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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 19, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[English]

CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EFFORT TO COMBAT ISIL

The House resumed from February 17 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up the question, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence had five minutes, 45 seconds remaining in his remarks.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure I can cover off the five minutes. The 45 seconds might be a bit more of a challenge. The difficulty of having my speech interrupted halfway through is that in some respects, I will have to summarize what was said.

At the point at which we initially ran out of time, I was talking about the NDP position, which was that the NDP supports the government's position on the upping of humanitarian aid. It certainly supports the government's position on the welcoming of the refugees here. By the way, more than 20,000 Syrians, possibly even 21,000, are now sheltered here in Canada. The NDP also certainly supports the position with respect to enhanced diplomatic engagement.

The NDP wants the government to engage in the interdiction of both arms and funds. However, there is a perception, at least as I understand the position of the NDP, that it can be done without military engagement. I would invite them to rethink that position, because to do those interdictions, we certainly have to have robust intelligence capabilities. We certainly have to have robust training and advising capabilities, because unless there are those boots on the ground, those local boots on the ground, the interdictions and the laudable goal of cutting off arms and funding will simply not happen.

The Conservative position, on the other hand, is that they wish to keep the jets in theatre. The rhetoric I have heard, which has been a

little over the top at times, is that somehow or other, by keeping the jets in theatre, things will somehow or other work out and we will all be that much safer.

I would just point out to the hon. members opposite that Paris happened while the jets were in theatre. Beirut, Jakarta, Burkina Faso, and California, all of those events that affected us all, happened with jets in theatre, which leads me to the conclusion that this has to be a far more robust engagement than merely jets in theatre.

It is clear at this point that if there is to be a complete degrading of ISIS, ISIL, Daesh, however one wishes to refer to it, there need to be boots on the ground. Those boots on the ground need to be the best trained boots on the ground that can be there. They need to be local forces, and they need to have the best possible intelligence available to them.

The jets have done what the jets can do, and the only lines between Mosul and Iraq at this point are the rat lines. The actual connections between those two centres of ISIS activity are in fact controlled by the jets. Of course, the coalition, and we are in a coalition, has significant capability to maintain the gains the jets have achieved.

I want to conclude with some observations from others with respect to what our new, and I would argue, more robust engagement in this conflict is. I would start off by referencing Col. Steve Warren, a spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve. He says:

everybody likes to focus on the air strikes, right, because we get good videos out of it and it's interesting because things blow up—but don't forget a pillar of this operation, a pillar of this operation, is to train local ground forces. That is a key and critical part.

Then James Stavridis, dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts and former NATO Supreme Allied Commander says:

Now I understand you're going to shift from doing training, which is...perhaps the most important of all. So I applaud the fact that our Canadian military and NATO colleagues will be working on the training mission with the Iraqi security forces, potentially with the Kurdish Peshmerga in the north because we don't want to send 100,000 troops or 150,000 troops like we did in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We want local forces to fight ISIS. We need to train, advise, and mentor them. NATO can do that very effectively.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in this debate. I would end by quoting an editorial by a national newspaper, which said: "It's a sensible way to proceed".

Government Orders

•(1010)

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am perplexed at the Liberal position. I cannot for the life of me understand their position. On this side of the House, we have a lot of folks who have served admirably in our Canadian Armed Forces, as they have on that side of the House.

When I go through my riding, I speak to veterans, and they are asking how the government can pull these jets out of the sky. There are 75 troops on the ground now, when there has been cover for them, but they will not provide any cover. That is incredible. The Liberals are tripling the boots on the ground. That is their rationale. They will triple the boots on the ground, with no cover, which is going to make the problem even worse. We are going to have so many casualties as a result.

I would like the parliamentary secretary to explain that contradiction in the Liberals' position.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the hon. member to disabuse whoever it is that is speaking to him about this contradiction. There will be air cover. It is not as if the air cover is going away. There are at least 10 nations providing air cover. I think that at this point, 65,000 sorties have gone up. It is not as if the air cover goes away.

We are refocusing on what needs to be done in the next phase of the mission. The bombers have done what the bombers can do, which is drive ISIS members into their hidey-holes. Our troops will be as well if not better covered while they engage in this mission. I hope that the member disabuses his concerned constituents of the idea that there will be no cover, because that is simply not true.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy my colleague's speeches. I enjoyed them in the last session, and I enjoyed this one. However, I have some questions we have been trying to get answered. We are being invited to change our position. The Minister of National Defence has said that there will be increased risk to our men and women in uniform. One essential piece of information I would like to know is whether they have a projected casualty count they could share with us. That is an important piece of information for us to know, and I am wondering if the member could share that.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, as the minister said yesterday in question period, the people we will be putting on the ground will be the best of the best, the most able of the most able, the people who have the best equipment possible. They will be in a theatre where there is greater risk.

However, it is not without risk, and to engage in fanciful exercises about what might be a casualty count is a disservice to the people of Canada, but particularly to our brave men and women in uniform who, when they sign up, take on unlimited risk. This is what they do. I would not under any circumstances engage in any kind of fanciful calculations along those lines. I think it is a disservice to our people.

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for his excellent speech. I wonder if he would care to build on his comments about the fighter support provided by allies in support of Canadian soldiers who may or may not be on the ground and draw that back to Afghanistan, where, as I recall, the

Conservative government did not deploy Canadian CF-18s and relied extensively on international air power, with good cause and effect. As well, I do not recall the Conservative government ever releasing or discussing casualty counts prior to operations. Perhaps the member can confirm those facts.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for answering the question from the previous member better than I could. He has probably as much experience with the Canadian military, particularly in Afghanistan, as anyone in this House. His experience is something we rely on this side of the House to give us guidance when putting forward this kind of revised mission.

I want to go to the point of interoperability. Just because it is an American jet up there, that does not mean they are not communicating with troops on the ground, of whatever nationality, that are in the coalition. There is interoperability. There is intercommunication that worked quite well in Afghanistan, and as the minister has said repeatedly, the intelligence gathering we are bringing to this theatre of conflict is at a level of capability that possibly does not exist in other nations.

I feel absolute confidence that there will be excellent coverage while our people are in theatre. I feel absolute confidence that there will be interoperability. I feel confident that the communication will be there, and it does not necessarily mean that those have to be Canadian jets in the sky. They can be American or Dutch or whatever.

•(1015)

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ISIL is an evil, brutal, and completely ruthless collective of organizations that specializes in the use of terror to accomplish its aims. ISIL seeks to conquer and subjugate, with the interest and intent of establishing a quasi nation state. As such, it is an insurgency. The Canadian Armed Forces, indeed Canada, has learned many valuable lessons over the last decades in counter-insurgency operations.

Allow me to quote from the Canadian Armed Forces counter-insurgency manual, published in 2008 under the authority of the previous government: "Insurgency is not a movement or people. It is a competition, struggle or conflict involving different groups of people. As a manifestation of war, it is a competition of wills."

At its root, an insurgency is a political problem—so eloquently referred to by the Minister of National Defence yesterday—and a wider range of agencies, elements, power, and capabilities, in addition to the military, must come together in unity of purpose to defeat an insurgency. Defeating an insurgency needs more than just bombing. There are lots of bombers available in the region, as so eloquently mentioned by the previous speaker.

Our CF-18s, pilots and ground crew, have done a great job, with bravery, professionalism, and discipline. Since we deployed our fighter ground attack aircraft, they have contributed about 2.5% of the overall coalition air strikes, and they have done a fantastic job.

However, should Canada continue to contribute to the fight? Yes, but what, where, and how should we contribute in the whole-of-coalition context? What is needed among the various tools in the coalition toolbox is worthy of study, and the Minister of National Defence and his team have done just such.

Government Orders

Let me tell a story, essentially a tale of what we can learn from history.

I first deployed to Afghanistan in 2003 as the Canadian task force commander. Then it was a stability operation with some counter-insurgency activities against terrorists. We lost excellent soldiers in that fight. Eventually, our skill sets improved. I went back every couple of months for seven years, and I eventually became the army commander for four years.

Our forces, of course, were very successful in and around Kabul. Then we shifted to Kandahar, with the intent of providing some security for reconstruction and development. This turned into arguably the toughest fight that the Canadian troops had seen since the Korean War. The cost in lives and resources was both tragic and staggering. Our contribution grew into a very powerful battle group, and it was very well equipped. I will give credit where credit was due. It was in large measure thanks to the previous government and its focus on getting the troops what they needed for the Afghan war, and a robust provincial reconstruction team that was doing most of the local fighting themselves.

With very little value added, we saw poorly trained Afghan militia observing from the sideline, themselves traditionally ferocious warriors, but lacking in the disciplined and modern contemporary skill sets. There was lots of allied air power available, and the Conservative government focused its efforts, after time, on training because that was what was needed. We had to get the local forces into the fight. After a relatively short while, we Canadians realized that our efforts to help the local government win would best be served by increasing the amount of resources and troops who contributed to the training mission, and to intelligence, provincial reconstruction, and actual regional stabilization. From about 2005 to 2010, this transition was under way and applied with great vigour, determination, and skill, by not only the Canadian Armed Forces personnel, but indeed all those who contributed to a whole-of-government approach.

In 2010, the Conservative government ceased combat operations in the direct fight and the killing, and focused the entirety of the mission on training. I will say it again. In 2010 and onward, the Conservative government ceased all combat operations in the direct kinetic fight and focused the entirety of its efforts on training indigenous forces. It worked. It was a sound decision. There were no Canadian CF-18s overhead, and all of our troops were involved in the training mission.

Therefore, what has changed? What lessons can we draw from the valiant efforts of our soldiers, lessons paid for in blood and treasure?

• (1020)

Let me say this again. The Conservative government withdrew all combat elements and rerolled them into a strictly training role. No one in the Conservative caucus argued against this idea at the time. I know, because I was the army commander. It was the right thing to do then, and it is the right thing to do now, because the great shortfall is in training indigenous forces.

Counter-insurgency operations conducted within a counter-insurgency campaign are aimed to defeat the insurgency through military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civil

actions, something we got to know quite well, and Canada became really good at it. However, the overriding focus was on providing skill sets so that we could do better than probably just about anybody else in the world. That turned out to be the complex endeavours of training indigenous forces, assisting in regional stability, reconstruction of civil society, and humanitarian support. Yes, we can fight, absolutely, but at times, to fight smarter, we have to look at it in the whole-of-government context.

This whole-of-government approach includes everybody in the fight. Whether people are public servants, police officers, aid workers, soldiers, trainers, or helicopter pilots, whether armed or unarmed, they are all there contributing to the fight, just like our government is proposing to do in a much more sophisticated and nuanced approach than exists today in Iraq.

