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(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 16, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 16, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying), with amendments to which the concurrence of this House is desired. Copies of the amendments are available at the table.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Should you consult with the other parties, I believe you will find unanimous consent that notwithstanding any standing or special order or usual practice of the House, when orders of the day are called later this day, a minister of the Crown be authorized to move without notice a motion relating to Senate amendments to Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other acts (medical assistance in dying).

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to Section 38 of the Access to Information Act, to lay upon the table the report of the Information Commissioner for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2016.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to four petitions.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2015 annual report of the RCMP's use of the law enforcement justification provisions. This report addresses the RCMP's use of specified provisions within the law enforcement justification regime, which is set out in section 25.1 to 25.4 of the Criminal Code.

This report also documents the nature of the investigations in which these provisions were used.

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[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts.

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

* * *

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the second part of the 2016 ordinary session of the Council of Europe and its mission to the next country to hold the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union held in Strasbourg, France, and Bratislava, Republic of Slovakia, from April 18 to April 28, 2016.

*Routine Proceedings***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the twelfth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled “Public Accounts of Canada 2015”.

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

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics entitled “Review of the Access to Information Act”.

This report was agreed to unanimously by all members of the committee who worked together cordially and produced an excellent report. We are expecting comprehensive legislation from the government forthwith.

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

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, entitled “An Update on Rail Safety”. This report was intended to underscore the need for safety on Canada’s rails.

From Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, to Richmond, British Columbia, the committee heard the common theme that people and communities support commerce and recreational rail travel, but they do so with the expectation that it is safe and reliable.

The members of the committee submit the report with the hope that the recommendations will help to positively move the bar when it comes to safety on the rails. I also want to thank all the committee members for their great work.

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

* * *

• (1010)

GOVERNMENT AWARENESS DAY ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-296, An Act respecting a Government Awareness Day

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce this bill, an act respecting government awareness day. I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the hard-working and excellent member for Courtenay—Alberni for seconding the bill.

The bill would have Parliament establish July 8 every year as government awareness day. The purpose would be that there be a day for Canadians to reflect on and celebrate our democracy. July 8 was the first day that Parliament ever sat in our country. That is the

significance of that day. It would encourage citizen engagement, a celebration of our democracy, and education. It would encourage all citizens to use that day to contact any representative they wish, municipal, provincial, or federal, and make their views known to that representative as a way of showing that democracy is about government by the people for the people.

I hope that all members of the House will join with me in establishing such an important day, which we do not have now in the country, to celebrate, respect, and enhance our democracy.

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

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CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-297, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (voting hours).

He said: Mr. Speaker, once again I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni for seconding the bill.

As all Canadians and this House know, we are about to embark on a very important exercise in electoral reform. This gives us and all Canadians a chance to reflect on and discuss our democracy and our democratic practices and make improvements.

What the bill would do is expand voting hours in British Columbia and across the country from seven o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night. The idea is to expand the opportunities for Canadians on election day to cast their ballots. Research shows that, when polls are closed at 7 p.m., as they are in B.C., or at 8 p.m., there are Canadians who work and cannot get to the polls. Therefore, by increasing the length of time on the day Canadians go to polls, we would increase voter turnout. That, after all, is the essence of democracy.

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

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-298, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (voting hours—Pacific time zone).

He said: Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for seconding the bill.

This bill emanates from constituents of mine in British Columbia who have pointed out that the current practice of having voting hours in British Columbia on election day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. is not optimal for encouraging voter turnout. The bill would make a slight adjustment to open the polls at 8 a.m. and go to 8 p.m. on the theory that there are far more Canadians who will go to vote after work and are shut out at the polls because they get there after 7 p.m. than there are people who can get up and be at the polls from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m.

This is another way to encourage democratic involvement, to increase the rate of voter participation on election day. I hope all members of the House will join me in supporting the bill.

Routine Proceedings

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe you would find the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill S-1001, An Act to authorize La Capitale Financial Security Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec, be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed.

• (1015)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

* * *

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to state that the completion of Bill C-14 is an urgent matter because a legislative framework is needed to protect our most vulnerable in society and establish clear and consistent practices for medical professionals, while providing access to assisted dying pursuant to the Supreme Court of Canada ruling.

Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 53, I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing or special Order or usual practice of the House, when Orders of the Day are called later this day, a Minister of the Crown be authorized to move, without notice, a motion relating to Senate amendments to Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying).

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's arguments with respect to the urgency of this issue. However, he may be aware, and I think should be, that provincial guidelines have already been proposed with respect to this, and provinces are bringing in a framework to deal with this at the provincial level.

That does not negate the possible arguments for or against having a federal framework, but I think it is important to acknowledge, in the context of a claim to the alleged urgency of this issue, what the reality is at the provincial level, because if we look at the various guidelines, it actually seems fairly clear to me that a number of provinces have done a much better job of protecting the vulnerable than the framework the federal government has put in place.

I have raised concerns repeatedly in this House about the lack of protection for the vulnerable in this legislation. It is important that

we separate out two different issues. There is the issue of the eligibility criteria, which has been fairly contentious in terms of whether it should be terminal, whether it should simply repeat the language of the Supreme Court, or whether it should use other types of language, as the government does in the somewhat ambiguous term of death being “reasonably foreseeable”, but then there is the separate question with respect to safeguards.

I think, especially in this legislation, whatever Canadians and members of this House think of the provisions in terms of eligibility criteria, that there is an absence of safeguards. If we look at what the provinces have put in place, they have, in many cases, done a much better job of providing important safeguards.

One of the models I would like to draw to the attention of members of the House is the law in place in Manitoba. The law put in place there has actually been praised. It was welcomed as a welcome development, even by someone involved in assisting people accessing assistance in dying, with an understanding of the real benefits of this law.

The system that was set up in Manitoba was that it allowed individuals seeking assistance in dying, euthanasia, or physician-assisted suicide, whatever we want to call it, to have their cases reviewed by government lawyers. It did not require judicial review, which has many advantages but is something that some members have claimed is unduly onerous. It instead created a procedure by which government lawyers would review the eligibility criteria and would be able to, in the context of their legal expertise and knowledge, rule on whether the person in fact met the criteria.

The government's legislation contains absolutely no mechanism for advance legal review by a competent authority, and we proposed an amendment to that effect in hopes of seeing the government bring it in. Unfortunately, it would not agree to that.

I think the Manitoba law strikes a good compromise. It does not require judicial review, but it does have some kind of apparatus whereby we have review by competent legal authority. Certainly in the case of Manitoba, the vulnerable in Manitoba are better off under the provisions of the existing standards in Manitoba than they would be under federal legislation.

Let us talk about some of the other provinces. In general, the provinces I was able to look at use language around attending physicians. They have protections in terms of conscience, but they are rooted in this idea of an attending physician being in some way involved in the process.

The federal legislation, Bill C-14, makes no reference to attending physicians. It does not require the involvement of the attending physician at all. It simply says that any two physicians can sign off. We could have two physicians in the country who see a particular case one way, with every other physician in the country seeing the case a completely different way, and that person would still be able to access euthanasia or assisted suicide.

Routine Proceedings

In their wisdom, most of the provinces, at least most of the ones I have had a chance to look at, have guidelines that deal specifically with some kind of carved-out role for an attending physician. I would argue that involving, in the guidelines, specifically the attending physician provides significantly greater safeguards than we would have otherwise.

This speaks very much to the motion the government House leader put forward, because he is claiming that there is some urgency to passing this legislation on the basis of the protection of the vulnerable. However, if we look at the rules that are in place in the various provinces, it is very clear that they may, so far, in terms of the interim guidelines they have put in place since June 6, have a somewhat more liberal interpretation of the eligibility criteria, but on the issue of safeguards, on the issue of the protection of the vulnerable, they are actually doing a much better job.

• (1020)

I have stated before concerns about the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario's policy with respect to conscience. It is evident in its interim policies that it has introduced, as well, a requirement for effective referral, requiring someone to be complicit or to refer for euthanasia, which is gravely concerning to physicians as well as to many other people within the province of Ontario. However, that would not change with the federal legislation, because the legislation would not provide the necessary protections for conscience.

In other provinces, though, we see a better job in terms of understanding processes that can be put in place which protect the vulnerable and also protect conscience. Therefore, generally speaking, they make reference to this issue of having the attending physician involved, but they do not specifically require the participation or an effective referral. In my home province of Alberta, there has been a system constructed whereby there is a sort of central hub where people would go directly, or where someone might be pointed, in order to have their situation addressed or adjudicated in some way.

These systems prevent what I think is one of the very pernicious aspects of Bill C-14, which is the possibility of doctor shopping. It is where a person, or even a member of their family, could shop the case around, and 10 or 20 different doctors could say absolutely not because the person does not meet the ambiguous criteria. It is somewhat ambiguous under Carter, but no less ambiguous under the provisions of the new government legislation.

What is important in this debate is that people have raised the spectre of a legislative vacuum, in that there will be no legislation, no rules in place whatsoever. Well, June 6 has come and gone, and provinces were ready to respond in a way and to an extent that the federal government simply was not. The government proposed the legislation fairly late. It did not seek to get our buy-in on the substance of the legislation. Instead, the government pushed this forward at a late stage and said that we have to pass it now because it is urgent.

Well, provinces have done a much better job here. Now June 6 has come and gone, and we are not in a vacuum. Provinces have developed standards, policies, and procedures, some of which may be better than others; some of which I may agree with more or less. However, if we look at the substance of these, I think we see that

there is not at all a legislative vacuum. In fact, the provinces have in some cases been more effective.

The central issue of doctor shopping, the issue of whether or not someone meets the criteria, needs to be adjudicated. It needs to be adjudicated, hopefully once, and may be subject to appeal or review by someone else. However, there needs to be one person or a group of people who have the expertise, legally and medically, who make the assessment, and then that decision is made.

This fearmongering from the government about the absence of a law or a vacuum, I think really misses the point. We have these bodies, colleges of physicians and surgeons at the provincial level, that have the competency and have come up with guidelines, that have recognized, unlike the government, the concerns about doctor shopping that we have raised repeatedly in the House. They have recognized the problems with conscience and said they could try to construct, using their expertise and authority at the provincial level, a system that works better and that provides real protections for the vulnerable.

Whenever we think about the eligibility criteria, and in some cases the interpretation of the eligibility criteria is different at the provincial level, let us provide the safeguards.

One thing I want to briefly mention is that the federal legislation provides immunity from prosecution for someone who has a "reasonable but mistaken belief" that the standards have been met. Therefore, someone could take the life of a person who did not meet the criteria and still avoid prosecution. That is not a protection for the vulnerable. However, in the absence of the legislation, we do not have that exemption. The vulnerable are better protected because there is not an exemption for those who take life without the consent of the patient and without the proper criteria being met.

In looking at the reality of what is in place at the provincial level, it is not correct at all to talk about a legislative vacuum. Therefore, the motion does not have the urgency that is claimed.

• (1025)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. Resuming debate.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: Will those members who object to the motion, please rise in their places.

[*And fewer than 10 members having risen:*]

The Deputy Speaker: Fewer than 10 members having risen to object, the motion is adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to present three petitions on two different topics today.

The first petition is with regard to victims of violent crimes, that is unborn children being victims of violent crimes, and the fact that our law does not currently recognize them as victims. There is currently a private member's bill, Cassie and Molly's law, and the petitioners call on all of us to support that law.

• (1030)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the other two petitions are with regard to religious freedom and the fact that religious freedom is probably one of the first freedoms at risk when freedoms are attacked around the world. The petitioners call on the government to restore and renew the mandate of the office of religious freedom.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE MEDAL

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to present to the House of Commons an electronic petition initiated by veteran David Palmer, calling on the Government of Canada to re-establish a Canadian military volunteer service medal, which was previously awarded but cancelled in 1947. The petition has garnered almost 3,600 signatures from every province and territory in the country, and thousands more in hard copy.

At this time, I would like to commend Mr. Palmer for his many years of dedication and commitment to veterans and to his efforts to re-establish this medal.

[Translation]

HOME MAIL DELIVERY

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I said recently, I have never seen a more popular petition than this one, which calls on the government to restore home mail delivery and reminds the Prime Minister that he made a promise during the election campaign to do so. Once again, I have the honour to present a petition to restore home mail delivery.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition that arises out of the death of 22-year-old Cassandra Kaulius, who was killed by a drunk driver, and all the other Canadians, including many in my riding of Richmond—Arthabaska, who have suffered the same fate. A group of families who have lost a loved one to impaired driving, called Families for Justice, believes that our impaired driving laws are too lax. It is calling for mandatory sentences in such cases and wants those offences to be recognized for what they are: vehicular homicide. Impaired driving continues to be the leading criminal cause of death in Canada. Over 1,200 Canadians are killed every year by a drunk driver. Canadians want mandatory sentences for vehicular homicide and are calling on the House to pass Bill C-226, the impaired driving act.

[English]

BLOOD DONATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present e-petition 126 to Parliament. This petition calls on the Government of Canada to implement a ban on the operation of for-profit, paid donor blood collection clinics in Canada. This is particularly apt in that World Blood Donor Day is this week.

Routine Proceedings

This initiative has received the support of thousands of Canadians from across the country. It reflects the opposition of many to the Liberal government's support for the privatization of the collection of blood plasma of Canadians. Just this week, news broke of the planned opening of yet another paid donor blood facility, this time in Moncton, in direct violation of the principles and recommendations of the Krever inquiry into the tainted blood scandal.

I would like to thank Kat Lanteigne and other safe-blood advocates who have campaigned relentlessly to defend Canada's blood supply. It is time for the government to put a stop to paid plasma and keep our system safe, public, and voluntary.

IRAN

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of Canadians, requesting that the Government of Canada maintain the listing of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a state supporter of terrorism, pursuant to section 6.1 of the State Immunity Act, for as long as the Iranian regime continues to sponsor terrorism.

FALUN GONG

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

The first is from constituents in my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands from Galiano, Salt Spring, and Mayne, as well as Saanich Peninsula. The petitioners are calling for the government and in particular the Minister of Foreign Affairs to issue a statement condemning the practices of the People's Republic of China in relation to human rights and particularly the rights of practitioners of Falun Dafa and Falun Gong.

The petitioners are further requesting that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship list the People's Republic of China as a refugee source country to allow people to escape the oppression that occurs in that nation.

• (1035)

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Second, Mr. Speaker, a petition from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands calls for this House to develop a national registry for missing persons and a victims index.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from Neerlandia and Barrhead, two towns in my riding. The petitioners are concerned about the accessibility of violent and degrading sexual material online, and the implicit impact on public health, especially the well-being of women and girls. As such, these petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to adopt Motion No. 47.

Government Orders

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many constituents of mine asking that the House of Commons specify and identify hospice palliative care as a defined medical service covered under the Canada Health Act so that the provincial and territorial governments will be entitled to funds under the Canada health transfer system to be used to provide accessible hospice palliative care for all residents of Canada in their respective provinces and territories.

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QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 190 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 190—**Mr. Larry Miller:**

With regard to the operation of the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency: what were the revenue figures for pari-mutuel wagering for horse racing conducted in Ontario, for each fiscal year from 2012-2013 to 2015-2016, broken down by (i) racetrack, (ii) year?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that also agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

AN ACT TO AMEND THE CRIMINAL CODE AND TO MAKE RELATED AMENDMENTS TO OTHER ACTS (MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): moved:

That a Message be sent to the Senate to acquaint their Honours that this House:

agrees with amendments numbered 1, 2d, 2e, 4 and 5 made by the Senate to Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying);

proposes that amendment 2c(i) be amended by replacing the text of the amendment with the following text “sistance in dying after having been informed of the means that are available to relieve their suffering, including palliative care.”;

proposes that amendment 3 be amended in paragraph (b) by adding after the words “make regulations” the words “that he or she considers necessary”;

respectfully disagrees with amendment 2a because requiring that a person who assists to be free from any material benefit arising from the patient's death would eliminate from participation the family members or friends most likely to be present at the patient's express wish, and this would violate patient autonomy in a fundamental and unacceptable manner; and

respectfully disagrees with amendments 2b, 2c(ii) and 2c(iii) because they would undermine objectives in Bill C-14 to recognize the significant and continuing public health issue of suicide, to guard against death being seen as a solution to all forms of suffering, and to counter negative perceptions about the quality of life of persons who are elderly, ill or disabled, and because the House is of the view that C-14 strikes the right balance for Canadians between protection of vulnerable individuals and choice for those whose medical circumstances cause enduring and intolerable suffering as they approach death.

• (1040)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice, Lib.): She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my comments by acknowledging the depth and quality of the thoughtful work that the other place has undertaken in its review of Bill C-14.

The number of amendments that were presented and thoroughly debated speaks volumes, not only about the complexity of the issue at hand but also about the dedication with which members of the other place sought to improve the legislation.

Bill C-14, as passed by the House of Commons, expressed our policy choice to address medical assistance in dying in a principled and cautious manner. This policy choice was deliberately and carefully crafted. The bill achieves the most appropriate balance between individuals' autonomy in deciding how their death will occur and protection of vulnerable individuals, as well as broader societal interests. These interests include suicide prevention, equal valuation of every person's life, and preventing the normalization of death in response to suffering. Several amendments were made to Bill C-14 in the other place.

The most significant amendment was the deletion of the definition of “grievous and irremediable medical condition”. The effect of this amendment essentially removes the eligibility requirement that “natural death has become reasonably foreseeable”. This amendment appears to have been motivated by a concern that this criterion is unconstitutional because it does not explicitly appear in the Supreme Court Carter decision.

Many legal experts have testified before the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in the other place. Some expressed their views that Bill C-14, as initially passed in the House of Commons, would be found unconstitutional if challenged in the courts.

However, other legal experts and professors took the opposite view, that Bill C-14, as adopted in the House of Commons, with the requirement that natural death be reasonably foreseeable, is constitutional. In Carter, the Supreme Court was clear that it is the role of Parliament to craft a complex, regulatory regime with respect to medical assistance in dying and that such a regime would be given a high degree of deference by the courts.

Hon. colleagues, as Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada, I am confident that Bill C-14, as originally drafted and presented in this place, is constitutional. As outlined in an addendum to the legislative background paper that I distributed to all parliamentarians earlier this week, and which I am pleased to table in the House today, the question is whether the complex, regulatory regime found in Bill C-14 is consistent with the charter, not whether it exactly replicates the wording of the Supreme Court in Carter. In the dialogue that this Parliament has with the judiciary, Bill C-14 is our principled, cautious, and deliberate response.

Government Orders

This is a transformational discussion, and a significant first step for our country. It is important to note that Bill C-14 is very different from the former law that was before the court in Carter. Our proposed legislation permits medical assistance in dying for the overwhelming majority of those Canadians who would seek to access it, and it is motivated by broader, new legislative objectives that do not animate the former law.

Bill C-14 is a new law with new features, and an analysis of its constitutionality must reflect this. The Carter ruling alone is not the end of the story, nor is it the end of our national discussion. The conclusion to draw here is that there are diametrically opposed but reasonable points of view about the constitutionality of Bill C-14.

The situation is not unique. It is normal and part of a healthy debate for legal experts to differ on the merits of a particular piece of legislation that has not yet been examined by the courts. However, I would caution that fundamentally altering the delicate balance purposefully struck in Bill C-14 solely because of the existence of these differing views is ill-advised.

As the Supreme Court of Canada stated in Carter, “the risks associated with physician-assisted death can be limited through a carefully designed and monitored system of safeguards”. The government's policy choices, as reflected in Bill C-14, were specifically crafted to protect vulnerable Canadians from these different types of risks.

● (1045)

First is the protection of those who will ask for medical assistance in dying. Bill C-14, as passed by this chamber, would limit eligibility to those whose death has become reasonably foreseeable and for whom the risks can be adequately addressed by the robust safeguards found in Bill C-14. However, if eligibility is drastically expanded to all Canadians who are suffering unbearably, regardless of whether or not their death is reasonably foreseeable, as in the amendments the other place proposes, there are more risks of different types that are much harder to detect.

These risks include the very real possibility that individuals may be motivated to request medical assistance in dying for a whole host of reasons, psychosocial, emotional, or systemic, which are separate from their medical condition but that exacerbate their suffering. People may die unnecessarily or prematurely, when other options for improving their quality of life are available. Cases from other jurisdictions that permit medical assistance in dying support these concerns. We do not believe that this is what Canadians want.

Importantly, while the other place expanded eligibility in the bill, it did not introduce new safeguards for the very circumstances where the most caution is required. The result is that any serious medical condition, whether it be a soldier with post-traumatic stress disorder, a young person who suffered a spinal cord injury in an accident, or a survivor whose mind is haunted by memories of sexual abuse, could result in eligibility for medical assistance in dying. I raise these examples from other jurisdictions not to be sensational, but to highlight the real risks at play.

However, beyond the risks for those who make a request for medical assistance in dying, making it available to all Canadians who are suffering would also have repercussions at a much broader

level. It would alter our societal values and send the wrong message to our most vulnerable Canadians who may never even request assistance. These are risks for which there are no obvious safeguards.

Broadening eligibility for medical assistance in dying to situations where death is not reasonably foreseeable would contribute to negative perceptions about the quality and dignity of life of people with disabilities. Organizations like the Canadian Association for Community Living and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, among other disability rights organizations, have cautioned us about the potential devaluation of the lives of Canadians with disabilities that broader eligibility criteria would attract. They tell us that such devaluation happens when the law presumes that life with a disability could be so unbearable that death should be a state-sanctioned option.

Broad eligibility criteria could also send the wrong message that society feels it is appropriate to address suffering in life by choosing death. This message may encourage some who are in crisis and already considering suicide to act, even privately and without assistance. Procedural safeguards would not help these individuals. The relationship between medical assistance in dying and suicide has not been sufficiently studied and we must have more information about this complex situation before we can decide what is right for Canada. I want to acknowledge the thorough and emotional discussion in the other place on this incredibly important issue.

We recognize the important amendments to Bill C-14 adopted by the other place, namely that a person signing on behalf of the patient requesting assistance cannot know or believe that they will benefit from the patient's death. This is indeed a thoughtful amendment that improves the bill and a valuable safeguard that we are pleased to support. Ensuring that a patient is aware of all means available to relieve their suffering, including palliative care, is of course important.

A further amendment concerning the monitoring system introduces mandatory language requiring the Minister of Health to make regulations and guidelines. The government appreciates the other place's concern that regulations to support the monitoring regime be put in place. Canadians want to know that this system will be well monitored and we support this well-crafted amendment from the other place.

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●(1050)

Further, there was an amendment requiring that the issues to be studied in the bill, which are mature minors, advance directives, and requests where the sole underlying condition is mental illness, be completed in two years. This amendment from the other place reflects the concern that Canadians have for these incredibly complex issues, and the desire for this government to be held to account on each of them, and for that reason it is supported.

I would also like to acknowledge the substantive work of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, whose thoughtful study of the bill resulted in 16 amendments from all parties being adopted.

I would urge all members of the House to consider the pressing need for a federal legislative framework governing medical assistance in dying. With no such regime in place at this time, with the force and clarity of the criminal law, all Canadians face significant uncertainty.

It is crucial to keep in mind that Bill C-14 was carefully and deliberately crafted as a cohesive and balanced regime. The balance sought in Bill C-14 would be upset by the broadening of eligibility criteria to individuals who are not approaching death without the corresponding safeguards for these specific cases.

Since forming government, we have spent countless hours consulting with Canadians and stakeholders, carefully considering all of the evidence and diverse perspectives on this incredibly challenging issue. We are confident in the policy choices expressed in Bill C-14. The legislation represents the right approach for Canada at this important time in our country's history. I encourage all members of the House to support the government's motion, which respects the other place's contribution to this important debate and maintains the most appropriate balance for all Canadians.

I am pleased to table, in both official languages, a document entitled, "Legislative Background: Medical Assistance in Dying (Bill C-14)—Addendum".

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no question in my mind, and in the minds' of my colleagues, that this is the most crucial issue this Parliament and any of us as parliamentarians will deal with in our lifetimes.

One of the comments the minister made was that there is no clear relationship between physician-assisted suicide and suicide in general. I would like to point out that in one of my previous interventions I did quote Aaron Kheriaty, associate professor of psychiatry and director of the medical ethics program at the University of California Irvine School of Medicine, who stated:

The debate over doctor-assisted suicide is often framed as an issue of personal autonomy and privacy. Proponents argue that assisted suicide should be legalized because it affects only those individuals who—assuming they are of sound mind—are making a rational and deliberate choice....

He goes on to report that in states where physician-assisted suicide has been legalized, there has been an increase in suicide of 6.3% overall, but among those over 65, an increase of 14.5%.

It is clear that there is a direct link between authorizing physician-assisted suicide and the increase in suicide in general. That is a major concern that we should be seized with.

●(1055)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the hon. colleague's comments on the crucial nature of Bill C-14 and pursuing a national regime for medical assistance in dying in this country, necessarily so in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's direction. I recognize, as stated in my comments, the importance of ensuring that we proceed with caution with respect to medical assistance in dying, recognizing that there is a link, as articulated by my friend, and that we do everything we can to study this particular issue and proceed with caution on the next steps of this debate in this country.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice said, in introducing the motion, that she respectfully disagrees with amendments 2(b) and 2(c) because they would remove the criterion of reasonably foreseeable death and undermine the objectives of Bill C-14. As the House knows, the amendments would make sure that the legislation would be consistent with the constitutional parameters of the Carter case, in the words of the Supreme Court. Professor Hogg said that if the bill was amended in this way it would be consistent with the parameters set out in the Carter case, and if it were not the bill would be unconstitutional.

I would like the minister's reaction to the comments of Dr. Douglas Grant, the chair of the Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada, who said that the criteria in the unamended Bill C-14, in other words, the "reasonably foreseeable" language the minister would propose to retain would involve language that is "too vague to be understood or applied by the medical profession and too ambiguous to be regulated effectively."

I would like the minister's comments on that quote.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, I certainly acknowledge my friend across the way for the work and the commitment he has made with respect to Bill C-14 and this discussion.

While I acknowledge the quote that he conveyed from Douglas Grant from the regulators, I would like to counter that discussion with a comprehensive response that we have received from the Canadian Medical Association and physicians across the country who look at the language of reasonable foreseeability and the further definition that we provided in terms of eligibility around "grievous and irremediable" as providing clarity, as providing medical practitioners across the country with the ability, based on their direct relationships with their patients, to determine whether or not a patient is eligible for medical assistance in dying.

We believe that flexibility is the most appropriate response, and the medical practitioners have confirmed that with us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the minister. I would say that this was not her best argument in defence of Bill C-14.

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She seems to be confusing the concepts of being suicidal and assisted suicide. She also claims that adopting the definition in Senator Joyal's amendment and the terms in the Carter decision would put us on a slippery slope, giving people who are suddenly suffering access to medical assistance in dying.

We are talking about medical assistance in dying. Does she think that health care professionals would consent to assist someone who is suicidal? Since they would not give their consent, does she think that a suicidal person under the care of our health care system would not find the help they need to reverse their suicidal state? How does she distinguish between being suicidal and medically assisted suicide, other than by citing the fact that the latter is medically assisted? Does she trust the health care system?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, certainly I acknowledge my colleague across the way for his ongoing commitment and discussion on this important issue.

My words today were in speaking to a motion to the other place in terms of their thoughtful considerations with respect to Bill C-14.

The member opposite speaks to the risks, speaks to the broadening of the criteria in terms of one of the amendments that was sent back. What I was expressing in my comments were the serious concerns that we have. If we were to broaden the eligibility criteria, there would not be the necessary safeguards in place to account for that broadening of the criteria.

What I sought to articulate in my comments were examples highlighted from other jurisdictions, factual examples where a broad criteria has resulted in patients accessing medical assistance in dying in the cases that my colleague across the way speaks to, in terms of individuals who are suffering from mental illness alone. Recognizing that there are other remedies, certainly, we trust medical practitioners to perform their duties responsibly in servicing their patients in the best and most appropriate manner.

● (1100)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Justice for her very carefully considered and very appropriate and thoughtful review of the Senate's amendments.

I want to come back to the issue of "reasonably foreseeable". The minister recognized that in the event that "reasonably foreseeable" were to be removed from the law, we would be changing the law in such a manner that different people who were never intended to be covered by the law would suddenly have grievous and irremediable illnesses.

One example might be someone who recently became a paraplegic, whose mental process, whose acceptance of their new circumstances, may be very different if they waited a year. The waiting period in the bill is 10 days. As such, does the minister not believe that if we were to change "reasonably foreseeable", we would need to drastically extend the waiting period for some categories of people?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, around reasonable foreseeability and expanding the eligibility criteria with respect to medical assistance in dying, there are any number of situations that

could arise with a broad eligibility criteria such as the member suggested, for example, looking at persons who have recently become disabled in a car accident and have become quadriplegics.

We have considered all of the different machinations in what safeguards should, and need to be in place, and the risks associated with a broadening of an eligibility criteria. For a recently disabled person, I would submit that a 10-day reflection period is not a substantive reflection period to respond to such a circumstance. We need to proceed with caution.

We will have a continuing conversation as a country, and we will ensure we continue to have these discussions.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister puts a great deal of stock in the reasonably foreseeable provision. "Reasonably foreseeable" in this context is not a recognized legal term or medical term. The minister herself has said in previous debates that it does not mean terminal. Therefore, given the alleged significance of this criteria, this safeguard, so to speak, could the minister tell us what "reasonably foreseeable" means?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, in the compressed timeline I have to respond, I have spoken to reasonable foreseeability in the chamber.

Reasonable foreseeability is something that has been used quite regularly in the Criminal Code. We placed it in the legislation to inject what we feel is a necessary flexibility to provide medical practitioners with the ability, based on their direct relationship with their patient, to determine when that patient would be eligible for medical assistance in dying. In other words, they would determine when their patient's death has become reasonably foreseeable.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. leader of the opposition in the House.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe Standing Order 62 provides for the member who rises first to be recognized.

The Deputy Speaker: I would have to check the standing order that the hon. member references. At the time of resuming debate, members rise in their place to be recognized, and we do have a list, as the member understands quite well. I recognized the hon. opposition House leader as he was rising in his place. That is the customary way that we proceed.

Therefore, I recognize the hon. opposition House leader, and he will begin his remarks now.

● (1105)

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I suppose I caught your eye first. That is the way it normally works.

Before I begin my remarks, under the parameters of the debate, I have an unlimited time slot. I wonder if I could get the unanimous consent of the House to be deemed to have a normal 20-minute speaking slot and I would share that time with another colleague.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. opposition House leader.

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Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

I will be brief. I want to speak to a few of the amendments the government has chosen to accept and also express a few words of caution.

I want to thank the minister for keeping the language as tight as possible. “Reasonably foreseeable” is a much better situation than “grievous and irremediable”. As this is such a fundamental change to our society, we do not want to open the door to assisted suicide in such a manner that a large number of people who may be suffering from physical or mental ailments would have access to it.

I understand the slight wording change on the palliative care amendment. It is important that any patient make an informed decision, whether it is about something as simple as a normal medical procedure, but certainly in a situation like this of such a grave and serious matter. In essence, as this may be the last decision some people make, making an informed decision is critically important. Knowing what other options there might be to alleviate of pain as well as palliative care are also so important.

I hope the government will work with the provinces in the coming months and years to establish a robust palliative care regime so this type of decision is not made without having real and practical options to extend life in as comfortable a manner as possible, while understanding the significant challenges that are often placed on family members.

I wish the government had included the amendment that dealt with beneficiaries of estates or insurance policies not being able to participate directly in the act of assisted suicide. That is an important amendment to keep. This is going to be a new thing in Canada and we do not know how it will unfold, so having some kind of safeguard in place to avoid pressure being put on people to make this decision is important.

Many members may be familiar with the Terri Schiavo case in Florida. It was a bitter dispute with a lot of allegations all around. One of the facts that came out was that one of the family members pushing for end of life care to be withdrawn from Terri Schiavo was a beneficiary of an insurance policy. That conjures up gloomy images of what might happen to people who do not wish to end their life and are not able to either grant consent or put up opposition to it and have those decisions made for them.

I want to touch on a few comments that are troubling to me. I have heard comments made by government members and the minister about how this is a first step and that this could be expanded in the future. Those types of things very much concern me. The House is taking this decision because of a court decision. The Supreme Court of Canada reversed its original decision that upheld the laws against assisted suicide and has thrown this on to Parliament.

I understand the need that the government had to fill in this legal vacuum, and I commend it for using the language “reasonably foreseeable” and not “grievous and irremediable”. However, I am wary about what might be coming down the pike. It really worries me when people talk about this being a first step. I shudder to think where this might go. If this type of regime is opened up more, people

who may be going through difficult times in their life, maybe temporary difficulties, both physical and mental, will access it.

I hope we have created a tight box that will not be expanded. I will be watching in the future and will do everything I can to ensure that this is not expanded, and I hope many of my colleagues will do the same. I do not want to go down the road of what has transpired in some European countries where this is used in a much more aggressive and expanded way. Many times it involves vulnerable people or people with severe disabilities who are not able to communicate their desires and other family members or other caregivers make that decision for them.

Canada could be going to a very dark place if this is a first step. If it is filling in that legal void and we have created a strict enough and a tight enough box around it, then I hope this is as far as it goes. I will be doing everything I can to ensure that is the case.

• (1110)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member across the way.

Could the member provide some thoughts on the number of individuals who were involved? We can talk about the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, and the preliminary work that was done last summer on the issue of assisted dying. We had a joint committee of the House, including the other place. We have had ample opportunity through consultation, even at committee stage with individual members of Parliament. This is a very emotional issue for all of us as we try to deal with the passage of Bill C-14.

Could the member provide any personal insights on the legislation, or about the issue at hand, or provide comment in regard to the amount of individuals who have had, directly or indirectly, an opportunity to participate?

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I have voted on this subject a couple of times in the House. It came up through private members' bills. I think a member of the Bloc Québécois, in the 39th Parliament, proposed a bill to remove the restrictions around assisted suicide. It was not as comprehensive as the bill before us. I think it just deleted a clause. This obviously is a more robust response to the issue.

I do take the hon. member's points. Once the House came back after the election, there was a great number of opportunities for members to weigh in on what direction it should take. There was the special committee before the legislation was drafted, obviously debated in the House, the standing committee, and now over to the Senate.

However, none of that matters when we are dealing with the original principle that the Supreme Court hoisted back on to us. Several times in the last decade or so the elected representatives have voted against legalizing assisted suicide. The Supreme Court, in my lifetime, has upheld the rules and laws against assisted suicide and now has reversed itself. This is my beef with the whole question.

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It was quite clear, through the will of the elected by Canadians, that Canadians were comfortable with assisted suicide being illegal, that the sanctity of life being upheld all the way through to natural death was an important principle, and that Canadians were afraid of where this might lead to. However, the court, having reversed its decision, has now placed it back on the lap of Parliament, so there are limited options for parliamentarians to take.

The bill is not perfect. I voted against it at second and third reading. I would have liked to have seen more protections for conscience rights for medical practitioners. I wish we had talked more about that. It is not in the amendments that we are dealing with today, so I cannot speak to that. However, it would have been easier for me to support the bill if those types of protections for medical practitioners to reflect their conscience were in it.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the hon. member's comments about what Canadians think. Perhaps he might want to actually contact the governments, including the Government of Alberta. It actually took the time to survey Albertans. It also worked with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, as it has across the country. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta has issued guidelines consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada.

On the survey of Albertans, 60% of respondents want to support the safeguards put in place by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which is immediately consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada.

How is it that the member, and frankly the Minister of Justice, keep saying that we should rely on a political body that lobbies on behalf of medical interests in Canada as opposed to the colleges of physicians and surgeons that support the Supreme Court of Canada guidelines?

• (1115)

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the steps the Government of Alberta took to survey people in Alberta. If it was not a referendum, then I do not know how accurate a reflection of the people it could be. I would not look to the current Government of Alberta to inform basically any of my decisions, especially about something as serious as this.

Let us be honest. We are talking about very complex legal principles. We are talking about medical terminology that touches on many different aspects of different kinds of care.

The will of Canadians was reflected through the House, which is a pretty fundamental principle. Political parties and MPs come here to represent their constituents. We did vote on this several times in my life here as a parliamentarian, and every time we rejected the call to legalize assisted suicide, and rightly so.

I have had people in my family reach the end of their lives and go through very tough medical conditions. However, upholding the principle of the sanctity of life is our job, and it is the medical industry's job to protect life, to extend life. That is a fundamental principle, and if we lose that anchor, I worry a lot of unintended consequences will come down the pike in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise for what will probably be

my last time speaking to this particular bill, though I am sure not to this issue in general.

I am going to give a fairly disparate speech addressing a number of different issues that have been raised and loose ends in this conversation.

First, it is important to underline that we do not exist in a legislative vacuum at the present time. The government has, in my judgment, created this sort of artificial sense of fear, this artificial timeline that says we have to pass its bad legislation, in my judgment, just because if we do not do it, there will be no legislation.

June 6 has come and gone. There are provincial guidelines in place. I do not dispute the fact that a better version of a federal framework would have many desirable things about it. I have not certainly opposed the principle of the federal government legislating in this area. We are, after all, talking about the contours of an exception to the Criminal Code. However, in the absence of the federal government having done the detailed work, in terms of actually coming up with a system of checks and balances, a system of safeguards, it may well be—and in my view, it is the case with the present legislation—that we are better off to defeat it, perhaps to bring back a better bill in the future. I will talk specifically about why that is and what a better bill would look like.

However, I think it is fundamental that we recognize the reality that there is not a legislative vacuum. It is not as if people are being killed without some kinds of systems, checks and balances, and safeguards in place. Provinces were ready in a way that the federal government simply was not.

I think we have a failure of process here. I will just briefly outline what that process was.

We had a Supreme Court decision at a time when the Conservatives were in government. We created this expert panel to review and report back, and it would have reported back after the election. It would have been difficult for politicians to be involved in a government consultation process in the immediate lead-up to and during an election. However, we had this external expert panel that was consulting Canadians and that was ready to report back the results of its consultation, as well as make policy recommendations.

When the new government came in, it removed the power of that expert panel to make recommendations with respect to policy. It only reported on its consultation. When we hear the government talk about this timeline, somewhat misleadingly, it will say that the previous government did nothing to advance this, when it was its decision to remove that essential power of the expert panel to make policy recommendations.

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Then we had a motion in this House, in December, to create a joint committee of the House and Senate to review this issue. That panel could have sat during the Christmas break, but it did not. It faced a time crunch when it came back. Then we waited months before seeing any kind of federal legislation. The failure of process was that in every case, in as much as a year and four months is not that much time, we faced a time crunch toward the activities of the committee and toward the activities of the House and certainly the Senate, because we did not more effectively use the panel that was put in place by the previous government. That panel consulted far beyond what the special committee did, far beyond what the justice committee did—in the case of the justice committee, not for any ill intention, I am sure. I was concerned about the process of witness selection with the joint special committee. There were many people who were even intervenors in the Carter case who were not able to participate in those hearings. In any event, the point is that we had this artificial time crunch that was created, and we see it happening again today.

Again today, the government is trying to create this artificial urgency instead of delving into this substantive conversation. Quebec did this in six years. I am not saying we should, or could, take six years, but having the prudence to have introduced legislation earlier and to have drawn on the wisdom of the expert panel would have been much better because we are in this seeming time crunch. However, I think we need to reject the time crunch the government is creating and, instead, do the diligent work that we need to do to fix some of the big problems in the bill.

● (1120)

We see sloppiness in this legislation, especially around this discussion of reasonable foreseeability. The justice minister just spoke, and I actually share many of the concerns she raised about leaving this wide open, but I think what she neglects is that reasonable foreseeability is not clear enough to be, in any sense, a meaningful safeguard.

I have listened to the minister speak repeatedly about reasonable foreseeability, and I understand that in response to my short question, she did not have enough time to define it fully, even if she had wanted to. However, having listened to her speak many times on this subject, I am not at all clear—and maybe subsequent speeches will provide some clarity—what that term actually means.

Obviously, death is reasonably foreseeable for all of us. This is part of the human condition. We are born and we die. There was certainly nobody on either side of this debate who suggested that natural death is abnormal, bad, or something to be feared. It is a part of life and reasonably foreseeable for all of us. That does not mean that we should not be concerned, though, about policies that would artificially cut short the process of natural life and death.

However, if “reasonably foreseeable” is so important, then we should actually have a definition. There should be some clarity about what that means. Liberals have said they are not talking about imminent natural death, but at some point in the future. I have quipped before that, when I was learning to drive, my mother thought death was reasonably foreseeable every time we got in the car, but the central point is that death is reasonably foreseeable for all of us. It is part of the human condition.

Therefore, this is very sloppy. It is not a safeguard. We need real, meaningful safeguards. I suggest that the federal government should contemplate safeguards along the lines that the government of Manitoba has brought in, whereby some competent legal authority reviews cases to ensure that legal criteria were met, not a model of judicial review but government lawyers designated for this purpose.

Other provinces have put in place systems that necessarily involve the attending physician, or if the attending physician is a conscientious objector, a different attending physician can assess the situation. However, it does not allow someone to just find any doctor anywhere who agrees that someone meets the criteria, but involves the physician or somebody actually involved in providing the person with care to make the assessment. If we look at what the provinces have already done in terms of safeguards, we see these are things that the federal government could adopt.

It is disappointing for me, frankly, as a member of Parliament, to see the government not doing the diligence that provinces have shown is possible when it comes to finding meaningful safeguards within a relatively compressed timeline. The government's approach has been to emphasize sort of an artificial timeline of urgency, but then not actually do the diligent work in advance. It created this time crunch by leaving it until the last minute and then said that it has to be passed or there is a legislative vacuum. There is no legislative vacuum, and again, the important work has not been done in terms of clarifying the safeguards.

I will make a general comment. I find myself repeatedly asking the government for definitions of things. On this issue and a range of other issues, it repeatedly uses words without actually clarifying what the words mean. It is true of the provisions of this bill, but more broadly, it is true of the underlying philosophy of this bill. So much of the motivating arguments for this legislation come from the concept of human dignity, human rights founded on an idea of human dignity. I think we would all agree that human rights have their foundation in human dignity. We give rights to people on the basis of what they are, intrinsically. Yet the government, in the context of talking about dying with dignity, has not told us what it means by dignity.

I believe in the idea of intrinsic human dignity. Dignity is present in all of us. I know that one member of the other place who was criticizing me in the media suggested that young people cannot understand this issue because they do not spend enough time in nursing homes. I have volunteered regularly in nursing homes for a very long time and, recently, my grandfather passed away in a care facility. It is important for me to believe, but more than that, to know, that he had dignity in spite of his suffering.

Many of us here have seen or been with people as they suffered and died. It is important that we know and believe that people, regardless of their circumstances, regardless of their suffering, have dignity.

● (1125)

Dignity is not conditional on circumstance. Dignity is intrinsic. If the government disagrees with that, if it has a different concept of human dignity, then it should at least define the term.

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This work is sloppy, the philosophy is sloppy, the legislation is sloppy, and I encourage members to defeat this bill in every way possible.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the issue raised by the member opposite when he talked about an artificial time crunch and a failure of process.

The Carter decision was handed down on February 6, 2015. Between February 6, 2015, and the federal election, there was the elapse of eight and a half months in which the Conservatives were in power, eight and a half months of the 12 months allotted by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The member opposite said that it was difficult for politicians to be involved in the lead-up to the federal election. My question is why. The politicians in this place, during those eight and a half months, were denied an opportunity for debate in any sort of a parliamentary process, they were denied an opportunity for debate or discussion before a parliamentary committee, and they were denied an opportunity for debate in this chamber.

All the while, it was the Conservative government that was denying that opportunity, specifically by voting against a motion to establish such a process that was brought in March by the Liberals—

The Deputy Speaker: You only have five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his work on this, although he knows I think there is some sleight of hand involved in that question.

I certainly did not say that politicians could not be involved in the discussion in the lead-up to the election. What I said is that it is difficult for politicians to undertake a formal government consultation in the midst of an election period. I think that is fairly obvious. The approach we took was a responsible approach, where there was an expert panel that was conducting consultations and reporting after the election.

This member and the government have to explain why they cut that process off. It is simply not true to say that members were denied an opportunity for debate in this place, as the member knows, and he in fact alluded to it. There was a supply day discussion of the issue. Supply days are a process and a part of the debate.

The reason there was no government-orders debate at the time was that there was no government legislation. It would have been irresponsible for the government to try to bring forward and pass legislation in the spring of last year, that shortly after—

• (1130)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Questions and comments.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief question.

I put the same question to another of the member's colleagues in the Conservative Party. I would think it is important, as representatives of certain regions, to pay attention to what the people of our region are saying.

The Government of Alberta took the time to do a survey of Albertans to see what their view was on the various opportunities to legislate in this area, and 60% of respondents replied that they wanted to support the safeguards put in place by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, which as the member knows, is the regulatory authority. Those are the guidelines adopted by the Supreme Court of Canada.

My question to the member is this. There has been a lot of discussion on that side about how we cannot do anything until we provide palliative care. In the decade that his party was in power, it did not put any additional dollars into providing palliative care to Canadians.

What would the member like to say to that question?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I will resist the temptation to offer some comments on the Alberta government in the context of that question. I have a great working relationship with my local MLAs, even if we do not agree.

I do want to specifically address the question in terms of surveys. One of the concerns I have with many of the surveys that are done on this issue is that people often misidentify, and questions can poorly identify, the distinction between the withdrawal of treatment and active euthanasia or assisted suicide.

It is regular and supported by everyone here that in a medical environment there would be certain cases—many cases, frankly—where extraordinary measures would need to be withdrawn and the natural process allowed to take its course. That is something that is fundamentally different from the act of killing associated with euthanasia or assisted suicide.

One of the problems we routinely see with these surveys is that they often fail to identify the distinction. I would be interested in looking at the back data and the questions in the survey to which the member refers. However, having been in the polling business myself, I have an understanding of those issues.

With respect to palliative care, there are members on our side who can speak to it in greater detail than I can. I simply disagree with the premise of the member's question. Significant actions were taken on palliative care. Yes, there is more work that needs to be done. I and others have called for more work to be done.

However, we supported an initiative to have a national palliative care strategy. I think that was supported by many parties in the last House. The work was begun and needs to continue.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to address the government's motion on a response to the Senate regarding the amendments it has made to Bill C-14. My personal involvement in this process began in January when I had the honour to serve on a special all-party and Senate committee. My colleague, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, was a very important member of that committee as well. Our mandate was to advise the government on a response that would respect the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Carter, respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and respect the priorities of Canadians.

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I have told the House before how very proud I was of the work that we accomplished together, and the spirit as well with which we worked in that place. We knew that the government would not accept all of our recommendations, but each was based on the evidence and faithfully respected the testimony that we heard, testimony of experts who came to us from across this country and reached out to others in the process.

Since Bill C-14 was introduced in the House, I, like many others, have focused great attention on its most surprising feature. That feature was the decision of the government to narrow the declaration of the Supreme Court of Canada to a much smaller circle of eligibility, and it could have proved to be a fatal flaw.

That was the testimony, after all, of the Canadian Bar Association, the Quebec Bar Association, Jean-Pierre Ménard, Joseph Arvai, and later the testimony of Canada's foremost constitutional scholar, Professor Peter Hogg. That was the conclusion, as well, of the courts in Ontario and Alberta. That flaw was important, not only because it fatally weakened the bill against the charter challenge, but also because it would force suffering Canadians to launch a court battle. That flaw was so important and so glaring that it overshadowed much of what was good about Bill C-14. Colleagues who have grown tired of hearing me warn about charter challenges and infringed rights will be pleased to hear little of that from me today, because that fatal flaw has been erased from the bill that is now before the House.

The bill as amended now combines a clear and faithful implementation of the Supreme Court ruling with a system of stringent medical safeguards to individually screen every request for assistance in dying. Those safeguards are based on the evidence received by the all-party committee. They reflect the best practices of other jurisdictions as well as made-in-Canada provisions, which members of all parties have helped shape over the course of this debate.

Without the amendment that came to us from the other place, as Peter Hogg has testified, the bill would not be consistent with the decision in Carter. That was his clear testimony. It also would remove a victory that would be taken from those individuals in Canada who could not comply with the very narrow, and frankly inexplicable restriction, of reasonably foreseeable death. Those individuals have that right as of today until Bill C-14 is enacted. Those rights will be taken away should the motion by the government be passed.

However, I am happy to say that the bill before us today, which contains the language of the Supreme Court decision, would of course be compliant with that decision and with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As Professor Hogg has said in the clearest possible terms, if it is not fixed as per the amendment that comes to us today, it will be struck down in the Supreme Court of Canada.

When I speak of Mr. Hogg and I hear the government saying we have different experts in different places, I suppose it is important to remind the House of the accomplishments of that individual. His decisions and his book have been cited over 200 times in the Supreme Court of Canada. By my reckoning, it has been cited 1,627 times in the courts of Canada. To suggest that this professor is just another person with an opinion is really quite disturbing, because the

government itself, the Department of Justice, has retained that individual on countless occasions.

•(1135)

For him to say, as he did in the other place, that the bill, without the amendment before us today that would fix the problem, is somehow unconstitutional, that it is just another expert, that lawyers differ, economists differ, whatever, is simply misleading.

Canada's leading constitutional scholar has said in the clearest possible terms that without the amendment that happily is now in the bill before us for debate, it has to be fixed. I termed that testimony a game-changer, because I wondered how on earth a government that has retained this gentleman dozens of times could now turn around and say, as the minister did this morning in her speech, that constitutional scholars just differ and that is how it works.

Happily we have in front of us a bill as amended in the other place that we can support, and that is the good news for Canadians. Some amendments come before us to deal with things like palliative care, an amendment that would require all patients considering medical assistance in dying to get a full briefing on palliative care options.

Another amendment would deal with restricting people who help a person in assisted dying, tightening the rules around what role a person who could materially benefit from the death could do.

Another amendment that comes from the other place would compel the Minister of Health to draft regulations around death certificates and provide greater clarity on what information is collected by medical practitioners.

Another amendment calls for a report to be issued to Parliament within two years on issues that have arisen from the provision of physician-assisted dying. Finally, there are some minor language amendments.

The safeguards in the bill reflect many things. They provide the high degree of care, caution, and scrutiny that is necessary to match a court ruling that was broad in its compassion for the right of suffering Canadians to choose. They reflect the confidence that Canadians have in the skill and judgment of our health care professionals, and they reflect the realities of our vast and diverse country, and the principles of equity that undergird our public health care system, of which Canadians should be so proud.

Much has been said in this chamber about the need to balance respect for the autonomy and protection for the individual. We have heard that so often. The Supreme Court of Canada was unanimous in its analysis of our charter, and it ruled definitively on the question of whose autonomy must be respected on this deeply personal matter of choice.

Government Orders

It was for us, as legislators, then to choose what combination of safeguards might be necessary to screen out from that group those who, by virtue of diminished capacity or external pressure, must be denied this option for their own safety. We consider this question carefully, knowing that excessive caution would have its costs. Excessive barriers would not protect the vulnerable. Rather, they would condemn competent, autonomous, adult Canadians to intolerable suffering by wrongly denying their right to choose.

Neither could the solution be to presumptively deny the autonomy of a whole class of persons granted their right to choose by the Supreme Court of Canada. No matter the rhetoric, to presumptively deny people's autonomy, to assess them not as unique individuals, but to dismiss them blindly as a group, to me, is as deeply patronizing and offensive as it is unnecessary.

The Supreme Court expressed faith in us as legislators that we could devise what they called "a carefully designed and monitored system of safeguards" to address the risks associated with offering the compassionate choice of medical assistance in dying. I, for one, believe the court's faith was not misplaced.

We remember what the Supreme Court of Canada said in Carter:

We have concluded that the laws prohibiting a physician's assistance in terminating life...infringe Ms. Taylor's s. 7 rights to life, liberty and security of the person that is not in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice, and that the infringement is not justified under s. 1 of the Charter. To the extent that the impugned laws deny the s. 7 rights of people like Ms. Taylor they are void by operation of s. 52 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

● (1140)

Here is what the court went on to add:

it is for Parliament and the provincial legislatures...should they so choose, by enacting legislation consistent with the constitutional parameters set out in these reasons.

There are two key points that came out of the Supreme Court's pronouncement. The first is that we did not have to do this at all. The court decision could have stood on its own, as in fact it is doing now, along with the safeguards that the provincial and territorial regulators have put in place. We did not need to do what we have done, but we did, in the words of the court, choose to do so.

The second point, though, is equally important: that we could only do so if what we enacted as legislation was "consistent with the constitutional parameters set out in [our] reasons".

Here is what Professor Hogg testified in the other place. He said, "In my opinion, [the bill] is not consistent with the constitutional parameters set out in [the Carter reasons]."

The amended bill before us would fix it and be possible for all of us to work in the spirit of collaboration, as we did so effectively in the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying and the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. We wrapped our hands around something that would make Canadians proud, wrapped our arms something that would show the compassion that the Supreme Court of Canada showed in the Carter decision, rather than dividing us on party lines or other lines.

All that the amendment the government announced today it wishes not to follow would do is to ensure that it is consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada and the charter. Much has been said

about the fact that we need not follow and put into legislation the precise words of a court judgment. Of course, that is right. The simple path was to put the actual language of the decision into the legislation because that was clear and obvious, and certainly no one could say it would be unconstitutional to do so. Rather, the government wishes to use the words "reasonably foreseeable" natural death, which people on all sides of this place have demonstrated is ludicrous language.

Dr. Douglas Grant, head of the regulatory body for all medical regulatory authorities across the country, has pointed out that the language is vague and unworkable from a medical point of view. The government proposed to take the words of the Supreme Court of Canada, though it did not need to, but at least no one can say they are bad, and substitute words that are incomprehensible to the people, physicians and health care providers, who are being required to implement them.

I cannot understand that. I particularly cannot understand it when to do so would be to take away the rights of Canadians that were hard fought for and won in the Supreme Court of Canada. Why? What do I tell those people who call me and say they have to decide whether to take their own life now, because after this bill comes into force that may not be an option available to them? They won that right in the Supreme Court of Canada. In no way do they feel they are near end of life. They may have 30 more years of excruciating pain and suffering, and how dare we say that they do not have that autonomy as a Canadian individual? However, now the government purports to take away that right.

Please understand that as of June 6, the Supreme Court decision stands alone, carefully governed by rules that apply to health care practitioners from coast to coast to coast. It is not the wild west, as colleagues have already pointed out. We have rules in place that are being enacted and carefully followed. If this motion passes, the moment the current government takes away those rights by saying that people have to have a reasonably foreseeable natural death, they will lose that right.

How can the Liberals possibly argue that this somehow would not deprive Canadians of rights that they won in the court? These are real people. This is real suffering. The government says no, that it has this delicate balance right, and it calls it a public policy choice. Some Canadians think that the government goes too far and some Canadians say it does not go far enough, so it will come right down the middle. That frame is wrong. We are here because we chose to implement a unanimous Supreme Court of Canada decision.

● (1145)

We are not here to say we will pick and choose what we like about this issue.

Government Orders

Can we add additional safeguards? Absolutely, and I am proud of what we did. Can we deal with palliative care? Yes. Can we deal with conscience rights? Of course, and we did, and I am proud of what we achieved.

The elephant in the room is that an entire class of successful litigants have had those rights deprived in this place.

The good news is that we can fix that. We have a path to do that, which comes from the other place. It is language we tried to get through the House before. I do not care where it comes from. I am on the side of suffering Canadians who want the rights that they had before.

It is worth reminding ourselves of a very simple fact. We are not called upon to legalize medical assistance in dying. That was already done by the Supreme Court of Canada and is now the law of the land. Instead, we were invited, if the government chose to do so, to offer the broader framework necessary to give clarity and comfort to all Canadians.

I believe that balance has been achieved in the bill that we have before us, as amended. The words of the Supreme Court are there to speak to whose autonomy must be respected, and the work of all parliamentarians is reflected in the system of safeguards before us. The onus must now be on the government to explain why it proposes to cut the words of the Supreme Court judgment out of the bill we have received from the other chamber.

I know that many of us share a common belief that no one can ever make this difficult choice of medical assistance in dying for another. But by rejecting the ruling of the Supreme Court and removing its words from the bill, that is exactly what the government suggests that we do. I cannot accept that, and on a free vote, it is up to all members to decide whether they can accept that.

I would ask all members in this place to consider the alternative; that is, to accept that what we now have is a balanced bill that bears the marks of the Supreme Court, of Parliament, and of thousands of Canadians who participated in consultations and town halls along the way.

I feel we have in our hands, now, what the special all-party committee set out, in January, to produce; that is, a bill that respects the Supreme Court ruling, respects the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and respects the priority of Canadians.

We do not need to reopen the debate and cut out the words of the Supreme Court. We do not need to reject the charter fix, which was proposed in this chamber, adopted by the other chamber, and confirmed as constitutional by a most respected scholar on the charter.

I move:

That the motion be amended by:

- a) Deleting the paragraph commencing with the words “respectfully disagrees with amendments 2b, 2c(ii) and 2c(iii)”; and
- b) Replacing the words “agrees with amendments numbered 1, 2d, 2e, 4 and 5” with “agrees with amendments 1, 2b, 2c(ii), 2c(iii), 2d, 2e, 4 and 5”;

• (1150)

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I

thank my colleague for his passionate intervention. His participation at every stage of this debate has indeed been thoughtful. Although we do not always agree, there is no denying the comprehensive and heartfelt nature in which he addresses the debate.

I want to ask the member a question about the speech that was put forward by the Minister of Justice.

The Minister of Justice indicated that when we take out the words “reasonably foreseeable” and leave the bare words of the Carter decision, we are left in a situation, and we draw this experience from the most permissive regimes in the world, where it is possible that a soldier with PTSD, a sexual assault victim, or a young person with a spinal cord injury, under those permissive regimes and without the reasonable foreseeability language, will be able to avail themselves of medical assistance in dying.

The member talked about us bringing forward something that would make Canadians proud. Therefore, my question for him is whether he agrees with what the Minister of Justice has said, that we owe a responsibility to those individuals in the legislation that they be protected under Canadian federal law. My question is whether he agrees that this is a responsibility that we hold, and whether we will be maintaining that responsibility by defeating the motion before Parliament.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I will start by thanking the parliamentary secretary for the nice things he said and to say right back to him that it has been a pleasure to work with him on this difficult issue. I know that all members of the House know how sensitive and difficult this topic is for all of us. I just want to acknowledge the very respectful way in which he has conducted himself throughout this process.

I do accept that responsibility to be mindful of the sexual assault victims, PTSD victims, and the like. I would say, however, that I agree with the Supreme Court that we can do that. It heard the evidence and came up with the test that is before us in the Carter case, which would be in the legislation should we insert that language in it. The safeguards, such as a reflection period, which is in the bill, would address the issue in part.

However, I have to remind the hon. member that we have as well the very intricate safeguards that each of the provincial regulatory authorities have suggested need to be in place. We cannot look at this bird with just one wing. I would agree with Dr. Douglas Grant that the reasonably foreseeable language is “too vague to be understood or applied by the medical provision”.

• (1155)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his speech. He knows that we have some substantial disagreements about this issue, but it is interesting to find myself agreeing at least with the parts of his speech where he talks about how “reasonably foreseeable” is ridiculously ambiguous. I know that he wants a more open regime and I want it to be clarified in perhaps a more restrictive direction, but for us to have a phrase in the legislation that is largely meaningless, and to act as if that is a safeguard, is clearly a problem.

Government Orders

I would ask the member what he thinks about the Manitoba structure in place, where government lawyers would review every case. There is no requirement of judicial review, but there is a process by which a competent legal authority, not just medical authority, is involved in looking at every case.

That seems to me to be a good model. It is one that has been put in place in Manitoba. Is that something the member would see as an improvement to the legislation?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the contribution the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has made throughout this process in both committees.

The idea that the Manitoba regulators have of interposing a prior judicial restraint, if you will, or the process that the member described, could constitute an effective barrier to access. Canadians accept that their doctors look after them in life, and I believe, with the safeguards that are in place to deal with conflict of interest, a reflection period, and the like, we can trust the same physicians to look after us in death.

I worry about barriers that would impose, particularly in non-urban areas, the notion of finding a lawyer and the like. In Nunavut or northern Manitoba for that matter, it is somewhat troubling. Therefore, I think that would be an effective barrier. I do not think it is required.

I think we have it right in Bill C-14. I just wish the test of eligibility would embrace all Canadians and allow those who won the victory in Carter to not have to march back to the Supreme Court in a few months to be told that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by expressing my admiration and respect for the commitment and sense of responsibility that my colleague from Victoria has demonstrated in this complex and sensitive issue. I have benefited from his expertise in constitutional law on a number of occasions.

This week, as a way of justifying the provision on reasonably foreseeable death, the Minister of Health said that it is not just Canadians' rights that are at stake here. She said that we must also consider the challenge for doctors to carry out the requests for medical assistance in dying.

Like me, my colleague heard representatives from the medical profession when they appeared before the special joint committee or the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Naturally they said that their profession has changed dramatically since February 6, 2015. How are they dealing with these new requests?

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, let me say at the outset what an absolute pleasure it has been to get to know and to work with my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. She has been an extraordinarily effective member of those committees.

The question involved reasonably foreseeable and the effect on doctors of that test, as well as on patients. Should we be concerned about the doctors and health care practitioners who will be called upon to implement this bill?

It troubles me greatly when I hear the head of the regulatory body for all doctors say that this is unworkable. For the life of me, I cannot understand how the government can bull ahead and no doubt get this bill passed in the face of that opposition. We have a top constitutional lawyer saying that it is not consistent. We have the head of the regulatory body for all doctors saying that they do not know what it means. Now we have before us the chance to fix it by accepting the amendment before us. I urge the House to do so.

● (1200)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Victoria for his passionate speech and his incredibly dedicated work on this file. It has been an honour to work with him.

I want to say that the Canadian Medical Association differs with what he just said. There have been many doctors' associations testifying before our committee that disagree.

However, I have a different question with respect to the waiting period. The member mentioned, and I appreciate, that in the other place they removed reasonable foreseeability. Then we run into this debate about people who have a traumatic injury, become a paraplegic, and suddenly have an emotional change that they cannot adjust to. Does the member believe that the safeguards in the bill, which we have applied to people near the end of life, really would not be changed and be different had we intended to deal with people who have suffered recent paraplegic injuries?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Mount Royal for his superb leadership as chair of the justice committee, which I have the honour to work with him on.

I understand that the Canadian Medical Association agrees with the bill. I have heard from so many doctors in my office who call constantly saying that they do not understand it. Frankly, the CMA is a trade organization for doctors. It is not the regulatory body that has to decide what to do when doctors run afoul of the professional standards being implemented in each of the territories.

I think that the constitutional constraints on us, under a criminal law power, to do some of the things that provinces can more properly do will address some of the very concerns that the member raises, such as whether we have an adequate reflection period, and the like. I am proud to see that, although these rules are not unanimous from coast to coast to coast, they are fairly consistent. I think taken with Bill C-14, they will provide the kinds of safeguards that Canadians expect.

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to say before I begin that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Montcalm.

I am pleased to be here today to continue our important discussion on Bill C-14 concerning medical assistance in dying.

[*Translation*]

We have seen the serious thought and deliberation that hon. senators have put into this bill over the past few weeks. It is now up to us to carefully examine the amendments that the Senate has presented.

Government Orders

[English]

Medical assistance in dying is only available in a very small number of jurisdictions around the world and it is brand new to Canada. What we are talking about with this bill is a fundamental change to social policy in this country. We are pursuing transformative change at the same time as we are facing incredible time pressure to put federal legislation in place. It is, therefore, critically important that we move forward with great care.

There are a number of paths that we could choose to follow with respect to medical assistance in dying in this country. I believe that the choice we have made with Bill C-14 represents the approach that is most appropriate and responsible for Canada, and here is why. It strikes a careful balance between respecting the autonomy of patients seeking assistance in dying and protecting vulnerable people. It would protect the conscience rights of providers and support those who choose to participate. It would put measures in place to study the legislation over time as we understand and gather further data to deal with the issues.

I would first like to bring to the attention of hon. members the ways in which the bill respects the autonomy of patients. Under this legislation, eligible patients approaching the end of their lives would be able to choose a peaceful medically assisted death. This represents a significant shift in the way we approach suffering at the end of life in this country. It provides patients with greater autonomy over their decisions.

[Translation]

The bill also improves access for patients. By allowing nurse practitioners to administer medical assistance in dying, the bill recognizes Canada's unique geographic and demographic realities. Nurse practitioners often work alone to provide vital health care services in underserved regions.

• (1205)

[English]

In addition to supporting access and autonomy, Bill C-14 also takes care to protect patients who may be vulnerable. When changing social policy, we must proceed with great caution if there is a chance that those who are most vulnerable among us may be negatively affected. Without appropriate safeguards, the availability of medical assistance in dying could pose threats to marginalized people and those who may lack access to adequate familial, social, or economic supports. This bill would establish robust safeguards and procedures to protect vulnerable persons from being encouraged or coerced into seeking medical assistance in dying.

It is important to recognize that there has been significant support in this piece of legislation from the health care sector, including the Canadian Association for Community Living, which includes 40 individual advocates and 50 organizations. It includes various medical associations, both provincially and federally, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Association of Advanced Practice Nurses, the Canadian Pharmacists Association, the Canadian Psychiatric Association, the Canadian Association of Social Workers, and many more.

This legislation also complies with the vulnerable persons standard, which I believe sends a strong message to all Canadians about our support for those among us who need most protection.

[Translation]

The bill recognizes that medical professionals have the right to follow their conscience and choose whether or not they want to participate in medical assistance in dying. For those who do choose to participate, the bill ensures that the doctors and nurse practitioners who administer this assistance will not be prosecuted. It also exonerates those who may assist, such as pharmacists and authorized nurses.

[English]

Finally, it outlines criteria to help support providers in assessing patients. It is important to keep in mind that health care providers are required to assess the condition of their patients on a regular, if not daily, basis. Assessing the level and type of suffering is already part of medical practice and it is very common in all end-of-life care. It is, for example, a crucial element in determining the best approaches to alleviate suffering in palliative care.

Our eligibility criteria and safeguards offer providers direction and flexibility within their field of expertise and scope of practice to make an assessment about the condition and circumstances of a patient seeking medical assistance in dying on a case by case basis.

Given the complexity and often personal nature of this issue, there is significant debate in terms of the correct approach from many different perspectives. What we have with Bill C-14 is an approach that would put a cautious assisted-dying framework in place while leaving the door open to adjust as we better understand more challenging issues. In the legislation, there is a commitment to independent studies on challenging issues that need to be investigated further before determining what policy considerations the government should make.

One thing is certain, these are issues that present real risks to people in vulnerable circumstances and highlight the complicated nature of balancing autonomy against the protection of vulnerable patients. There is also, of course, a mandatory parliamentary review of this legislation after five years.

I would be remiss if I did not reaffirm here today the importance of improving access to high quality palliative care for all Canadians. Our government has committed to investing in this area. I continue to work with provinces and territories to help support access to all options for care at the end of life.

The motion today has given thoughtful consideration to the work of the upper chamber. I thoroughly appreciated the opportunity to take questions for a two-hour period at the committee of the whole, in addition to the time that I appeared before the committee's pre-study.

Government Orders

There are two amendments made by the upper chamber where we respectfully disagree. As captured in the motion today, we as a government reviewed and sought a path forward that encompasses the Senate's amendments where possible, resulting in our agreement with the five remaining amendments. There is alternative text proposed to reflect the upper chamber's desire to recognize the vital importance of palliative care options for patients. As I have said repeatedly, this is a positive outcome if the result of this legislation allows tangible improvement to access palliative care in Canada.