The former government learned that a multinational coalition fighting against insurgency had to adopt this sophisticated approach, this whole-of-government approach, and that it had to look across the wide aspects of all the tools available to the coalition to get the job done. The former government decided to refocus all of its efforts into training local forces, increasing humanitarian support and development assistance, and worked very hard and quite successfully to enhance regional stability. It provided additional intelligence assets and reconnaissance assets, and focused and refocused on training. This is exactly what we are doing, so how is it different? How can it possibly be different? We have learned from the lessons of Afghanistan.

I have a rhetorical question. It is quite a simple question. How is what our government is proposing to do in Iraq any different from what the previous Conservative government learned after many hard lessons, paid for in blood and treasure, in the experience in Afghanistan?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member opposite was serving in Afghanistan, he appeared before the Standing Committee on National Defence. When asked the question of why he sent our troops into Afghanistan in forest greens, his response was so that they would be noticed; they would stand out. I would like to know if his position is still the same, or is there another reason for wanting our troops to stand out like targets?

Government Orders

•(1025)

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member is referring to a situation wherein there were two types of uniforms, both green and brown. In the streets of Kabul, which was mainly stability operations and not necessarily focused entirely on counter-terrorism, it was presence patrolling, which is in the pantheon of operational capabilities in the centre of the spectrum for counter-insurgency operations. In that context, our doctrine clearly states that presence, being able to be seen, to be readily identifiable when accompanying Afghan police in the busy streets of Kabul, is a marked difference.

I would also point out that we had tan uniforms available from when we went out to do the business in the mountains.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all agree on the need to eliminate ISIL, which for all of us is the equivalent of removing evil. We also agree on the need to increase humanitarian aid. However, what resonated with my constituents in Kootenay—Columbia during the election was that in order to deal with ISIL, we needed to do three things: cut off its supply of money, cut off its supply of arms, and make sure that Canada is the kind of country where everyone feels welcome, thereby ensuring that no Canadians would ever consider joining ISIL.

My question to the hon. member is this. The citizens of Kootenay—Columbia want to know how the government's proposal accomplishes those three objectives.

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for his appreciation of the nuances and sophistication required in the modern and contemporary counter-insurgency fight. What he is suggesting is part of the tenets, the building blocks, in the whole-of-government complex approach.

However, there does come a time when we have to focus on giving the indigenous residents themselves the skill sets and tools to carry the fight to the local foe. That is the government's proposal. It incorporates some of the good ideas that the member has, but, as well, it is not abandoning the fight but carrying on the fight by training the local soldiers themselves, turning them from a militia into a professional force so that they can carry the fight to the foe.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from Orleans for a detailed and very credible presentation this morning, which draws upon his personal experiences.

I am looking at my personal experience around business and the top-down approach to management-solving versus the bottom-up approach. It is one that relies on intelligence gathering, complexity of issues, and complexity of strengths to attack problems together. I am wondering whether I might be oversimplifying this or whether this might apply to the current situation in the Middle East where we are doing intelligence gathering, training, and the execution of plans using a bottom-up approach versus a top-down approach.

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, the intelligence cycle starts both at the top and the bottom. We have kinetic activities and those which support it. We have the observe, detect, orient, and react cycle, which is fairly well-known in military theorems. The bottom line, though, is that it has to be comprehensive, so it incorporates some of

the ideas already articulated by the previous question of the NDP member and this member's question.

We do have to work on choking off the flow of supplies, monetary supplies and personnel, in this holistic approach. I submit that is exactly what the coalition forces are up to now. It is exactly the intent of the NATO command and control architecture that is coordinating the activities in Europe, and of course of our American allies who have the lead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

The member for Orléans is a former military member like me. Today, we are in politics and our duty is to put our soldiers first. The decisions we make are critical.

The government's plan to combat ISIL is hypocritical to say the least. People are very dissatisfied with it. It goes in every direction but the right one, the direction that will lead to combatting ISIL. The government is increasing the number of soldiers on the ground to provide more training. In other words, we will show people how to fight without getting our hands dirty.

This plan does not take into account the wishes of Canadian Forces members. It is a repudiation of their work on the ground. Many Canadian Forces members are unhappy with this government. By way of evidence, I would like to read a letter I received from Mr. Roy. It says:

Thank you [hon. member] for your commitment. I am a former infantry soldier who spent 14 years in the military. I was in Haiti in 1997, Bosnia in 2001, and Afghanistan in 2004 and 2009. As such, I often talk to other former soldiers, and we feel betrayed by the [Prime Minister's] government. It seems as though the [Prime Minister's] government is minimizing what Canadian soldiers have had to endure both physically and psychologically, not to mention what their families have had to endure with the soldiers being deployed so often. Canadian soldiers make these sacrifices to build an international reputation for Canada and to defend our values.

Thank you for saying out loud what so many people are quietly thinking.

As we can see, the Canadian Armed Forces and Canadians in general are very dissatisfied with this plan. Under this plan, the government has already withdrawn our CF-18s from Iraq and Syria, without even waiting until we finished debating the issue here in the House of Commons. That is a mistake since our allies and everyone recognized how much Canadian air strikes were helping in the fight against ISIS. The government has not given any coherent explanation for this decision.

Nathalie Elgrably-Lévy of the *Journal de Montréal* spoke about the Prime Minister's lack of judgment. She said:

To justify his desertion [that word, "desertion", is very important], he claims that "...the people terrorized...every day don't need our vengeance. They need our help."

Bombast like that from our Prime Minister is appalling and unfortunate.

...

It is appalling because it shows that [the Prime Minister] considers the fight against Daesh to be rooted in vengeance. What poor judgment!

Government Orders

Do we really have to explain to him that stopping a horde of fanatics who are destroying everything in their path is not about vengeance? That stopping bloodthirsty terrorists from raping people, kidnapping them, murdering them, cutting their throats, burning them alive, and beheading them is not about vengeance? If the Prime Minister can't tell the difference between vengeance and self-defence, if he can't tell the difference between Daesh's murderous instinct and the West's survival instinct, Canada is in very bad hands.

At the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meetings in Brussels, Miami, and Washington, many people told me that it is not the right time or not a good idea for Canada to recall its CF-18 fighter jets from Iraq and Syria.

In yet another episode of the current government's disavowal of logic, the Minister of National Defence says that he is considering the possibility of fighting ISIL in Libya. According to Italy's defence minister, Roberta Pinotti, who believes that action must be taken to prevent ISIL from gaining ground in Libya, some 3,000 ISIL terrorists are in Libya. Oil production facilities have been attacked, and 60 people were killed in a suicide bombing in February. After withdrawing the CF-18s from Iraq and Syria, a move that most Canadians do not agree with, the Liberals are taking their wishy-washiness to Libya. Once again, in Brussels last weekend, NATO people told us that going to Libya would be the worst thing to do.

There seems to be no end to the government's bungling. "Whatever" is the watchword, it seems. The Minister of International Development and La Francophonie even acknowledged that money sent to the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders could end up in the hands of the enemy, ISIL. Why? Because we have no way of controlling where the money goes. The minister even said that we cannot control that. As Canadian citizens, as taxpayers, we want to know what is being done with that significant amount of money. It should not be handed over to our enemies; it should be used to fight them.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs is saying that Canada will do more to help Jordan and Lebanon deal with the pressures of the civil war in Syria. However, I thought the plan was to fight a war against ISIL. When you pursue too many targets at once, you often miss all of them.

● (1030)

That is the problem here. This plan has too many targets, even though there is only one enemy, which is ISIL.

It is important to understand what the people who elected us here really want. Consider this example: according to an Angus Reid poll from the beginning of February 2016, Canadians are concerned about the impact on the world stage of withdrawing our CF-18s from Iraq and Syria. In fact, 63% of Canadians want Canada to continue bombing ISIL targets at the current rate or to increase the number of bombing missions conducted against ISIL. Also, 47% believe that withdrawing our CF-18s will harm Canada's reputation abroad. Two out of five people, 37%, believe that Canada should continue with the current number of bombing missions against ISIL. One-quarter, 26%, believe that we should increase the number of missions. In addition, 64% of people believe that the threat ISIL poses has increased, and half of those people, or about 30%, believe that the threat has increased significantly. In the wake of the Paris attacks, 33% of people believe that Canada should increase its involvement in the fight against ISIL.

Not only did the government miss an opportunity to show leadership by taking a position much more focused on a combat mission against the Islamic State, but it also missed the boat on public opinion, on what Canadians think, and on what they want their government to do to fight terrorists.

A government that does not listen to the public is a disconnected government and that is what this government is. It only took them a few months to get there. Who knows, maybe the Liberals want to beat their own record at becoming disconnected from the Canadian public. This is how disconnected Liberal governments have acted in the past. Let us not forget the sponsorship scandal. They are back to their old ways, making bad decisions. In short, this government is on the wrong track. It has too many targets. It has forgotten who the enemy is. Its adversary in this war is the Islamic State.

The attacks in Paris last year, and the attacks in Ottawa, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, and Burkina Faso are reminders that terrorists threaten and strike vulnerable, innocent people everywhere. We must fight these terrorists and eradicate them someday.

The Liberals are also disregarding the fact that Canada is making a mistake by eliminating from its plan the component of combatting ISIL. By withdrawing our CF-18s from Iraq and Syria, we are taking away from our experienced pilots the opportunity to use their skills in the air strikes.

Make no mistake about this mission: increasing the number of Canadian soldiers on the ground to provide training without assigning them to combat, which is what they are trained to do, diminishes their role and is an insult to the skills of the men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

It is a mistake to return our army to the 1990s role of peacekeepers, which was catastrophic for Canada, especially in Rwanda, where 800,000 people were killed because our soldiers were powerless to intervene.

I will be voting against this government's ill-conceived plan, and I encourage all my colleagues in the House to reject it because it diminishes Canada's international reputation, it insults the talent and dedication of the men and women in the armed forces, and it eliminates the element of combatting ISIL terrorists, which should be the basis for this plan.

● (1035)

[English]

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our coalition allies, the Americans and the French, have much greater resources than Canada when it comes to their air forces and they are providing the air cover that coalition forces on the ground need in the theatre. Canada on the other hand, as was mentioned, demonstrated in Afghanistan that we have tremendous capacity and experience in training indigenous forces on the ground and it is those indigenous forces that will take the fight to Daesh directly. We have committed to tripling Canada's capacity and to taking a lead in taking that fight to Daesh.

Does the hon. member agree or disagree with our position that Canada can take a lead in taking the fight to Daesh and training the indigenous forces who will take that fight to it?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, the previous government sent CF-18s into combat and special forces to train Iraqi soldiers. We have never been against the training component.

The new plan is problematic because it eliminates the combat capacity, which was effective. Even if we only carried out 2.5% of the strikes, we were one of the five countries that were bombing targets effectively.