We also have a responsibility to provide language in the legislation that health care professionals can understand in order to provide access to assisted dying. As is stated in the proposed message to the Senate, removing the criterion of the reasonable foreseeability of natural death would undermine the objectives of Bill C-14 to recognize the significant and continuing public health issue of suicide, to guard against death being seen as a solution to all forms of suffering, and to counter negative perceptions about the quality of life of persons who are elderly, ill, or disabled. Bill C-14 strikes the right balance for Canadians between protection of vulnerable individuals and choice for those whose medical circumstances cause enduring and intolerable suffering.

In conclusion, I would like to underline to my fellow parliamentarians that the approach set out in Bill C-14 is the result of tremendous thought and deliberation over the course of many months. There have been extensive consultations over this past year on the issue of medical assistance in dying with Canadians, stakeholders, and relevant experts. The findings have been reviewed carefully to inform the legislation.

I hope both the House and the Senate are able to support the motion. I would like to thank, from the bottom of my heart, all the parliamentarians from both the upper and the lower chamber who have professionally and thoroughly debated this issue. It is a transformative social policy that governments debate once in a generation, and this piece of legislation is one of those remarkable debates. Make no mistake, this will be a dramatic change for Canada.

In the Carter decision, the Supreme Court acknowledged that it was up to Parliament to craft an appropriate regime. I believe we arrived at the best approach for our country.

• (1210)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister mentioned fundamental change and transformative change. Certainly, I think we agree that it is. Where we disagree is on whether it is a positive or a negative transformative change.

She referenced, different times, vulnerable persons in her comments. I just want to remind Canadians that in the preamble of the bill it clearly is looking at the possibility of extending physician-assisted suicide to those where mental illness is the sole underlying medical condition. I do not know if there is anyone more vulnerable. Another group of vulnerable people are those who might be coerced by relatives who may be beneficiaries. I cannot understand why the Liberal government would reject this amendment that was passed in the Senate.

Finally, she assures me that no doctor would be coerced into participating in physician-assisted suicide. Could she assure me that

no medical doctor or health care institution would be forced to either participate or refer for physician-assisted suicide?

Hon. Jane Philpott: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the time that he has committed to being here to debate this important matter.

I share his concerns over the protection of people who are facing mental illness. This is one of the fundamental reasons why we hope that he and his colleagues will support the motion that we have put forward in the House today. We are concerned with the Senate's recommendation for the removal of the clause that recommends that this be considered only in the face of natural death being reasonably foreseeable because of the fact that people with mental illness, among others, would not be adequately protected.

The member also talked about other safeguards that were suggested by the Senate. This piece of legislation was drafted in totality. The safeguards that are in place to recognize that no one would be coerced need to be seen in totality so that one piece or clause in particular does not adequately put those safeguards in place. My colleagues and I who have worked on this—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the member but I need to allow time for other questions. Maybe the minister could finish her thoughts on the next question.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have over the last few weeks heard reports from many experts that Kay Carter, whose case before the Supreme Court of Canada brought this important issue to us, would not be eligible for physician-assisted dying under Bill C-14 as it now stands.

I would like the minister to comment on that. Does she disagree with that position? Does it not reflect on the confusion that the bill as it has been crafted has caused in the debate?

Hon. Jane Philpott: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question gives me an opportunity to reiterate again, as my colleague the Minister of Justice and I have said on numerous occasions, that we are absolutely clear on the fact that the two cases that were reviewed in the matter of Carter v. Canada are cases of people who would absolutely have been eligible under the legislation that is before the House today.

If the Carter decision is read carefully one will understand that it was clearly speaking to people who were facing end-of-life decisions. We are fundamentally affirming today that the people in question in that case would have met the criteria of Bill C-14 for medical assistance in dying.

• (1215)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is more open-ended. The minister is attempting to bring forward good, solid legislation that reinforces the fact that it will stand the test of time. It sets up a wonderful framework and enables us to deal with an important issue that Canadians want us to deal with.

Government Orders

I wonder if the minister could give us some concluding remarks.

Hon. Jane Philpott: Madam Speaker, this legislation would change the social fabric of this country. We need to think about how this legislation would affect the lives of individual Canadians as they face the end of their life. We are pleased to put forth a piece of legislation that we believe is the right approach for Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the Minister of Health for sharing her time with me. This clearly demonstrates that she believes in fair play and democracy, since she knows that I am opposed to the motion and the bill.

That being said, I am wondering how I will say everything I have to say in 10 minutes.

I will begin with the heart of the issue. The premise of the fundamental debate relates to our understanding of the principle of self-determination. Here are the main questions that the Department of Justice and the two ministers should have asked themselves. Why and on what grounds would we take away people's right to self-determination throughout their lives? When, even in urgent medical situations, no medical intervention can happen without a patient's free and informed consent, why and on what grounds would we take away people's right to self-determination at a time when they are enduring intolerable suffering, when they are about to die, when they are their most vulnerable?

The government says that it is in order to strike a balance, but that has never been proven, and the Supreme Court thought it was futile. Had it been referred to the Supreme Court, the bill would have been amended and considered unconstitutional. I imagine that is why the bill was never referred to the Supreme Court. It said that three rights had been violated by the total prohibition.

If we carefully study the Morgentaler ruling, we see that the court agreed to strike down the law that allowed abortions under certain conditions on the basis of just one right: the pregnant woman's right to security of the person. How can anyone seriously believe that the security of the person who is enduring intolerable suffering from a grievous and irremediable illness, disease, or disability would be protected by section 1 of the charter, which states that any limits must be reasonable in a free and democratic society?

It is quite unreasonable for a person who is among the most vulnerable in our society, the one who is suffering, to have to bear the burden of proving to the courts that he or she meets this criterion of reasonably foreseeable natural death or, as we saw recently, to have to go on a hunger strike in an attempt to meet the criterion.

I remind members that this criterion discriminates on the basis of age. The motion states "...to guard against death being seen as a solution to all forms of suffering, and to counter negative perceptions about the quality of life of persons who are elderly, ill or disabled...". Whose negative perceptions? Where are these negative perceptions coming from, exactly? As far as I know, when someone has a degenerative disease, and this will come as no surprise to the Minister of Health, medical practitioners follow their patients' cases.

Is she assuming that medical practitioners, doctors, nurses, and health care professionals have a bias against their patients because of

their age or social condition? Is she assuming that health care professionals have bad intentions?

• (1220)

If they have bad intentions, we should get rid of them. This rationale shows a bias against health care workers. Is she saying that seniors need to be protected from the people who care for them? This bill is a bad cut-and-paste version of the Quebec law.

We were able to move somewhat quickly here because Quebec has already gone through this, and its focus was the area of palliative care. Quebec achieved an amazing feat by not pitting euthanasia against palliative care and by ensuring that patients have access to a wide range of palliative care options.

Why would the bill limit itself to this one aspect or even to a degenerative disease like ALS? The idea is that death is reasonably foreseeable in this case, and this is where there is discrimination among degenerative diseases.

Who are we to pass judgment on someone's quality of life? It is not up to the doctor to pass judgment on a patient's quality of life or compare one life to another. These are basic principles of ethics.

We trust the health care workers who provide care, and obviously, they will see their patient's quality of life change over the course of a year. If the patient says he cannot take it anymore, the request can be made.

Quebec's law is not a response to the Supreme Court's directive. Why? Because the Carter decision came afterward. Quebec's lawmakers sought to comply with the Criminal Code and respect each authority's prerogative in its own jurisdiction.

Now we have the Carter decision and this bad bill. Quebec's minister of health and social services was right when he told his doctors that this approach is unworkable and asked them to be prudent because this government lacked the courage to respond when the Supreme Court ordered us to create a framework for assisted suicide.

I read the motion and asked the minister a question today. The government is rejecting Senator Joyal's amendments, which are also those of the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party, and the NDP, who are calling for the elimination of this utterly vague criterion and a return to the terms in Carter, to what really matters for people who have a grievous and irremediable health condition that causes them persistent and intolerable suffering.

The motion says we struck the right balance and want to reject these amendments "to recognize the significant and continuing public health issue of suicide". What is that all about? No one working in suicide intervention would ever confuse the two states.

As far as I know, a suicidal state is reversible. It is not irremediable, but indeed remediable. There are treatments for suicide. However, something like Alzheimer's is irremediable, as far as I know. Such is the confusion that was created here this morning, and the argument that was made.

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That is the only argument that the Department of Justice is going to make at the Supreme Court and patients will have the burden of going to court in order to have access to medical assistance in dying. I will weigh my words carefully and say that I find that to be indecent.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for weighing in on this issue and for his involvement in the discussion.

The Quebec legislation has, effectively, a terminal requirement. This federal legislation intervenes in an area that at least the Quebec government has called Quebec jurisdiction by changing the criteria.

I wonder if the member would agree with me that it would be more respectful to that particular sense of Quebec jurisdiction to include a clearer terminal requirement in the federal legislation?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, a consensus has emerged in Quebec that does not involve changing the federal legislation or the Criminal Code.

Clearly, any legislation that allows a range of end-of-life care and choices regarding end-of-life services and care must eventually be brought in line with the Carter decision, since there may be no legal vacuum.

However, I found it a little strange that my colleague said that there is no legal vacuum and we do not need to reach a decision on this today, when the guidelines provided for these situations are based on the Carter decision, which he opposes.

At this time, if Quebec wants to legislate on assisted suicide, if nothing happens here and all we have are the guidelines based on the Carter decision, Quebec would have to rely on those guidelines and what has been done.

It is not a question of imposing the Quebec law and trying to say that it solves all the problems. That is definitely not the intention.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during this whole debate around assisted dying, there has been a great deal of emphasis, justifiably so, put on the issue of palliative care. This is something that the national government, through the budget and a commitment toward a new health care accord, is trying to focus more attention on, that we do need to spend more energy and more resources on trying to develop a national palliative care system, in fact.

I realize it is a bit off topic as opposed to the specific bill, but it is something that has been debated quite extensively, and I am very much interested in the Bloc's thoughts on a health care accord and the importance of that and coming up with a national palliative care program.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, any health care accord that respects Quebec's prerogatives would be most welcome. Since the devil is always in the details, we would have to see what it says.

Getting back to the debate, I would say that palliative care does not address all the problems associated with the end of life. That is why, in some circumstances, people who are dying ask for an assisted death because there is no way to relieve their pain. Certain illnesses and certain cancers are impervious to pain medication.

In that regard, we wish that the Liberal Party would have had the courage to bring forward legislation that properly addressed that whole issue, in the same way that Quebec has a well-defined framework for end-of-life care and assisted suicide, while not confusing that with a suicidal state.

• (1230)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

I have had the privilege of following, from a distance, the proceedings in the Senate over these last days. I am disappointed that a number of the options that were given to the Senate were not adopted.

Senator Plett's amendment to make it a criminal offence for anyone to compel an individual, organization, or medical practitioner to provide medical assistance in dying or to refer was rejected by the Senate.

I wish I could share the optimism of our Minister of Health when she assured me a few minutes ago that no one would be compelled to participate in this. I do not share that optimism. I am hopeful I am wrong on that. I am hopeful there will never be a case where a medical professional, a health care worker, a health care institution will be obligated to participate or to refer for this practice when they find it morally objectionable.

The other amendment Senator Plett put forward was adopted by the Senate, however, rejected by the government today in its response. That is the amendment relating to not allowing a beneficiary of a person who is seeking medical assistance in dying from assisting that person.

It seems quite clear to me that if we are to protect vulnerable people, this was one of the key points that needed to be adopted. By rejecting this amendment that was passed by Senate, we are actually increasing vulnerability. That is a sad result of rejecting this amendment.

It goes without saying that this is a very sad day, a disappointing day for me. This is a day when choices will be made that will affect generations to come, and it is without question the most important choice that I and most of my colleagues will make in our parliamentary careers.

Government Orders

It is disappointing on two points. First, it is disappointing to see the activism of the Supreme Court. I mentioned earlier in my comments on this topic that it was unfortunate the Supreme Court of Canada had taken it upon itself to force legislation to be written which would overturn hundreds of centuries of our understanding of the intrinsic value and dignity of every human life. The Supreme Court has done this, completely rejecting the fact that as elected members of the House, we have rejected initiatives to legalize physician-assisted suicide on at least 15 occasions since 1991, the most recent one in 2010 by a vote of 59 to 226.

The other reason this action is disappointing for me is because of the many years I have worked on the issue of suicide prevention. I have worked with people who have been left to suffer the aftermath of suicide, parents who have lost children, children who have lost parents, and more. To know there are groups across Canada today that are working very hard to prevent suicide, to save lives, and to see we are now, in a way, normalizing suicidal behaviour is disappointing.

Bill C-300 was an initiative that the House passed almost unanimously, calling on the federal government to initiate a federal framework for suicide prevention. Just a few weeks ago, the Minister of Health indicated that the bill was almost ready to be fully implemented by the Public Health of Canada.

On one hand, we are working as hard as we can to prevent suicide, which I applaud and will continue to give my efforts to. On the other hand, it appears that we have given up and we are allowing those who are losing hope to actually access assisted suicide.

Ten Canadians each day lose their life to suicide. In Canada, groups are working hard on the ground to prevent suicide. Mental health care workers, experts, are providing safeTALK training so front-line workers, such as teachers and our volunteers in our minor sports programs, can observe these first signs of suicidal ideation, and intervene with the intent of restoring hope to that person who has lost hope and is now in despair. Their motivation has always been to save lives.

Now, to turn 180 degrees and begin the path towards normalization of suicide, is a tragic course, a tragic course of action for all of Canada.

•(1235)

Again, I want to quote from an expert in this field. Aaron Kheriaty, an associate professor of psychiatry and director of the medical ethics program at the University of California, Irvine school of medicine, states:

The debate over doctor-assisted suicide is often framed as an issue of personal autonomy and privacy. Proponents argue that assisted suicide should be legalized because it affects only those individuals who — assuming they are of sound mind — are making a rational and deliberate choice to end their lives. But presenting the issue in this way ignores the wider social consequences.

What if it turns out that the individuals who make this choice in fact are influencing the actions of those who follow?

Professor Kheriaty goes on to report that in states where physician-assisted suicide has been legalized, there has been an increase in suicides of 16.3% overall, but among those over 65 an increase of 14.5%. He further states:

[These] results should not [be surprising to] anyone familiar with the literature on the social contagion effects of suicidal behavior. You don't discourage suicide by assisting suicide....

...Aside from publicized cases, there is evidence that suicidal behavior tends to spread person to person through social networks, up to three "degrees of separation" away. So my decision to take my own life would affect not just my friends' risk of doing the same, but even my friends' friends' friends. No person is an island.

Finally, it is widely acknowledged that the law is a teacher: Laws shape the ethos of a culture by affecting cultural attitudes toward certain behaviors and influencing moral norms. Laws permitting physician-assisted suicide send a message that, under especially difficult circumstances, some lives are not worth living — and that suicide is a reasonable or appropriate way out. This is a message that will be heard not just by those with a terminal illness but also by anyone tempted to think he or she cannot go on any longer.

Debates [around] physician-assisted suicide raise broad questions about our societal attitudes toward suicide. Recent research findings on suicide rates press the question: What sort of society do we want to become? Suicide is already a public health crisis. Do we want to legalize a practice that will worsen this crisis?

I believe life is to be chosen over what some would call "death with dignity". There is nothing dignified about deciding someone's life is not worth living. If a patient has a need, let us address it. Our goal should be to eliminate the problem, not the patient.

It is my firm belief that the House and the current government should be invoking the notwithstanding clause in order to protect Canadians. For thousands of years, all caring societies have agreed that it is not okay to kill another human being. We can try to soften that language. We can call it physician-assisted death. We can call it medical assistance in dying. We can use any euphemism we want, but the reality does not change.

Today, we are intentionally throwing away the wisdom of our faith foundations and the wisdom of centuries of civilization. My fear is that in a few short years, we, our children, and our grandchildren will live to see the folly of allowing physician-assisted suicide.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I indicated to the member earlier that he was fairly persistent in dealing with this issue over time. I respect his comments although I do not necessarily agree with them.

At the conclusion of the member's remarks, he made reference to using the notwithstanding clause. We need to recognize that we did get a Supreme Court of Canada decision in which all nine Superior Court judges recognized we needed to bring in legislation. That should also be factored into this. I know there have been petitions, even a petition in my own area, regarding the notwithstanding clause. The minister did a fantastic job in explaining why we needed the legislation and how it would establish the legal framework. I believe it will stand a charter test.

My question for the member is with respect to how the notwithstanding clause could be used. In this situation, I do not necessarily believe it is warranted.

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•(1240)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, I hope my colleague heard my opening remarks when I referred to the unfortunate activism of the Supreme Court of Canada. We have seen it on this issue. We saw it just a few days ago in relation to some sexual behaviour with animals. All of these things are not the job of the Supreme Court. This House is elected to represent the Canadian population. It is up to us to decide societal norms. It is not up to the Supreme Court to make that decision.

However, as it relates to this specific situation, many times in the House we have referred to the fact that we are under a time crunch. Invoking the notwithstanding clause would simply have given Parliament up to five years. It did not need to take that long if it did not want to, but Parliament would not have been rushed into making a decision in three months, a decision that takes much longer.

In the end, we are going to be sorry for the decisions we are making. In spite of the attempts to get this as good as we can, it is still a bad law.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I had the privilege of sitting with him on the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying. This committee's meetings were marked by respect and a willingness to listen, and I was able to better understand my colleague's reasoning with respect to his conscience.

However, for me, medical assistance in dying is a choice. I believe that if someone is not comfortable with it, they simply do not have to ask for it.

My colleague finished his speech by talking about the wisdom of centuries of civilization. I have been dealing with this issue since January, and my fellow Canadians have been telling me that civilization is at the point that individuals can make decisions about their own lives.

Does my colleague not believe that we must let Canadians make decisions about their own lives?

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, I remember serving on the committee together. I agree we had very respectful although diametrically opposite points of view, but there was a large degree of respect.

As it relates to choice, it comes back again to the fact that no man is an island. When I have the right to ask for someone to help me to assisted death, it automatically implies someone else has been asked to participate in that. It is not a matter of just individual choice. That is why I have been relentlessly calling for better protections for health care workers and health care professionals who have been professionally trained and have no interest.

I have a letter from a palliative care physician, who indicates, "In addition, all palliative care providers are dually trained. We have clearly told the Canadian Medical Association and others that we will quit palliative care and do other jobs if we are forced to participate". That is why I have been relentless on this. We cannot

simply say this is a choice of mind. It is a choice that will impact another person who will be implicated in either actually carrying out the physician-assisted suicide, or referring to someone who will.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the NDP amendment, as well as to the underlying issues raised by Bill C-14, and to address some outstanding issues.

The first thing I want to do is pick up on a question that my colleague from the NDP just asked with respect to choice. Many of the arguments in favour of this legislation have been framed around this idea of choice. However, at the same time we have to acknowledge that this bill is designed to impose significant limitations on choice as well. It does not legalize suicide in every case. I think it clearly suggests that there still ought to be limits on choice. That is a good thing. However, those limitations do not at all protect the vulnerable. They do not go nearly far enough. We would understand the limits of choice in that choice is shaped by values and social norms, and my colleague touched on this as well. The stigma and social acceptability around something shapes the kinds of choices that are made.

In light of the Supreme Court decision and the fact that we have to respond to it, I am very concerned, and I think many of my colleagues at least on this side of the House but perhaps in other corners of the House are concerned that suicide remain a socially unacceptable choice, and that maybe it should be allowed in certain narrow circumstances as required, but that we do not allow ourselves to shift in a direction where we remove the fundamental stigma around taking human life, and that we maintain a fundamental respect for the intrinsic value and dignity of all human life. It is my belief that going down that road only a little bit is very difficult and perhaps even impossible. In the debate around this issue, we have already seen that, as soon as the can of worms is opened a little bit, there is a major push for expansion to all kinds of other different situations.

The language used, and the language that some members and the NDP amendment want to limit this to, is "grievous and irremediable". It seems to me that people who take their life do so because they consider themselves to be facing grievous and irremediable suffering. Clearly, there is no one who takes his or her life who does not think that. Therefore, it is not at all a simple matter, as some members have suggested, to clearly demarcate suicide; and then, on the other hand, what is covered by this issue? Choice always has limits. It must have limits, especially when choices may impact the broader social architecture of choice under which other people operate. I think that is an important point that is underlined here, that we need to try, as much as possible, to preserve that underlying concept of the value of human life. I do not think that Bill C-14 has nearly the safeguards to do that. What we could have had, and what we should have at the very least, is some kind of clear legal criteria.

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It has been interesting in the discussion today that we have the minister really highlighting the importance of the “reasonably foreseeable” criterion. I do not support the NDP amendment. All things being equal, I would still like “reasonably foreseeable” to remain in the bill, although I agree with the NDP that it is not at all clear what that means. Then the minister talks about the importance of this criterion and how the entire bill, the system of safeguards, was developed with that criterion in mind. She said that, clearly, if we did not have that aspect in the criteria, we would need additional safeguards. Therefore, she is putting a very large amount of weight on those two undefined words. She said that the Liberals would not want “reasonably foreseeable” to apply to a young person who had some kind of an accident and became permanently disabled. They would not want “reasonably foreseeable” to apply to somebody with just a mental health challenge. However, without meaning to those words, without some kind of clarity, it is not at all clear that those cases that the minister has identified are even excluded by this legislation. Therefore, in a sense, she defeats her own argument by saying that this legislation has limited safeguards because of the narrowing of the criteria, such as only a 10-day waiting period, but given that there was no meaningful, well-defined, narrowing of the criteria, then she acknowledges effectively that the safeguards in this bill are inadequate.

● (1245)

If this legislation were written with a tighter narrowing of criteria in mind, then perhaps we should have actually had some definition of what constituted the new criteria. We should have had some kind of definition of what this means. Of course, Conservatives proposed an amendment to add the word “imminent”. We can say that death is reasonably foreseeable for all of us, but death is not imminent for all of us. That would have at least provided some metric for establishing a distinction between some cases and other cases. The lack of criteria is a huge problem.

It is important, in recognizing the absence of clear criteria, that we again investigate putting review criteria in place. We have seen what the provinces have already done. The reason I say we are not in a legal vacuum is that there is no federal legislation but there are provincial rules in place, so we are not in a legal vacuum, as such, strictly speaking. There are policies and procedures in place at the provincial level. The provinces have introduced many very good safeguards that are not in this federal legislation, and it is important to say that those safeguards, in many cases, would not apply after the federal legislation passes.

Provincial guidelines, in most cases that I have seen, refer to the involvement of the attending physician. They do not just say any two physicians. They say there is some role for an attending physician and a consulting physician, implying that the person involved in adjudicating the case should be, in some ways, involved in the care of the patient and not be some doctor somewhere else who has agreed to sign all the forms for almost anyone. The involvement of the attending physician is important. It could have been included in the federal legislation, but if the federal legislation passes saying any two doctors, then the requirement for an attending physician being involved would no longer apply, because it would be prescribed a certain way in the Criminal Code.

I would encourage the government to take the experience and wisdom of the provinces seriously on this, recognizing that there are no effective legal criteria up front, there are only undefined legal criteria, and we should add in some of the more effective review mechanisms to ensure that, however ambiguous the criteria are, the legal criteria are being met, in fact, such as they are.

I have advocated for the Manitoba model, or some element of it, to be incorporated into the federal model, which involves government lawyers looking at each case. I asked my friend from Victoria about this, and he said that could pose an unnecessary barrier, such as if there are no lawyers available. The model that the Government of Manitoba has put in place includes government lawyers available to review each case. It is not as if one has to go out and find someone, and it is not a process of needing to make an application to the court, although there are, frankly, plenty of cases in the world where someone might need to make an urgent application to a court and there are provisions to allow that to happen.

Therefore, it is not at all true that this is sort of an impossibly onerous barrier, but the Government of Manitoba has done something much less than requiring judicial review. It has simply put in place a system where there is advance legal review by government lawyers. Recognizing the value of that model, that review process, the government should think about incorporating that into federal legislation or, at the very least, ensure it is not proceeding in a way that interferes with or overturns that provincial set-up.

In conclusion, I want to speak briefly to the issue of protecting the vulnerable. There has been some discussion here about what constitutes vulnerability and who is vulnerable. We can understand “vulnerable” as referring to people who probably, in ideal circumstances, would not choose death, but are in some way in not ideal circumstances, which limits them and propels them toward a choice they would not otherwise make. This can happen often, whether it is a person who does not have perspective because of his or her situation, or whether someone is sort of the victim of suicide contagion and is responding to other things and situations happening in his or her life. It could be someone who is influenced more by social than physical circumstances. We need to be attentive to these things, and that speaks to the importance of robust safeguards.

I hope we can, as a House, still at this last stage, try to bring in some meaningful definitions and safeguards that would protect the vulnerable and protect Canadian society.

● (1250)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his third intervention today on this issue. I appreciate his passion and commitment to the cause he is trying to defend.

The member brought a number of amendments to committee, I think probably in the dozens. Many of them were not even supported by members of his own party at committee, but they were all fairly debated and fairly defeated.

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I want to get back to the premise at this point of needing a law in place. I disagree with the hon. member that the provincial regulatory bodies are sufficient. I think we need national standards in place.

Does the hon. member not agree that, if it is the will of the vast majority of this House to get a law in place, we should do our best and utmost to get a law in place today?

• (1255)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his good work as chair. He might remember that I proposed a mere one dozen amendments, or thereabouts, and I actually got three amendments passed. They were not substantive enough to address the major problems that remain in the bill, but I figure that is not a bad record for a member of the opposition in a majority Parliament.

With respect to the issue of national standards, I would be happy to see national standards that would provide meaningful safeguards. My concern with the legislation is that we have some of this ambiguity, the lack of safeguards, which I have discussed in my small number of interventions on this subject.

Also, the effect of the federal legislation would be that it undermines the existing safeguards that are at the provincial level. It would have the effect of changing the way that those operate. Therefore, the requirement that an attending physician be involved under provincial criteria would be negatively affected by the federal criteria, and that is pretty clear in the guidelines that have been put forward. They are put forward as interim guidelines, because the provinces do not want to be in the situation of legislative conflict.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his third speech today. I had the opportunity to listen to him at the special joint committee, which helped me better understand his position.

I think that no human being makes light of asking for medical assistance in dying. It is impossible to take this issue lightly.

Organizations representing the disabled appeared before the committee and told us about the importance of respecting the rights of the disabled because the Supreme Court talked precisely about rights and about recognizing them as persons.

I am concerned when I hear my colleague say that we must not give people too many choices. Even a vulnerable person, a person who is suffering, can make a decision.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I certainly would not have it suggested that I accuse anyone of taking this issue lightly, either people in this place or the people who are involved in health care. However, I think it is pretty clear that different interpretations of these criteria will exist.

I have raised a concern about doctor shopping, that people could go from physician to physician under the framework established by this law to find someone with a more liberal interpretation of the criteria. In effect, we would end up with a race to the bottom, with people getting adjudication by doctors with the most liberal criteria. That is not to suggest that they do not take it seriously but that, if the

criteria are to be meaningful, then there has to be some consistency in the adjudication.

I am sure the member would agree that in certain cases, in certain situations, there have to be limits on choice. We might disagree on exactly where those limits are, but I think all members of the House agree that there are certain cases where suicide should not be allowed and that we should not let just anyone and everyone who wishes to take their life do so. We have to then come up with a metric for adjudicating that on the basis of perhaps vulnerability or perhaps how they are affected by other social factors that make that choice a meaningful expression of their autonomy or not.

These are the things that I think we have to take into consideration regardless of our broader perspective.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise again in the House to speak about the sensitive and complex issue of medical assistance in dying.

This morning, I had the honour of seconding the motion of my colleague, the member for Victoria. I would like to reiterate how much I admire and respect the commitment and sense of responsibility he has shown throughout the process that has brought us here today.

I have had the opportunity to learn from his great expertise in constitutional law on many different occasions. I am a new member who was elected on October 19, 2015. The Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying was the very first parliamentary committee that I have ever been a member of. It was a great privilege for me because all the members of the House of Commons and the senators who worked on that committee did so in a spirit of co-operation in order to achieve the best possible outcome. We did not always agree, but we had a lot of respect for one another and we listened to what everyone had to say. We wanted to ensure that we made the best possible decisions and recommendations for the benefit of all Canadians, while respecting their rights. The 21 recommendations that we did make reflect that desire. One of our main goals throughout our discussions was to ensure that no one was discriminated against.

Naturally, Bill C-14 could not include all 21 recommendations. As I said after our report was released, I think it will continue to be useful for years to come.

My colleague from Victoria and I felt it was important to augment the committee's work with a supplementary opinion. The one thing all of the witnesses agreed on is that medical assistance in dying is linked to palliative care.

We also felt it was important to write a supplementary opinion to connect this issue to all other social determinants. It is important to say that we all have equal rights. However, because of certain social constraints, we must ensure that social determinants are taken into account in implementing medical assistance in dying.

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As a member of the committee, I was astounded at the level of expertise we have in Canada on this issue. We heard from more than 60 witnesses, and we read thousands of pages before drafting our report and recommendations. I have a great deal of admiration for many of the witnesses who appeared before us because they put a lot of careful thought into this sensitive issue.

Our thinking on medical assistance in dying has changed in this country. The Supreme Court's Carter decision is proof of that. The witnesses talked to us about the change that has taken place in society. Looking back at the Rodriguez ruling from 20 years ago, it is clear that our society's thinking on end of life has changed.

I believe that our report and recommendations attest to that, and that is why it is so important to me that the bill we pass in the House reflect our constituents' thoughts on this matter. The witnesses, particularly groups representing people with disabilities, put a lot of careful thought into this matter and came to share their ideas with us.

●(1300)

I found it particularly hard when some of these groups told us that a few of their members had had friends or loved ones commit suicide prematurely. We currently have no measures to give these people hope that they will be able to freely choose at which point they will make a request for medical assistance in dying. That concern stuck with me.

I was also struck by the testimony from doctors who came to tell us that the Carter decision, which was handed down on February 6, 2015, changed their profession drastically. These doctors, like the ones I met in my riding, told us that throughout their training and their careers, they have been taught to heal and, failing that, to extend life. Now, they are being told that, according to what the public wants, what the law allows, and what their rights allow, patients in our country will be able to submit a request for medical assistance in dying.

I have listened carefully to a number of speeches since we started having this discussion. During my many meetings in my riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, I pointed out that it is not up to us, in the House, to decide whether medical assistance in dying should be available or not. The Supreme Court has already ruled on that issue. It is up to us to amend the Criminal Code.

I am from Quebec. The people of Quebec have had the Act respecting end-of-life care since December 2015. As many people have said in the House, that act was the result of six years of work to reach a broad consensus. Of course, in order to reach that broad consensus in Quebec, the legislation still had to comply with the federal Criminal Code. The province could only go so far within its areas of jurisdiction. Now we can pass legislation that allows us to go even further.

The consensus that emerged in Quebec and that was confirmed in my discussions with my constituents is that we now recognize that we have reached a time in our civilization when, as citizens, we want to be able to choose. What the Supreme Court told us is that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms gives us the freedom to request medical assistance in dying.

In order to deepen my reflections throughout our deliberations in the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying, I felt

duty-bound to seek out people and groups in my riding, Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who are dealing with this situation every day and meet with people who are sick or dying. This includes stakeholders and volunteers with a community organization called Les Amis du crépuscule, which provides assistance to people receiving palliative care and later to their grieving families. There are user committees for health care institutions, as well as the Hôtel-Dieu-de-Saint-Hyacinthe hospital foundation. That institution is one of the largest long-term care facilities in Quebec. Hundreds of people spend their last days on earth at the Hôtel-Dieu-de-Saint-Hyacinthe. I think it is around 500 people. That hospital has hundreds of beds, but only 12 palliative care beds.

●(1305)

That is why it has been important from the start of this debate on medical assistance in dying to talk about developing and implementing a real national palliative care strategy. For medical assistance in dying to be a real choice, palliative care also has to be offered as a choice. Unfortunately, many people have limited access to palliative care.

In Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, people have access to Maison Victor-Gadbois, a home for end-of-life care for those with cancer. This home receives 800 applications a year, but can house only 200 people.

Doctors have told us that we have developed a health care system based on hospitals and healing. When I met with Monsignor Lapierre, bishop of the Saint-Hyacinthe diocese, to talk about this issue, he made a comment that was full of wisdom. He told me that we should be just as concerned about aggressive treatment as we are about medical assistance in dying. He is sometimes called to the bedside of people who tell him they have had enough.

We must vote on this issue of medical assistance in dying here in the House with a sense of the responsibility we have to represent our constituents who are living with a serious and irremediable illness and intolerable pain.

Every time I rise in the House to speak to this issue, and during each meeting of the joint committee and the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, which studied this bill, I think about the people who are suffering. They are the ones who are at the heart of our discussion on Bill C-14. There are people who are suffering now, and they have high expectations for the bill we are going to pass. When the Supreme Court rendered its decision in Carter, people who were suffering had hope that their right to request medical assistance in dying would be respected.

The amendments in the motion by my colleague from Victoria say that we must not disappoint these people who are suffering and awaiting our decision. They hope that we will allow them to make this request for medical assistance in dying soon and that their rights will be respected.

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These people who are suffering need not go to court. I was touched by the testimony given by members of the Carter family, who spent many years before the courts with their mother. When Bill C-14 was introduced, they came to tell us that the bill would not even give their mother the right to request medical assistance in dying. I cannot rise in the House and vote in favour of this bill, knowing that I am leaving people who are suffering to their own devices because they are not in the right class to be eligible for medical assistance in dying.

This week, the Minister of Health told us that we need to think not only about the rights of Canadians, but also about the work of doctors. Since I began thinking about this issue, I have realized how much respect I have for all health care professionals. I also have a lot of faith in their judgment.

The doctors who testified in committee said that, while requests for medical assistance in dying are a new part of their reality, they have been dealing with difficult requests from patients that require them to use their judgment every day since they became doctors.

• (1310)

The difference since the Supreme Court ruling in Carter is that now they must deal with requests for medical assistance in dying. These decisions will be difficult for some. Fortunately, the bill gives them the right to conscientiously object and tell the patient that they are not comfortable complying with their request. We think it is important for the health care system to ensure that patients will not have to find a new doctor in the Yellow Pages. They must have support in order to exercise their right to ask for medical assistance in dying.

We also believe that sufficient safeguards have been put in place. I was really moved by the representatives of organizations for the disabled who asked us not to be paternalistic or treat the disabled like children. The fact that they have an incurable disease or are living with a degenerative disease or suffering a great deal is no reason to treat them like children. They are autonomous and can provide informed consent.

The Supreme Court talked about suffering that an individual deems intolerable. Nobody can judge another person's suffering. We all react differently to illness. That respect for individuality must permeate the medical assistance in dying law we implement. We must ensure that each individual, each citizen of this country, has the freedom to make that choice if the situation arises.

Nobody in this country wants to be in the position of having to make this request. Nobody wants to face the choice of whether to request medical assistance in dying. Nobody wants to support a loved one in making a choice about requesting medical assistance in dying. Nevertheless, we all hope that, when that day comes, every person will have all the resources they need to give free, informed consent. We hope that every person will feel their rights are being respected and will not be told that, unfortunately, they belong to a small class of people who are not eligible because it is felt that their death is not reasonably foreseeable.

Many, including the Barreau du Québec, the Collège des médecins du Québec, and Quebec's health minister, came and told us that "reasonably foreseeable natural death" does not mean anything and

is impractical. In my opinion, we are putting doctors in a position where they cannot reasonably use the flexibility we are trying to give them in a fair and equitable manner because this criterion has no clear meaning for a doctor.

We must ensure that the legislation we pass is consistent with the Supreme Court's decision in Carter and with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We must ensure that once this legislation is enacted people who are suffering will not be required to ask a lawyer to go before the courts to uphold their right to seek medical assistance in dying. At the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying, we heard that the provinces are ready to continue their work to enact provincial legislation. Quebec's health minister said that he was pleasantly surprised at the work of his colleagues from the other provinces.

Today we must pass legislation that is consistent with the Supreme Court's decision in Carter, that is consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and that allows every Canadian to request medical assistance in dying.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard, not only during this particular debate, whether it is at second or third reading stage, a great of expression with respect to the reasonably foreseeable issue in the definition.

I am wondering if the member would acknowledge that if we were to check with the legal community and the medical profession that there are differing opinions on this issue.

I really and truly believe that this legal framework we are establishing will in fact be constitutional, and because we have one or two opinions to the contrary does not necessarily mean that it is not. I wonder if she could pick up on the point that there will always be differing opinions.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, I understand that when the Canadian Medical Association does a poll, doctors might say that they need to work through a process before they are fully prepared. Palliative care doctors even told us that there is not enough training in palliative care. Few physicians are trained to support people at the end of life. Clearly, physicians have some challenges ahead of them. The various professional associations from different provinces, for they are the ones directly involved, not the Canadian Medical Association, told us that they have given their members very clear directives and that they are there and ready to support their members to ensure they can get prepared and are able to meet their patients' requests for medical assistance in dying.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we hear a lot from the NDP about the importance of palliative care, so I want to ask her a question about how palliative care fits into this.

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I moved an amendment, supported by our caucus, to require that patients receive information about palliative care options. That would be one of those fairly minimal safeguards that I think could have improved the bill. However, she and her caucus voted against the amendment that would have simply said that people need to receive information about palliative care options before receiving euthanasia or assisted suicide.

I want to ask why she voted against that amendment, and why New Democrats would not support these simple safeguards that do not create a real burden but simply ensure that patients have access to information about other options.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, I disagree on the point that it does not add anything to the burden. Every time we add excessive safeguards and put anything else between a request from a patient and a response to that request, we impede the process unnecessarily.

We need to bear in mind that we are talking about people who are experiencing suffering that they deem intolerable, day after day after day, every minute of their lives. We must not add any obstacles. We must not say that the patient should have access to this or the patient should be able to get more information. No, the process needs to be simple and clear to anyone who is suffering.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her informative speech. I always like listening to what she has to say.

She mentioned that the medical profession, by definition, has had to change because it is paternalistic. Progress has been made in the practice of medicine by various disciplines, such as bioethics, which has been working to counter paternalism by placing more emphasis on the patient's right to self-determination.

Right now, many doctors are having a hard time understanding that the practice of medicine will have to continue to progress and change. Medicine is not just about curing diseases; it also about caring for people. End-of-life care falls under provincial jurisdiction.

Does the member agree with me that doctors will have to be trained so that they are properly prepared not only to cure diseases, since some diseases cannot be cured, but also to care for patients, including those who are at the end of their lives or who have—

• (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. I appreciated his expertise in bioethics when we were working on this issue.

Doctors' associations testified in committee that most of their members were prepared to adapt to changes in our health care system. However, it is clear that the government needs to give the provinces the funding necessary to make these changes in our society.

In the past, the federal government provided up to 50% of funding for provincial health care. However, in recent years, it has been providing only 17% or 19%. It needs to contribute a minimum of

25%. The decision that we are going to make on medical assistance in dying must go hand in hand with assistance and funding for the provinces so that doctors are properly trained to respond to these requests.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her excellent speech and her contribution to this debate. Together with my colleague from Victoria, she has worked very hard on the issue of medical assistance in dying. I tip my hat to them because it is not an easy subject.

My sister works at Hôtel-Dieu-de-Saint-Hyacinthe and so I am somewhat familiar with this subject. She tells me about all kinds of things that happen there. It is not always easy. It takes a lot of energy. At present, there is a shortage of resources for and a lack of commitment to palliative care. In my riding, people are working very hard on the issue.

Can my colleague explain why the government's recent budget did not include the money needed to invest in palliative care?

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, that was the big disappointment with the budget. Since tabling its budget, the government has repeatedly promised to invest \$3 billion in palliative home care, and people believe that it is in the budget.

In my riding, people told me that the government had finally kept its promise, which is not the case because it is not in the budget. The government continues to make that promise, but we do not know when it will materialize.

My colleague spoke about the Hôtel-Dieu. I met a nurse who has worked in palliative care for 20 years. She said that some doctors do not have any palliative care training, and in order to alleviate patients' suffering they would prescribe two aspirins or something like that. She knew from experience that that was not enough to relieve the pain.

Therefore, we need a framework and support to provide appropriate palliative care across the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, perhaps the member could provide further comment on how important it is that the different stakeholders, in particular the federal government, work with the different provincial governments and indigenous people to ensure we have the type of palliative care that Canadians want. I would like to provide her with the opportunity to comment on the issue of collaboration with the provinces.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, I was a municipal councillor for several years and I worked as a public servant for the Government of Quebec, so I have a huge amount of respect for the jurisdictions of all levels of government.

Palliative care does indeed fall under provincial jurisdiction. Quebec worked very hard on this when it passed a law on end-of-life care. At the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying, we considered this issue and heard from a panel of provincial and territorial experts who had studied it.

I think that the provinces are ready and that the territories and indigenous communities are on board.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will share my time with my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North.

I rise today in the House to speak to Bill C-14, for the last time, I hope.

Although it was sometimes quite heated, I think that the debate on Bill C-14 brought out the best in us as parliamentarians. All parliamentarians showed a great deal of respect, even though we all have different perspectives on a very sensitive and emotional topic.

Today, I will talk about the amendments that were proposed by the other chamber. I support the motion by the Minister of Justice to accept some amendments and reject others.

• (1330)

[English]

The palliative care amendment that was brought in by the Senate is a good amendment. We had a lot of discussion at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and here in the House on the balance between access to medically assisted dying and the importance of ensuring quality palliative care. The fact that the Senate has once again reinforced the importance of ensuring that information be provided on palliative care before someone has access to medical assistance in dying is something that we should accept. I am pleased that we are going to accept that as amended by the Minister of Justice.

I am also pleased that the Minister of Health will be required to set out guidelines for death certificates within one year. We made amendments at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to require the Minister of Health to work with her provincial and territorial counterparts to set standards to include coroners. This amendment falls well in line with what the House has already accepted.

It is entirely legitimate for the Senate to ask for a deadline with respect to the studies that will be done on advance directives, mature minors, and psychological illnesses, and to require them to be delivered back to Parliament within two years from the time the studies begin. We in committee amended this to say “must commence within six months”, which is also a reasonable requirement.

What is also eminently reasonable and strongly follows the will of the House of Commons is the minister rejecting the amendment to remove the criteria of death being “reasonably foreseeable”. Removing that requirement entirely changes the bill from applying to someone who is near the end of his or her natural life to encompassing people who may have 30 or 40 years left to live. It may encompass people who have purely psychological illnesses, which was not the intention of the bill, because we have specifically

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stated that we are doing a study about people who have psychological illnesses.

However, if we look at the definition of “grievous and irremediable” and take out subsection (d) on reasonable foreseeability, then we fall into a situation where someone who has a psychological illness may meet the criteria of subsections (a), (b) and (c), thus completely changing the position of the bill on whether people with purely psychological illnesses can have access to medically assisted dying.

I want to emphasize from a public policy perspective that this legislation took a prudent approach. We can argue back and forth about what medical doctors and lawyers and law professors have said. I sat in committee and listened to well over 40 witnesses. I also had the pleasure of periodically glimpsing in on the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs and listening to its witnesses.

Doctors, lawyers, professors, distinguished people came down on all sides of this issue. There are those who say that the bill is not Carter-compliant or charter-compliant and there are just as many, if not more, who say that the law is Carter-compliant and charter-compliant. In my view, it is the role of Parliament to determine what we believe to be charter-compliant. It is the role of Parliament to determine the best public policy within a charter-compliant law.

Medically assisted dying to me is meant to help people who are suffering intolerably but have an illness that will extinguish their life at some future date.

The court, in Carter, talked about Gloria Taylor and people like Gloria Taylor. Gloria Taylor had ALS. Gloria Taylor was undisputedly going to die from the illness she had.

I believe that ensuring that death is reasonably foreseeable falls entirely in line with public policy guidelines that we expect. Doctors and nurses, many of them, came before us and said that they did not go to school for many years to end people's lives. They went to school to try to help people who were suffering, to try to prolong life as long as possible within the framework that we currently have in the profession. They did not go there to be told that someone who comes to them and who may have many years left to live, and who has an illness that we may find a cure for in four or five years, should have their life extinguished.

As such, I do believe the minister is making the right decision to reject that Senate amendment. I also believe the government carefully researched what was being done in other jurisdictions. There are only nine jurisdictions in the entire world that have legally regulated medical assistance in dying. In all but three of them, there is a requirement that the person's life be near its end.

Whether it is Colombia, or the four United States' states that have these rules, or whether it is Quebec, which adopted its own end-of-life framework, which I understand is different and was pre-Carter, all of them require that a patient be dying, at the very longest, within the next six months, under reasonable medical certainty.

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Only in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg do we allow people to have their lives taken by medically assisted dying if their natural life is not close to an end. What kinds of situations have we seen in those jurisdictions? We have seen people who I believe many of us in this House would believe should not have access to medically assisted dying being given medically assisted dying.

We saw twins in their 40s, who were blind and starting to go deaf, for example, but had no other conditions that would end their life. Those people needed help, real help, psychological help, help to live their lives, not being told, yes, they should go die together now. People who were purely psychologically ill, who could not get over traumas related to sexual assault. These may be incredibly traumatic psychologically, but there are ways of helping those people that do not involve medically assisted dying.

I do not think Canadians, when we are talking about all the opinion polls that are being cited, where there is support of over 70% for medically assisted death, are contemplating those situations. They are contemplating situations where someone is nearing the end of their natural life and is in intolerable pain.

For me, if we removed reasonable foreseeability, we would be asking the medical profession in Canada, the nursing profession in Canada, other medical practitioners in Canada to be participating in medically assisted death beyond where they decided to do, and even more importantly, we would be doing so without the safeguards that would have been put in the bill had we intended that that class of people be covered. There is no way that a 10-day waiting period suffices when somebody could have 40 years left to live.

In conclusion, I want to say that I support the motion from the Minister of Justice, and I will be voting in favour today.

• (1335)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for his speech and for the work he did as chair of the justice committee. Of course we do not always agree, but I thought he was a very fair-minded and very effective chair of that committee. I want to commend him for the work he did.

Now, listening to his speech, it sounded as if he was motivating the idea of a terminal requirement within the legislation, or a requirement for imminent natural death, and yet the provisions that the government is defending, the language “reasonably foreseeable” is not at all clearly pointing us to terminal or to some kind of imminent situation.

I proposed an amendment at report stage, as he knows, that inserted the word “imminent”, and I believe he and all of his colleagues on that side of that House voted against adding that kind of clarity to the bill.

It seems to me that there is a bit of a disconnect between some of the very real issues and concerns he raises with there not being an imminent requirement, and yet the government's opposition to in any way clarifying that imminence is what reasonably foreseeable means. Without that clarification, that is not what it means.

• (1340)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, for

the very strong contributions he made, both in the debate in the House and at committee. I also appreciate working with him.

With respect to those comments, I think that what I am saying is that “reasonably foreseeable” means, as the minister has stated, that someone is on the path toward their natural death.

What we heard at committee was if we used the word “imminent”, it means the death is going to happen within the next month, and I do not believe that it would be the best public policy approach to take such a restricted term, nor would it necessarily be charter-compliant, in my view.

I believe that while I personally would have been comfortable having a longer time frame, such as a year, in the bill, I also understand the reasons there is not that time frame. I am comfortable with the concept of “reasonably” in assisted death knowing that means that, based on someone's overall medical condition they are on that—

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

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to thank the member. I know he has been working hard, along with my colleagues, on the bill for quite some time. We would all like to have some legal clarity for Canadians.

What troubles me and troubles both of my colleagues is the result of the bill tabled by his party in now rejecting the very amendment from the other place. The exact effect will be to exclude this option to the very people who have now been allowed that option by the Supreme Court of Canada because it is their charter right. The result of the bill will be that the very people who happen to be 45 years old and are suffering from this grievous and irremediable disease will not get this assistance but somebody perhaps who is 99 will.

I fail to understand, and the member can explain to me, why they would exclude my constituents who have had to go to court for exactly those kinds of situations and would now be prohibited from getting that medical assistance.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, in my view, the Supreme Court spoke to Gloria Taylor and people in the same class as Gloria Taylor. I do not believe the Supreme Court was speaking to someone whose death was not naturally foreseeable. We disagree as to what the terms of the Carter decision are. We actually completely disagree.

As I mentioned in my speech, I do not believe that the Carter decision requires us to encompass the class of people of which the hon. member is speaking. We have defined “grievous and irremediable” as being someone whose death is naturally reasonably foreseeable within the context of their overall condition, and I believe that will be both Carter-compliant and charter-compliant.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Mount Royal, who is always such a gentleman. How could he be otherwise, with a name like that?

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Nevertheless, I do believe he is exaggerating somewhat. He talked about Ms. Taylor, but he said very little about Kay Carter. According to the reasonably foreseeable death criterion, Kay Carter would not have had the right to medical assistance in dying unless she argued on the basis of age discrimination.

Is that what we want? Do we want a law that condones discrimination on the grounds of age or illness? Ms. Taylor had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. It is as though this bill were designed—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If the member wants an answer, he has to give his colleague time to answer. The answer must be very brief because time for questions has run out.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague's question. He has made a tremendous contribution to this debate.

Yes, I believe that Kay Carter would have qualified based on the criteria in the bill, as our Minister of Health said.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what a debate this has been. Bill C-14 has been at times a very emotional discussion, both inside the House and outside the House, whether it has been at committee or other places. I have learned a great deal from it. I really appreciated the many members on all sides of the House, no matter what their position has been on Bill C-14, who have been able to articulate and share quite candidly some real-life stories, whether it was during second reading, at third reading, or at the committee stage. A number of members of Parliament were engaged in this debate and I would like to acknowledge their contributions.

It has been an interesting process from its beginning. We can talk about the Supreme Court decision and then fast-forward it to December, when there were heavy discussions on how we could come up with a report. We had a joint committee of the House and the Senate where we saw members of both places coming together to work and get a better sense of recommendations, ideas, and thoughts through consultation to make sure we could advance to where we are today. We saw ministers of the crown, two in particular, those for Justice and Health, pull it all together into something that sets a good, solid, legal framework, but will stand up to a charter challenge. I truly believe that to be the case.

From the ministers, to the individuals who sat on the committee, to the individuals who have spoken on this at different levels of readings, to those individuals outside of the House, people throughout our great country have been involved and engaged as much as one can expect on a piece of legislation that is so very important to each and every one of us. I have on numerous occasions stood with petitions dealing with this issue. I know other members have done likewise. I know that all members of the House have had consultations with their constituents, have received correspondence, and had telephone discussions.

I was able to cite a very personal experience with my father and what had taken place at the time of his passing. I was only one of many who was able to share stories. I thought I would provide a

highlight in terms of why we are here. As members will know, it was a unanimous decision. All nine Supreme Court judges made the decision that we had to bring in a new law. That is really what Bill C-14 deals with, a new law regarding medical assistance in dying.

The Supreme Court of Canada made that decision and they put in a time frame. We have passed the deadline, but not by too much. It would have been nice to have achieved that deadline, but that is where we are today. If I could make reference to what this is, it is that access to medical assistance in dying would only be available to those who meet certain conditions: mentally competent adults who are in an advanced state of irreversible decline and capability; have a serious and incurable illness, disease, or disability and are experiencing enduring and intolerable suffering caused by their medical condition; and whose death has become reasonably foreseeable, taking into account all of their medical circumstances.

Something that is not highlighted very often is the fact that after four years this whole process will be under review, which is really important to emphasize.

Earlier today at the beginning of the debate, there was a comment that captured the essence of the bill and hopefully will put to rest many minds in regard to the issue that we have been debating. This is a quote from the Minister of Justice this morning. She said, "The bill achieves the most appropriate balance between individuals' autonomy in deciding how their death will occur and protection of vulnerable individuals, as well as broader societal interests."

● (1345)

That is something the minister said earlier today, and that I concur with 100%.

I will now go to what the Prime Minister has said, and this is a great way to conclude my remarks. He recognized that Bill C-14 does not end the national discussion that needs to take place

We have seen a budget that has brought forward an incentive to ensure we build on a health care accord. This is something we believe is important to all Canadians, because Canadians from coast to coast to coast have told us that. We will continue to build and look toward palliative care as a part of that ongoing discussion.

It is such a privilege to be able to stand up and share a few thoughts and words before the bill ultimately passes.

● (1350)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the government's alleged commitment to palliative care. Of course, we saw nothing in the budget. It seems to be a bit of an afterthought.

The expert panel was very clear in its report that if someone does not have access to palliative care, a decision for physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia cannot be seen as truly voluntary. If they have no other option, it cannot be seen as truly voluntary. I wonder if the member acknowledges that.

Also, the government talks about money for palliative care and home care. I would like to know what part of that is specifically for palliative care, when the Liberals finally get around to honouring this promise.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, with the shortness of time, I can assure the member that we have had responses by both ministers with respect to the question of the technicality within the legislation.

In terms of the issue with respect to palliative care, if he looks at the budget, he will in fact see that there is a commitment to achieving a health care accord. The only way in which we can deliver the type of palliative care that Canadians not only want but deserve is to work in collaboration with our provinces and indigenous people in order to make that happen. The way in which we can do that is, in part, to recognize the importance of achieving a new health care accord, which would in fact deliver on palliative care.

This government has made a very solid commitment, which enters into the hundreds of millions of dollars, to be there for the future of palliative care. I think that Canadians as a whole understand and appreciate that. We will continue to move forward together on that issue.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, very soon we are going to be called upon, both here and in the other place, to vote on this piece of legislation. There are people who will undoubtedly feel compelled to vote against it, albeit for different reasons.

I invite the hon. member to speak to the ramifications of there being no federal law. For those who are considering voting against the legislation for one reason or another, what will be the consequences if that turns out to be the majority view, either here or there?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the first thought that comes to mind is that the most vulnerable in our society will be the ones who will have the least amount of protection.

As parliamentarians, I would suggest that we have more than a moral obligation to understand and appreciate what the Supreme Court of Canada is asking, not only of the House of Commons but also of the Senate of Canada. Hopefully we will see the legislation achieve final approval sometime within the next few days.

Having said that, I acknowledge the fine work that the Senate has done. It has brought forward some amendments. Ultimately, we were able to accept a number of them that, from our perspective, keeps intact the general legal framework, which is so critically important in terms of protecting our communities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, the House must consider the people who are suffering now. Our responsibility is to ensure that they have the right to request medical assistance in dying.

My colleague talked about the most vulnerable. Is he thinking on their behalf? Can he judge whether their suffering is tolerable or not?

The law must enable each individual to make their own choice, to make that request.

Some of the things he is saying give me the impression that we are here to think on behalf of our constituents. We are here to represent

them and to ensure that their rights are respected. We must not talk about vulnerable people in terms of what we think is best for them.

● (1355)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we are here to respond to what the Supreme Court of Canada has done in this situation, and what we have done is that we have established a legal framework with this legislation.

With respect to the other issue, let us not underestimate just how important the different stakeholders are, such as our health care professionals, who understand the importance of palliative care. We only need to go to a patient inside a hospital or go into a personal care home facility, or other institutions, private facilities, homes, and so forth, and what we will find is that there is an immense amount of dedication to assisting people in dying in the best way they can.

What the legislation would ultimately do is establish a very basic framework that would assist people in doing something that I believe is really important. I speak of that not only from my personal experience, with respect to the passings of my father and grandmother when I was at their bedsides, but also from the consultations that I have had over the last number of months and I would even suggest years, going well back into the 1990s, if we factor in the importance of palliative care. At one point I used to be the health care critic for the Province of Manitoba, and I can say that Canadians are genuinely concerned and want to see further collaboration from the different levels of government to ensure that we have the best palliative care.

As the Prime Minister has said, the great discussion on this issue has not ended today. Rather, it will be ongoing as we all try to do the very best in dealing with this very important issue to all of us.

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

As there are no further speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

● (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

Statements by Members

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay. [English]

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Madam Speaker, I would ask that the vote be deferred until later today at the end of the time provided for oral questions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly the recorded division on the amendment stands deferred.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

ENERGY EAST PROJECT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador has come out formally against the energy east project. This new voice, which represents 43 indigenous communities, really tips the scales. It adds to the chorus of voices in Quebec that oppose the project, including 300 cities and towns, Montreal and the surrounding area, environmentalists, the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec, representatives of civil society, and people all across Quebec.

In short, it would be faster to name those who support the project than those who oppose it.

The Quebec nation and indigenous nations are speaking with one voice. Serge Simon, grand chief of Kanesatake, sums it up nicely: “No to energy east, period.”

The federal government needs to pull its head out of the oil sands and come to its senses once and for all.

* * *

ESCUMINAC, NEW BRUNSWICK

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend marks a sombre anniversary for the people and families of the villages of Escuminac and Baie Sainte-Anne in my riding.

On June 19, 1959, the worst maritime disaster in New Brunswick's history struck the region, killing 35 local fishers, men and boys as young as 13 who died in a violent coastal storm. None of the boats were equipped with radio, and the storm came up without warning for these fishers, who faced winds of 120 kilometres an hour and 15-metre seas. Twenty-two boats were reduced to shreds and this small community was left with 24 widows and 83 orphans, many of whom are still alive today.

A monument called *The Fishermen* was erected near the Escuminac wharf, as a lasting reminder of this great tragedy that swept through this small coastal village in my riding.

WILLIAMS LAKE STAMPEDE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to speak about a significant event happening in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George.

Every year, during the Canada Day July 1 long weekend, my hometown of Williams Lake rolls out the welcome mat, with visitors flocking from far and wide to enjoy several days of the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association action at the world-famous Williams Lake Stampede. It just so happens that this year is the 90th anniversary.

Top rodeo stars from across North America will compete in premier rodeo events such as bull riding, saddle bronc, steer wrestling, team roping, tie-down roping, barrel racing, and of course the exciting mountain race. However, most important, it is an opportunity for visitors from all over the world to witness the can do, never accept no, pioneering spirit of the Cariboo.

I am so proud to call the riding of Cariboo—Prince George home. I look forward to taking part in this year's 90th anniversary festivities at the world-famous Williams Lake Stampede. Yee-haw.

* * *

NEW DENMARK

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a country that boasts Danish Canadian communities from coast to coast to coast. As the member of Parliament for Tobique—Mactaquac, I am proud that the oldest Danish community in Canada is in my riding in New Denmark, New Brunswick.

On June 19, known as Founders Day, New Denmark will be celebrating its 144th year as a Canadian community, a rural community of rolling hills and potato fields that line the St. John River Valley.

I am pleased to be invited as a guest at the celebration, not just to take in the traditional live Danish music, folk dancing, and ice cream but because I will have the opportunity to delve into the rich history of this charming village and recognize the community on behalf of the Government of Canada.

I congratulate the community of New Denmark.

* * *

SAFE AND REGULATED SPORTS BETTING ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, later today my Bill C-221 will be debated in the House of Commons for the second time before going to a vote. I would like to thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his support for this bill.

Statements by Members

This bill would allow single-event sports betting, which is critical for the Canadian economy. Most important, it would take away \$14 billion of money to organized crime and unregulated offshore betting taking place right now in a market that induces our youth. The money it supplies to organized crime can be rerouted to public infrastructure, health care, education, gaming addiction, and a number of different priorities that Canadians want.

Sports analysts across the world are coming to the conclusion that regulation is necessary for this activity. This bill, to be clear, would allow the provinces to do this if they so choose. It would not make them do anything. Why would Liberals be opposed to the province of Ontario? Are they listening anymore?

* * *

● (1405)

WEST ISLAND YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the West Island Youth Symphony Orchestra on its 30th anniversary. This is a proud milestone for maestro Stewart Grant, the musicians and parent volunteers who have fashioned the orchestra into the musical force it is today.

[Translation]

The orchestra is a pillar of cultural life on Montreal's West Island that gives young musicians the chance to develop their talent and residents an opportunity to attend top-notch classical music concerts.

[English]

I have personally enjoyed the orchestra's performances on many occasions. Each time I have been impressed and inspired by its passion, virtuosity and commitment to musical excellence.

In keeping with its mission of providing its young musicians with opportunities for personal and musical growth, the orchestra has many times toured both at home and abroad.

[Translation]

I call on hon. members to join me in wishing maestro Grant and the West Island Youth Symphony Orchestra much success in the future.

* * *

[English]

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATIONS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is graduation season and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the grade twelve graduates in Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek

There are 32 high schools in my riding, and I look forward to attending as many ceremonies as possible over the next few weeks.

Finishing high school is an accomplishment of which to be very proud. Graduation offers graduates the opportunity to reflect on the friendships and memories made, the personal goals achieved and successes earned. It also offers them the opportunity to envision their future and all the dreams to which they aspire.

I encourage all grads to not only dream big, but to pursue those dreams. Their future is filled with hope and promise and I am excited for the contributions they will make, not only to our province but to our great nation.

* * *

BRAMPTON

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since I was a little girl, Brampton has been my home. As I grew, so did Brampton. It is now the ninth largest city in Canada. I am honoured to be the MP for Brampton North.

However, like so many youth in Brampton, I pursued post-secondary education, first in Hamilton and then in Michigan. This is because Brampton is the only city among the top 10 cities in Canada that does not have a major university campus.

A new university campus in Brampton would deliver post-secondary education to a community that is under served, while also reducing the burden on students and creating massive economic benefits for all Bramptonians.

I will work with my fellow Brampton representatives at the municipal, provincial, and federal level to ensure that Brampton can serve its growing demand for a university.

I encourage the Ontario provincial government to release the second targeted call for proposals.

* * *

WILLIAM CARLOS TULL

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the school year comes to an end, I think it is safe to say that summer vacation is on everyone's mind. Memories of summer camp are usually filled with joyous moments spent with friends, but for citizens of my riding, this time comes with a heavy heart.

This year is the 35th anniversary of the passing of William Carlos Tull, who passed away at CFS Lac St. Denis in 1981. What should have been a fun swim for cadets on the beach turned to tragedy as Billy Tull jumped into the water and never came back up. His best friend Alex Zenetsis, who had also jumped in, rushed to his rescue, risking his own life in the process.

Billy was a proud member of the 1979 Centennial Cadet Corps in my riding, and a loving brother, son and friend who will not be forgotten.

I would like to take this moment to invite the House to join me in commemorating the life and legacy of Billy Tull, and honouring the bravery of his friend Alex Zenetsis.

* * *

● (1410)

CHILDREN ON THE HILL

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a very important group of employees on the Hill, those who work at Children on the Hill day care.

Statements by Members

They have provided care for children 18 months to five years of age since 1981. Their dedication, organization and care for all the children is extraordinary and very much appreciated.

My son Tristan has been going to the Children on the Hill since September 2013. They deserve a special thanks for taking tremendous care of the children during the horrible events that unfolded on October 22, 2014. Their courage, care and commitment to ensuring all were happy and secure at the day care will always be remembered, and we are very grateful for all their efforts.

It is with a heavy heart that my wife and I will be taking Tristan out of the day care as he heads to school.

Thanks to those who work at Children on the Hill for all they do and for making our son's first learning years unforgettable. We will miss seeing them all. What they do is the most important work out there.

* * *

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the theme of this year's World Refugee Day in Waterloo region is "Waterloo region celebrates refugees".

Indeed, Waterloo region does celebrate refugees. We have a long history of welcoming refugees, including Russian Mennonites in the 1920s, and Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s.

Over the last six months, different levels of government, settlement agencies, and other service providers in Waterloo region have come together to welcome and resettle over 1,000 Syrian refugees. The collaboration has been key to the successful resettlement of refugees in our region.

I want to thank the immigration partnership of Waterloo region, Reception House Waterloo Region, Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre, the YMCA Cambridge, and Kitchener-Waterloo immigrant services, and all those other organizations and associations that make our region an amazing place to live.

* * *

BALLET B.C.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House to brazenly boast about a dance company in my riding of Vancouver Centre.

Ballet B.C. ranks among the top three companies in North America, just ending tours in England and New York to rave reviews. Ballet B.C. is a progressive company that pushes the limits of classical ballet to new and dazzling heights. Experimental and daring, it challenges the human body to extraordinary feats of endurance and interpretation through dance.

What is remarkable about Ballet B.C. is the exclusive partnerships it has with talented Canadian choreographers across the country. I recently witnessed these partnerships in action, as Ballet B.C. performed three dynamic and progressive pieces at Ottawa's NAC during Canada Dance Fest, one with in-house choreographer Emily Molnar, and the other two with choreographers from other provincial ballets. Each piece received sustained standing ovations.

Ballet B.C. has put Canadian dance on the map, and in their tours are stellar ambassadors for Canada's creative sector.

* * *

LANGLEY ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Langley's 2016 environmental heroes were just honoured in beautiful Fort Langley. The winners were in three categories: individual, group, and youth.

An apple tree was planted in their honour in the heritage Hudson's Bay orchard. Ann Blaauw won the individual category for establishing Blaauw Eco Forest in north Langley. The family has donated millions of dollars in memory of Thomas Blaauw, with a covenant agreement with Trinity Western University to preserve the forest for education, research, and community engagement.

The winner in the group category was the Coastal Painted Turtle Project, for its efforts to return the turtle's population to sustainable levels.

Desiree Chek-Harder won the youth category. The Langley fine arts student spoke about the community garden and the importance of educating people to engage in the environment.

This is the 10th anniversary for the Langley Environmental Hero Awards. Congratulations to this year's Langley environmental heroes.

* * *

●(1415)

RUSSELL CHARLES GOODMAN

Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to the attention of the House the passing of Russell, Rusty, Charles Goodman, of Kelowna, British Columbia.

Mr. Goodman was an accomplished artist, designing and installing over 1,000 stained glass windows in private and public buildings across the country. He was also the founder of the Goodman Zissoff Glass Studio, which has created stained glass windows for the House of Commons, and most notably in the Senate foyer commemorating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Recognized widely for his work, Russell Goodman has been awarded the Order of Canada, the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts, and the Queen's Jubilee and Diamond Jubilee medals.

Our thoughts are with his wife Nancy, and sons Mark, Scott, and Christopher, who is also a stained glass artist. Russell Goodman's beautiful art will live on in many places throughout our country, including Parliament. Rest in peace, Rusty.

*Oral Questions***JO COX**

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the life of Jo Cox, a mom of two beautiful children, a friend, a dedicated labour MP, and a long advocate of human rights in Britain and around the world, who was murdered today.

Jo used her voice for those who have none. She dedicated her passion to those who needed it most, and she harnessed her limitless love, even and especially for those who allowed hate to consume them.

Her husband, Brendan said it beautifully. “She would have wanted two things above all else to happen now, one that our precious children are bathed in love and two, that we all unite to fight against the hatred that killed her.”

To Brendan and to Jo's beautiful children, we express our deepest condolences.

* * *

VETERANS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is the member of Parliament for Papineau, a riding named after Joseph Papineau, one of the most significant figures in Quebec history. Papineau's great-grandson was World War 1 hero Talbot Papineau, a PPCLI officer, Military Cross winner, and a writer called the soul of Canada. Ironically, the Prime Minister, when he was an actor, portrayed Talbot Papineau in the CBC movie *The Great War*.

In 1917, in a speech to soldiers near the front, Papineau made this pledge to Canada's injured veterans, “For those who have been disabled, who cannot carry on the good fight—it is certainly for us to see that they want for nothing.”

This statement by Papineau is yet another expression of the tremendous obligation Canada owes to its injured veterans, an obligation that this week the member of Parliament for Papineau is denying in a courtroom in Vancouver.

Talbot Papineau died a century ago at Passchendaele, but the Prime Minister has the power today to fulfill the pledge that Papineau made. I ask that the Prime Minister, the member for Papineau, once again act like Talbot Papineau and stop the court fight with our veterans.

* * *

[*Translation*]**GILLES LAMONTAGNE**

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the honourable Gilles Lamontagne passed away last Tuesday evening.

Mr. Lamontagne had a full life. He was the mayor of Quebec City from 1965 to 1977, Liberal MP from 1977 to 1984, national defence minister in the Pierre Elliott Trudeau government, lieutenant-governor of Quebec until 1990, Officer of the Order of Canada, Chevalier de l'Ordre national du Québec, and Chevalier of the French Legion of Honour.