We have nothing against increasing the number of troops providing training. We have never been against that. We are against withdrawing the combat and air protection capacity provided by our CF-18s for our troops and the fact that we will be relying on our allies to do the heavy lifting.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech. He was in the army for 22 years, so he understands and has expertise in these important issues.

He attended three NATO meetings, in the United States and in Europe, to understand the approach taken by Canada and its allies to ensure that Canada makes a better contribution within the coalition.

Can he tell us how our international allies perceive Canada? How might this perception affect Canada in the coming months?

• (1040)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. I was indeed a member of the Canadian Armed Forces for 22 years. I am still in contact with former colleagues who are still members of the forces and who share their concerns with me.

At the NATO meetings, I was able to talk to colleagues from different countries. Our international allies say everything is fine, obviously. Given the nature of politics and diplomacy, people will say that everything is fine.

However, parliamentarians from other countries told me they were disappointed that Canada was withdrawing from the combat mission. Canada has decided to take a secondary role. This role can be important, but Canada's refusal to fight is a rejection. We must not forget that we are no longer in Afghanistan. We are fighting ISIL, which is an international terrorist group.

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I concur with my colleagues in congratulating my friend and colleague for an excellent presentation. I commend him for the 22 years he served our country, and served it with distinction.

The one thing I fail to understand about the Liberal position is simply this. The Liberals seem to think it is appropriate for other countries to do all the heavy lifting when it comes to protecting our troops. We were asked by a coalition to join the fight against ISIL, one of the most barbaric and murderous regimes this world has ever seen. We were asked to do so, and our government agreed, willingly. My colleague just asked in the previous question what message that sends to our allies when we refute their request to continue on with the CF18s. The answer is obvious. Our allies are not only

disappointed, but they will be very hesitant in future of trying to count on Canada's support.

My question for my colleague is this. Does he think that this move by the current Liberal government, by pulling out our CF18s, will do long-term, irreparable harm to our reputation and our relationship with our allies?

[Translation]

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

As I said, when I spoke to parliamentarians from allied and foreign countries, they told me, in private, that Canada's position was weakened because we were withdrawing from combat. This is not hearsay. I think the government is to blame for that.

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, which includes Garrison Petawawa, I welcome this opportunity to participate in the debate regarding Canada's contribution to the war against terrorism.

There is an ongoing and serious security threat in the Middle East posed by international terrorism. It is not only a threat to innocent victims in that war-torn part of the world, but also represents an active threat to international security and stability for Canada and our allies, as we have seen in Paris and more recently in California here in North America.

The brutal murders of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and Corporal Nathan Cirillo on Canadian soil mean that no Canadian is safe. This is why the Canadian Armed Forces must continue to be a part of the solution as full participating members of the international coalition against terrorism.

My riding is home to the largest army base in Canada. More significantly, Garrison Petawawa is home to the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, CSOR, the first new regiment to be stood up in over 60 years. The decision to triple the number of Canadian soldiers on the ground in the fight against ISIL to compensate for our withdrawal of the CF-18 jets affects my community directly, as it affects my local base. Those soldiers will come from CSOR. They and their families are my friends and family, my constituents. I see their faces every day.

As a member of the Petawawa community, I shared the grief and anguish of our military family when the political decision was made to disband the Canadian Airborne Regiment by a previous Liberal government during the period referred to by the former chief of defence staff, General Rick Hillier, as the "decade of darkness" for Canada's military. I was an elected member of Parliament when that same government made the political decision to send Canadian soldiers to Afghanistan without proper basic equipment. Moreover, the 1993 election promise to cancel the replacement purchase for the Sea King helicopter meant that Canadian soldiers died on the dusty roads of Afghanistan.

Will the 2015 election promise to withdraw Canadian jets from the war on terror mean that Canadian soldiers will die this time in Iraq?

Government Orders

Our Canadian soldiers were sent by the Liberal government to a land of sand and deserts wearing forest-green uniforms. The defence minister was not listening or chose to ignore the briefing when he was told there were no forests where our soldiers were being sent.

Once in Afghanistan, our soldiers were forced to use the Iltis jeep, a ride that offered no protection to its occupants. Garrison Petawawa remembers Sergeant Marc Leger and Corporal Robbie Beerenfenger who lost their lives when their Iltis jeep hit an IED.

During the inquest into their deaths, it was revealed that soldiers who used the Iltis jeep had to make a choice between the more likely way they could die: from a sniper, or a roadside bomb. If they felt the greater danger was from snipers, a soldier kept his armoured vest on. If a soldier felt there was a greater danger from roadside bombs, he removed his vest and sat on it, as the Iltis jeep offered no protection from being blown up.

In the incident that killed Sergeant Marc Leger and Corporal Robbie Beerenfenger, the driver of the jeep, who had served longer in Afghanistan, had determined that the greater threat was from an IED. He survived that bomb blast by sitting on his fragmentation vest and was blown clear. Sergeant Marc Leger and Corporal Robbie Beerenfenger were wearing their fragmentation vests and died in the explosion when the jeep hit the roadside bomb.

What life and death choices will Canadian soldiers now have to make knowing that Canadian air support will not be there if needed?

When the commander of the U.S. troops saw the jeep that our Canadian troops had to use, a horrified General Tommy Franks offered armoured Hummers, an offer that was turned down, for reasons only the Liberal government can explain.

However, once our Conservative government was in control of the situation, we immediately moved to provide things like proper uniforms, strategic lift to get our soldiers away from the roadside bombs, and replacement of the Iltis jeeps by vehicles complete with armour plating to protect the occupants from land mines.

• (1045)

Canadian soldiers do not complain. They do their job. We owe it to them to give them the proper equipment and resources to do the job we ask them to do.

The new defence minister is very quick to tell Canadians that he has first-hand experience serving as a reservist in Afghanistan. That would suggest he has direct knowledge of the consequence of sending soldiers into conflict without the proper tools and resources.

With that knowledge, he needs to explain to Canadians what will happen when we get another situation like what occurred last December. Will what happened in Afghanistan happen in Iraq? Will history repeat itself with the withdrawal of the air cover?

Canadian soldiers were involved in some direct fighting in northern Iraq. Luckily for those soldiers, they could call in air support from CF-18 Canadian fighter jets. These are the same jets that have been ordered home by an uncaring Prime Minister and his defence minister, who claims empathy for the serving soldiers based upon his time as a reservist in Afghanistan.

Perhaps the minister is suffering from selective amnesia. Or, did he not speak to soldiers who were first sent to Afghanistan without the benefit of strategic lift or who lost a comrade to a roadside bomb? As a reservist serving in Afghanistan, did he avoid being sent in a green uniform that would allow him, in the worlds of the Liberal predecessor, to be better seen?

The Prime Minister and his advisers cynically hope that Canadians have forgotten what happens when troops are caught in a war zone without proper air support. The high casualty rate in Afghanistan was a direct result of the politically motivated decision by the Liberal Party to cancel the Sea King replacement helicopter contract, without the strategic lift to pull our soldiers away from harm's way. Soldiers died.

It is 2016. Canadian foreign policy is taking a radical shift to the left. Now, we have another Liberal government making another election promise not to provide air support for Canadian soldiers.

I forgive the Canadians who may be confused in thinking that the year is 1993, the last time a Liberal election promise was made on the backs of soldiers.

While Canada prepares to spend millions of dollars airlifting tens of thousands of Syrian non-combatants to Canada, millions more suffer in camps, under the constant threat of attack.

Now is not the time to retreat. If they take away our air support, someone is going to die. Soldiers need to know that the government has their back. Bringing home the CF-18 military jets sends the wrong message at the wrong time.

It is said that the first casualty of war is truth. Nowhere is this more important than in the rhetoric Canadians are hearing from the government as the Prime Minister spins the peacekeeper myth. Using peacekeeping as an excuse, Canadian soldiers will be ordered to abandon the honour and recognition earned in Afghanistan. By pulling them back from the international coalition fighting terrorism, it will allow the government to make larger cuts and freeloader on our allies, which was our reputation before 2006.

Cutting our military and abandoning our allies is absolutely the wrong direction for Canada. As a member of Parliament, I remind the government of its obligation to our NATO partners and its responsibility to protect the freedom, democracy, and safety and security of all Canadians.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant continues to threaten world peace and security. That threat has not changed.

• (1050)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague for her passionate remarks and her almost two decades of advocacy in this place for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and, particularly, the base and military family community in Petawawa. There is no greater champion than that member of Parliament.

Statements by Members

She also has a unique role, having done a lot of work internationally as a NATO parliamentarian. So, my question for the member would be related to her experience internationally.

Our participation in NATO was forged in Canada's active participation and sacrifice in World War II. What do our NATO allies really feel when Canada pulls back, as she said, like we did in the mid-nineties in the decade of darkness, and like we are doing now, withdrawing our active combat role fighting ISIS? What do our allies really feel about the absence of a traditional Canadian part?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, last week, following the ministers' meeting at NATO, parliamentarians met and gave input about the increasingly dangerous situation in the world, especially in Europe and certainly over here in North America.

The overarching issue and concern people have is that Canada is retreating again, stepping away from the fight. Within the next few weeks, Canada will be named and shamed on how little we are currently spending on the military, and there is a fear that the spending cuts will grow.

•(1055)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by expressing heartfelt thanks to our colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for all the work he did during his time in the army, as well as to our Conservative colleague for her involvement in her community.

The word “mistake” has been used a few times during the speeches we have heard. I think the only mistake that Canadians made was keeping the Conservatives in power for 10 years. That problem was solved on October 19, when the Liberal Party took over.

How can the Conservatives say we are making a mistake? During the election campaign, we made it very clear that we planned to withdraw our CF-18s from combat. On top of that, in 2010, the Conservatives implemented a strategy that was similar to ours. Why do they want to go against the wishes of Canadians who made a clear choice on October 19 based on our promise to withdraw the CF-18s?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, our concern in the Conservative Party has always been and will always be the welfare and well-being of soldiers and their families.

The best way to show concern for the soldiers and the families is not just to appoint a minister for show, implying that the government has concerns. The best way to show concern for our soldiers and their families is to make sure the soldiers come home.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of this House and the parent of two children currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, rest assured I have complete confidence in both our Prime Minister and our Minister of National Defence in the decision to play a part in a coalition.

Can the member across please explain to the House how she does not understand that we are part of a coalition, and look the family

members of Canadian Forces in the eye and tell us that they are not doing enough?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, Canadian soldiers join up and train to fight. That is the reason they wanted to be in Afghanistan. We had no greater recruitment efforts and reply to the recruitment efforts than when we were actually fighting.