Mr. Lamontagne was a Royal Canadian Air Force pilot in World War II. The bomber he was flying was shot down, and he was

detained as a prisoner of war in a concentration camp for almost two years. Mr. Lamontagne was a hero, a builder, a statesman, and for all of us in Quebec, he will always be “Mr. Mayor”.

I did not know Mr. Lamontagne personally because I am too young and I only entered politics very recently. However, I do know that, like everyone who believes in serving others and who is committed to the Quebec City region, the province of Quebec, and Canada, we are all his successors.

As he takes his last flight, I want to tell him, on my behalf and on behalf of all my colleagues, “Thank you, Mr. Mayor”.

* * *

● (1420)

[*English*]**JO COX**

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand that there is agreement to observe a moment of silence in honour of Ms. Jo Cox, United Kingdom member of Parliament for Batley and Spennings. I now invite the House to rise to observe a moment of silence.

[*A moment of silence observed*]**ORAL QUESTIONS**[*Translation*]**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a United Nations report includes details of the mass killings and sexual slavery of thousands of Yazidis by the so-called Islamic State. “The genocide of the Yazidis is on-going,” the report concludes.

Now that the UN has joined the European Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom in recognizing that the self-proclaimed Daesh is committing genocide, will the government finally call this campaign of extermination what it really is, genocide?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in the House, we strongly condemn the horrendous atrocities committed by the so-called Islamic State.

Today for the first time, an independent report by the UN commission has concluded that genocide was committed by the so-called Islamic State against the Yazidis in Sinjar. Given this evidence, our government believes that genocide against the Yazidis is currently ongoing.

That is why we are once again calling on the UN Security Council to take urgent action, as I did last month.

[*English*]

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that it took this stubborn minister so long to realize the facts that have been staring the world in the face.

Oral Questions

While I appreciate his reflection on today's UN report with respect to the Yazidis, his statement today is simply insufficient because this genocide affects more than the Yazidis. It affects the other indigenous minorities of Mesopotamia. It affects the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, and the Armenians.

Will the minister not join the U.S., EU, U.K., and the opposition in recognizing the broader genocide of Daesh?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, our position is exactly the same as the one of the government of Britain and the administration of the United States.

The difference, though, is that we are taking the lead in asking the Security Council to be sure that they will prosecute the perpetrators of these atrocities and investigate in order to understand very well what is happening on the ground.

In the meantime, we have tripled our effort to help fight ISIL on the ground, because we need to rescue this population. This is the priority.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it disturbing that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is so profoundly misinformed on a matter of such great moral importance.

In fact, the United States, the U.K., and EU, in their motions recognizing this genocide, apply that term to what this terrorist death cult is doing to the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the Armenians, the Christians, and to other indigenous minorities, not only the terribly benighted Yazidis.

Will the minister not again follow that international lead, follow Canada's natural moral conscience, and recognize the broader genocide happening—?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

• (1425)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is wrong. The government of Britain and the White House have the same approach as us. However, that is not the main point.

The main point is that we need to rescue these populations. It is why we have tripled our effort to train the peshmerga guards, which gives the fighters the best situation to rapidly rescue this population that is in danger. That is the priority we have, and it is why we are taking the lead.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of Foreign Affairs has declared the content of the UN report today to be valid, my question is to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

One of the recommendations of this report is to immediately accelerate the asylum applications of Yazidi victims of genocide. Will the Minister of Immigration finally accept this recommendation, which the opposition has been making for many months, including the Leader of the Opposition, and tell the House how he immediately plans to accelerate these applications?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, we deplore and condemn these atrocities.

I understand that a number of Yazidi families will be arriving in Winnipeg within a few weeks, coming in under a privately sponsored refugee program. I understand that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration only today voted unanimously to study the situation of people in terrain that is difficult to get to. Those are good steps.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number of Yazidi cases the government has processed is nine, and that is not acceptable. This report calls for the immediate acceleration of these applications. The government has not done that. With one stroke of a pen, the minister can sign an order under section 25 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, with one stroke of his pen, and bring thousands of Yazidis here to safety.

Will he commit to doing that today?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to say one can do something with one stroke of a pen is a bit far-fetched, when the individuals are in an extremely dangerous territory that it difficult to arrive at.

We take this situation very seriously. We are studying it, we are welcoming a number of Yazidis into Canada in coming weeks, and we will work very hard to do more, not just for Yazidis but for other endangered groups in difficult-to-reach territories of the world.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is now the second-largest exporter of weapons to the Middle East, behind only the United States, but when it comes to arms sales to Saudi Arabia, not only has the Minister of Foreign Affairs contradicted himself repeatedly, but Liberals also rejected a proposal from the NDP's foreign affairs critic to establish parliamentary oversight for all international arms sales.

Will Liberals drop the excuses, embrace accountability, and agree to our proposal for better parliamentary oversight of weapons sales?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it is the party of my hon. colleague that contradicted itself. In order to have the seat, it said something, and after the election it said something else.

We are very consistent. It is very clear that I have the power, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, to stop export permits if weapons are poorly used, regarding our national interests, the interests of our allies, or human rights. The Prime Minister asked me to exercise this power with a lot of rigour and a lot of transparency.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): The minister is confused, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

A secret document dated May 2011 showed that half of Afghan detainees had no connection to Taliban insurgents.

Yesterday, an open letter signed by Canadian military police asked, “How and why did this disregard for our Canadian laws and values occur?” The government needs to provide an honest and comprehensive answer to that question so that this sort of thing never happens again.

Will the Liberal government finally face up to its responsibilities and hold an independent public inquiry?

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this issue had been subject to some considerable inquiry over the last number of years. These are policies and procedures that the Canadian military takes very seriously. The previous inquiries have included the vice chief of the defence staff in 2010, an investigation by the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service in 2011, a public interest hearing by the Military Police Complaints Commission over four years in 2012, and there is a continuing investigation that commenced in 2015.

* * *

● (1430)

[Translation]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the amendments to Bill C-14 are now before the House. We have another chance to pass a bill that respects the right to medical assistance in dying.

Will this government accept our amendment to make this bill constitutional, instead of forcing Canadians who are suffering to fight for years in court?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said many times in the House that I am confident that this bill is constitutional. We have worked hard on an extremely complex issue to find the right and necessary balance between personal autonomy and protecting the vulnerable. There are multiple objectives contained within Bill C-14. It is the right approach for Canada right now, and we look forward, hopefully soon, to having our legislation in place.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Liberal government is being stubborn and intransigent, rejecting the evidence and advice of Canada's top experts in both medicine and law. Liberals are choosing to narrow charter rights instead of expand them, as a truly progressive government would do.

If Liberals really are so allergic to compromise and if they really believe that they are correct in law, will they agree to refer this bill to the Supreme Court? Why are the Liberals so afraid to ask the Supreme Court to review this bill?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take our responsibilities incredibly seriously. The Supreme Court of Canada said two things

in the Carter decision: it said that an absolute ban on medical assistance in dying is unconstitutional; and it left it up to Parliament to determine what the appropriate national regime is for medical assistance in dying. We have heard from a vast majority of people. We are taking the responsible approach. We are legislating for all Canadians, and I look forward, hopefully soon, to having legislation in place on medical assistance.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today's UN report is unequivocal, that genocide against Yazidis has occurred and is ongoing and, as important, that there must be no impunity for these crimes.

The Liberals have spent months, until today, making excuses for refusing to recognize this as genocide, but every state—and this includes Canada—has an obligation to act to prevent and to punish genocide.

Now that the minister has finally spoken the word, will Canada restore the combat mission?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, in fact, we have tripled our capacity to train the peshmerga, who are the fighters in the best situation to rescue these populations. We have a strong plan. Canadians must be proud of what Canadians are doing in Iraq and in Syria, with our allies. We improved the plan precisely because we need to act to protect these populations.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a litany of blatantly implausible excuses for the Liberals' genocide denial. One of the early excuses was that, if Liberals acknowledged the horrifically obvious, Canada would be obliged to do something. We have not heard that excuse for a while. The minister has been hiding, until today, behind process.

Is that the real reason? Have the Liberals denied genocide to avoid restoring and extending Canada's anti-Daesh combat mission?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is wrong. In fact, we acted with a lot of strength to be sure that we will eradicate this awful terrorist group, which is the so-called Islamic State. That is why we have tripled our capacity to train the peshmerga in order to be sure that we will be rescuing these populations. That is the goal. I call upon all my colleagues to support the plan that Canada is making on the ground to help these populations.

PENSIONS

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister is trying to strong-arm the premiers in this country to support his plan to increase CPP by over \$3,000 a year. That is a tax nobody can afford. Customers will pay higher prices for everything. Employees will be taking home less in their pay. We have already seen small businesses, this morning, begging the Minister of Finance to stop.

Why will he not listen?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a promise to Canadians that we would enable them to retire in dignity. We have started down that path in budget 2016. We improved the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors. We changed the old age security to ensure people could get retirement security when they needed it. Now, we are working in collaboration with the provinces to make sure we can come up with an enhancement to the Canada pension plan that would enable the next generation of Canadians to retire in dignity.

• (1435)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want the minister to actually listen to Canadians. He does not want to hear how his plan is going to cost Canadian families. He does not want to hear how his plan is going to force businesses to fire employees. He does not want to hear how, actually, families will go home with fewer paycheques. Even his own advisers have told him that 83% of Canadian households do not face a pension crisis.

When is the minister going to stop taxing Canadians in order to pay for his social engineering?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that investments in the future of Canadians are just that: investments in helping people to have a better retirement. We are focused on ensuring that we actually help those Canadians who are in need of more saving for retirement. That is exactly what we are trying to do, by working together with provinces to make sure they have a way to save appropriately for a dignified retirement and then do it in a way that is gradual so that people and businesses can get along that path in an appropriate way.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are worried, and for good reason. On Monday, the Minister of Finance will meet with his provincial counterparts in Vancouver to talk about the pension plans of Canadians.

Canadians are worried because, since the Liberal Party came to power, everything it touches turns into higher taxes or, worse yet, a deficit. Canadians are worried. I have a simple question for the Minister of Finance.

Can he assure us that there will be no increase to pension plan premiums?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a promise to Canadians during our election campaign. We promised to enhance our retirement system to ensure that Canadians can retire with dignity.

That is exactly what we have started to do. We started by increasing the guaranteed income supplement. Now, I am working

Oral Questions

with our provinces to ensure that, in the future, Canadians will be able to have a dignified retirement.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Minister of Finance that he promised Canadians that changes to taxation would be revenue-neutral. However, those changes resulted in a \$1.7-billion deficit. That is why Canadians are worried.

Our job creators, our wealth creators, small businesses, they are the ones who foot the bill for the pension fund. If, God forbid, the government were to follow the lead of its Ontario friends, employers could end up paying \$3,000 more per employee. That makes no sense.

I will ask the minister again: can he assure us that premiums will not go up, yes or no?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, investments in the future are true investments. These investments will secure a dignified retirement for Canadians. That is exactly what I am doing with the provinces. We are working together to enhance the Canada pension plan. That is good for Canada's future and good for the future of Canadians.

* * *

VETERANS

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to take a different approach when it comes to their relationship with our veterans. However, what the Liberals are calling “real change”, we would call “more of the same”.

Not only is the Liberal government carrying on with the court case against our veterans, but now we have learned that too many veterans are finding it hard to access long-term care facilities, when those facilities are not being threatened with closure.

Will the government promise to reinvest in order to ensure that all veterans have access to long-term care when they need it?

[English]

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government supports veterans in more than 1,500 long-term care facilities across this nation. We support veterans at whatever care level they need, and we pay for that care, and of course, we work with our provincial government partners to ensure they have access to these long-term care facilities. We are committed to veterans and the long-term care that they need and that they get.

Oral Questions

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just like the Conservatives before them, the Liberals are shamefully denying benefits to veterans. Care is downloaded to the provinces while federal facilities close beds or shut their doors.

Peter Blendheim is a decorated 94-year-old war veteran, but he has been refused space at Camp Hill veterans hospital in Halifax. This is simply a disgrace.

Will the Liberals change course and agree to start investing in long-term care so that all veterans can have access to the care they need and deserve?

• (1440)

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs supports allied veterans, including those from Norway, nationwide. We pay for their long-term care in 1,500 community facilities. We can also help them remain in their homes by providing a comprehensive home care service that includes personal health care, housekeeping, as well as yard work.

* * *

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the downturn in the oil and gas sector has left many western Canadians without work. Shamefully, the Liberals want to increase taxes on job creators and keep the industry down indefinitely. They continue to ignore a ready-made solution, which is to clean up decommissioned oil and gas wells. Cleaning up these wells would put unemployed Canadians back to work, retain expertise, and create economic and environmental benefits.

Will the Liberals stop their attack on oil and gas workers and help get them back to work?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, it is the responsibility of those who created the problem in the first place to clean it up. If the premier of Alberta or the premier of Saskatchewan believe it is a top priority for infrastructure investments in their province, then I am sure the government would be interested in considering their request.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that, in November, the Prime Minister's own department asked Google to remove dozens of public documents from government websites. This happened 51 times. The Prime Minister's website is not his own website to do with what he pleases; it belongs to the Canadian people. It cannot just be changed at the whim of the Liberals.

Who in the Prime Minister's Office ordered this deletion, and will they reverse this?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of the previous prime minister's archived web content can be accessed by Library and Archives Canada, along with other archived government material. Canadians expect government websites to reflect the most up-to-date and accurate information when they are searching on these sites.

The fact is, and I assure my friend opposite, that our government hopes that the memory of the former Conservative prime minister lives in the minds of Canadians for a very long time.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last weekend journalist and noted electoral reform advocate Andrew Coyne criticized the Liberals' schedule for the committee on electoral reform. He stated, "The very tightness of the timeline feeds suspicions the Liberals are trying to rig the process in favour of their own allegedly preferred reform model".

Nonetheless, the short timeline does give the Liberals enough time to conduct a national referendum in 2017, after they introduce their final proposal. Keeping this in mind, will they use the available time to hold a national referendum and give Canadians the final say?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me quote the member opposite in 2014, when the unfair elections act was being rammed through with no consultations, when the opposition parties were not being engaged at all, and expert witnesses were not being listened to. I am sorry, he did not say anything.

I am glad there is a change of heart and that we want to see Canadians be engaged. There is a process for that. We have a committee working with the member opposite. I hope he will take the opportunity to hear from Canadians and ensure that process is as valid as it can be.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for eight months now, the official opposition has been asking legitimate questions about electoral reform.

Every time, the minister's reply sounds like the same broken record. We all know that the minister is not listening to journalists, political scientists, three-quarters of Canadians, analysts, or even her colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I have a very simple question to ask her.

Why is the minister so determined to dismiss out of hand everyone who is calling for a referendum? Is it because she does not trust them?

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite the contrary. In fact, it was the party opposite that said it was going to support a motion from the NDP on the change of the committee to make it one of the first, and maybe the first ever, committee that a majority government allowed to be controlled by minority parties. The Conservatives made that suggestion, we listened, and then they voted against it. The point of the matter is that we are ready to work with them, and with all parties, including on the issue they mentioned. A committee hopefully will begin its work next week and examine these issues, engage Canadians, and, in the process, improve our democracy.

* * *

●(1445)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Northlands Denesuline, Athabasca Dene, and Sayisi Dene first nations have been in land claims negotiations with the federal government for over 16 years. An agreement is close, but the Liberal government is refusing to move forward on the next steps towards ratification. If the government is really committed to reconciliation and a nation-to-nation relationship, will the minister instruct her officials to stop stalling and move forward immediately on the next steps toward ratification?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, this is not just an agreement between the federal government and the first nation or the land claim. It requires the co-operation of the provinces and territories that are involved in this. We are working with those other jurisdictions to try and find a resolution to this.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is missing here is federal leadership. The fact is that some progress was made on this file under the previous government, but the Liberals are stalling.

The Sayisi Dene and Northlands Denesuline have worked for 16 years to resolve this land claim, and they are waiting for the federal government to step it up.

This is about reconciliation, and reconciliation includes resolving land claims, like the Denesuline claim. Will the minister instruct her officials to work with the Denesuline to resolve this land claim as soon as possible?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reassure the member that the new approach of our government in terms of trying to resolve these land claims, the approach of creative solutions and working together, is happening now. We will do everything in our power to offer that leadership to be able to resolve this claim.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the previous Parliament, and during last year's election campaign, we committed to keeping Canadians safe while ensuring that our national security framework complies with the charter and

reflects Canadian values. This morning the government upheld an important part of that commitment by introducing legislation to establish a committee of parliamentarians that will provide a new review and scrutiny for departments and agencies with national security responsibilities.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please tell the House what else he is doing to protect both Canada's national security and the rights and freedoms of Canadians?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on national security, we will provide new scrutiny by the committee of parliamentarians and a new office for community outreach, careful compliance with the charter, a more precise definition of terrorist propaganda, repairs to no-fly appeals, full protection of the right to advocate and protest, and a statutory review after three years. For the first time ever, Canadians will be honestly consulted on what other steps are necessary to keep Canadians safe and to safeguard our values, rights, and freedoms.

* * *

[Translation]

VETERANS

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Prime Minister said that no veteran would have to fight their own government to get the support and compensation they deserve.

Now we know that those words were nothing more than empty rhetoric, given that the Prime Minister and his party took veterans back to court instead of concluding the settlement negotiations initiated by our Conservative government.

Why are the Liberals distancing themselves from their election promises by turning their backs on veterans?

[English]

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to our sacred obligation to Canada's veterans, and this is outlined in the strong mandate given to me by the Prime Minister to repair the relationship with those men and women who have served this great nation.

We made a commitment in our platform to restore the option for a lifelong pension for veterans, and that is what we will do. Budget 2016 took historic steps getting financial security to veterans and their families by investing \$5.6 billion.

I committed to work with all veterans and stakeholders to make this happen. We will fulfill our mandate commitments to our veterans.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, veterans are sick and tired of hearing the same old story all the time.

Oral Questions

However, it gets worse than that. In mail-outs to the riding of Winnipeg Centre, the Liberals deliberately misled Canadians when they said that they have reinstated lifelong pensions for aging veterans. Such a statement is clearly false. People now expect the Liberals to break promise after promise, but it is a totally different story to directly mislead veterans.

When will the Liberals begin to tell the truth to our veterans?

• (1450)

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the election, we made strong commitments to veterans to heal the relationship that was sadly broken under the previous Conservative government over the last 10 years. We made great steps in budget 2016, delivering \$5.6 billion in financial security to veterans and their families.

We will continue to work on our mandate letter, restoring options for a lifelong pension, and building up opportunities for them in education and retraining to see them fit their new normal and get to civilian life in a dignified, refined fashion.

We will deliver on what we said we would do in the election.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, veterans are not buying the minister's excuses. Our Conservative government expanded the permanent impairment allowance and created the retirement income security benefit to provide lifetime financial support to injured veterans.

We struck an agreement with the Equitas Society upon its lawsuit. Now the Liberals have broken their word and have taken the veterans back to court.

Who made the decision to abandon the previous government's agreement? Was it the Minister of Veterans Affairs or was it the Minister of Justice?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows full well, the lawsuit started under the previous administration. The Conservatives merely kicked the can down the road for our government to deal with, and that is exactly what we are doing.

We are delivering on our commitments to veterans. We are going to fulfill our mandate letter, and we are going to return an option for veterans on a lifelong pension.

I will remind the member that, in budget 2016, we expanded the community impairment access. We expanded opportunities for the earnings loss benefit.

We are delivering on behalf of veterans and we will continue to do so.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has allowed an agreement in the Equitas Society veterans lawsuit to fall apart, and his lawyers are back to attacking veterans.

The Prime Minister promised to uphold the sacred obligation to our veterans, and his minister quotes this obligation today in the House, yet lawyers this week in Vancouver are denying this sacred obligation.

When will the Prime Minister and the silent veterans in his caucus finally stand up, take this court case out of circulation, and keep their promises to our Equitas veterans?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand on this side of the House that we do have a sacred obligation to our veterans, and we are doing that daily.

We are fulfilling our mandate commitments. We are fulfilling our obligations to increase financial security for our veterans and for those who are most severely disabled. We did that in budget 2016, and we are going to continue to work on our mandate items, including an option for a lifetime pension.

I would ask the member to understand that what he did was merely kick this problem down the road, and we are actually dealing with it at this time.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seven out of 10 Canadians have no workplace pension, and many have inadequate savings to retire. The Liberals promised to expand the CPP, but on the eve of the meeting with the provinces, the Liberals have still not said what they are trying to achieve. The complete lack of leadership from the federal government jeopardizes any progress at all.

Will the Minister of Finance publicly commit to pushing for expanded CPP benefits so that all Canadians can retire in dignity?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes I will. I will make a public commitment right here and now that we are looking to work with the provinces to expand the Canada pension plan to ensure that this plan allows Canadians today and in the future to have a dignified retirement.

I am looking forward to a meeting this coming Sunday night and Monday where we will be talking with representatives from the provinces and working together. I hope to have something positive to report to this House in the coming days.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the City of Longueuil, the people of CAPA-L, and the flight schools in Saint-Hubert on reaching an agreement to improve the residents' quality of life. Under this agreement, new noise suppressors will be installed on the planes. The problem is that we have been waiting for three months for Transport Canada to approve the noise suppressors that could resolve the problem.

Can the minister please demand that Transport Canada approve the noise suppressors without delay? Does it really take three months to approve a noise suppressor?

• (1455)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to noise caused by aircraft, we always encourage people in the region to talk with the airport authorities to come to a conclusion.

There are rules, and I encourage the two parties to sit down and talk.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the offshore northern shrimp fishery employs hundreds of Maritimers. Despite the importance of the northern shrimp fishery to communities in the Maritimes, three of the four members of the so-called independent advisory panel are from Newfoundland and Labrador. However, one panel member is married to the chief negotiator for an organization that appeared before the committee to oppose the offshore fishery. When will this part-time Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard admit that the panel is rigged and does not represent the interests of Maritimers?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are certainly not going to admit such a thing because it would not be accurate. The member knows very well that the panel was set up to provide independent advice to the government. It was a commitment we made in our campaign platform to review LIFO.

We understand the importance of the northern shrimp fishery to coastal communities and to businesses that have invested considerably in this fishery. We are looking forward to receiving the recommendations of the independent panel next week, and then I will have the responsibility of making a decision.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the panel was set up with not a single member from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, or P.E.I. The offshore northern shrimp fishery is worth \$131 million a year to Nova Scotia companies alone. Despite the importance of this industry to Nova Scotia, the minister's so-called independent advisory panel is all but ignoring the province. Of the seven public hearings that were held, only one meeting took place in Nova Scotia.

Why is this part-time Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard ignoring the concerns of Nova Scotians; and, why will Nova Scotia Liberal MPs not stand up for their province?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague that all members of the Liberal caucus from Atlantic Canada have spoken to me forcefully about the importance of the northern shrimp fishery. We have heard from the Government of Nova Scotia. We have also heard from other provincial governments, including my own in New Brunswick, the Government of

Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Government of Prince Edward Island.

Once we have the report of the independent panel, of course I will be consulting with my caucus colleagues and many others in this sector, and then I will have the responsibility of making the right decision.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night the Liberals had the opportunity to support a bill that would have helped save hundreds of Canadian lives. Canadians were shocked that the Liberals defeated Bill C-223, which would have established a national organ donor registry.

The Liberals should be ashamed that they chose to play petty politics over the well-being of those who need an organ transplant. Can the Liberals explain why they chose to defeat a bill that would have saved so many lives, for absolutely no reason other than partisanship?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government works alongside Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec. We are fully in support of ensuring that organ and tissue donations are done well in this country. There is a Canadian transplant registry to which we have already committed \$64 million in recent years to develop.

This is a matter that is under provincial jurisdiction, and it is for that reason that the bill was unsupportable. We encourage all Canadians to consider going online now and committing to being an organ donor.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I know the hon. member for Edmonton Manning feels strongly about this, but he needs to restrain himself, not react when someone else is speaking, and wait until he has the floor.

The hon. member for Pitt Meadows.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities has been mandated to invest \$120 billion in infrastructure to promote economic growth and job creation.

Budget 2016 commits \$3.4 billion to public transit. Provincial and territorial governments are key partners in successful infrastructure projects, and the minister is expected to align his efforts with existing provincial, territorial, and municipal priorities.

My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities. Could the minister provide an update on the status of such efforts to collaborate and forge bilateral agreements?

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to deliver on our long-term infrastructure investment commitment. Today the Prime Minister announced our first bilateral agreement, investing \$460 million in public transit in British Columbia, leveraging more than \$920 million altogether.

This funding will support projects that will create jobs immediately, grow the economy and reduce traffic congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help build strong and inclusive communities.

* * *

● (1500)

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, closing Canada's only museum dedicated to Confederation, cutting Confederation out as the theme of the 150th anniversary, writing the War of 1812 out of the citizenship guide, rejecting the donation of John Diefenbaker's birthplace, the Liberal government is engaged in an all-out work on Canadian history.

Now the Liberals are shutting down proposals for a commemorative medal for the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

Why do the Liberals want to mark this anniversary by killing a tradition as old as our country, that of recognizing worthy citizens with a commemorative medal? Why this Liberal war on history?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will not take any lessons from a past government that forgot to include indigenous perspectives, and their own way of seeing our country's history. In that context, we will ensure that 2017 is a very inclusive celebration.

I would like to point out for my colleague that this morning I had the chance to announce \$5 million to Ottawa for the 2017 celebrations for the national capital region to celebrate.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to make evidence-based decisions. They promised to respect the Cohen Commission. However, Justice Cohen said we must address the dangers fish farming posed to wild salmon. Yet the Minister of Fisheries has actually extended the licences for open net fish farms from one year to six. He did so with no public consultation and no environmental assessment.

Will the minister now stand up for the wild salmon fishery, respect Justice Cohen's recommendations, and rescind this decision?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that all of the decisions our government will be making on issues like this and allocations and quotas with respect to Canada's fisheries on all three coasts will be made based on scientific advice and the rigorous scientific standards that are required.

We thought it was unfortunate that the previous government did not respond formally at all to any of the Cohen Commission recommendations.

We think it is an important exercise for British Columbia and a critical industry. I look forward to being in British Columbia and publicly responding to all of the Cohen Commission recommendations.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, one in seven Canadians is over the age of 65 and seniors represent a growing segment of our population. In 2036, it is expected that seniors will make up 24% of our population. This government has taken practical measures to support our seniors.

Can the minister responsible for seniors, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, tell us about the additional measures this government is taking to help seniors across the country?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe for her excellent question and the outstanding work she does for seniors in her riding.

Today, I am very pleased to announce that we are launching a call for proposals for community-based projects under the new horizons for seniors program. This program is extremely important to the social security and social involvement of our seniors.

I invite all members of the House to actively promote this important program for seniors.

* * *

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House has unanimously changed copyright laws to implement the Marrakesh Treaty, freeing up over one-quarter of a million Braille, audio and large-print books for Canada's blind at no cost to taxpayers or users. The Senate is likely to pass the same bill this month. The CEO of the World Blind Union calls the Marrakesh Treaty the biggest development for blind literacy since the invention of braille.

We need two more countries to sign on for it to take effect. What is the Minister of Foreign Affairs' plan to recruit two additional countries to the Marrakesh Treaty so we can bring over 270,000 books for the blind?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard for a whole-government approach, too, as we go into the world and restore Canada's reputation internationally to ensure that countries around the world will also implement the Marrakesh Treaty.

We have opportunities later this month and later this year to work with our colleagues at the UN level to ensure that other countries ratify so we get to 20 and we all work on Marrakesh.

* * *

• (1505)

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, the CEO of Air Canada was extremely angry. He could not get over the fact that MPs dared to demand explanations as to why Air Canada is not fulfilling its legal obligation to provide services in French.

His arrogant reaction is understandable since the federal government has been looking the other way while Air Canada has broken the law for 45 years.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage agreed to change the law and help Air Canada run roughshod over Aveos workers, so when does she plan to change the law so that Air Canada can do the same to francophones?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada must comply with the Official Languages Act, and I understand that the president of Air Canada testified in committee yesterday.

I will be speaking to my parliamentary colleagues who sit on the committee to hear their recommendations, and I will take those recommendations into consideration.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a desperate need for health care services and Ottawa is not doing its part.

Its transfers are woefully inadequate and well below what it could be providing. Its lack of commitment is threatening the viability of the public system and putting unbearable pressure on the finances of Quebec and the provinces.

There was nothing in the last budget to correct the situation. The government said that it would talk to Quebec and the provinces about this. However, the finance ministers are getting together next Monday and Ottawa does not even plan on addressing the issue.

Can the Minister of Finance confirm that the pseudo-discussions he talked about when he tabled the budget are essentially a load of rubbish?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated in the House earlier this week, I am working with my colleagues in the provinces and territories to negotiate a new health accord. Within that accord we will make new investments in health care in our country.

I look forward to working with all of the health ministers across the country. I have already had conversations with Minister Barrette

Government Orders

in Quebec and my other officials. We look forward to announcing a new health accord hopefully later this year.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in responding to a question for the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions said something that could not be true, unless he was accusing me of having deliberately lied to the House.

He said that the Conservatives stated that we would vote in favour of the NDP motion on electoral reform and then reneged. The facts as to how we were frozen out of these negotiations were related to the House by me in an S.O. 31 on June 6.

As the member is honourable and wants to stick to the truth, I invite him to retract his comment, which I am sure was made inadvertently. I also seek the unanimous consent of the House to table that S.O. 31 in order to set the record straight.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is entirely possible that the member opposite does not monitor the Conservative Twitter account that is managed by his party. It stated that the Conservatives supported the NDP position on this issue and that it was something on which they could agree. I was referring to that.

I would ask for unanimous consent to table that tweet stating that the Conservatives were going to support the efforts of the New Democrats in this matter.

The Speaker: This is debate. I think I have heard enough, unless there is unanimous consent to table the tweet.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: I have heard enough for now. I will consider this, and if necessary, I will come back to the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1510)

[English]

AN ACT TO AMEND THE CRIMINAL CODE AND TO MAKE RELATED AMENDMENTS TO OTHER ACTS (MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING)

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Government Orders

The Speaker: It being 3:09 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion to concur in the Senate amendments to Bill C-14.

Call in the members.

• (1515)

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

*(Division No. 102)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultaif	Angus
Ashton	Aubin
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boutin-Sweet	Brosseau
Cannings	Caron
Chan	Choquette
Christopherson	Cullen
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Erskine-Smith	Hardcastle
Hughes	Johns
Jolibois	Julian
Kent	Kwan
Lametti	Laverdière
MacGregor	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathyssen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Moore
Nantel	Oliphant
Paucé	Quach
Ramsey	Rankin
Saganash	Sansoucy
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Thériault
Trudel	Weir — 54

NAYS

Members

Albas	Albrecht
Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barlow	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boucher
Brassard	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Brown	Caesar-Chavannes
Calkins	Carr
Carrie	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Clarke	Cooper
Cormier	Cuzner
DeCoursey	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeschen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Egliniski	El-Khoury

Eyking	Eyolfson
Falk	Fast
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Foote	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fuhr
Gallant	Garneau
Généreux	Genuis
Godin	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Harder	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jeneroux	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Kelly	Kenney
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Lake
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lightbound	Lobb
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morneau
Morrissey	Nassif
Nater	Nault
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Connell
Oliver	O'Regan
O'Toole	Ouellette
Paradis	Paul-Hus
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poilievre
Poissant	Qualtrough
Raiitt	Ratansi
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rioux	Ritz
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sanson
Sangha	Sarai
Saroya	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schieffe
Schmale	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Sohi	Sopuck
Sorbara	Sorenson
Spengemann	Stanton
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Trost	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Viersen	Virani
Wagantall	Warkentin
Webber	Whalen

Government Orders

Wilson-Raybould
Young
Zahid

Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer — 240

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

[*And five or more members having risen:*]

• (1525)

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

(Division No. 103)

YEAS

Members

Albas
Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Clarke
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Garneau
Goldsmith-Jones

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Berthold
Bittle
Boissonnault
Boucher
Breton
Brown
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Cooper
Cuzner
Damoff
Deltell
Dhillon
Dion
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Généreux
Goodale

Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Kent
Khera
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Ratansi
Reid
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sorbara
Stanton
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Webber
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Kelly
Khalid
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Liepert
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
McCrimmon
McGuinity
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Nassif
Obhrai
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paul-Hus
Peterson
Philpott
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Rayes
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Spengemann
Strahl
Tan
Vandal
Vaughan
Virani
Whalen
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 190

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Allison
Angus
Ashton
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bergen
Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Cannings
Carrie
Christopherson
Davies
Doherty
Dreeshen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)

Albrecht
Anderson
Arnold
Aubin
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Bernier
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Caron
Choquette
Cullen
Diotte
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseault

Business of the House

Duvall	Eglinski
Erskine-Smith	Falk
Fast	Gallant
Garrison	Genuis
Godin	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Jolibois	Julian
Kenney	Kitchen
Kwan	Lake
Lametti	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maril
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Moore	Nantel
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Ouellette	Pauzé
Quach	Raïtt
Ramsay	Rankin
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saganash
Sansoucy	Saroya
Scheer	Shields
Sopuck	Sorenson
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Viersen	Wagantall
Warkentin	Weir
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 108

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

● (1530)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be presumptuous but I think it is reasonably foreseeable that this may be the last Thursday question of this session, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your hard work over the past few months.

I would also like to thank all the chair occupants, the deputy speaker, and the assistant deputy speakers who make sure the chamber runs smoothly. I would also like to thank the clerks at the table. I know what a tremendous team they provide you, Mr. Speaker, but indeed all members of the House. Last, but certainly not least, we have such a great group of young Canadians every year. I would like to thank the pages for all that they have done.

On behalf of all members of our caucus, and I am sure the same is true for all MPs, I would like to thank the staff in our offices, at our lobby desks, and in our research bureaus. They all do a tremendous amount of work to make their members of Parliament look good and sound intelligent.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andrew Scheer: I was going to thank our spouses, but if the hon. member for Chilliwack does not want to thank our spouses, we could make note of that. However, I would like to extend a big “thank you” to our spouses back home who allow us to do our jobs.