The concern right now is that the Liberals are not providing the adequate and proper protection needed to ensure that our troops come home safe and sound.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, January 30, I was honoured to attend an evening of education, conversation, and reflection at the Al-Zahraa Islamic Centre on No. 5 Road in East Richmond. No. 5 Road is affectionately known as Highway to Heaven where churches stand beside synagogues, mosques, and temples. The evening was an example of the values, beliefs, and religious tenets that unify all faiths.

This event was started five years ago by young people from the centre, an event created to communicate the beliefs and practices of the Islamic faith in an interactive and comprehensive way.

This year's theme, diversity in Islam, was designed to highlight and celebrate the differences, but also the unifying universal beliefs which manifest themselves in Islam and all religious faiths.

I am proud to salute the youth from my community for fostering this initiative and for creating an atmosphere of openness, dialogue, and unity for the good people of Steveston—Richmond East.

* * *

•(1100)

[*Translation*]

NAMING OF FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister commemorated Louis Riel Day this week, calling Riel a key contributor to Canadian Confederation. It was that same Confederation that nearly wiped out the Métis people. Meanwhile, the Minister of Canadian Heritage had no shortage of praise for the culprit, John A. Macdonald, a Canadian prime minister and father of Confederation.

John A. Macdonald was also the one who ordered Louis Riel to be hanged, despite the huge outcry from the people of Quebec. He was the one who took away the right to vote from people of Chinese origin, who worked for slavers during the American Civil War, and who deliberately caused the aboriginal people in the Prairies to starve to death.

Yesterday the Minister of Canadian Heritage promised to withdraw Claude Jutra's name from all federal institutions. I would like to suggest that she also remove the Macdonald name from all federal institutions.

* * *

[English]

ELVES SPECIAL NEEDS SOCIETY

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a wonderful organization in my riding of Edmonton West.

The Elves Special Needs Society is a non-profit organization that has been serving the needs of individuals with disabilities since 1973.

Elves Society is unique within Edmonton in that it is the only service provider that offers programming and care from kindergarten to late adulthood for persons with severe disabilities.

I had the chance to visit one of the Elves Society's facilities in Edmonton West and it touched my heart. With caring and compassionate staff and volunteers, everyone in need of help is offered the care and dignity they deserve.

Far too often those with developmental disabilities are not given the care that they need. That is where organizations like the Elves Society come in to save the day. Without the work it does, many would have nowhere else to turn.

I would like to thank members of the Elves Society for everything they do and to congratulate them in their success in helping thousands of persons with disabilities live full lives.

* * *

WINTER CARNIVALS

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today and inform the House of a proud tradition of community building which takes place in my riding of the Long Range Mountains in Newfoundland.

Every year, communities all throughout the riding host winter carnivals. These festivities are an important opportunity to spend time with friends, family, and of course, visitors, and to celebrate our very unique Newfoundland and Labrador culture.

Each year residents bundle up and we embrace the winter weather to celebrate our towns and our heritage.

With well over 100 communities in the district, there will be hundreds of activities to join in. Communities like Pasadena, Stephenville, St. Anthony, Port aux Basques, Port au Choix, Corner Brook for the 45th straight year, the Codroy Valley, and many others all along the Northern Peninsula will all partake in this tradition.

A very special thanks to all the volunteers organizing each and every one of these events. Without them, it would not be possible for the festivities to take place.

Most of all, I want my constituents in the Long Range Mountains to know I look forward to joining them to celebrate with as many carnivals as I can.

Statements by Members

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Kinder Morgan's plan to build a new export only bitumen-based crude oil pipeline through my riding of Burnaby South.

The results from the last election show people did not vote for business as usual.

The Prime Minister promised a "fair, new process" for reviewing Kinder Morgan. He promised to undo the damage caused by the Conservatives, who gutted the National Energy Board pipeline review process in 2012.

However, my constituents were shocked when the Liberal government announced Kinder Morgan would not have to reapply to build its pipeline. They were shocked when the Liberal government said that it would use the exact same NEB process put in place by the Conservatives in 2012. They were shocked when NEB hearings wrapped up last week and they still did not have their say. They were shocked that it was business as usual for the Kinder Morgan pipeline review.

The Liberals promised to fix the Kinder Morgan review process, but they did not. Now the only thing left for the government to do is to reject Kinder Morgan's application and bring in an improved process for all future projects.

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HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently toured Coquitlam's first purpose built homeless shelter. The shelter is located at 3030 Gordon Avenue in Coquitlam.

The city of Coquitlam, BC Housing, and the Tri-Cities Homelessness & Housing Task Group, spearheaded by Mr. Sandy Burpee and hundreds of volunteers, worked tirelessly on this project for over a decade. Together, their work ensured that it opened on schedule this December.

Operated by RainCity Housing, the residence provides up to 60 beds for men and women, where individuals are provided three meals a day. A final of 30 beds are self-contained transitional housing units.

Homelessness is an often ignored epidemic. This facility offers a safe and secure place for those who are most vulnerable, empowering them with the tools they need to transition back into their own homes, and lead more fulfilling lives.

I am proud to recognize such an organization within my community.

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● (1105)

STORMONT—DUNDAS—SOUTH GLENGARRY

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have had the honour of serving as Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry's federal voice for nearly 12 years.

Statements by Members

I am most proud of the work done by my top-notch staff and volunteers in the riding. We are one of the busiest constituencies in the country. In the past 12 years, our team has processed over 57,000 passport applications. We have handled over 9,000 files. We have helped over 1,500 families receive \$12 million through the disability tax credit program. Last year, we partnered with local volunteers through our CRA community volunteer income tax program to complete 4,000 income tax returns for lower- and fixed-income residents.

I am sure all members here will agree that our staff are the backbone of our success. That is why I am so grateful to Eric, Francine, Denise, Nicole, Sue, Stephanie, Claire, Rosemary, and all our income tax clinic volunteers for the fantastic work they do.

* * *

ARTS AND CULTURE

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize Emma Donoghue, a constituent of London West, whose first feature film, *Room*, has been nominated for four Academy Awards, including best adapted screenplay, best director, best actress, and best picture.

Emma Donoghue is an award-winning Irish-Canadian playwright, literary historian, novelist, and screenwriter. Her 2010 novel, *Room*, was an international best seller and finalist for the Man Booker Prize. She has also been recognized with the Stonewall Book Award in 1997, and the Ferro-Grumley Award in 2002 for excellence in LGBT fiction.

I join all Canadians in congratulating Ms. Donoghue on this spectacular achievement, and know that we will all be cheering her on to bring home an Oscar on February 28.

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MEDICAL RESIDENTS

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks, Canadian medical students will hear news of their residency placements.

This week is national residents week that recognizes the contributions of more than 9,000 medical residents who are a valued and critical part of Canadian health care delivery.

Residency sees newly minted doctors move from medical school to advanced training in their chosen specialty. Residency is an important part of our country's training for emerging physicians.

I can speak to the demands of residency programs, having watched my wife go through the rigours of residency several years back. My wife's program involved an entirely female cohort of eight residents in Chilliwack, B.C. Our family, including our three young children, met these female colleagues on several occasions.

We finally had an opportunity to meet the second year residents who included several men. My five-year-old daughter was perplexed by this development, wondering if boys could also be doctors.

I commend the women and men who are currently in their residency programs across Canada. I look forward to seeing them successfully complete their training and join their colleagues in

providing the excellent medical services that define part of who we are as Canadians.

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DAVE CHATTERS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a former member of Parliament, Mr. Dave Chatters.

Dave served as a member of Parliament for 12 years for the ridings of Athabasca and Peace River—St. Paul, from 1993 until 2006. Sadly, on January 25, Dave passed away at the age of 69 from pancreatic cancer.

As a member of Parliament, Dave was committed to serving his constituents and took this role seriously. Even today, his work ethic in the community is still fondly remembered.

In the House, Dave served the senior opposition critic for natural resources for over 10 years and chaired the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

A true Conservative, Dave Chatters was a man dedicated to his riding, his province and his country. His service in our nation made Canada a better place.

On behalf of the House, I extend my condolences to Dave's loved ones, including his wife of 48 years, Evie, his two sons Gary and Matt, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

* * *

● (1110)

TRAVEL SMART APP

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the upcoming travel season during March break, I would like to inform the House and Canadians about a great new tool.

Last December, the government launched its new Travel Smart app. It is a one-stop shop for international travel information and advice.

Travel Smart will provide Canadians with timely information on security conditions, health considerations, changing entry and exit requirements, passport validity, and wait times at border crossings. Most important, it provides emergency contact information for Canadian embassies and consulates and allows users to register so they can be reached in case of an emergency.

The Travel Smart app is a new tool that reflects our priority: helping all Canadians to travel safely around the world.

I want to thank our hard-working officials for this wonderful tool and encourage all members to download the app, and to encourage their constituents to do so as well.

[Translation]

HERITAGE DAY

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to highlight Heritage Day.

Heritage Day, the third Monday in February, encourages Canadian citizens to preserve and promote Canada's historic, architectural, natural, and spectacular heritage.

[English]

Outside the House we can see the magnificent and extensive work done to update and preserve the West Block.

Our Parliament Buildings are a national historic site and symbols of our cherished democracy. For this reason, and as a former parliamentary guide, I wish to recognize the efforts of the Department of Public Services and Procurement in rehabilitating and preserving our Parliament Buildings and our important heritage treasures for all Canadians.

I also salute the department's collaborative work with all of its partners, including the institutions of Parliament, in ensuring these buildings meet the needs of the 21st century.

[Translation]

As Canada's 150th anniversary approaches, I invite all of my colleagues to celebrate our heritage on Heritage Day.

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[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we all work to encourage innovation in Canada, I am concerned that some of the things the government is introducing will not help.

Right in Ottawa we have one of Canada's best tech start-ups known as Shopify. This firm is an incredible success story, started by two entrepreneurs who have grown their company into a multi-billion dollar firm. It employs over 1,000 people, has more than 200,000 vendors using its platform, and has a new research office opening in Montreal that will create 150 more jobs.

However, the CEO has publicly stated that the new Liberal plan to tax stock options would have made it extremely difficult for their company to grow and become such a success. The CEO said that many people took massive pay cuts to join his company in exchange for options to purchase equity. He also said that taxing stock options could have a disastrous impact on younger start-ups.

I urge the Liberal government to consider how the measures it is introducing, like taxing stock options, are going to impact our ability to have start-up companies continue to succeed.

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INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, International Mother Language Day, on February 21, is recognized by the United Nations and is celebrated by cultures and countries around the world.

Statements by Members

In 1952, students in Dhaka, Bangladesh, demonstrated for the recognition of Bangla as an official language of then East Pakistan. Several protesting students were arrested, and others were shot dead by police, including Abdus Salam, Rafiq Uddin Ahmed, Abul Barkat, and Abdul Jabbar.

On February 21, we remember these students and their tragic sacrifice, and we are reminded of the lasting impact that peaceful protest can have.

More, on February 21, we remember the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity, and our continued commitment to multiculturalism.

Dhonnobad.

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WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand to recognize World Day of Social Justice.

In Eeyou, communities we are taught that each person has a role to fulfill in maintaining a healthy society. Everyone and everything is valued and included. We learn that babies can teach us patience, that youth can remind us to have enthusiasm, and that our parents and grandparents provide wisdom, guidance and stability.

Today we live in an amazing time, and yet the global economy continues to operate in terms of unwanted, redundant, and superfluous. We are all part of an interconnected web of relationships. We have obligations to one another and everything in our lives.

[Translation]

Let us lift our gaze from the nasty and the brutish and imagine a better world. Social justice must be at the heart of all we do. We must ensure that all peoples can live free of discrimination, follow their dreams, and experience unity. By working together, we can walk alongside those who seek beauty and justice.

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● (1115)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the week, all parties in the House have been calling on the Prime Minister to enact Bill C-452 on human trafficking, a bill that received royal assent after it was passed unanimously in the House.

Mothers of young girls who are controlled by street gangs wrote to the Prime Minister directly this week. My fear is that the Liberal government is refusing to sign the order in council because the bill was not introduced by the Liberal Party. That would not be worthy of a government and a Prime Minister that should be making decisions for the good of the people.

In the words of the hon. member who introduced this bill in 2011, the broad parliamentary debate has already taken place and the law is ready. It is time for the Liberal government to set partisanship aside and sign the order. It would take five minutes and would help countless young girls.

*Oral Questions***COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION IN LA PRAIRIE**

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian social safety net has made us proud for many years. Over time, the face of poverty has really changed. An increasing number of salaried workers and even unemployed workers are doing their utmost to find a new job.

Fortunately, there are community organizations to help them. In my riding of La Prairie, Complexe Le Partage offers peer assistance, support, integration and training services to families and individuals in need. These services have helped almost 4,000 children and adults.

Tomorrow is World Day of Social Justice. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the people who work at Complexe Le Partage. I thank them on behalf of the families of La Prairie.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all week long, we, the Conservative members, have asked the government questions about the state of the public finances and control of public spending. Unfortunately, we did not even come close to getting a reasonable answer. There was no answer. It is very clear that if the Prime Minister were in charge of a company, he would have lost his job a long time ago.

When will the Prime Minister manage the government like a good father or mother would do?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were elected with a mandate to implement a plan that will stimulate economic growth and create jobs. We will continue to make significant investments to that end, because it is a priority for our government. It is even more important to recognize that it is a priority for Canadians.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board just said, “we were elected”. Yes, the Liberals were elected on a promise to run a maximum deficit of \$10 billion, and that has now become the minimum deficit.

They were elected on the promise that they would make revenue-neutral tax changes, when in actual fact those changes are going to cost us \$1.7 billion. They were also elected on a promise regarding the F-35s and we do not know what is happening with that. The answer may be yes or it may be no. My question is simple. What promise will they break next?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that we are doing the right thing by investing in infrastructure, by giving middle-income Canadians a break, and by helping low-income families with a new Canada child benefit. We are doing what economists like Larry Summers, former U.S. treasury secretary, say is the right thing to do. We are doing what David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, says is the right

thing to do. We are listening to experts, not to the Conservatives from whom we inherited debt, deficits, and a low-growth economy.

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[Translation]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to move on to another topic, and that is the sensitive issue of physician-assisted dying. We know that, from the outset, the Prime Minister has not stopped boasting about Quebec's experience in this regard. I would like to remind members that Quebec's experience ended with a free vote by MNAs. I know what I am talking about. I was there.

Last week, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons announced, not in the House but in the paper, that the vote on this issue would be a party vote and that members would have to toe the party line. The Liberal members for Scarborough and Winnipeg have already said that this does not make any sense, and they are right.

I appeal to the Liberal Party to use common sense and keep its word.

Will the Liberals allow members to vote according to their conscience, yes or no?

• (1120)

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue for Canadians. That is why there is a parliamentary committee studying and working on a report on the issue.

We look forward to receiving the report. We will take that report seriously and we will work with members of Parliament from all parties in a non-partisan way on this issue.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the absolute worst thing one can do during an economic downturn is to burden Canadians with higher taxes. The proposed national carbon tax would kneecap the energy sector.

Canadians out of work across the country expect the government to grow the economy, not add additional burdens.

This is a terrible idea that could not come at a worse time. Higher taxes on energy will make Canadian oil even less competitive on the world stage. Is the minister trying to completely destroy the western Canadian economy, or is he just doing it by accident?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working with all regions of the country to create an environment where we can have economic growth.

For instance, one of the most important issues is to have market access for Canadian petroleum. Under the previous government, the Conservatives were unsuccessful in getting one metre of access to tidewater for Canadian energy. That is because they refused to work with provinces. They refused to work with the environmental community, and they refused to work with aboriginal and first nations leaders.

We are working with our partners and stakeholders because we know what it takes to actually make economic progress for Canadians.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under our watch, four major pipeline projects were built, and the first thing they did was kill northern gateway.

A new national carbon tax would devastate all aspects of the economy, making Canadians pay more for everything they buy, and it will drive out investment. Premier Brad Wall has warned that this new tax would hurt economic growth and cost jobs across the country. Saskatchewan has indicated it wants no part of this job-killing scheme.

The Liberals talk about working with the provinces. Will the minister stand in the House and guarantee that Saskatchewan can opt out of this terrible idea?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, across Canada individual governments have priced carbon. This has occurred for a long time. Unlike the previous government, we are actually doing something that seems quite unconventional by recent standards. We meet with the premiers and we work with the provincial governments. We look forward to continuing to work with them to ensure that we have an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable energy industry here in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, former Aveos employees feel betrayed. After winning two court cases against Air Canada to save their jobs in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Mississauga, they have now learned that the government wants to change the law to relieve Air Canada of its obligations.

Before the election, the Prime Minister promised to fight for these former employees. The Prime Minister's response yesterday totally missed the mark.

Why is the government giving up on the 2,600 unemployed Aveos workers?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, air service, support, and the aeronautics industry is a key industry for Canada. This government understands that. We are working with all stakeholders. We will continue to do that. For instance, we are concerned with the recent issues around Bombardier. We are pleased to see Air Canada purchasing CS300 series planes from Bombardier. This is really important.

Oral Questions

Members should make no mistake about it. Our government understands the importance of the aeronautical industry, and we will continue to invest in it, support it, and work with its employees and stakeholders.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals understood the importance they would not be abandoning 2,600 families, and that is what they are doing.

Before the election, the Liberals promised they would defend Aveos jobs. Now the minister and the government say they will reopen the Air Canada Public Participation Act. This legislation was implemented to protect good aerospace jobs in Winnipeg, Montreal, and Mississauga. Why are the Liberals planning to remove these legal protections for thousands of good aerospace maintenance jobs across Canada? Why will they not stand up for these good Canadian jobs?

• (1125)

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is not only standing up for Canadian jobs, we are actually investing in creating Canadian jobs. We are investing in science, we are investing in innovation, we are investing in infrastructure, the kinds of investments that will create the jobs of today and tomorrow. We understand the importance of investing in Canadians and investing in Canadian innovation.

* * *

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning that the CBC/Radio-Canada tower is officially for sale.

This plan has raised some serious concerns from the beginning, and there has been no transparency. CBC/Radio-Canada's production capacity is at stake. Management has not offered any guarantees that it will be maintained.

Can the government tell us whether it truly plans to hand a blank cheque to CBC/Radio-Canada? What guarantees will it require?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We are waiting for CBC/Radio-Canada to consult with its partners to evaluate all the options. We realize that Maison de Radio-Canada is very important to Montreal and that it is a meeting place for Canadians.

We will reinvest in CBC/Radio-Canada to help with the digital transformation and plan for the future. All reinvestments will be made in co-operation and consultation with the broadcaster and the artistic and cultural communities.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, such a major transaction will require government approval. At the very least, the government should require transparency from CBC/Radio-Canada.

Oral Questions

Quebeckers and Montrealers have an attachment to the CBC/Radio-Canada tower. It has a unique status in our cultural history. The CBC/Radio-Canada board of directors' plans could see the tower torn down.

Can the government tell us whether it considered other options for using this building?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all options were considered for the CBC/Radio-Canada tower. It is important that the Maison de Radio-Canada facilities be modern and adapted to the new media reality, with the shift to digital. We value CBC/Radio-Canada. We will reinvest in the corporation. I would remind the House that CBC/Radio-Canada is an arm's-length corporation.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to fly over Saskatchewan. Perhaps he should stop in and feel the pain this province is undergoing right now. Saskatchewan continues to contribute, even in these tough economic times.

Saskatchewan businesses were in Ottawa this week, not looking for handouts but pleading with the current government to stop its job-killing tax schemes. Saskatchewan wants to be competitive, and that does not include a carbon tax. Why do the Liberals insist, then, on inflicting crippling taxes that will send more people to the unemployment lines?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised that the member opposite does not believe in a market mechanism that will help tackle climate change, create clean jobs, and stimulate innovation. More than 80% of Canadians will soon live in a jurisdiction where there is carbon pricing, and major Canadian corporations, as well as international corporations, already build the price of carbon into their investment decisions.

We look forward to sitting down with the premiers, unlike the other government, to actually look into how we can move forward to have a real plan to grow our economy and tackle climate change.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the delay-and-study party, a.k.a. the Liberals, understand that the people of Saskatchewan are hurting? The downturn in the oil and gas industry has left thousands of Saskatchewanians out of work. I see the devastating effects every time I drive in my riding.

Now the Liberals are scheming to impose a carbon tax, against the will of Canadians in Saskatchewan. Why are they imposing a job-killing carbon tax at a time when people in the energy sector are losing their jobs daily?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are certainly concerned about the situation in Saskatchewan and the job losses that are due to low commodity prices. However, unlike the previous government, we believe that the environment and the economy go together. That is why we are working with the provinces and territories to have a

comprehensive plan to tackle climate change but to also stimulate innovation and grow a clean economy.

• (1130)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every week that goes by, the Prime Minister breaks another election promise. Revenue-neutral tax cuts, deficits, balanced budgets—all broken promises. To make matters worse, the Prime Minister is spending billions of dollars of taxpayers' money on foreign vanity projects. Now we are hearing that he has a scheme to impose a harmful carbon tax on provinces like Saskatchewan at the absolutely worst time for our energy industry.