With that, I wonder if the government House leader would like to indicate to the House what the business of the House may be for the rest of this week and maybe next week as well.

The Speaker: I would be concerned that the member for Chilliwack—Hope would be treading on dangerous ground, but he did stand up and applaud, so I think he will be okay at home.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle.

This afternoon, we are continuing third reading consideration of Bill C-6 on citizenship. Tomorrow, we are going to debate Bill C-2, which would amend the Income Tax Act.

If colleagues would not mind, I would prefer to dispense with the statement for next week's business if that is okay. What I will do is join my colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle and associate myself with the very positive and appropriate comments he made.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, for you and me and many of our colleagues, the past few months have certainly been a learning experience. This is the first time in your long parliamentary career that you have served in this role that is so essential to democracy. On behalf of my Liberal colleagues, I want to say that we think you have done an excellent job, and we thank you for your service and for taking on the role of Speaker.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, we are doing this just for the sake of your wife, Kelly. I want her to see this.

As my colleague said, the last few months have been a learning experience as many of our colleagues here in the House of Commons have become familiar with parliamentary and constituency work. We have all made new friends.

This has been an extremely positive experience for me, and that is in large part thanks to the co-operation of our colleagues and the friendships we have forged. In spite of some well-intentioned clashes, we have been able to laugh together. I also think that we have served the interests of Canadians and done our duty as parliamentarians.

I will not repeat all of the tributes that we heard from the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, but my Liberal colleagues and I feel the same way.

[English]

If it is the case that it is the desire of the House to adjourn for the summer before next Thursday at 6:30 p.m., I want to wish all colleagues and all the staff who work with us here in an extraordinary way in this magical place of Canadian democracy a healthy, safe summer and time with their families and their constituents. We look forward to seeing all of our colleagues back in September in good health, and most important, in good humour.

• (1535)

[Translation]

The Speaker: I sincerely thank the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for their kind words. Like them, I thank all the employees of the House of Commons, the members' staff, the pages, and the list goes on. We appreciate everyone's work.

I wish all members of Parliament a wonderful summer. The summer starts when the House adjourns.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

LA CAPITALE FINANCIAL SECURITY INSURANCE COMPANY

(Bill S-1001. On the Order: Private Members' Business)

June 10, 2016—Second reading and reference to a legislative committee of Bill S-1001, An Act to authorize La Capitale Financial Security Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec—Mr. Joël Lightbound.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That Bill S-1001, An Act to authorize La Capitale Financial Security Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec, be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole, deemed considered in Committee of the Whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read a second time, referred to a committee of the whole, considered in committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in at report stage, read the third time and passed)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from June 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for North Island—Powell River.

Government Orders

At the Standing Committee for Citizenship and Immigration, I had the opportunity to hear witnesses from across Canada and they offered their expertise on how we could make Canada's immigration laws better.

As a result of those important testimonies, I tabled 25 amendments to Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another act. Significant amendments were required because Bill C-6 failed to remedy many of the problems created by the Conservatives' Bill C-24.

One gaping hole in Bill C-6 is that it failed to address the lack of procedural fairness and safeguards for individuals facing citizenship revocation. This is because Bill C-24 eliminated the right for an independent and impartial hearing. Furthermore, Bill C-24 also eliminated consideration of equitable factors or compassionate and humanitarian factors that could prevent a legal but unjust outcome.

The system we have defies common sense. How could it be that individuals fighting a parking ticket are afforded more procedural fairness than the person having their citizenship revoked? Yet this is the case.

On June 9, 2014, the minister, while in opposition, stated, “We object in principle to the arbitrary removal of citizenship from individuals for reasons that are highly questionable and to the very limited opportunity for the individual to appeal to the courts against that removal of citizenship.”

Fast-forward to today, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has further reconfirmed that the lack of judicial appeal and review rights for those in the citizenship process still needs to be addressed, yet this concern was not corrected by the government in Bill C-6. Because Bill C-6 failed to address this, I tabled substantive amendments to ensure individuals who face citizenship revocation have the right to a fair and independent hearing and an appeal process.

If passed, the amendments would have created a system modelled after the current process being applied to permanent residents who are subject to deportation on the grounds of misrepresentation. This system, which uses the immigration appeal division, would not only have provided the rights to an independent appeal process, but is also considered more cost effective and efficient than the old system.

Despite broad support to achieve this goal from experts that appeared at the committee such as the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Council for Refugees, Legal Aid Ontario, and others, the narrow scope of Bill C-6 resulted in these important amendments being ruled inadmissible.

I have asked the minister to adopt my amendments in a government bill in the fall and I hope that happens.

In the meantime, however, the unfortunate reality is that some individuals currently in the citizenship system faced with revocation will still lack the judicial fairness provided to people in Canada fighting a parking ticket.

Government Orders

On the issue of procedural fairness, Bill C-6 also failed to address the minister's ability to indefinitely suspend citizenship proceedings. The former Conservative government under Bill C-24 added section 13.1 to the Citizenship Act, which permits the minister to suspend citizenship applications and other proceedings indefinitely while additional information or evidence is gathered.

Under this process, someone could literally die before a decision is made about their citizenship application. I know that recent Federal Court decisions demonstrate the need for a statutory time frame for making decisions to avoid inordinate and unexplained delays. Again, I had attempted to resolve this issue through amendment at committee, and again, the narrow scope of Bill C-6 prevented me from doing so, and the amendment was deemed inadmissible.

Another misstep of Bill C-24 was to place all justice systems around the world on equal footing. This was done by barring individuals from citizenship if they have been charged with or convicted with offences equivalent to indictable offences in Canada.

While this might sound reasonable, it is incredibly important to remember that not all justice systems in the world are equal. Most importantly, some countries deal with corruption at various or even multiple levels of the justice and political system, from local police to lawyers and judges to national leaders. This can, and does lead to unjust charges and convictions. In my view, these situations should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

In its submission to the committee, the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic wrote:

Implementing additional immigration and citizenship penalties for individuals being charged or with convictions is inherently dangerous in that it leads effectively to situations of double jeopardy—that the individual will be punished once by the criminal justice system and then a second time through the immigration and citizenship system.

• (1540)

There are many countries around the world where rule of law is underdeveloped or completely inadequate, or where individuals are charged and convicted for purely political reasons.

While those appearing at committee used the example of Canadian citizen Mohamed Fahmy as an example of how not all justice systems reach the same verdicts as ours, I would also like to draw to the attention of this House that, in 2001, the House voted almost unanimously in favour of awarding Nelson Mandela honorary Canadian citizenship. Under the current laws, if someone like Mr. Mandela immigrated to Canada, he would have been automatically barred from applying for citizenship to Canada through the regular channels.

At the committee, the issue of minors coming to Canada without parents or legal guardians was highlighted to members as an area of significant concern. Unless applying for citizenship as part of the application with parents or guardians, individuals must be 18 years of age or older to become Canadian citizens. While the government argued that there is already a remedy in place to address this, at issue, as explained by Justice for Children and Youth, is as follows:

Section 5...allows for an applicant to make a request to the Minister on humanitarian grounds for a waiver of the age requirement. ...this humanitarian exemption poses a generally insurmountable barrier for children wishing to access citizenship and is not a reasonable limitation or a satisfactory solution to issues raised by the age requirement provision.... The provision in effect restricts access to

Canadian citizenship for children—solely on the basis of age—who otherwise meet all the requirements. It restricts access to citizenship for the most marginalized children, i.e. unaccompanied minors, children without parents or lawful guardians, and children with parents who do not have the capacity to meet the citizenship requirements or do not wish to apply.

My proposed amendment would have provided a pathway to citizenship for youth under 18 years of age without a parent or guardian who is, or is in the process of becoming, a Canadian citizen. Addressing this issue was supported by organizations such as Justice for Children and Youth, the Canadian Council for Refugees, and UNICEF Canada, among others. Unfortunately, the amendment was not adopted by the Liberal members on the committee.

While we are on the subject of minors in the citizenship process, in a brief submitted by Justice for Children and Youth, it was noted that the citizenship process fails to adhere to the principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act. It states:

Youth criminal justice records and ongoing proceedings before the youth criminal justice court cannot and should not be considered for the purpose of citizenship applications because to do so is contrary to the Youth Criminal Justice Act..., specifically violates the privacy protections afforded to minors by the YCJA, and is inconsistent with the fundamental purpose of the YCJA.

Once again, the narrow scope of Bill C-6 deemed this amendment inadmissible.

On the theme of pathways to citizenship, another issue that was brought in when Bill C-24 was tabled and was not rectified by Bill C-6 is the issue of double-testing in language. There is no doubt that acquiring skills in one of Canada's official languages is an important aspect of building a successful life here. However, under changes made by the Conservatives, the knowledge test of Canada required to obtain citizenship now amounts to a double-testing of language skills.

Prior to the Conservatives' changes, individuals had the ability to take the knowledge test with the aid of an interpreter. Due to the changes, the interpreter is no longer provided, and this amounts not only to second language testing, but to a language test that, as we heard from experts who appeared at committee, is arguably more difficult than the actual level of English or French someone must have to pass the actual language test.

My amendment to address this problem and go back to the old system, which would have been the case had the Liberals followed through on their election promise to repeal Bill C-24, was rejected by the committee. I do think this is most unfortunate, as the current rules only serve to maintain the barriers for the pathway to citizenship.

I am pleased that I was successful in advancing and passing two amendments to Bill C-6, which will now enshrine in the law the duty for reasonable accommodation, ensuring that the citizenship process adheres to the principles of the Canadian Human Rights Act for those with disabilities. This will make disability accommodation a right, not something provided out of mercy or on the basis of compassion, as it formerly was.

Government Orders

• (1545)

My amendment clarifies the requirement of the duty to accommodate those with disabilities as they navigate through the citizenship process. Currently, vague words of required “proof” and discretion around accommodation can lead to individuals, who would otherwise be able to become Canadian citizens, being denied due to a lack of disability accommodation.

There is much more to—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The time has expired.

[*Translation*]

Before we begin questions and comments, I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, government orders will be extended by seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Vancouver East for her contribution at committee and to this debate on Bill C-6, which I think is an incredibly important part of the commitment we made in the last election to roll back what we thought were many of the oppressive elements of Bill C-24 that had been passed in the 41st Parliament.

I would like to ask, given the contributions that my friend from Vancouver East made at the immigration committee with respect to some of those amendments—and I noted that some of her amendments were not accepted by the government—whether the member will still be supporting the overall intent of Bill C-6, including some of the amendments she had proposed that were carried at committee.

• (1550)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, yes, I still intend to support the bill, although it could have been made a lot better had the government been thoughtful about it and incorporated some of those essential amendments that I had tabled at committee.

The other amendment that the government did adopt at committee was the recommendation to address, in part, the issue of statelessness. Therefore, those who are found to be stateless would actually have some means for a pathway to citizenship on a case-by-case basis. Much work still needs to be done in that area. For example, those who are born second generation to Canadians in some instances will still be deemed to be stateless. That needs to be rectified. Therefore, I am really hoping that the minister, in his oversight in bringing forward those important amendments in Bill C-6, will actually bring forward a new bill in the fall so that we can rectify the many problems that were created under Bill C-24.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate my colleague from Vancouver East for not only an excellent speech but obviously a reflection of the work that she has put into this. I always wondered who would succeed Libby Davies, and kind of felt sorry for that person, given the fantastic parliamentarian that she was. However, the people of Vancouver East have managed to find someone who can actually fill those shoes. She brings a great depth of experience here, particularly as a senior provincial cabinet minister.

My question to the member is in regard to something she commented on earlier, which really jumped out at me. If I am correct, it was with respect to permanent residents, although I am not sure of the subject. However, I do remember the comment, which was that, because the bill was unamended as my colleague tried to amend it, in her opinion we have a bill that gives less judicial fairness to applicants than would be given in a parking ticket situation. Therefore, I was wondering if my colleague would expand on that issue because it sounded very jarring.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my good colleague for those very kind comments. That is very encouraging.

Indeed, Bill C-6 failed to bring forward proper due process for those who face losing their citizenship. In a normal set of circumstances, people who are given a parking ticket or a speeding ticket could appeal that process by going to court. Under this system, with the Bill C-24 changes by the Conservative government and the failure of Bill C-6 to rectify them, those who lose their citizenship would not have the opportunity to appeal this process. That is simply wrong. The Canadian Bar Association and many organizations came forward at committee to say that this needed to be changed. In fact, when Bill C-24 was debated in this House, the current Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship also said that was wrong.

Therefore, it is a mystery to me how the government neglected to include that important change in Bill C-6. However, that is exactly what happened. I tried to advance a series of amendments related to that. Unfortunately, they were deemed to be out of the scope of Bill C-6, and therefore not before us. However, I did get a commitment from the minister that the government would rectify this, and I look forward to it bringing forward a government bill in the fall to adopt those amendments I tabled at committee.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank my hon. colleague for all of her hard work and dedication. It is a wonderful thing to work with people who are so dedicated to making a difference and looking after these issues that are so important to the people we serve.

I am glad to rise in the House and speak on Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act.

As a former executive director of an immigrant-serving agency in my riding, I want to convey to members here the sense of betrayal that the former Bill C-24 had on our sector and on the people we served.

In my role as executive director, I spoke at many citizenship ceremonies and worked with people as they prepared for their citizenship here in Canada. I was constantly overwhelmed by the immense sense of pride and dedication people felt as they prepared and finally became Canadian. It was events like this that really made me the proudest to be a Canadian citizen.

However, Bill C-24 created a second class of citizen. In fact, it institutionalized systemic discrimination. It was a bill that was so unconstitutional that it had no place in our democratic foundation.

Government Orders

Under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, all Canadians are equal. It will be good to see this idea begin to be reflected in our legislation again. As our leader said in the 2015 campaign, "...a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian".

During the last election, the NDP promised to repeal Bill C-24, and I thank so much again my colleague from Vancouver East who worked so hard to really make that happen. I was very sad when all of those amendments were not heard.

Bill C-6 in its current form aims to rectify these missteps, but the bill does not do it entirely. After reflection, I am mindful that the bill is not ideal but it will repeal some of the harmful and unconstitutional changes to citizenship made by the previous government. Therefore, I will support its passing in the third reading.

While this is a step in the right direction, there are also many challenges that remain for immigrants. We call on the government to take urgent action on lengthy wait times and huge backlogs, on family reunification, and on the barriers to citizenship that still remain in place.

In the last session of Parliament, the NDP firmly opposed Bill C-24. We called on the Conservatives to withdraw it from the very beginning, but the Conservatives refused to listen.

While some of the changes implemented by the former bill were, in some cases, overdue and addressed some of the deficiencies in the system, others were so draconian that Bill C-24 was widely opposed by respected academics and experts in the field of law, including the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees, and UNICEF.

During the time of canvassing across my riding, and in the work I did previously, I met many members of the communities I served. I heard stories of people who were choosing to not venture toward becoming citizens, because they were very hurt about this second class of citizenship, and many parents were very concerned for their children.

One parent told me that his children had dual citizenship. He was choosing not to get Canadian citizenship, but he had married a Canadian woman and they had children who had both the citizenship of his first country and hers. Now he is worried about how much their Canadian citizenship actually means. He said to me that his children live here, that they will be raised here, and that this will be the only country they will ever know as home. What if they do something and Canada decides to take away their citizenship? Where will they go?

Other people said to me that it felt as if the government did not want them to become a citizen. They felt that they were a potential risk simply because they were born in another country.

These stories illustrate the real fear that people are feeling and the total disregard for their dedication to this country of Canada.

Bill C-6 begins to make some of those changes, but it still leaves that hesitancy. It still has so many barriers to citizenship. It still provides too many things that create fear for members.

● (1555)

I hope the government will listen and make the amendments in the fall that my hon. colleague suggested. Let us move forward in a positive way in this country.

I am glad that these provisions will no longer be law. Nevertheless, I am disappointed that Bill C-6 does not go far enough. It would still allow the minister to revoke someone's citizenship without the right to a judicial hearing. No matter how good their intentions, ministers simply should not have secret discretionary powers.

Prior to Bill C-24, individuals who were accused of fraud and risked having their citizenship revoked could request a hearing before a Federal Court judge. A final decision would be made by the Governor in Council. Bill C-24 allowed the minister to make a decision based on a review of paperwork, with no right to a judicial hearing. The Liberals' failure to address this feature in Bill C-6 means that there may still be a constitutional challenge to the Citizenship Act.

The NDP believe that a citizen facing revocation should always have the right to a hearing before an independent and impartial decision-maker as part of a process that considers humanitarian and compassionate factors.

I remember that the Prime Minister, during the campaign, talked about decentralizing the powers purposely accumulated in the PM's Office. The last government concentrated power in its different omnibus legislation. What happened to the right to a hearing and to due process?

In my last job, I served many newcomers to Canada. Some of the stories I heard were sad, and the commitment to becoming Canadian, in a country seen as free and inclusive, was tangible. The fact that the minister had the power to give or take away citizenship was a level of power that many people came to Canada to escape. Having a fair, transparent process is absolutely imperative.

When the bill was studied at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, New Democrats proposed a total of 25 amendments. Only two of them were eventually passed, and I am so grateful that they were: the duty to accommodate for individuals with disabilities, and adding statelessness as a factor to be considered when granting citizenship based on exceptional circumstances. The remaining amendments were voted down and the Liberals did not give a reasonable rationale for opposing them.

The Liberals need to do more. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has repeatedly acknowledged the considerable shortcomings of his ministry. He promised to take action on the long wait times, but we have still not seen a concrete plan.

Now that this legislation is at third reading, let us start to have this discussion in terms of how to reform it correctly.

Government Orders

The minister should disclose the reasoning for and the frequency of discretionary grants of citizenship. There must be action on cleaning up the mess at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, including speeding up family reunification, putting an end to lengthy backlogs, removing the cap on parent and grandparent sponsorship, and speeding up processing times for immigration and citizen applications, especially in light of the high fees paid by applicants who receive very poor service in return. The challenges I faced in my last job would have tested the patience of any normal human being.

The narrow scope of Bill C-6 prevented many amendments recommended by expert witnesses, including the Canadian Bar Association, from being admissible at committee stage. The minister has acknowledged this and suggests that the Liberals will need to introduce another immigration bill in the fall to address these shortcomings. I certainly hope to see it.

I would like to conclude today by urging the minister to work with us to table a truly comprehensive bill that will improve the Canadian citizenship process. It needs to happen, and it needs to happen soon.

• (1600)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that a good number of members in my own caucus aggressively pursue issues such as processing times, backlogs, and restrictions. In fact, one of the first actions by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship was to speed up processing times for spouses and to double the number of parents and grandparents being accepted. We have seen huge processing time reductions for citizenship, and I think there will be a lot more to come.

In terms of the Syrian refugees, there were tens of thousands of individuals through that one category. I think the current minister has done an admirable job, a fantastic job, of getting things done in a relatively short time.

When this legislation went to committee, we saw that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship actually looked for consensus, and we actually had amendments accepted. Maybe the member could comment on what she felt with respect to the amendments that passed that came from the opposition.

• (1605)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, it is always good to see change, but this is the reality: actions speak much louder than words. It is very good to say kind things, and it is good to have good intentions, but until the action takes place, we have to watch for it.

I will say to the member that it has actually been shocking for me.

There has been some good stuff. After about five years of working hard with a local member in our community, we finally received some of her family members from Syria. That was a very positive move in the right direction. I am glad to see that.

I might also add that most of the 25,000 refugees we have graciously welcomed, and I am so glad that they are here, came from the private sponsorship stream, not the GAR stream, the government assisted refugees, which is what I was hoping to see more of.

We also saw a huge cut in services to settlement agencies. It was about 6.5% in the area I serve. It was shocking to see that happening at a time when we need to serve these people.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether my colleague would support this amendment, which failed at the committee because it was deemed to be inadmissible. It relates to people who are deemed to be second generation born.

Effective April 17, 2009, in Bill C-37, second-generation children born abroad were restricted from obtaining Canadian citizenship. By denying citizenship to the second generation born abroad, Canada is in fact creating a second set of lost Canadians and is making some children born to Canadians stateless.

I wonder whether the member would support an amendment to address this issue, because it is an ongoing problem. It makes no sense that if an individual is second generation born abroad, he or she is actually at risk of being deemed stateless.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely support the amendment.

As I said in my speech, during the campaign, our leader said, "A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian". Regardless of where people live, if they are Canadian and they are having children, they need to have some consciousness that they will have children with a state. To leave children without one does not make sense.

Our job is to look after Canadians and work with Canadians in a positive way and to not create different classes of citizenship.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today at third reading would make amendments to two acts, the Citizenship Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which are two pieces of legislation that have a substantive impact on our immigration policy here in Canada. I started to get at this in my first speech on this topic.

My major concern is that the content of the bill is deemed to be the government's first priority in terms of addressing immigration concerns in Canada. My speech today will be in that context, because I feel that there are other more pressing concerns than the content of the bill that would positively impact our immigration system in Canada.

I will broadly frame my comments in two broad strokes. First is the prioritization of refugees coming to Canada and the criteria involved, and second is the supports provided for refugees coming to Canada.

Since the bill was first tabled, the Standing Committee on Immigration and Citizenship has had the opportunity to hear from many witness groups from across the country with regard to how the government's Syrian refugee initiative is playing out. Certainly I think I would be united in a non-partisan way with people on all sides and of all political stripes in this House in saying that Canada wants to help, has a duty to help, with the humanitarian and refugee crisis unfolding in the Middle East. The question really becomes how.

Government Orders

During the campaign, the now governing party I think really engaged in what was a series of one-upmanships in terms of the number of refugees who were coming to Canada. I think that was fairly shameful.

We certainly want to ensure that we have refugees coming to Canada, but we also have a duty to protect them. I think that is what the government should have been focusing on, as opposed to the content of the bill.

When we talk about refugee supports, one of the first things we have heard about over and over again is language training. The government has brought tens of thousands of refugees to Canada in a very short period of time. What we are hearing from settlement services groups, as well as from the refugees themselves, is that they are not able to access language training services. This has a material impact on their ability to integrate into Canadian society and to have a full and positive experience here as Canadians.

We heard from one man, a new refugee who I believe was in the Surrey area. He was talking about how he had been waiting for months to receive language training services and was not able to obtain them. What really struck me at my heart was that he also said that his wife, who is at home with their children, did not have the opportunity to receive language training services.

What is interesting is that when we tie this back to this bill, the bill actually makes significant changes to the language requirements for the attainment of citizenship. It actually reduces the age at which someone has to be proficient in one of our official languages to achieve citizenship.

What we are hearing in the context of support for Syrian refugees around language training services, is that language is a unifier. It allows refugees and newcomers to Canada to obtain employment, to ensure that they are not isolated, and to fully participate in the rich fabric of our country. What we have heard over and over again is that the government, so far, is failing to provide support for the high number of refugees it brought into the country.

To have this bill in front of us while this is rolling out really sends a message that we are not valuing language as a unifier in Canada. I really think that the government, rather than lowering the age, should be looking at how it can provide better language training services. We certainly heard this at committee in the review of this bill. This has actually been a theme of this entire parliamentary sitting in committee.

• (1610)

Moreover, we are also hearing from school boards across the country saying that the Liberals did not consult with them on how they were going to absorb the rapid influx of refugees in a very short period of time. Representatives of the Calgary Board of Education provided some very powerful testimony at committee last week. They talked about how they had absorbed the equivalent of a new elementary school in a very short period of time and had not received any additional funds from the province.

The province told the board to track its costs. When I asked the board representatives if they thought they had been told to track their costs so the province could send a bill to the federal government, they said yes. We asked department officials at committee if there

were any plans for the government to provide additional funding, support, or address the concerns of the schools boards, and the answer was no, that this was not under consideration.

We have heard over and over again from the minister that education is a provincial concern, that he is going to wipe his hands of that, and that he is not going to talk about it. However, these are human beings, not numbers on a score card. The minister has more of a commitment than just standing in the House of Commons talking about how many people he has brought here, like it is some sort of tally sheet of which he can be proud.

Yes, we need to help people and, yes, we need to ensure they come to Canada. However, we also have to provide for them when they are here. The fact is that the government has not costed this out. It has not costed out the provision of language training services. Its campaign promise said that \$250 million would be dedicated to the entire Syrian refugee initiative. Yet when departmental officials appeared at committee to talk about these costs, they could not even tell members of Parliament, in a meeting to look at supplementary budget estimates, what the entire cost across government was for these programs.

From what we have heard so far, it is kind of in the neighbourhood of \$1 billion, maybe. However, what was even more concerning was when I asked officials if they had calculated the downstream costs to municipalities, for example, with school boards, or provinces, for example, of the health care system and whatnot. They could not answer that either. They had not made those calculations.

Going back to the bill, the government has fundamentally changed the pace at which refugees are brought into Canada, which is its decision. However, it also has an obligation to fundamentally change how we support refugees and then be transparent to Canadians on that costing. It sold Canadians a bill of goods by putting in its platform that \$250 million would be the total cost of this initiative, saying it was a fully costed initiative. Then it was unable to tell the committee what the costs actually were.

I spent some time in management consulting, in which people are trained to ask what services they are providing, why they are providing them, and then look at the resourcing afterward. The fact that we are not even having this conversation here tells me that the government has significantly failed in its refugee initiative. It is not just me saying this as an opposition member. These are non-partisan service groups that have come to committee, I think somewhat reluctantly, because there has been so much fanfare.

The minister got very hot under the collar when I made fun of his photo ops. I remember being at Pearson airport, watching that very glossy photo op take place. These were privately sponsored families. Why were dozens of ministers in attendance and taking photos when the focus should be on transitioning them and providing more support?

Government Orders

These agencies appeared at committee. They said they had their funding cut and they had to cut hundreds of spots for language training. One of the school boards said that it had to increase class sizes and delay maintenance on some of its buildings. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons made a comment in one of his questions to my NDP colleague, saying that the government was doing a wonderful job on the refugee initiative. We all want to help. We want to bring refugees to Canada, but the government is doing a disservice to these refugees by sort of pushing this under the rug.

This is why I think this bill has misplaced its priorities. There is going to be a significant impact on affordable housing. I know my colleague from Vancouver East said that there were several groups from the greater Vancouver area at committee talking about the lack of availability of affordable housing in that area and how the current stock that might be available did not necessarily meet the needs of large, multi-generational refugee families. One refugee said something to the effect that there were bugs in his family's apartment, that they used spray and sometimes it did not work. Is this really the life that we want for refugees when they come to Canada?

●(1615)

There is another silo that the government could have looked at in terms of its legislative or management priorities with respect to this bill, and that is the privately sponsored refugee silo. These groups of people fundraise within their community to bring refugees to Canada, to support them and integrate them into the community. They are the heroes of the refugee initiative. I hope no one would disagree with me on that. I believe the refugees that the Prime Minister took his big photo op with at Pearson airport were not government sponsored refugees but privately sponsored refugees who had been fundraised for by the community. I wish those sponsors had been in that photo op, but they were not.

Some of these groups have actually fundraised tens of thousands of dollars to bring refugee families to Canada. They were told by the government that their refugee families would arrive within a very short period of time, days or weeks. They obtained apartments, contracts for cellphone services, child care, and whatnot. We have heard numerous cases in question period. I have had dozens of requests come into my office, asking why the refugee families have not arrive. These groups have had to release the apartments and waste donor money and their efforts of goodwill.

Therefore, when we look at the experience that some of our government sponsored refugees are having with respect to having to stay in hotels for months at a time, the lack of ability to find affordable housing, the concerns we are hearing about language training services and social inclusion, the fact that the government has not married those two silos, given the rapid influx, or put any effort into bridging those gaps, has done a real disservice to the groups of people that have raised all of these funds, as well as to the refugees themselves. I wish the government had spent some time thinking about that as opposed to tabling this legislation, which I do not think helps these refugees over a longer period of time, especially given the language concerns that have been raised.

The second component I want to raise with respect to priority is another theme that we have heard over and over again at the

citizenship committee, as well as in the House of Commons. The government really has not been able to tell Canadians the criteria that it uses to prioritize refugees coming into the country. On multiple occasions, I have asked the minister and his parliamentary secretary about this.

I remember being on an interview panel with the parliamentary secretary. I asked how the government was prioritizing because there were refugees from other parts of the world as well. That is a very fair question. It is not a partisan one. When we have groups, especially these privately sponsored groups, saying that they do not understand why their applications for an Iraqi family have been rejected because the government is focusing on people from Syria or from other parts of the world, it is fair to ask what the criteria is.

However, the parliamentary secretary said that the government was treating Syrian refugees differently. What does that mean? What message are we sending Canadians? That is a very timely discussion and one that the government will have to deal with in a very short period of time. The committee has heard from refugee settlement and sponsorship groups. They are asking this question as well. I am not saying this as an attack on the government. Rather, we should not shy away from talking about this. It is important today because of the report that was issued by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Again, while the government is focusing on this bill, something really significant is happening in the world. There is a growing international consensus that ISIS, the so-called Islamic state, is committing genocide on ethnic and religious minorities.

The report today focuses specifically on Yazidis. The report states point blank that ISIS has committed the crime of genocide, as well as multiple crimes against humanity and war crimes against Yazidis, thousands of whom are held captive in the Syrian Arab Republic, where they are subjected to the most unimaginable horrors.

We had committee testimony. There was this very strange back and forth with the department officials. My colleague from Markham—Unionville asked how many persecuted Yazidis had been guaranteed permanent resident status as part of the government's Syrian refugee program.

●(1620)

Ms. Dawn Edlund from the department said "... I believe it's nine cases at the moment". This was quite shocking. The department officials said that they actually were not tracking refugees through this initiative based on their ethnicity or religious background.

Oftentimes when we talk about ethnicity or religion, it comes up in a xenophobic context. However, Canadians live in a very wonderful secular society where church and state are very much divided. We live in this wonderful pluralism. Sometimes we actually cannot comprehend that there is religious conflict in this world, that there are crimes committed against people simply because of how they worship.

Government Orders

In this case, today the UN said that the most horrific atrocities were happening to a group of people. These people are being systematically wiped off the face of the earth because of what they believe in. Therefore, it is a fair to ask the department officials, in determining who is the most vulnerable, the criteria by which refugees come to Canada. Why is the department not tracking these things? Why is there not a specific initiative set up to take the most persecuted?

We know ethnic and religious minorities cannot, and sometimes do not, present at refugee camps, which makes it impossible for the UN to register them as refugees. Therefore, when the governing party members use their talking points that they rely on the UN and its designation, sometimes we have to realize the system is not foolproof.

In this situation, I fully believe the UN criteria to bring refugees out of that area is not foolproof. We only had nine cases that the department was able to point to with respect to Yazidi refugees. That is out of tens of thousands of people who were brought to Canada. This tells me the government is not doing its job in bringing the most persecuted here to Canada.

Again, I would encourage the government not to shy away from this. The government has a lot of opportunity here and a lot of goodwill from Canadians to continue the refugee initiative. However, I would encourage it to ensure it stays effective and that Canada does its best to bring those most persecuted people here.

The UN put forward several recommendations today to the international community. Some of these could be very important priorities for the government. I hope it takes these to heart and acts on them quickly. Again, this is why I find it surprising that we are debating some of the form and substance of the bill today. These recommendations were to recognize ISIS' commission of the crime of genocide against the Yazidis of Sinjar. There are many recommendations in here, but the one that struck me the most was to accelerate the asylum applications of Yazidi victims of genocide.

There are ways that we can do that. Section 25 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act includes a provision by which we can set up a special program to bring internally displaced persons to Canada in a very short, immediate period of time. We have asked the Prime Minister and the minister if they would consider doing that for this group. Their response has been to turn a blind eye to religion and just look at the UNHCR guidelines.

I understand what they are trying to do, but, again, from the bottom of my heart, we have a duty to these people. Their ethnicity and religion is why they are dying. Therefore, we cannot turn a blind eye to that. This is not xenophobic; it is stating fact.

In conclusion, I am disappointed in the bill. At the end of the day, when we look at citizenship, we want to ensure we benefit from those who come to Canada and their richness of experience. They in turn benefit from Canada with respect to their experience of having a full life that is free, with freedom of opportunity, free to love whom one wants, and free to pursue whatever opportunity. However, we need to empower them to do that, and a lot of the measures in the bill frankly do not do that.

We should be talking more about support. We should be talking more about how we support these people and the fact that the government has drastically altered the immigration levels of our country. This is where I see the bill falling short.

● (1625)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just listened to a presentation of the most revised history I think I have ever heard in this place. It was the government opposite 10 years ago that cut \$56 million from settlement services in this country. The government opposite did that. The Conservative Party stood in the House and walked away from subsidizing affordable housing, but not only did that, did not build it. When the Conservatives took office, the wait list in Toronto was 76,000 persons, largely the result of a provincial Conservative government. When they left office, it was 97,000 households. If there is no affordable housing in this country, Conservatives ought to look in the mirror and explain to themselves what they did not do over the last 10 years.

The process of settling immigrants and refugees is something this party takes very seriously. We can see it in the infrastructure investments produced in the budget. We can see it in the investments to land 25,000 Syrian refugees in short order, a process the Conservatives opposed. They wanted fewer refugees and to bring them here much more slowly. The reason there was no housing and the reason there was not adequate immigrant support, in particular language studies, is because that party spent 10 years decimating the system to land people.

How does the member justify her comments when her party's record is exactly the issue that she is criticizing?

● (1630)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I am sure this summer the member opposite will hear from his constituents. Many of the groups who came to our committee to express disappointment with the government's support services were actually from the community in his riding, so I encourage him to reach out to them.

However, he raised the issue of revisionist history, so I have some more recent history I would like to bring up for him. Late last week in the House he said, "Mr. Speaker, the members opposite seem to think that if they say the word genocide three times, spin around in a circle, and click their heels, suddenly something stops."

He is talking about revisionist history, but I think this comment was one of the most shameful and disgusting comments I have heard in the House of Commons in the last five years. I hope at some point if he has children, or if there are people looking at *Hansard* in years to come, that he stands and apologizes for that comment so that future generations of his or his constituents will not have to revise history for him.