Why is the Liberal government punishing Canadians at a time when hundreds of thousands of Canadians are losing their jobs?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, unlike the previous government, our government believes that the environment and the economy go together. Unfortunately, under the previous government, because the Conservatives took a position against developing resources in a sustainable way and diversifying the economy, we actually were not able to create the jobs that we need to grow the economy of the future.

What we are doing now is that we are going to be working with the provinces and the territories to develop a plan that tackles climate change, one of the biggest challenges of our generation, and that also moves us forward to a lower-carbon economy with good, new jobs.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has been promising Canadians a Canada-wide climate-change plan. Despite repeated requests to do so, the minister has failed to deliver such a plan, another broken promise. At the same time, she is boasting about billion-dollar climate-change projects in foreign countries and scheming on a tax grab, which would impose more punishing carbon taxes on Canadians.

My question is for the minister. As the broken promises pile up, why is she abandoning the thousands of working Canadians who are losing their jobs because of her policies?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, I have sat down with the representatives, my counterparts, from the provinces and territories to talk about a pan-Canadian plan to tackle climate change but also to set our economy on a new path where we have sustainable growth. We have done this.

The Prime Minister is meeting on March 3 with the premiers of the provinces, as well as the territories, to actually develop this pan-Canadian plan. We are well aware of the challenges faced by Saskatchewan and other provinces. That is why we are going to invest in green infrastructure and is how we are going to create clean jobs.

* * *

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the March 2016 deadline for a new agreement on internal trade is fast approaching. I know government members like to tell us that they are working really hard while consulting on consultation, but Canada desperately needs a long overdue new agreement on internal trade.

Will the Prime Minister announce a new agreement on internal trade when he meets with Canadian premiers next month in Vancouver, or will he promise more promises and come home empty-handed?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we ran on a growth agenda, and we understand it is very important that we work with our provincial and territorial counterparts. That is why I had the pleasure of meeting with them a few days ago to discuss this very important matter. We were able to make sure that we are making progress on meaningful areas to reduce barriers, to harmonize regulation.

We have goodwill. We are co-operating with them. We are working with them, and I am very confident that we will have positive results to announce to Canadians in the near future.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the recent report from the National Bank of Canada, the Liberals are on track to add \$90 billion to Canada's debt.

In Manitoba, we have witnessed how runaway NDP deficits destroyed our province's credit rating while Premier Selinger raised taxes and drove away business. The tax-and-spend policies of the NDP in Manitoba did not work, so can the Minister of Finance tell us why the new Liberal government wants to burden Canadians by repeating the terrible NDP mistakes?

[Translation]

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

On October 19, Canadians made a very clear choice: they chose growth. In December, we started to follow through on our plan by lowering taxes for the middle class, a measure that is benefiting more than nine million Canadians.

In the upcoming budget, we will continue with the Canada child benefit, which will help nine out of 10 families and lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. In addition to that, our

Oral Questions

infrastructure program will promote economic growth across the country.

On October 19, Canadians made a clear choice. They chose growth.

* * *

● (1135)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, harassment within the RCMP is once again making headlines.

Things are supposedly under control, but the problem is clearly systemic. Furthermore, the RCMP seems incapable of handling its internal complaints in a fair manner. There is no respect for victims, allegations are not taken seriously, and punishments are laughable.

When will the government demand that the RCMP take things seriously?

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Harassment is a serious issue that is unacceptable within the RCMP or within any other organization.

I want to inform the House that two members of the RCMP have been suspended in connection with this issue.

[English]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, harassment in any workplace is a serious issue. It must be dealt with fairly and immediately, but according to new reports, complaints about things like bullying and sexual touching were raised by former RCMP employees in 2014 and 2015 but were too often ignored. When fault was found, the penalties were just not credible.

The RCMP investigating itself is just not working. Will the minister agree to take this on directly and order a full, independent review of harassment in the RCMP?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reiterate that we are concerned about harassment and we are working with RCMP officials to ensure that the RCMP provides a workplace free from harassment and sexual violence.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Dianne Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, innovative companies not only in British Columbia but right across this country rely on stock options to keep smart young Canadians working right here at home. If we do not keep our taxes competitive, these young people will simply go elsewhere.

Oral Questions

Shopify is a Canadian innovation success story, and we know that the CEO and many other CEOs have called on the Liberals to abandon their misguided plan to tax stock options.

Will the Minister of Finance listen to the people who are actually creating the good jobs for these young people and cancel this misguided tax hike?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity actually to visit Shopify. It is an incredible Canadian success story, and what is encouraging is that they have a government that is really committed to a comprehensive innovation agenda, an agenda that will create opportunities for companies like Shopify to expand and go into operation.

We have heard their concerns around stock options. We are engaged with them. More important, they are very excited about the fact that this government is going to be putting forward an innovation agenda that will really help companies grow and succeed here and be competitive globally as well.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Dianne Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need jobs. Bombardier has the potential to create much needed jobs if the Toronto Island airport is allowed to expand. However, the Minister of Transport has overruled the decision not only of Toronto City Council but of the Toronto port authority. He has blocked the expansion of the Toronto Island airport.

Why is the Minister of Transport blocking Bombardier from creating jobs for Canadians and preventing the expansion of the Toronto Island airport?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for that question. I will reiterate that, as announced on November 12, 2015, the Government of Canada will not reopen the tripartite agreement between the federal government, the City of Toronto, and Ports Toronto. All three parties of the tripartite agreement must concur on any amendments.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been the same old story from this government for months. We even heard the story this morning: a plan for this, a plan for that.

The only plan we can see is a plan to mess things up. This week we learned from public servants at Public Services and Procurement Canada that the Liberals' plan was to have tugboats and fireboats built outside Canada.

Can the minister tell us why these boats should not be built here, in Canada, by Canadians?

[English]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to investing in the Royal

Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard to ensure that they are able to operate as a true blue-water force while also growing our economy and creating jobs.

To support our electoral commitment to be more transparent and open, we will be providing regular updates to Parliament and the public on the progress of the shipbuilding strategy.

We are always looking for opportunities to increase the efficiency of procurement processes so we can save time and money.

• (1140)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Public Services and Procurement recently stated that the new ships for the Royal Canadian Navy do not have to be built in Canada.

Minister after minister, even today, has stood in this House and told us they have a plan, a plan to grow the economy and create jobs through infrastructure spending. Yet when they have the opportunity to do so, the first thing they do is look to send the jobs overseas instead of supporting our shipbuilding sector.

Will the minister tell us why the Liberals would rather farm out jobs to foreign countries than create the high-paying jobs here in Canada?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a renewed federal fleet is a key enabler of important government priorities, including our sovereignty, preserving our fish stocks, monitoring the impact of climate change, and supporting the Canadian economy by creating jobs.

To date, more than 300 Canadian companies have received work as a result of the shipbuilding strategy. The vessels will be built in Canada. It is estimated that the shipbuilding strategy will create up to 15,000 jobs and more than \$2 billion in annual economic benefits over the next 30 years.

* * *

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing that everyone can agree on and that makes everyone angry, it is the lack of competition for wireless carriers.

Yesterday, the CRTC refused to give small players access to the infrastructure they need to grow and develop. This means that there will be less competition, when more would certainly have been easier on Canadians' wallets.

Can the minister tell us what he plans to do to ensure more competition, which will allow for broader coverage and lower prices?

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE***[English]*

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. As he knows, the CRTC is an arm's-length administrative tribunal that regulates and supervises broadcasting and telecommunications in the public interest.

However, for me, the telecommunications sector is an essential platform for innovation, particularly in this digital economy. That is why we continue to support competition, choice, and availability of services. We want to make sure we continue to foster a strong investment climate to make sure we have greater competition and better choice for consumers.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that will not bring down cell phone prices. Canadians pay some of the highest cell phone bills in the world, yet the previous government failed to make any progress, and the Liberals have shown no interest.

Yesterday the CRTC denied an appeal to spark real competition in the wireless sector by allowing new small players into the market.

What action are Liberals going to take to stop Canadians from getting gouged? Will the minister step in to review this proposal?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain engaged with consumers. We remain engaged with the companies that have brought forward this proposal. We want to make sure that we create an environment for them to be able to provide their services.

As I said, with respect to the CRTC, it is an independent tribunal and it will make its own decisions, but we want to promote competition, we want to promote choice, and we will continue to make sure we advance this file as part of our overall innovation agenda that will allow an opportunity for better choices for consumers.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government's openness and transparency is refreshing after a decade of deceit and denial by the previous government. In fact, important financial information on numerous federal programs was kept hidden by the previous government, even when requested by the parliamentary budget officer.

Can the President of the Treasury Board inform the House of the actions he is taking to ensure that the PBO finally receives the information that has long been requested?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sydney—Victoria for his work on this file and for that tough question.

The Conservatives refused to disclose information about their 2012 budget cuts to Canadians and to the parliamentary budget officer. Our government has released this information because government information belongs to Canadians. Our government will continue to be open and transparent with Canadians because we believe it is the right thing for a government to do, as we believe in open-by-default government.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I feel obligated to remind the Liberals of how barbaric ISIS terrorists are. This week they publicly beheaded a 15-year-old boy for listening to pop music. The U.S. State Department reported that ISIS used mustard gas in a deadly attack against Iraq's Kurdish peshmerga. The new Liberal plan puts our troops at increased risk and ignores the immediate security needs of innocent civilians.

Now that our CF-18s can no longer take out ISIS from the air, will the Prime Minister be using reason to stop ISIS from carrying out these atrocities?

● (1145)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with hon. member opposite about the atrocities that ISIL is committing, but I would also remind him that with an enemy like this that commits these atrocities, we cannot take it out from the air. It can only be done on the ground. This is the reason we are tripling our training capacity and doubling our intelligence, so that we can actually work as part of a coalition and defeat ISIS finally.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister is speaking in the House on the government's motion on the ISIS mission, the defence minister quietly issued a press release saying our CF-18s dropped their last bombs on Monday and were headed home. In his press release, the Minister of National Defence did not even thank or acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by Canada's fighter jets. This comes before the House has even had a chance to vote on the motion.

The Prime Minister promised a debate and a vote, knowing full well he would blatantly ignore the democratic will of Parliament. Why is the government more interested in retreat than debate?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the announcement, we stated that the bombing campaign by the CF-18s would end on February 22, but that the exact decision would be made by the Chief of the Defence Staff and the coalition. That decision was made for Monday.

Also, the member opposite knows I actually made the announcement during the debate when the member opposite was standing right here in front of me. In that statement, I actually commended the great work of our CF-18 pilots at that time, and the press release was sent out after that.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the families of soldiers will remember the 2002 friendly fire incident when U.S. jets fired on Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan, killing four of them. Our CF-18s would have known they were Canadian boots on the ground, and now we are back to relying on other countries for air cover.

What did the minister mean yesterday when he said that our special forces in Iraq needed anti-armour? Did he withdraw the CF-18s before putting necessary protection in place for our soldiers on the ground?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member opposite asked that question.

Regarding an anti-armour capability, it should have been provided before the Liberal government was elected, when our ground troops went there in the first place. This capability was not there.

I would also like to remind her that the reason we are putting this in is that in inclement weather, the air strikes cannot take place. If there is a threat that can only be taken care of by anti-armour capability, we need a portable system to do so, and that system is not in our inventory any more. This decision was made by the previous government and I am going to bring that capability back.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence said that we need to be on the ground to combat the so-called Islamic State. Since he has confirmed that our soldiers are involved in ground operations where they could be exposed to enemy fire, he has the duty to protect them. However, he is withdrawing our CF-18s from the fight.

Why is the minister asking our allies to take our place in protecting our soldiers?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a coalition, we fight as a team. We defend each other as a team, as well.

When we put our military package together for the coalition, we consulted, we looked at the gaps, and we provided the necessary capacity. This is the reason why, I will repeat, we are tripling our training capacity, providing intelligence, and even putting in additional capabilities, which I personally briefed my critic about over the phone on the day we made the announcement.

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LABOUR

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' attack on labour rights included stripping the rights of workers to refuse unsafe work, and rolling back health and safety protections for federally regulated workers.

These are fundamental labour rights that took generations to achieve. Yet, despite the Liberal election promises, the new government has failed to act.

Instead of patting themselves on the back, will the Liberals give working Canadians a straight answer today for why they are refusing to reverse these Conservative attacks on the protection of workers?

• (1150)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way is right to state that the previous Conservative government had organized labour in its crosshairs. We saw that time and again, with Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 for example, which I am very pleased that our minister's first piece of legislation, Bill C-4, will repeal.

We will continue to work on labour issues, fair wages, and the definition of danger. Those are important issues and we will continue to pursue them as we go forward.

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STATISTICS CANADA

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, between 2006 and 2015, the Conservative government took an axe to Statistics Canada. More than 539 products were slashed, including crucial information needed to make informed policy decisions, such as information on food production, farm prices, GDP, and much more. All of these products are no longer available to researchers, scientists, policy-makers, and Canadians.

Will the government bring back these crucial products, or will it continue the Conservative war on science?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that our government did was to bring back the long-form census. That is a clear indication that we will bring back evidence-based decision-making in government to replace the Conservatives' decision-based evidence-making, which was going on for 10 years, because we believe not only in open and transparent government but that we can make the best possible decisions when we have the best evidence.

I agree with the hon. member, and we will continue to ensure that the Canadian government makes the best decisions with the best evidence.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I was pleased to see backbench members from across the aisle clearly condemn the anti-Semitic boycott, divest, and sanctions movement and agree to support our motion.

Oral Questions

Will the frontbench Liberals be clear and unequivocal in fully condemning the boycott, divest, and sanctions movement, as our allies in Britain have already done, and will they launch an education program to inform Canadians of the anti-Semitic nature of the boycott, divest, and sanctions movement, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated was the best course of action in his speech yesterday here in the House?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is certainly determined to strengthen all the programs that will educate Canadians against racism and intolerance, and to have a more tolerant and open-minded country, especially regarding our Jewish community.

This being said, the attempt of the Conservatives to divide the House on this issue failed yesterday, and it will always fail as long as we have this government in place.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said his only goal was “to free every Canadian in trouble around the world”.

Ernest Fenwick Macintosh is a Canadian and a convicted pedophile. He is in jail in Nepal right now for sexually assaulting a child. In 1997, the government issued a passport when it should not have done so.

Is this someone that the Liberals want to bring back to Canada?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will be there to give consular help to Canadians when it is appropriate, and all the help they are entitled to have.

Who we want to free are those Canadians that are unfairly put in jail everywhere in the world. That is what I want to say. If it were not clear for my colleague, I am pleased to clarify it for him today. I hope he is clear on it now.

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COPYRIGHT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for people who are visually impaired and love to read, the good news is that there are 285,000 books in Braille, audio, and large print available around the world, in addition to what is already available at home. The problem is that the copyright laws keep those books out of this country. That is the bad news.

Last spring our government introduced legislation to change copyright and implement the Marrakesh Treaty in order to make more than a quarter of a million books available to the visually impaired at zero cost to taxpayers.

I wonder if the government would commit today to reintroducing this legislation and working with all parliamentarians to pass it as quickly as possible.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his very thoughtful question.

I want to say that we do support the treaty, because we understand that many Canadians live with print disability. For these Canadians,

it can be especially difficult to obtain access to the printed material they need to participate in the economy and our society.

This government is working to address this challenge by facilitating, for persons with a print disability, published works around areas of audio and large print to provide greater accessibility and opportunities for all Canadians.

I will continue to work with the member opposite on this very important matter and will make sure we advance it. As I said from the beginning, we do support this very important treaty.

* * *

•(1155)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Denis Lemieux (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the humanitarian tragedy caused by the forced displacement of people in Syria reminds us of the responsibility we have to provide development assistance.

Can the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie explain what impact increased humanitarian aid will have on the victims of the crisis in Syria and in that region of the world?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his interest in this matter.

During my recent visit to the Zaatari camp in Jordan, which houses 80,000 refugees, I was able to see first-hand the impressive work being done by our humanitarian partners, including the grocery store set up by the World Food Programme and the health clinic set up by the United Nations population fund, which has made it possible for 5,000 babies to be delivered safely.

The work being done by UNICEF in regular and alternative schools in Jordan and Lebanon is also very impressive. Canadians can be proud of their contribution.

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[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is out of touch with Canadians.

In just 100 days, it has done nothing to help the most vulnerable in society. It has done nothing to help low-income families, and it continues to keep them in the dark.

Why is the minister making moms and dads wait months to hear about their latest tax scheme? How are families supposed to plan their budgets when they are being told to hang in there until July 1?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question even though I do not really understand it. If any party has been clear about its plan for the middle class, it is the current government.

Oral Questions

In December, we cut taxes for the middle class, which will help over nine million Canadians. We even told our colleagues opposite and all Canadians that the upcoming budget will include the Canadian benefit for families, which will start in July and help nine out of 10 families, as well as our infrastructure program.

We have a comprehensive program to stimulate the economy and help children and the middle class.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Canadian Forces members are deployed across the world, their spouses and their children are just as much a part of that deployment. They live it alongside our service men and women as if they were on the front lines also.

Coming home, wounded or not, the primary support for forces members and veterans is their family. The government promised to do more to support families as they support veterans.

Can the Minister of Veterans Affairs tell us what steps he has taken to begin this work?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Avalon for his advocacy on behalf of veterans and their families.

The Prime Minister gave me a mandate to ensure that veterans receive the care, compassion, and respect they deserve. Families are the cornerstone of a return to wellness. We were proud to announce two new tools, the OSI resource for caregivers and the veterans' mental health tutorial. These online resources will help to better understand veterans' mental health issues and reduce stigma. These are just the first steps in a better approach.

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HEALTH

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a search for Zika virus prevention in Canada on the Health Canada website yields nothing. The United States, Brazil, and many other countries have shown their citizens that they have preventive measures in place. Here in Canada, however, we have heard nothing from the minister to explain to Canadians what she is doing to protect against Zika. Why has the minister done nothing to protect Canadians against this virus?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the matter of the Zika virus epidemic is something that we have taken very seriously. My colleagues in the Public Health Agency of Canada have been very active on this file on a daily basis collaborating with our international partners at the World Health Organization. We have advised Canadians every day to make sure they are taking protective measures if it is necessary for them to travel to affected regions.

We have also advised, if women are pregnant or considering pregnancy, that they avoid travel to affected countries. All of that information is available at travel.gc.ca.

● (1200)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of International Trade confirmed that officials in her department are negotiating a new softwood lumber agreement because, as she said, "It is essential for Canadians".

Actually, for some Quebec communities, it is more than essential; it is vital. According to the Fédération québécoise des municipalités, 20,000 Quebecers have lost their jobs in the forestry industry over the last decade.

What will the minister do to ensure that the new agreement recognizes Quebec's forestry regime, which is vital to Quebec regions such as Abitibi and the North Shore, and to ensure that our regime is not considered a subsidy, as is the case in the United States?

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

This issue is a top priority. Our goal is to maintain stable access to the American market for Canada's softwood lumber industry. We will work with our American partners, and we are working very hard on this issue.

This specific issue has been raised with President Obama, Michael Froman, the U.S. trade representative, and Penny Pritzker, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

[English]

Our officials are working very hard on this file. It is important for Quebec, for B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and the Maritimes. We know it is important. We are hard at work.

* * *

[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after first threatening Quebec with cutting equalization payments and transfers, the Premier of Saskatchewan is at it again, now saying that help for Bombardier should be conditional on Quebec allowing the energy east pipeline project to go ahead.

Instead of aiding and abetting such a distasteful swap, will the government immediately provide some assistance to Bombardier, as it did for Ontario's automotive sector?

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 2015–16**

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (C) for the financial year ending March 31, 2016, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

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[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, the aerospace sector is very important to the Canadian economy. It employs close to 180,000 people. It contributes \$29 billion to our GDP. That is why we are engaged with the company. We are looking at the business case. We are doing the due diligence. We are going to make sure we make the right decision in the best interests of Quebecers and all Canadians.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said that the Canada-Europe free trade agreement would be ratified this year. It is therefore time to put in place a compensation fund for Quebec's cheese producers who will be penalized by this agreement.

Will the Minister of Agriculture honour his government's commitments and set up that promised compensation fund for Quebec's cheese producers, one that lives up to their expectations?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question.

The Government of Canada strongly supports free trade and the implementation of the Canada-Europe free trade agreement. It will stimulate investment, open up new markets, create jobs, and benefit Canadian consumers. The agreement will improve market access for Canada's agricultural exports and imports.

We will work with the departments involved and representatives from the provinces and territories to implement this agreement.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is common in this place when a minister misspeaks and says something that is factually incorrect to correct the record as soon as possible. To assist the President of the Treasury Board with that, I would like to table the “Fiscal Monitor” from November from the Minister of Finance's own department which shows that the Conservative Party left the Liberals with a surplus. I would like to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the hon. opposition House leader?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I am not seeing any consent.

● (1205)

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2014-15 annual report of the veterans ombudsman.

* * *

CANADIAN ORGAN DONOR REGISTRY ACT

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC) moved for leave to introduce C-223, an act to establish the Canadian organ donor registry and to promote organ donation throughout Canada.

He said: I rise today to introduce my private member's bill to establish the Canadian organ donor registry and to promote organ donations throughout Canada.