Government Orders

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a person who worked in immigrant services under the former government, let me say that it is a nice change to hear that the Conservatives are listening to the service providers.

I want to point out that in the year prior to the present government, the Conservative government cut settlement services across the board by 7%. I certainly from that perspective do not appreciate the further 6.5% cut, if we look at that very high percentage cut from settlement services. This is also the former government that had barbaric practices, implemented a two-tier system of citizenship, and created a sense in the services and the people that I served that this was not a friendly country anymore.

How has listening to service providers so very carefully made the member reflect on her previous government's actions?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, on June 12, 2010, an expansion of the resettlement program was announced. The resettlement target was increased by 2,500, which means that 500 more government-assisted refugees and 2,000 privately sponsored refugees would have been resettled on an annual basis. That was done under our government.

More importantly, as opposed to what my colleague just said, funding for the resettlement assistance program, which offers income support and immediate essential services to resettle government-assisted refugees from overseas, was increased for the first time in 10 years by about \$9 million a year. Someone else was in government at that time.

In terms of being welcoming to new Canadians, the record under our government was the fact that we had the highest levels of immigration in 70 years, significantly more than Canada accepted under the Trudeau, Chrétien, and Martin Liberal governments.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her speech, but I think there are a couple of things she missed. To set the record straight, within six years of the previous government, Conservatives brought in only 23,000 Iraqi refugees and 2,000 Syrian refugees in 2013. Our government since November 4, 2015, brought in 27,000 Syrian refugees.

In the Waterloo region, immigrants have been welcomed and have been receiving language training. Some are working during the day and taking language training at night. The member also mentioned humans being not numbers on a scorecard and that we have to provide for them. What about the interim federal health program that the previous government cut for Syrian refugees, leaving the refugees vulnerable?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, many of the complaints that have come before committee have been from groups in the broader region of the member opposite's constituency.

A Liberal member of Parliament asked the federal government to investigate a complaint signed by more than 20 Syrian refugees who said they were mistreated by the city's main settlement agency.

My colleague talked about numbers on a scorecard but he then cited numbers as the key metric. He was not even talking about how many refugees were employed, or how many would have to go on

social insurance, or how many had learned a language, which I find shameful. That is going to be the government's key problem on this file as we go into World Refugee Day on Monday.

Ahead of World Refugee Day, I would like to give a shout-out to all of the settlement services groups that provide services.

With regard to the health care program for refugees, the reality is that there are people who apply under the refugee program who are not legitimate refugees. Those people cost Canadian taxpayers money to process and remove from this country. Our party believes that those refugees who come to Canada who have legitimate claims, certainly the Syrian refugees we see here, are the people we should be providing health care services to. We should not be providing health care services to claimants who are not legitimate refugees.

• (1635)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member talked about an increase in services. She also mentioned that the Conservatives would support increased funding for that.

My colleague also talked about an increase in privately sponsored refugees. We have some groups in our riding that privately sponsor refugees and they would like to support more. I am glad to hear that the Conservatives will support that increase.

Does the member have any comments on the technical aspects of the legislation?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the first part of my colleague's statement, I am concerned about the Liberals' first response on this. They actually do not know how much this program is costing them right now and they do not know where the money is going. Settlement services groups are telling us that their funding has been cut and yet the minister stood up in the House and said that he has increased funding for settlement services.

I would not support any sort of financial plan that the Liberals would put forward unless I had a forensic auditor look at it first. I want to be absolutely clear on that, because the Liberals do not have any sort of credibility on costing for this file given that they only put \$250 million in their fully costed campaign platform.

With regard to the technical components of the bill, there are some aspects regarding document seizures. With regard to the document seizure components, we are on the record in committee as a party that supports them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is taking a number of initiatives with respect to this legislation. The member talked at length about the federal government's attempt with respect to refugees. We need to recognize that Canada will receive in excess of 250,000 immigrants and when we factor in the refugees, that number is probably going to get closer to 300,000.

Government Orders

When the Conservatives were in government they did not feel it was appropriate to provide the type of settlement services that would assist people in learning English or French. Could the member provide comment on that?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, it was our government that increased funding to the resettlement assistance program and that was the first time funding had been increased in that program in over 10 years, which was of course during the tenure of the previous Liberal government. We have a pretty strong record on that.

The fact that the Liberal government has not consulted with the provinces and municipalities about the downstream costs of providing health care services, affordable housing, as well as support at the primary education level, is concerning.

I have been waiting for a question from the member opposite for some time and I am glad I had one today. Regardless of political stripes, I would like to congratulate his daughter for being elected in the Manitoba election. When women are added, politics are changed.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, the Senate; the hon. member for Carleton, Small Business; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Human Rights.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Willowdale.

I rise to speak to Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another act. Bill C-6 would make specific and targeted changes to legislation passed by the previous government in Bill C-24. The objectives of those targeted changes are twofold.

Before I expand on those two objectives, I wish to state the following. We live in the best country on the planet: Canada, which we share with our first nations and on whose shores generation after generation landed. We are a Canada of first nations, immigrants and refugees, and their progeny. These were and are freedom's shores and the land of opportunity. It is a great privilege and good fortune to be a citizen of our country.

I state this as the son and grandson of refugees. Both of my parents and all four of my grandparents were refugees who arrived from displaced persons camps. My paternal grandmother called Canada freedom's shores, where everyone was equal before the law and where for the first time in her life she had the vote. She had a voice as an equal citizen. It is with this very personal legacy in mind that I speak to Bill C-6.

One of the two objectives of Bill C-6 is to make the journey toward citizenship less onerous and to bring it back to the standards and requirements of a system that worked well previously. There are changes such as reducing the length of time required to be physically present in Canada to qualify for citizenship. It would be reverted back to three of five years as opposed to four of six. It would also allow time in Canada before permanent residency to count as half-days toward the physical presence requirement. This would allow

people who came here to study or work, or are under protected persons status the comfort of knowing that they are welcome to begin the process toward citizenship. As well, it would amend the age range for language and knowledge requirements from age 14 to 64 back to the previous 18 to 54 age requirement. These are important changes.

However, the most important objective of Bill C-6 is to address the dangerous precedent set by Bill C-24, which created two classes of citizen: first-class citizenship for those who obtained citizenship through birthright; and second-class, revokable citizenship for those became citizens by choice, often by difficult choice and through hard work.

During the last election campaign, our Prime Minister and the Liberal Party of Canada made clear to the millions of Canadians whose citizenship had been denigrated to second-class status and done so retroactively by the previous government's Bill C-24 that we would rescind the offending clauses of that legislation. Simply put, under a Liberal government a Canadian would be a Canadian would be a Canadian once again.

A foundational principle of western liberal democracies is the concept of *égalité*: that every citizen is equal before the law and is to be treated equally by the law. No citizen has an inherent birthright privilege. This runs counter to historical feudal notions of hierarchical rights granted to different groups based upon birth: caste born into; ethnicity born into; wealth born into; or, in the extreme, the birthright of royalty and the absolute, the divine right of kings. In the liberal democratic west, we are beneficiaries of a system built upon the sacrifices of those who revolted against the injustice of feudal birthright inequality.

The concept of equality was at the core of the French and American revolutions and succinctly put into the American Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson, who wrote, "all men are created equal". I would with humility paraphrase today that all humans are created equal.

In Canada, the principle is enshrined in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We live under a system of rule of law. However, all laws must subscribe to the fundamental principles of the Charter of Rights.

● (1640)

When expert witnesses appeared before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration during our review of Bill C-6, I asked the panellists, those who both criticized and supported the Conservative Bill C-24, a simple question: "One of the fundamental principles of our justice system is that every citizen is treated equally before the law... Do you subscribe to this principle?" I asked for a simple yes or no.

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Surprisingly, both critics and proponents of Bill C-24 responded yes. Only one did not state yes, prevaricating that “For me, it really reflects...the force of that argument, of the position the government has staked out. I still think there are circumstances in which the breach is so fundamental that it requires some other remedy...”.

Even within this prevarication, the only “no” among the witnesses to “should every citizen be treated equally before the law”, one finds an embedded logical disconnect. If the breach is so fundamental that it requires some other remedy, as was stated, should this other remedy, assuming it is a more arduous legal penalty for a fundamental breach, not apply to a Canadian-born terrorist or person engaged in treason, as well?

However, there are other rational disconnects and legal, ethical pitfalls to this section of Bill C-24; for instance, the penalty for a terrorist or treasonous individual who is a dual citizen of a country that is a state sponsor of terror. What would deportation to such a country result in? Would it be a hero's welcome?

On the other end of the spectrum, would we strip Canadian citizenship and deport to a country that subscribes to torture or a country in whose prisons individuals “disappear”?

The question then becomes this. Why did the Conservative government, in the year leading up to an election year, enact a law so deeply flawed; a law that not only offends the fundamental principle of equality before the law; a law that would not stand up to a charter challenge; a law whose penalty in practice could create moral jeopardy or lack of consequence?

Perhaps the answer lies in the observation that it was the same governing group that established a snitch line for barbaric cultural practices during the last federal election campaign—a slightly more camouflaged attempt at the dangerous politics of division and demagoguery that we are currently seeing in the lead-up to the U.S. presidential election.

However, would a Canadian government knowingly resort to undermining the fundamental principle of equality before the law for electoral gain?

As our Prime Minister pointed out not long ago in this House, it was the same Conservative Party that took away the fundamental right to vote from Canadians in the 2011 election.

During the election campaign, I was proud to be part of a team that pledged to do politics differently; whose leader would not succumb to the temptation of dividing Canadians against themselves; who spoke to our better angels.

As I speak today, I think back to the principles my grandmother imbued me with. She was a hard-working refugee who loved her Canada, who loved our Canada, a country that, for the first time in her life, had given her a voice and the same equal rights of every other citizen. She never missed a vote, and she taught her grandchildren to stand against the injustice of inequality, which had been her lot in life prior to landing on freedom's shores.

Our government, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration worked hard and diligently on this legislation.

It is with pride that, this upcoming Canada Day, we will be able to declare that our Prime Minister and our government have fulfilled their commitment and under the current government, once again, in Canada, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

• (1645)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. However, we are aware of many Canadians who have given a lot of money and set aside hours of time to sponsor private refugees coming into Canada. There is a church in my area that has raised over \$70,000, already spent over \$7,000 that is gone, and still no sign of the refugee family.

I wonder what my colleague, who I believe sits on the immigration committee, would recommend to clear up this backlog of mismatch between people who are waiting for a refugee family and refugee families who have been waiting in some cases up to six months, have been cleared at all security and health clearances, and yet no action? I wonder if my colleague would have some recommendations for us.

• (1650)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak to this issue. We heard one of our previous Conservative colleagues call our electoral pledge to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees—among the most vulnerable on the planet today—a “shameful” pledge. It was inspirational. We stepped up at a time when people were vulnerable. Everyone remembers those awful images of dead bodies washing up on Europe's shores.

We made a pledge. Yes, it is a significant number. We made that pledge knowing that things would not work out perfectly, that there would be problems. However, today before the committee we have heard from refugees who landed in Canada, thankful for the opportunity and explaining that perhaps certain things are not quite perfect. That is to be expected, and that is the role of the committee, to help in this process. The minister has expressed his interest in hearing this testimony so that we can make this process easier. These individuals have lived through horrors. We should really do our best to make sure they can begin a new life in our country.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend and hon. colleague from Etobicoke Centre for his excellent speech and his points on equality. I know him to be one of the House's most ardent and dedicated champions of democracy and human rights here at home and around the world.

I wonder if he could take a few moments to let the House know about the feedback that he received on Bill C-6 from leaders in his riding who have come from elsewhere, whether it be Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, or other parts of the world. What has he heard from them about the direction we are taking in Bill C-6?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from across, but from the same party, for his question and also for the tremendous work he has done over the years in the Middle East.

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Often this term is not used correctly, but the GTA is unique in the fact that half of our population was born outside our country. Half of the citizenry of this megalopolis of the GTA, 6.5 million people, were born outside of Canada. They feel it. They understand this. When Bill C-24 was enacted, all of a sudden they felt somehow they did not have the same equal rights to citizenship as their children, for instance, would have.

Therefore, people were extremely happy that under a Liberal government we delivered on our commitment. It will be a proud moment this Canada Day when in Etobicoke Centre we once again swear in new Canadian citizens and we can say, “Welcome. In Canada a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian”.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of Bill C-6. I will be using my time today to obviously outline why I support this bill, but also why these changes are deeply needed to improve the Citizenship Act as it stands today. I will be splitting my time with the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

This bill fulfills many of our campaign commitments that we promised during the recent election, when our party was given the honour to serve as the government. If we look back to the campaign, in my riding of Brampton South, I heard a lot about the Conservatives' approach to immigration. I heard, loud and clear, that their approach pitted groups against one another. It was not about bringing people together. Simply, people told me it was slow.

In the first few months of our government, we have chosen different priorities. We are focused on reuniting spouses and families. We are focused on reducing the backlog. We are focused on a more compassionate approach to refugees. This is why we have taken in many refugees, notably from the Syrian communities, but we also continue to take in refugees from many countries at an exceptional pace of processing.

Immigration is the number one topic I hear about in my constituency office. It is what I hear about all the time, because we live in a globalized world where the links are local through technology to places all over the world.

I do not hear about vague economic ties. It is people's family member, friend, or small business that connects them. Immigration, the movement of people, is at the core of that relationship. The connection our country holds with other countries is enriched and built by individuals. It is about people. Everyone deserves dignity and a fair chance to succeed.

Under the previous Conservative government, the system was broken. It was hard for people to reunite with families, and they were made to feel as if seniors and youth were not worthwhile pushing for.

I will be honest. We should be creating an immigration system that is working for everyone and working in a timely way. The minister's job, and something this minister has been particularly good at it, is to create a fair and just system. A fair system is compassionate, timely, and ensures people have a clear understanding.

Now with Bill C-6, our government is making changes to improve the system. Our government is reducing wait times, shrinking backlogs, and working hard to prioritize people who need us the most. We can be proud of that system and these changes.

Since June 2015, adult applicants are required to declare, on their citizenship applications, that they intend to continue to reside in Canada if granted citizenship. The provision created concern among some new Canadians who feared their citizenship could be revoked in the future if they moved outside of Canada.

The government is proposing to repeal this provision. All Canadians are free to move outside or within Canada. This is a right guaranteed in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Bill C-6 would also improve the lives of permanent residents, who would have one less year to wait before being able to apply for citizenship. They would be able to count time they spent physically in Canada before acquiring permanent resident status.

I want to applaud the amendments that came forward at committee. They protect groups and people who need protection, particularly stateless people. I further want to applaud the inclusion of a focus on people with disability. This is a stated priority of our government.

I am pleased to see that, as MPs, we are working together to meet these stated goals. This is about people. I am also pleased to see changes to the language requirements in this bill, which would remove potential barriers to citizenships for seniors and youth who apply. This would make a real difference in the lives of many who are seeking to reunite with family or their spouse.

In May 2015, legislative changes came into effect that created new grounds for citizenship revocation and allowed citizenship to be taken away from dual citizens for certain acts against the national interest of Canada.

●(1655)

These grounds include convictions for terrorism, high treason, treason or spying offences, depending on the sentence received, or membership in an armed force engaged in armed conflict with Canada.

This bill is sensitive to some who were convinced in the previous government's time that terrorists on Canadian soil with dual citizenship could be shipped off because Canada was sending a tough message to terrorists abroad. However, that shirks our responsibility to deal with these people ourselves. It says that our own system is not strong and capable enough and that the person is not a homegrown terrorist. That speaks to an experience others could be having here in Canada. If we have people reading ISIL propaganda here in Canada and plotting, we need to deal with those people and that reality ourselves.

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We have had a few examples of this in the past couple of years. We need to tackle the fact that this mentality and this problem is not isolated elsewhere. We cannot just ship off our problems. A Canadian, despite what the person may have done, is still a Canadian and should be dealt with in Canada.

However, the ability to revoke citizenship when it becomes known that it was obtained by false representation, by fraud, or by knowingly concealing material circumstances will necessarily remain in place.

The minister would continue to have the authority to revoke citizenship in basic fraud cases, such as identity and residence fraud, and the Federal Court would continue to have the authority to revoke citizenship in cases where the fraud was in relation to concealing serious inadmissibilities concerning security, human or international rights violations, war crimes, and organized crime. I think all hon. members would agree that no one should be rewarded with Canadian citizenship if they attempt to obtain it through false pretenses.

Bill C-6 is a comprehensive bill that deals with outstanding issues, but it also pushes us forward. Many permanent residents in my riding of Brampton South are looking forward to being given credit for time spent in the country before becoming citizens.

This is what real change looks like, and I am pleased that we are discussing all of these issues. Together we can ensure a Canada that is both diverse and inclusive. We will continue to ensure the safety and security of Canadians.

In fact, on a related note, I want to applaud the announcement of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness yesterday on border exits, which will go a long way in further benefiting our immigration system. Announcements like this are what working together in government looks like.

Bill C-6 is the right bill at this time to fix a system that is not inclusive, not focused on people, and not processing things fast enough for the people affected on the ground, like the people in my riding of Brampton South. I know that they want this bill passed at the earliest opportunity and want to see a system that is fair. I look forward to voting for this bill. I hope all honourable members will be doing the same.

• (1700)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to the member's speech. There has been a lot of talk about which aspects of the broken immigration system we should fix first, and I am wondering if the member agrees that Bill C-6 is a really good place to start, given the enormous breakage that was left by the previous government.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-6 would ensure the safety and security of all Canadians. The proposed changes would not compromise the security of Canadians. That is something this government is wholeheartedly committed to. This bill is focused on removing the fear the Conservatives had been spreading and would bring in a solid system that is strong in the face of concern abroad.

Canada remains a welcoming, open symbol to the world. That is something I am very proud of, because a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have certainly dined out on the phrase “A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian” for several months now, but that is not actually the case.

The minister has indicated that he is looking to remove the citizenship of dual Canadian citizens if they commit fraud. If someone is a convicted terrorist who commits terrorism against Canada or Canadian interests, that is okay. That person can always remain Canadian, because a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, even if the person is a terrorist. However, if people commit fraud, then the Liberal government will come against them.

Which one is it, and why the inconsistency?

• (1705)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, in Bill C-6, as I said, we are looking at that option.

During the campaign, we talked a lot about how the Conservatives offered a two-tier citizenship plan. They think a minister should be able to say who is Canadian and who is not. Despite what anyone has done, one is still Canadian and should face the full force of our legal system.

We believe that we should deal with homegrown terrorists here in Canada, not strip them of one of their two citizenships so they can be shipped off somewhere.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the last Conservative government, we saw a huge increase in fees for people who are applying for citizenship. I am just wondering if the member can let us know what the government's plan is on potentially decreasing these.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, the bill was what we promised in the campaign and what Canadians endorsed. It is more fair for the people affected. That is what I am focused on, and that is what the people of Brampton South expect me to focus on.

We said that we would shorten processing times and get rid of the two-tier Conservative system. That is what our government said we would do. It is what Canadians expect us to do, and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Perhaps I will try again, Mr. Speaker.

The member has just said a number of times that they are eliminating two-tier citizenship, but that is simply not true.

We understand that the Liberals, no matter what terrorist act an individual commits against this country as a dual citizen, will protect the citizenship of that terrorist, but they will not protect the citizenship of someone who commits fraud. Why is fraud a more serious crime against one's citizenship than terrorism?

Why are the Liberals having a dual-citizenship, dual-track, two-tier system for those who commit fraud?

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Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, in Bill C-6, we feel that the challenges in the immigration system matter to those people I meet in my constituency. This is the bill for those people who have a deep love for Canada.

The bill proposes to allow applicants to receive credit for the time they have been legally in Canada before becoming permanent residents. This change is intended to help attract international students and experienced workers to Canada. This is a plan that is good for our economy and the inclusivity of our society.

Again, I hope all members will support Bill C-6.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my serious concerns about Bill C-6.

Canada is the greatest and the most generous nation in the world. Our diversity is our competitive advantage, and having strong evidence-based immigration policies is vital as we continue that tradition.

We must have the right policies in place to ensure that Canadians and new Canadians can take pride in their citizenship for generations to come. However, the Liberals have literally ignored this fact, despite their commitment to transparent evidence-based policies. The Liberal government has consistently demonstrated the exact opposite since coming to power. They are recklessly politicizing Canada's immigration policy, despite the important role it plays in safeguarding the future security and prosperity of all Canadians.

The bill before us would reverse changes to the Citizenship Act enacted by our previous government, with the most notable changes being the ability of the government to revoke the citizenship of a dual national convicted of a terrorist act and the requirement that new Canadians sign an oath declaring that they intend to reside in Canada.

We believe that new Canadians enrich and strengthen our country. Their experiences and perspectives make us stronger. Immigration is an important part of who we are as a nation and of the strength of our nation's future. We want newcomers to Canada to have every opportunity to succeed, with opportunities for economic success, the experience of our many freedoms, and the experience of safe communities.

However, I am concerned that the Liberals' first priority, when it comes to tabling immigration and public safety legislation, is to effectively give back citizenship and protect the rights of a convicted member of the Toronto 18, Zakaria Amara. Bill C-6 would overturn the previous rule of stripping Canadians of their citizenship if they are charged with plotting against their adopted country. These charges include treason, acts of terrorism, and armed conflict against Canadians. As members can see, these are very specific instances.

It is baffling to me that the Liberal government would prioritize restoring Canadian citizenship to Zakaria Amara. Mr. Amara has so far been the only individual whose Canadian citizenship has been revoked under the changes made by the previous Conservative government.

To provide some context as to why this is important to me and to Ontarians, Mr. Amara had been previously sentenced to life in prison for his role in a bomb plot against a number of high-profile targets in

Toronto and southern Ontario. This included a plan to rent U-Haul trucks, pack them with explosives, and detonate them via remote control in the Toronto area. Police thwarted the plot when they arrested Amara and 17 other people in the summer of 2006.

For many families, including mine, the news of the plot was very unsettling. Why would the Liberal government make these changes and not consider the opinions of Canadians in the GTA and how it would impact them, given what happened a decade ago? Other experts in the field have similar views.

● (1710)

Ms. Sheryl Saperia, director of policy for Canada for the Foundation for Defense of Democracies does not believe the provision should be repealed. In committee testimony, she stated that in cases where the crime is not just a crime under the Canadian Criminal Code but a crime against Canada as a national entity, by virtue of a person's actions, this might forfeit the right to Canadian citizenship. She said:

This has nothing to do with discrimination. This has nothing to do with putting up roadblocks, certainly not for any particular community. This is about people's actions. What they choose to do has certain consequences, which may include the revocation of citizenship.

She continues to claim, "I believe that, when people commit a crime against the country itself, then they are potentially forfeiting their right to that citizenship." She also believes that it is not unreasonable to revoke citizenship for someone who is convicted for crimes of treason, espionage, armed conflict, and terrorism against Canada.

Finally, she states:

I don't believe that Canadian citizenship should just be so easy to receive. I believe it is truly a privilege and a gift. Canada is the most wonderful country in the world to live in. I don't believe it is unreasonable to create minimal standards for what it takes to retain that citizenship. I stand by my defence of the ability to revoke citizenship for those crimes against Canada....

Furthermore, when Mr. Shimon Fogel, chief executive officer of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, last appeared before the committee to testify regarding the previous Conservative government's Bill C-24, he articulated a position in support of the revocation of citizenship from dual national Canadians who have committed certain offences including terrorism offences. This position was a reflection of his belief that in the case of certain particularly heinous political crimes, the perpetrator is actually guilty of two distinct offences. First, they are guilty of the particular crime they have committed. Second, they are guilty of the fundamental betrayal of the core values on which Canadian citizenship is based.

To quote Mr. Fogel:

Our support for this provision [to revoke citizenship] reflects the desire to address not just the crime but also the grievous insult to Canada and Canadian identity that has taken place.

There is only one class of Canadian citizen and all Canadians deserve to be protected from acts of terror. It is also extremely worrying that under the bill a dual national's citizenship cannot be revoked for committing a terrorist act, but can be for simple fraud.

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Bill C-6 also removes the requirement that an applicant intends, if granted citizenship, to continue to reside in Canada. Applicants for Canadian citizenship will no longer need to intend to remain in Canada upon gaining citizenship.

I believe that new Canadians enrich and strengthen our country. Their experiences and perspectives make us stronger. Immigration is an important part of who we are as a nation and the strength of our nation's future. We want newcomers to Canada to have every opportunity to succeed: opportunities for economic success, the experience of our many freedoms, and the experience of safe communities.

• (1715)

The “intent to reside” provision likely does not restrict mobility rights guaranteed under the charter and instead reinforces the expectation that citizenship is for those who intend to make Canada their permanent home. We hope that those seeking Canadian citizenship intend to bring their personal experiences and contributions to our country and enrich it by residing here.

In addition, Bill C-6 seeks to reduce the number of days during which a person must have been physically present in Canada before applying for citizenship. Under the existing Citizenship Act, the physical presence requirement was fulfilled if an applicant resided in Canada for 183 days in the four out of six years prior to making a citizenship application. The Liberal government proposed changes to reduce the physical presence requirement to three out of five years before the date of application.

We want newcomers to Canada to be successful and experience all that Canada has to offer. The longer an individual lives, works, or studies in Canada, the better connection that person will have to our beautiful and special country. I believe that strong residency requirements promote integration and a greater attachment to Canada. Participation in Canadian life for a significant period of time before they become citizens helps enrich both their experience and our country's future.

Finally, Bill C-6 limits the requirement to demonstrate a knowledge of Canada and of one of its official languages to applicants between the ages of 18 and 54 from the current ages of 14 to 64.

I cannot emphasize enough my belief that an adequate knowledge of either French or English is a key factor in successful integration into our communities and the labour force.

When I arrived in Canada, I began working in a factory. At the time, I was shy and spoke limited English. I have said this before and I will say it again. As a result, I had to rely on those around me to help me communicate with both my co-workers and supervisors. One day I needed help to ask my supervisor for some nails to complete the project I was working on. The young man I asked for help responded by demanding that I buy him lunch first. In this way, I was made to purchase lunch for this young man every day just to keep my job.

This is a situation that I hope other new Canadians never have to find themselves in. For myself and many others, learning the language allowed me to move past this difficult situation, further my own career opportunities, build a number of successful businesses,

provide for my family, and support my own children as they pursue their hopes and dreams.

It is because of this experience that I support the immigration language requirements as they currently exist within the Canadian Citizenship Act. To change these provisions without thoughtful evidence-based research is both reckless and irresponsible. As I have repeatedly said, we want newcomers to Canada to have every opportunity to succeed, opportunities for economic success, and the experience of safe communities. Adequate knowledge of either English or French is a key factor in successful integration into our communities and labour force. Language proficiency promotes integration and a greater attachment to Canada. Proficiency in our official languages helps enrich both their experience and our country's future.

• (1720)

Does the Liberal government not value immigration and new Canadians enough to prioritize their successful integration? Are new Canadians simply a number in a politicized immigration levels plan, tabled without thought to what their lives will look like once they receive Canadian citizenship?

Part of successful integration is the opportunity to pursue meaningful employment. When questioned by committee members if any quantifiable consultation had been done into the economic implications of reducing language requirements, the Minister of Immigration answered that his government had not done so. My caucus colleagues and I demand the government implement sound, well-researched policies. The changes to the Citizenship Act as outlined in Bill C-6 fail on all fronts.

• (1725)

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that those who have committed treason or terrorism and are convicted of doing so face tough punishment and should be punished. There is, however, a problem under Bill C-24. That is why Bill C-6 seeks to revoke the two-tier citizenship.

Does the member opposite subscribe to equality before the law? Does he believe that in the eyes of the law each and every person should be treated the same way, should be put through due process, and should have fairness and justice under the law?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, absolutely, we believe in the system of due process. However, one thing I would tell my hon. friend is I would not like my family living next door to Zakaria Amara.

This is a special case. When someone comes to our country, lives in our country, and we provide the whole situation for this person, and he has no respect for our country, for human values, or our infrastructure, that person has given up his citizenship of our country by his choice, not by our judicial system.

It is not our choice, nor my choice. As far as I am concerned, he committed the crimes and he is going to pay for it.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I do not understand why the member insists on defending provisions that, according to the testimony of many experts from various groups, likely violate the charter, do not comply with international law, and will result in many constitutional challenges. Those groups include the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Barreau du Québec, the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, and UNICEF. How can he defend these provisions?

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, as far as I understand, the same provision is applied by Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and many other countries. It is also pretty similar in the U.S.

To finish up on the topic, usually they throw the bombs from a drone. I think it is a fair deal looking at regular, hard-working Canadians. The people who commit that sort of crime, in my judgment, have forfeited their rights.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for sharing some of his thoughts and experiences.

There seems to be a pattern here. We have a Liberal government that refuses to call genocide, genocide. We have a government that is so consumed with political correctness that it forgets what the everyday Canadian thinks about and is concerned about.

We all agree that with Canadian citizenship comes rights and responsibilities. The Liberals believe that as well, because there are instances where they are not changing the legislation whereby citizens would have their citizenship revoked. There are certain things that in the view of the Liberals constitute having citizenship revoked.

Why would the Liberals not think that somebody who commits an act of terrorism against Canada should have his or her citizenship revoked, but there are other circumstances where it would be all right? Why do the Liberals want to protect the citizenship of terrorists but not other types of criminal activity?

• (1730)

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, I am also puzzled by the same situation. I had a call two weeks back from somebody in Scarborough. The person claimed that somebody had made a minor mistake on an application for citizenship 25 years ago. That individual has kids and grandkids and has been told that he has to leave the country.

The member talked about balance. Bill C-6 has no balance. Is committing fraud worse than committing a crime against humanity or a crime against the country?

I talked to another colleague who said that nothing has changed in Bill C-6 compared to Bill C-24. Before the Conservatives took office, the citizenship application fee was \$1,500. We brought that down by \$500. The Liberal government has not brought anything down.

There are many other issues—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Maybe the member could include that in his next remarks.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kitchener South—Hespeler.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Madam Speaker, everyone in the House would agree that the main argument the Conservatives are giving is that they want to keep Canadians safe, and I understand that argument. Do they not feel that all Canadians who commit crimes should face the consequences of their actions through the Canadian judicial system? That would keep Canadians safe. If someone commits a crime, that individual should be subject to our judicial system and should be put in prison. That would keep everyone safe.

My colleague mentioned the Toronto 18. I want to give him an example. A family comes to Canada. One child was born overseas and another child was born in Canada. Say both of those children committed a crime here. Under our Canadian judicial system would they both not be considered equal under our laws? Under Bill C-24, one of those children would have citizenship revoked but the other would not. That would not be considered equal justice under the law.

I wonder if the member could comment on that.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, I have given at least two examples. My friend is on the same committee and we hear the same thing time after time. If somebody commits a crime against humanity, revocation of citizenship is valid as far as I am concerned. As I mentioned, a number of other countries, Australia, New Zealand, England and so on, do it.

Regarding the example of those two kids. Only the parents would be affected. The kids would stay in the country. There is no doubt in my mind that those kids' crimes would have nothing to do with the parents. If the parents committed a crime, then they should pay for it.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's comments.

I asked the Liberal member for Brampton South earlier why the Liberals were okay with protecting dual citizenship when it came to terrorism, but when it came to fraud, they wanted to allow those citizens to have their citizenship stripped.

It seems they are in favour of two-tiered citizenship. If people are terrorists, the Liberals will make sure to protect their citizenship. If people are fraudsters, though, the Liberals might still go after them.

I also wanted to get his comments on a recent case in Denmark, where a terrorist, a dual citizen of Denmark, had his citizenship stripped after he committed terrorist acts and plotted against Denmark.

Perhaps the member could talk about that kind of a progressive country having that sort of law and that sort of system, as well as the Liberals' hypocrisy on dual track citizenship.

• (1735)

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, it seems, from past experience, that the Liberals are always on the aggressor's side but never on the victim's side. This is what our party and Conservative MPs bring, they are more for the victims rather than the aggressors.

Going back to Denmark, and many other countries, that sort of punishment makes a difference. That sort of thing puts fear in their minds that if they do certain things, they will no longer be living in this country of Denmark or wherever.

This is exactly why the Conservative Party of Canada brought in Bill C-24. It was to put the fear in those people who want to commit crimes against humanity, against Canada, against all those things. We want to make sure the fear is there so they do not commit those crimes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:37 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

SAFE AND REGULATED SPORTS BETTING ACT

The House resumed from April 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-221, an act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to private member's bill, Bill C-221. After carefully considering the bill and reviewing the earlier debate on the subject, I want to advise the House that I cannot and will not be supporting it. The bill would amend the Criminal Code to authorize a province or territory to conduct betting on a single sporting event, which is sometimes called "head-to-head betting". Bill C-221 would essentially replicate former Bill C-290 of the previous Parliament.

The bill would delete paragraph 207(4)(b) of the Criminal Code, meaning that the current prohibition on provinces and territories against conducting single-event sports betting would be removed. Currently, section 207 of the Criminal Code authorizes provinces and territories to conduct betting on multiple sporting events, which is normally called "parlay betting". The current gambling provisions in the Criminal Code criminalize all other forms of gambling, except those that are specifically authorized by the Criminal Code.

I understand that the provinces and territories would stand to gain a substantial increase in gambling revenues if Bill C-221 were to pass. For casinos that have proximity to a city in the United States that has no legal, single-event sports betting, there could be a strong market advantage. Canadian border cities with casinos might see some additional economic development benefits.

While I appreciate the economic advantages that the proposed reform could bring about, the big concern I have to share is the impact that this proposed change could have on individuals and families, the social costs of gaming.

Private Members' Business

I would like, now, to turn to the very important issue of gambling addiction.

The dangers involved with gambling addictions are serious and profound. Problem gambling is associated with mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and suicide. It can also affect family and marital relationships, work and academic performance, loss of material possessions, and it can lead to bankruptcy and, certainly, crime.

Provinces and territories spend millions of dollars toward the prevention and treatment of problem gambling. They offer a variety of services and treatments that have been derived from many different methods of counselling and therapy to assist those who have a compulsive gambling problem, as well as family members of those who suffer from this problem.

Youth are particularly vulnerable to the problems arising from gambling. A 2014 study by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, CAMH, in Toronto, found that 35% of students in grades 7 to 12 gambled at least once in the past year. Another study found that a quarter of Ontario students with gambling problems reported a suicide attempt in the past year, roughly 18 times higher than in the general population.

I believe that if Bill C-221 were to pass, the costs to the provinces and territories would inevitably increase. More important, the cost to individuals, families, and society would increase.

We must also consider the issue of illegal bookmaking. Illegal bookmakers enjoy a monopoly on single-event sports betting. Police report that bookmakers are connected to organized crime.

We know that numerous Canadians illegally bet on single-event games. In my view, even if Bill C-221 were to pass, the vast majority of those who bet with illegal bookmakers would continue to do so. This is because bookmakers extend their credit directly to the bettor, unlike the provinces and territories. Illegal bookmakers also have lower overhead costs and can offer more favourable betting odds. Bill C-221 would do nothing to change the attractions offered by illegal bookmakers.

Sports leagues are rightly concerned to ensure that there is no match fixing. Professional sports leagues previously have strongly opposed similar bills. They have argued that allowing single-game betting would open a Pandora's box of match fixing and social problems associated with gambling. The integrity of sport is critical to maintaining the interest, respect, and loyalty of sports fans.

In my view, while the sponsor's stated objectives are indeed laudable, the proposals would not achieve the desired objectives without doing significant harm to society and increasing the already high social costs of gambling. For that reason, I will not be supporting the bill and do not recommend that it be sent forward to a legislative committee for its consideration.

• (1740)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-221, also called the safe and regulated sports betting act.

Private Members' Business

I would like to thank my hon. colleague and neighbour, the member for Windsor West, for introducing this bill. It is an important piece of legislation. It seeks to delete paragraph 207(4)(b) from the Criminal Code, which explicitly prohibits wagering on any race, fight, or single sports event or athletic contest.

The bill may sound familiar, and for good reason. It was previously introduced by my friend, Joe Comartin, the now retired member for Windsor—Tecumseh. He did more than just introduce it, though. His bill was debated in this place, passed in a vote at third reading, and sent to the Senate. Unfortunately, it languished in the Senate for years before dying on the Order Paper with the dissolution of the 41st Parliament.

It is shameful that the Senate did not do its job and that it prevented the passage of legislation that was passed by elected MPs in the House. Therefore, I thank the member for Windsor West for choosing to reintroduce his former colleague's bill and for his continued work serving his community in the region of Windsor-Essex.

As I mentioned, Bill C-221 would remove the clause in the Criminal Code that prohibits betting on “on any race or fight, or on a single sport event or athletic contest”. Betting on sporting events is not illegal in Canada. Since 2005, Canadians have spent around \$500 million annually betting on sports legally. What this bill would do is make betting on a single event legal.

Right now, individuals are required to bet on at least two events. In Ontario, the minimum is three. This so-called parlay system is under the jurisdiction of the provinces, as is all operating, licensing, and regulating of legal gambling. Bill C-221 would simply allow for single sports betting to come under the purview of the provinces as well.

The safe and regulated sports betting act is very relevant to the people who live in my riding of Essex. A large employer and attraction in our region is the world-class Caesars Windsor casino. People come from all over southwestern Ontario and the American Midwest to visit Caesars, both for its entertainment purposes and to enjoy the many other tourist attractions of the Windsor-Essex region. Local residents know how much Americans love coming over to Caesars. All anyone has to do is look at the border traffic on any weekend in Windsor.

Americans choose to come to Windsor-Essex even though Detroit casinos may be more convenient for them. They like coming to Canada, especially now with the lower dollar. The legislation before us today would give casinos like Caesars a competitive advantage over their competition south of the border. This is good for Canadian jobs, tourism, and economy.

Currently, only Las Vegas, Nevada, offers legal single sports betting in North America. Think about that. If people want to place a legal wager on the Super Bowl, the Grey Cup, or a Stanley Cup finals game, the only place they can do so is Las Vegas. For the Super Bowl weekend alone, there are estimates that nearly \$116 million were generated.

There is tremendous economic opportunity here. Gaming is the largest sector of the entertainment industry. It directly supports more than 128,000 full-time jobs and generates \$8.7 billion in revenue to

governments and first nations groups. A Canadian Gaming Association study estimates that the introduction of single sports betting would generate \$70 million in revenues and nearly \$31 million in ancillary revenues to the Windsor-Essex region. Other border regions with casinos would similarly benefit.

Many communities stand to gain from this new source of revenue that would be returned, in part, to the community. It has been estimated that allowing single sports betting could create 100 direct jobs at Caesars Windsor. This is huge for my region, which has stubbornly high unemployment rates. Over the past decade alone, it has lost well over 10,000 good manufacturing jobs. The region needs new opportunities. This is why my colleague's bill has widespread support, including from the city of Windsor, the city of Niagara Falls, the Canadian Gaming Association, and the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce.

A delegation came to Ottawa earlier this year to encourage parliamentarians to support this bill. Representatives came from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Gaming Association, and others. Despite the bill's broad support, the government has said it opposes Bill C-221 because it could potentially have negative impacts on those who struggle with gambling addictions. This is a serious concern and something to which I am very sensitive. Addiction is a serious problem, one that can destroy the lives of people and families in our community. Let us not underplay that.

● (1745)

However, I do not see any evidence put forth by the government to support its claims that Bill C-221 would encourage gambling problems. It is important to note that single sports betting already happens in Canada, but it is illegal and unregulated. In fact, it is estimated that the size of the market is in the \$14 billion to \$15 billion range. It is operated by illegal offshore gaming companies or organized crime rings. These are unregulated and unsafe venues. Yet, every day, people hand over their credit card information to these offshore websites and incur big amounts of debt. These organizations will not hesitate to prey on the vulnerable and they do not help to provide services that benefit the public.

Simply continuing the prohibition on single sports betting, as the government seems to favour, will do nothing to stop these organizations from profiting off of Canadians. According to reports by the Criminal Intelligence Service Canada, bookmaking exists in all regions of Canada, and gambling, including sports betting, is used as a funding tool for organized crime. A legal and regulated single sports betting industry would undermine the client base of illegal gambling venues. Legalization would not only reduce their profits by providing customers with a legal alternative, but it would also protect law-abiding citizens.

Private Members' Business

For those who currently participate in single sports betting by dealing with criminal groups, a regulated industry would provide a safe alternative. This safe alternative would be of greatest benefit to those suffering from an addiction to gambling. As I have said, we need to support those who need our help, and continuing this prohibition on single sports betting impairs our ability to do this. Instead of being exposed to the opportunities and services available to them in a safe, legal, and regulated environment, those suffering from gambling addiction are forced to interact with predatory and criminal enterprises. This is dangerous to their personal safety and financial health, and also detrimental to their ability to heal. Do members think organized crime groups are contributing money to anti-addiction efforts, supports, or services? Of course not. The provinces do this.

Measures are in place to support people with gambling addictions. In Ontario, there is a Responsible Gaming Resource Centre operated by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation. The one in Caesars Windsor is open seven days a week between 10 a.m. and 2 a.m. These centres provide people with information about community services available to help them fight addiction and also help them learn about safe gaming practices. According to the website rgrc.org, over 170,000 people receive services from these centres.

There are other resources available to those who wish to seek help with their addiction. These include Ontario's self-exclusion program, where individuals can request to be denied access to OLG facilities; and also the playsmart.ca website, which is full of excellent resources. It is incredibly important to have a strong network of services to support people with these addictions.

Bill C-221 would not legalize something that does not already happen. Single sports betting happens every day in Canada. What we are talking about here is providing the opportunity for the provinces to be able to regulate and co-ordinate in a safe environment. We know and believe that moderation is the key to responsibly enjoying other forms of gaming. This principle should be applied to single sports betting.

Let us take the money out of the hands of criminal groups and put it to work for our communities. Providing a safe and legal environment for Canadians and providing the vulnerable with better addictions services absolutely deserve all of our support.

I want to encourage my colleagues to give serious consideration to supporting this bill at second reading. I urge all members to vote in support of the safe and regulated sports betting act.

• (1750)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-221, an act to amend the Criminal Code on sports betting, put forward by my colleague, the MP for Windsor West.

Before I start, I would like to say a few things about the MP for Windsor West.

I cannot think of a better champion for his or her community than that MP, the dean of the NDP caucus. Not only is he a voice of reason in our party and in the House, but he is also a tireless defender of his community. This bill shows he has a deep understanding of how his region works, the needs of his region, and is prepared to put

forward positive ideas and proposals to make the local economy better.

This bill, in brief, proposes to modernize the Criminal Code to allow provinces to regulate single-event sports betting. In doing so, the member argues, in putting his bill forward, that it would add economic benefit to not just his community, but many Canadian communities, and reduce the influence of organized crime.

I will speak a bit about those two points. I am supporting the bill for a different reason, which I will share shortly.

Bill C-221 would amend the Criminal Code by deleting a section in it which explicitly prohibits provinces from allowing wagering "... on any race or fight, or on a single sport event or athletic contest". The bill would allow for wagering on the outcome of a single sporting event, and many Canadians are probably confused that we do not already have this. This is a throwback law that has been in place for a long time, and in a lot of people's views, unnecessarily.

There has been a shift in how betting laws are regulated in Canada. The federal government has decentralized a lot of this control to the provinces over the years. Provinces are currently responsible for operating, licensing, and regulating all legal forms of gambling, including the lottery schemes. This is really because each region, each province, has individual needs and, of course, different cultures for gambling and related events.

Perhaps there are different views among the populations that have to be reflected in provincial laws, which makes sense. It is not as if we do not have unregulated betting at all. It is handled by the provinces.

There was too much regulation at one point, and now we are kind of reaching a point that we have decided that the provinces will take care of all of this. Therefore, each province determines the type, amount, and location of gaming activity that is available in their jurisdiction, which seems right to me.

Since 1985, gaming facilities have been established in most provinces, offering a diverse range of options, including slot and video machines, card games, and games of chance such as Roulette and Craps. In greater Vancouver, we have seen a kind of flourishing of the gaming industry, but a moderate flourishing. When this started, a lot of people thought it would be a very bad and intrusive industry that would change the very nature of our communities. However, it does not seem to have had that impact, although it has had both positive and negative impacts.

The key is that at least it is regulated now. At least the provincial governments get a significant amount of revenue from these industries. Not only provincial governments but municipalities and charities also receive a significant benefit from gambling.

Gaming is one of the oldest activities in the world. It is proper to regulate it, again, much like marijuana. It is something that happens, and government involvement is important. Also, it would lead us to recover some of the revenue so we could help support things like addiction services and counselling when people have trouble with these activities.

Private Members' Business

Oversight in this industry has been decentralized to the provinces, but the Criminal Code still applies to some aspects of the gaming industry, including single-event sports betting. Therefore, if this proposed law were in place and single-event sports wagering were permitted, each province would determine how and if it would be implemented.

It is not like passing this law would all of a sudden open up single sports betting right across Canada. It would still be up to the provinces to decide if they were going to allow it and what the laws would look like in each province.

• (1755)

The public is not losing control of this industry or oversight of this industry, it is just being decentralized to the provinces, who, I would say, are in better shape to make decisions about those more localized communities.

We heard some arguments today about the economics of this industry. Gaming is an important contributor to the Canadian economy. It is the largest segment of the entertainment industry, and supports more than 128,000 full-time jobs, with another 283,000 indirect jobs. It generates almost \$9 billion in revenue for government and community programs. It is nothing to sneeze at, and it is something to take very seriously.

I am glad my colleague from Windsor West has brought the bill forward. It allows us to have these kinds of debates. Again, it puts pressure on the government to consider if, indeed, we are regulating this industry in the correct way.

The reason why single-event sports betting is important is that it would give the Canadian gaming industry an edge over the American gaming industry. In British Columbia, where I am from, although there are local casinos, most people talk about going to Las Vegas. Lots of British Columbians fly to Las Vegas to bet down there. One reason is single-event sports betting, which is allowed in Las Vegas but not in British Columbia.

One could imagine the reverse flow of residents and gamers if this were allowed in British Columbia, starting here with this law and then regulation by the province. It would reverse the flow of that money. That is an important consideration. We all know we are in tough economic times. This would be important.

Now in Vancouver, with a fairly robust economy, maybe this would not make a huge difference, but in some communities along the border, this would make a difference, especially from what I am hearing from my colleagues in Windsor. No other states have legalized single-event gaming operations, so this would give Canadian gamers an edge. My colleagues have said it very well, that this is occurring. These betting activities are occurring, but mainly illegally in Canada. What this allows us to do is capture the revenue that we are losing.

Again, the government has made the same claims about legalizing marijuana, saying that when it is an illegal substance it is only dealt with in an illegal way and all the profits remain in the hands of organized crime. That is why they are arguing they should legalize marijuana. It would allow the government to regulate and capture this revenue. The same case could be made for single-event sports betting.

We have heard opposition from the other side, and we have heard a number of Liberals say that they are not going to support the bill. They have in the past, and I am hoping that they again reflect on what they are denying Canadians by voting against the bill.

In terms of organized crime and the effects of organized crime in this area, illegal sports wagering includes both illegal bookmakers and illegal Internet betting companies operating in North America. It is hard to estimate the size of black markets, but according to the American Gaming Association, Americans spent almost \$140 billion on illegal betting last year. In Canada it is harder to get a sense of what illegal gambling brings in, but it is estimated that it is between \$14 billion and \$15 billion, only on single-event sports betting.

One can imagine the amount, if this entire industry were regulated, in two ways: first, if we were able to capture revenue on the \$14 billion to \$15 billion, and second, if we were able to attract some of the American betters.

I am not a huge fan of gambling. It may seem strange to say that after this speech but I have talked to my constituents. I opposed a mixed martial arts bill that came from the Senate in the last session. However, I voted for it because my constituency told me loud and clear that this was what they wanted. The same applies to this bill. I have talked to a number of people in my constituency, elected officials and local residents. They have said they want me to support the bill, and that is what I am doing.

I am standing up today to support my colleague from Windsor West and his private member's bill. I hope everyone here in the House will as well.

• (1800)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues on all sides for taking part in this debate. What takes place next is a simple process. It is about whether this House has the courage to tackle organized crime in the most significant legislation that will be proposed in this House of Commons for this session of Parliament. It is clean and simple. We send this to committee to be studied, examined, and brought back here for a final vote.

Let us look at the facts carefully. The bill was already in previous Parliaments. It went through with Liberal, Conservative, and NDP support. It was stymied in the Senate and had to re-emerge here. With about \$10 billion going to organized crime per year, it has cost us over \$20 billion. As it has stalled in the Senate for three years, that is \$50 billion going to organized crime.

If the bill does not make it this time and we do not get it to committee, it becomes another four years, unless it is introduced by the government, having to eat crow. What do we have in the meantime? We have a \$50-billion gift to organized crime. Organized crime will get the biggest single corporate tax cut from the government. They will get the resources.

Adjournment Proceedings

Sports betting across this globe is a \$2-trillion annual business. Canada is a laggard in terms of accountability. Very little of that is recovered by governments. About 80% is going to organized crime.

If we vote for the bill right now, we give it a chance to go to committee. Let us hear from the experts that are for it. Let us hear it from the experts that are against it. Let us hear about one sentence in the Criminal Code that, in my view, would increase accountability, tourism, and jobs and would give us more reason to tackle other organized crimes, because we would unplug them from their single most profitable source of revenue. That would mean new revenue for health care, education, gaming addiction, and other elements.

I am being mocked and heckled by a Conservative over there, but that is okay. They do not take it seriously, but I do, because those revenues are being asked for and supported by the Province of Ontario and by the official opposition in Ontario.

This gives the provinces the opportunity to choose, if they want, to go into this type of possibility. They have the infrastructure, such as the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, which has accountability and the ability to put this out to market if they choose to do it.

For example, if Ontario wants to bet on one event one time, they can do that, monitor it, and provide the accountability and oversight that so many people want.

I can still hear my colleague, and I would ask him to maybe speak to the bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I ask the members to keep their voices down, but I do want to advise the member that there is a private conversation going on here, and it has nothing to do with what the member is saying.

Again, I will ask the members to keep their voices down so you can continue with your speech. You have one minute left.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, this is an opportunity we will not have again. We will not have it for this Parliament, unless the Liberals decide to actually introduce it as part of their process.

We have heard testimony on gaming accountability from international and domestic police and others who have testified to the veracity of the exposure we have from unregulated, unaccountable, single sports betting that is taking place in backrooms, bars, basements, and back halls and through organized crime. Sadly enough, with the click of a mouse, it is also being done by our youth.

Let us send this to committee. Let them hear the evidence, and let us move on.

• (1805)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 22, 2016, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvas the House, you would find we could see the clock at 6:35 p.m.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Do we have unanimous consent for the House to see the clock at 6:35 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-225, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (substances used in the production of fentanyl).

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

THE SENATE

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, every time we turn around it seems the Senate is costing Canadians another million dollars. In question period, I have asked about the Privy Council Office spending more than a million dollars a year to fund the supposedly independent advisory board for Senate appointments. I have also asked about the government leader in the Senate requesting almost a million dollars to manage these independent senators on behalf of the Liberal government.

I am very interested in hearing the government's explanation as to why it has a leader in the Senate requesting all of these managerial resources if its senators are truly independent of government direction.

Adjournment Proceedings

The broader question that I would like to explore is whether we need to have a Senate at all. The classic argument for bicameralism is that the upper House provides a sober second thought. There are very few examples in Canadian political history of the Senate actually performing that role.

An interesting point of comparison would be at the provincial level. I do not think many Canadians are saying, "If only we had an upper house in our provincial legislature, our province would have better laws. If only our premier appointed a group of people to review the work of elected members of the legislative assembly, the governance of our province would be improved."

That is not what we are hearing in the coffee shops in Regina, and I do not think we are hearing it anywhere else in our great country. In fact, all of the eight provinces that ever had upper houses in their legislatures have abolished those upper houses. Therefore, it seems that the consensus in favour of abolition is actually quite strong.

We sometimes hear the argument that while we do not need upper houses in our provincial legislatures, we should have one at the federal level to represent the diverse regions of our great country. In our very decentralized federation, the real source of regional representation is strong and legitimate provincial governments, not senators here in Ottawa.

It would be very interesting to put that concept to the test. The Government of Canada could initiate a Senate abolition transfer equivalent to the \$90 million a year currently spent on the Senate. Those funds could be directly transferred to provincial governments in proportion to the number of Senate seats that their province currently has. For example, Prince Edward Island currently has 4 out of 105 senators. Therefore, it would be entitled to well over \$3 million per year from the Senate abolition transfer.

The government and the people of Prince Edward Island have far better things they could do with more than \$3 million than to support four senators here in Ottawa. However, an interesting thing would be to put that concept to the test by giving provincial governments the choice to either maintain the Senate or to abolish it and use the money for other purposes.

•(1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was not that long ago that I was afforded the opportunity to respond to a very similar question from one of the member's colleagues. I am more than happy to share with him some of the things I talked about or attempted to explain about a week ago.

The issue the member raises is related to the eternal issue of the Senate. What the member needs to recognize is that it is no more appropriate for us in the House of Commons to deal with the issue that he is hoping we can deal with, than it would be for the Senate to look into issues surrounding the House of Commons, the Board of Internal Economy, and members of Parliament making decisions on the allocation of monies.

For example, the Government of Canada, through the Board of Internal Economy and discussions that take place among all political parties in the chamber, made a decision. It made a decision that the New Democratic Party is going to get a few million dollars every

year. That few million dollars every year is to assist New Democrats in addressing issues and performing the duties they feel are necessary in order to be the third party in the House. It is the House of Commons, through the Board of Internal Economy and House leadership teams, that discusses what resources are required in the House for parties to perform their duties. That same principle applies for the other chamber.

Where we are going as a government on the issue of transparency and accountability is, at least indirectly, what the member wants to talk about. He wants more accountability and transparency in the other House. In terms of Liberals demonstrating transparency and accountability, the Prime Minister of Canada has been very clear. We have progressed significantly.

In fact, the member was here, no, I am sorry, he was not here. Many of his caucus colleagues were here a couple of years ago when the then leader of the Liberal Party, now Prime Minister, moved a motion for proactive disclosure. If he checks with his colleagues, he will find it was the New Democrats who actually opposed the motion. What were we asking for? We were asking for proactive disclosure of what MPs were spending money on, things like travel and hospitality.

Even though New Democrats did not agree to be more transparent and accountable in how tax dollars are being spent, we took it to the next step. Even though it was not the law of the land for us, we still acted on it and provided proactive disclosure to the constituents we represent. I was pleased that the Conservatives took a few months to catch on and then accepted it while in government. It took a motion in the chamber, ultimately, to embarrass the New Democrats, but eventually they too came onside.

We recognize the importance of transparency and accountability and on this side of the House we are going to do what we can to enforce it.

•(1815)

Mr. Erin Weir: Madam Speaker, I will take it as a compliment that the member for Winnipeg North assumes that I am a veteran MP who was here in the last Parliament. That is very kind of him.

To get into the substance of this adjournment debate, the argument that we heard from the member across the way was that it is inappropriate for members of the House of Commons to second-guess the functioning of the Senate. This is a very convenient way for the member for Winnipeg North to not actually address any of the specific arguments or analyses that I presented. It is also the ultimate circular argument on his part, because, essentially, what he is saying is we have to accept the Senate's legitimacy because the Senate is legitimate. What I am arguing is that the Senate is not legitimate and, indeed, we should do away with it.

When the member talks about accountability and transparency, that is not what I want. I think we should abolish the Senate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, it is the adjournment proceedings show, which means that we follow up questions that were asked at a previous time. If that is what the member really wanted to talk about, that is maybe what the question should have been when he originally posed the question, and then we would be able to have that discussion.

Adjournment Proceedings

If the member wants to talk about the future of the Senate, or if he wants to talk about the future of democracy for Canadians, we just agreed to a wonderful all-party standing committee that is going to be taking in all sorts of ideas, in which we surrendered the majority of government so that the opposition would feel that much more empowered. If those are the types of things that the member wants to talk about, and in particular the issue of the Senate and the role of that institution in the years ahead, I would suggest that the member might have that discussion among his caucus colleagues and encourage maybe an opposition day on it, or encourage a question on it in question period.

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have been talking an awful lot about the middle class lately. In fact, they produced a cool chart in their budget to try to demonstrate that middle-class incomes have grown almost not at all in 40 years. That claim was surprising because Conservatives had previously produced data showing that middle-class incomes had skyrocketed over the last decade alone.

So I secured the Department of Finance Canada data that were used to create that funky chart I mentioned earlier, to try to reconcile the claims. From at the data, who was right? Was it the Conservatives, who claimed higher incomes for the middle class in the last 10 years; or was it the Liberals, who claim that the middle class has had almost no real raise at all in four decades? The answer is both.

How is that possible? How is it possible that Liberals can say, truthfully, that incomes have not gone up in four decades and Conservatives can simultaneously say, truthfully, that they have gone up dramatically in the last 10 years? Let us look at the chart. In 1976, the median income in Canada, in constant inflation-adjusted dollars, was \$46,300 under a former prime minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau. However, that dropped by \$2,800 or 6% down to \$43,500. It then took 30 years to recover incomes back up to \$46,500.

In other words, the first Trudeau did so much damage to middle incomes in this country that it took almost three decades for the Canadian economy to undo that damage. Then, during the subsequent Conservative government, incomes did rise from \$44,700 to \$49,602, an increase of \$5,000 or 11% after inflation. That is according to Liberal budget data. That is the largest increase in median incomes in 40 years. In fact, under our recent Conservative prime minister, median incomes grew faster than under the Trudeau, Clark, Turner, Mulroney, Campbell, Chrétien, and Martin governments combined. Again, that is according to data in the Liberal budget.

The question really is this. Given that this chart, which comes from page 11 of the Liberal government's budget book, demonstrates the overwhelming damage that the first Trudeau did to middle income, why would his son produce economic policies that are nearly identical? Those policies include rising taxes, spiralling debt, massive government interference and control in the economy, and bail-outs for incompetent corporate leaders.

Why would the current government want to repeat the mistakes of a previous Liberal government that took 30 years to reverse? Are the Liberals suggesting that we should sacrifice another generation to the

damages that always flow from over-intervention of government in the economic life of Canadians?

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thought we were going to be talking about small businesses today, but I am very much interested in the subject matter that the member has raised.

It is always interesting. I enjoyed statistics courses. I did not have very many of them, but I did have the opportunity to have discussions with individuals who loved to talk about statistics. The numbers always look great and they can be twisted in different ways, no doubt.

However, I listened to the member when he said that the Liberal Party said this or that the Liberal Party budget said that and tried to give an impression that things were going in the right direction. Then he said the Conservative Party did this when it was in government and it appeared as if it were going in the right direction. Then, I think he went back to the seventies and early eighties where he said it was Pierre Elliott Trudeau that kind of set us back.

I would tend to disagree, especially on the latter point. I think that if we take a look at it and ask people what the difference is today, if we talk to our constituents, put the numbers to the side, and talk about the seventies and the eighties, I was a teenager back then. I can tell members that when I was a teenager, things were going along pretty good not only for me but also for my peers. We had a sense that we could move out of our parents' house. We could acquire assets and buy a house. We had these dreams and so forth. The general feeling, at the time, was that people had a disposable income and that disposable income was enabling them to fulfill their dreams.

How does that compare with the last 10 years? Check how many parents will tell us, "I love my son" or "I love my daughter, but they're 28 years old and still living in my basement". They are still living in their homes. We love our children and we want them to be able to stay with us as much as possible, but the point is that the disposable income is something that is of critical importance, in terms of lifestyle and so forth. If members were to check with my constituents, I believe they would concur with me that it seems they have not had the same sort of money to be able to do the things they want, and their generation is feeling somewhat left behind at a very critical time in the last 10 years.

I think what we need to see is a government taking a proactive approach at trying to build hope and to demonstrate that it believes in the middle class. This Prime Minister and this government, more than any other government, even over the last 10 years, have put so much focus on the middle class and building the middle class. Two great examples of that are, first, the Canada child benefit program, a very progressive program that is tax free and that is going to lift literally hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty, and second, the first initiative that we took in terms of legislation coming into the House, the tax break from which over 9.6 million Canadians are going to benefit directly.

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Both policies are going to see literally hundreds of millions of dollars of disposable income being put into the pockets of Canadians in every region of our country. That is going to benefit, I believe, all Canadians. Most important, I believe it will change the attitude and hopefully provide more hope for Canadians as they see a government that truly believes in the middle class and wants to support it.

• (1825)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the hon. member tries to replace the statistics in his government's own budget with hypothetical and unnamed anecdotes of people who may not even exist outside of the four walls of his own head.

I am quoting data, not from some Conservative source or think tank. I am quoting data from the Liberal budget. It not only shows that middle incomes grew by 11% under the previous Conservative prime minister, but that the greatest growth was among female income earners, who saw a 14% increase, an increase that was five times the rate as under the Chrétien and Martin governments and five times the rate of the previous Trudeau government.

For the party across the way, which talks a lot about the middle class and talks a lot about gender equality, it should look back at the successful outcomes that, according to its own budget, were secured under the previous Conservative government in lifting up the middle class, and in particular, hard-working women who went into the workforce and saw their opportunities expand along with their horizons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I indicated, I was somewhat expecting we would be talking about small business. I had a lot of wonderful things to say about small businesses. Instead, the member comes forward, has all these statistics and says that he wants me to use statistics.

If I reflect on statistics during the former Conservative government, the one that comes to my mind is the issue of jobs. Imagine the not tens of thousands but hundreds of thousands of jobs that were lost in the manufacturing industry, while the Conservatives had the reins of power over the last 10 years. Those are statistics, real statistics that affected people.

If a person is making \$35 or \$40 an hour at a manufacturing plant, is 45 or 50 years old and then becomes unemployed, he or she will have difficulty finding another comparable job. To what degree did the Conservative government assist that person? It did not. Instead, that person would have had a substantial shift from that \$35 or \$40 an hour job to a \$17 an hour job, more often than anyone would like to see. Therefore, if we want to talk about statistics, I would invite the member to come back and hopefully I will be able to provide a response where we can do some comparisons strictly on statistics.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, earlier I had an opportunity to raise the situation facing the Rohingya Muslim community in Burma. I have not received a response at all with respect to the conditions of the Rohingya people in Burma. I hope I will be able to get more information about what the government is doing with respect to leadership on human rights in that country.

I have asked questions before about process, about my concerns, about changes that have been made with respect to the public service around human rights, specifically the elimination of the Office of Religious Freedom. However, this question is about what the foreign affairs minister has done, and is doing, to raise the very concerning human rights situation facing the Rohingya Muslim community.

At the time that I asked the question, the minister had been in Burma, making a major announcement about spending on democratic development. Yet we did not hear any public mention at all with respect to the Rohingya. It is important to not just have the capacity within foreign affairs working on these issues, but to have real leadership, leadership that we have not seen at all at a public level from the minister when it comes to international human rights. He was present at a press conference where the Chinese foreign minister berated a journalist for asking a human rights question, and we did not see leadership from the foreign affairs minister on that. He opposed a motion to recognize the genocide faced by the Syrian Christians, other Christians in other communities, as well as the Yazidis in the Middle East, which is very disappointing.

Specifically with respect to the situation of the Rohingya Muslim community, the issue with Rohingyas in Burma is that Burma is at this democratic moment. It very recently transitioned from a military rule dictatorial situation toward a democracy. Yet it is a democracy in which the very large Muslim community within Burma is significantly disenfranchised. The very citizenship and the right to participate in basic democratic activities within the new state of Burma are denied to them. This is tragic.

As Canada and other western countries are building their relationship with Burma, as we provide the kind of support for democratic development that the minister announced, it is so important that we have clear public leadership from the minister confronting this issue. The funding that was provided was for strengthening institutions, which is always important. However, the issue here is not about the strength of the institution, but about a political choice that has been made to disenfranchise this community in violation of the international human rights obligations, which Burma and all countries have.

It is concerning the kinds of things that have been done and said by the leadership. When Aung San Suu Kyi took over, when her party came to power, she announced the release of political prisoners but did not include in that Rohingya and other Burmese Muslim political prisoners. There is this ongoing issue of lack of citizenship. The government claims that the Rohingya people are not really properly Burmese. It calls them Bengalis, to suggest that they are not citizens but are actually from somewhere else. Therefore, the removal of citizenship from this community has created the largest stateless community of people anywhere. I could go through and list all of the human rights abuses, but I do not have time.

The core issue is leadership. Is this minister and the government prepared to stand up, lead, and advocate for the rights of the Rohingya? I hope they will say yes.

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•(1830)

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his ongoing efforts in promoting human rights and for pushing the government to action. It is really important that we work together to promote human rights, no matter what party we belong to.

Our government agrees with everybody who wants to promote human rights around the world. Perhaps what is different between the style of our government and the style of the previous government and my hon. colleague is that our objective is really to make a tangible difference on the ground. It is one thing to score a public point and make sure we are using a megaphone, and it is another to approach a problem in a pragmatic way, to find ways that our government can act to make a tangible difference on the ground.

Let me state clearly and unequivocally that our government is committed to the promotion of human rights. The minister announced last month the creation of the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion, an expansion of the work that was done by the previous office. The budget has also been tripled. We have now mandated all of our missions abroad to make sure that the promotion of human rights is an integral part of their approach to engaging governments abroad.

Let me be clear. There are concerns about human rights in Burma. When the minister went to Burma, he did not hesitate to discuss these issues with officials and NGOs. He not only met with government representatives, but he took the opportunity to meet with members of civil society to listen to them, to hear about the issues and the challenges that they are facing.

My hon. colleague referred to the announcement of the investment of \$44 million. It is an investment in civil society for the promotion of an inclusive society that will help Burma as it matures. Burma now has its first democratic government in 50 years. That is a step forward.

We should not lose sight of the much more work that still needs to be done, but we need to be constructive. We need to offer our support. We need to share lessons learned. We need to provide them with support and with ideas and suggestions, which is what the minister did when he went there.

I am proud of the work that our minister has been doing around the globe. He has never shied away from talking about human rights.

We are always looking for opportunities to make a real and tangible difference on the ground, to help people, particularly oppressed people, to find their way in to full citizenship, to participate in their country, and to have full rights.

I agree with my hon. colleague about the importance of promoting human rights. What we disagree on is the approach. Do I want to score points publicly but not make a difference on the ground, or do I

want to speak about human rights but also find a way to work together constructively to promote human rights, certainly domestically, but equally importantly, around the world?

•(1835)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, let me be clear. There are cases where it makes sense to work through back channels. Also there are cases where speaking clearly and publicly is necessary. I happen to think that the case of the Rohingya is a case where strong public action and public identification of these issues is necessary. After all, if we cannot be clear and public about our convictions with a country to whom we are giving tens of millions of dollars, then what exactly are we afraid of?

Maybe the parliamentary secretary could correct me, but the issue with the minister is that I cannot think of a single case in which he has spoken clearly, specifically, and directly to another country in a public way about the abuse of international human rights. If the government wanted to do something concrete, it could support the Magnitsky sanctions. It could find some case where it could speak publicly.

What is happening in Burma is a political choice by the government. We need our government to speak clearly to the Burmese government and say that the treatment of Rohingya Muslims is totally unacceptable.

Will the parliamentary secretary accept that some cases at least require strong leadership from the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Omar Alhabra: Madam Speaker, I am not saying that we do not publicly record our interests in promoting human rights and our disagreement with the treatment of minorities in particular in other countries around the world.

As I said in my opening remarks, we recognize the deplorable way minorities in Burma and other places around the world are treated. We want to make a difference. We want to make sure we work with those governments in promoting human rights. The minister has never shied away from speaking publicly, regardless of which country he was visiting that has a questionable record on human rights. He has taken the opportunity to speak with governments at all levels about promoting human rights.

Our commitment to the promotion of human rights is solid, unquestionable, and unshakable. The difference is that we want to be constructive about it.

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

(The House adjourned at 6:39 p.m.)

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