More than 200 Canadians die each year waiting for an organ transplant. Their deaths could be prevented if only more people were aware of the need and willing to help. As someone who has been an organ donor and who has seen the need first-hand in my family, I understand only too well how the lack of national coordination can sometimes lead to tragedy. A national registry would help save lives. I urge all members to support this bill and promote organ donations throughout Canada.

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

* * *

● (1210)

PETITIONS

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I present two petitions signed by dozens of residents of Guelph and the surrounding areas. Both petitions discuss fair electoral representation and call upon the House to amend the Canada Elections Act.

Government Orders

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition today signed by many residents of Winnipeg North asking the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of our retirement programs, in particular the OAS and the GIS, and to provide additional support for our seniors.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EFFORT TO COMBAT ISIL

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Don Valley East.

I am proud to rise in the House today to endorse a motion that supports the government's decision to broaden, improve, and redefine Canada's contribution to the effort to combat ISIL. This decision will help better leverage Canadian expertise and complement the work of our coalition partners to ensure maximum effect.

[Translation]

I am also proud of and grateful to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the diplomatic corps for doing their part in the fight against terrorism. I also want to thank the Canadian humanitarian workers for their efforts to provide much-needed help to the people affected by the conflict. I want to reiterate my support for our country's continued commitment to our coalition allies in the fight against the Islamic State.

[English]

This decision will refocus our military contribution by expanding the advise and assist mission of the Canadian Armed Forces in Iraq. It will significantly increase intelligence capabilities in Iraq and theatre-wide, and see the deployment of CAF medical personnel. It will enhance capacity-building efforts with our defence partners in Jordan and Lebanon to advance regional stability. As well, it would see the withdrawal of our CF-18s while we maintain air force surveillance and refuelling capability.

This decision will help to improve the living conditions of those affected by the conflict, and help to build the foundations for long-term regional stability, including in Lebanon and Jordan. It will lead to significant investments in humanitarian assistance, and an enhanced role for experienced humanitarian partners working to

support the basic needs of conflict-affected populations, including children and victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

[Translation]

This would allow us to engage more effectively with political leaders throughout the region. It would help us increase Canada's contribution to international efforts aimed at finding political solutions to the crises affecting the region and would reinforce our diplomatic presence to facilitate the delivery of enhanced programming. This decision would see us increase CAF deployments, strengthen dialogue with local and international partners on the ground, and generally give Canada a stronger voice in the region.

[English]

As well, this decision will see us complete our goal of welcoming tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to Canada.

Last month, constituents throughout Fredericton, New Brunswick, and the Grand Lake region were proud to welcome home troops leading Operation Provision, an important part of this whole-of-government approach to combatting ISIL. On January 12, in the wee hours of the morning, 58 soldiers returned to 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown, after working in Beirut and Amman to process Syrian refugees destined to Canada. These military personnel spent months supporting staff from the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, aiding with security patrols, data entry, and medical screenings.

• (1215)

[Translation]

I am proud of these soldiers' contribution to this operation. When they returned in January, I was also happy to see them reunited with their loved ones and colleagues. We all owe these women and men our gratitude for their service and praise for their work.

[English]

We cannot understate the tremendous effect that this nationwide community resettlement effort has had on the over 21,000 Syrian refugees who have come to us as vulnerable global citizens.

As has been recognized numerous times by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, my home province of New Brunswick, and the riding I have the honour to represent, Fredericton, have punched well above their weight in this resettlement effort. New Brunswick has now welcomed nearly 1,000 new residents, and I am proud to say that Fredericton now boasts of 400 new community members.

The leadership and support of our military, our community resettlement agencies, and the outpouring of generosity and support from everyday citizens in Fredericton and clear across this country has been nothing short of inspiring, outstanding, and heartwarming. All of these community leaders deserve our gratitude for their tireless efforts.

[Translation]

There is no doubt that, as part of this government decision, military efforts will continue to play an important role in setting the conditions necessary to deal with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Government Orders

[English]

In the town of Oromocto, 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown, Canada's largest military training base and home to some 6,000 military and civilian personnel, will surely play a leading role in the mission to defeat ISIS, deliver increased stability to the region, and develop capacity for local good governance, peace, and security. Consisting of two large formations and numerous larger units, the Combat Training Centre at Base Gagetown is organized around five distinct training schools: armour, artillery, infantry, tactics, and military engineering.

As Canada triples the size of its train, assist, and advise mission to help Iraqi security forces plan and conduct military operations against ISIL, the expertise and sophistication delivered from our women and men in uniform, many of whom will have passed through Base Gagetown, will prove essential and vital to efforts.

[Translation]

These CAF members will provide high-demand expertise in the areas of operational planning, targeting and intelligence. CAF medical personnel will provide training to Iraqi security forces in the conduct of casualty management in a battlefield context. Our personnel will examine ways to enhance in-theatre tactical transport.

[English]

Another key objective of this government's whole-of-government strategy is to promote security and stability. Canada's efforts will help prevent the spread of violent extremism by enhanced capacity-building efforts with security forces in Jordan and Lebanon.

[Translation]

Other Government of Canada security initiatives include \$145 million over the next three years for the fight against terrorism and for stabilization and security programs.

Canada will also continue efforts to support capacity-building and training of security forces of law enforcement organizations, stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, and prevent ISIL from accessing funds.

[English]

Canada will work with experienced partners to deliver \$840 million in humanitarian assistance over the next three years to support the basic needs of those hardest hit by the conflict, including children and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Canada will also deliver \$270 million over the next three years to build local capacity to provide basic social services, enhanced infrastructure, and help with accountable governance.

[Translation]

Canada's new approach also gives priority to enhancing Canada's diplomatic role.

[English]

Canada's new policy to address the ongoing crisis in Iraq and Syria and the impact it is having on surrounding regions will make a meaningful contribution to the global coalition's fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. It will help to strengthen the

ability of regional governments and local authorities to defend themselves, and allow them to rebuild over the long term.

It is a whole-of-government approach that allows several federal departments to work closely together to enhance security and stability, provide vital humanitarian assistance, and help partners deliver social services, rebuild infrastructure, and help with good governance. It is a whole-of-government approach that requires the ongoing leadership of the hard-working citizens of the riding of Fredericton, including men and women in uniform who pass through Base Gagetown.

It is a whole-of-government approach that I am proud to support.

• (1220)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian, I am always proud of our efforts around the world. I am proud of our ability to bring in refugees. I am always proud to say that we are helping the most vulnerable. However, yesterday in committee, we were informed that almost none of the refugees we have brought in have come from any of the camps that we see all the time on television.

I am wondering if the member could tell us if we are taking in the most vulnerable when we are taking in these refugees.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, it has been one of the greatest privileges I have ever had, to witness the coming together of the community of Fredericton in the welcoming of some 400 individuals and a number of families who have come to us as Syrian refugees. These people have arrived and told us their stories of having come from deplorable situations, and about how well received and how welcome they have felt by those in the community.

I do not think we can underestimate the situation that many of these refugees have found themselves in over the last number of years and how important a role Canada has to play in welcoming these refugees, as well as helping our Lebanese and Jordanian partners to accommodate refugees in camps in that part of the world.

It is about providing humanitarian assistance, compassion, and relief to individuals, but also providing some assistance to those who are carrying a heavy shoulder in this refugee effort in that region of the world.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his speech. I know him to be a proud Canadian.

Given that the Liberals have gone on the record and stated that Canada should not have a combat role, how can they guarantee that Canadian troops will not face combat in their advise and assist role? Will the Liberals acknowledge that their claims of Canada's new military role in Iraq being non-combat is unrealistic and that their plan puts our troops at even greater risk?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, as a government and as parliamentarians, we have a duty to ensure that we look out for our men and women in uniform and that we make informed decisions when we send them into conflict zones.

Government Orders

The men and women who pass through Base Gagetown, which is on the outskirts of the Oromocto community in the riding that I have the honour to represent, receive some of the best training delivered to any military personnel in the world. It is this sort of training, expertise, and sophistication that our military women and men are going to be bringing overseas to help capacitate Iraqi forces and help deliver some added stability to the region.

I will also mention the huge humanitarian assistance effort that goes along as part of this whole-of-government approach, and helping, as part of the coalition, to take down an evil force in the world in ISIL. Canada has an important role to play in this.

I have the utmost respect and confidence in our women and men in uniform to represent us well overseas and to do the job that we as parliamentarians and Canadians have tasked them with doing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to listen to many of the Conservatives speak on this, one could get the impression that Canada has to 100% participate by having CF-18s involved, and that if they are not engaged, then the Canadian Forces is not doing its job. We went through an election in which we had a very clear platform on the issue, indicating that the Canadian Forces can participate and be engaged but we do not need to have the CF-18s.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on this from when he was knocking on doors. The constituents that I represent today are quite happy with the fact that Canada will play a role and that we can play a role without the CF-18s.

•(1225)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, I think it is blatantly irresponsible for the Conservative opposition to suggest that this is one slim element that Canada has to play in the international fight against ISIL.

As I mentioned, in having walked through Oromocto, time and time again over the spring, summer, and fall, that community, and the Base Gagetown community that has grown up around it, have so much to offer to Canadians and Canada's international efforts, whether it be in diplomacy, leading humanitarian assistance, or leading in the military training effort they are going to undertake over these next number of years as part of Operation Impact.

I know that the people in the riding that I have the honour to represent, and those right across Canada, are proud of our women and men in uniform.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this important debate on Canada's effort to defeat ISIL. There has been a considerable amount of debate on this matter, although there is one aspect of the motion that needs full exploration and that is really the crux of the motion.

Before going into the details of our refocused mission, I would like to read the preamble, which says:

That the House support the government's decision to broaden, improve, and redefine our contribution to the effort to combat ISIL by better leveraging Canadian expertise while complementing the work of our coalition partners to ensure maximum effect...

That we better leverage our expertise is the crux.

We have heard from the Minister of National Defence and other hon. members, but we need to look at that the last part of that sentence, and that is complementing the work, which is very important because it maximizes our strength. It explains why the government is refocusing the mission. It explains why we are making the contribution we are making, and why the fine work done by our CF-18 pilots is no longer the most pressing need.

As part of a very broad coalition, we each bring our strengths and contributions to the table. We have allies and partners we can trust by our side.

Co-operation and collaboration have long been part of the Canadian way. We should recall the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, the Balkans, the liberation of Kuwait and the mission in Afghanistan. In all these cases, Canadians fought side by side with partners and allies, and we were part of a wider strategy. It is our responsibility to contribute into that large strategy if we wanted to defeat ISIL.

In the case of air power, our CF-18s have done an outstanding job. As the Chief of the Defence Staff said last week, when the CF-18s were initially deployed, it was in order to stop the rapid advancement by an aggressive enemy. If we think back to those times, ISIL was quickly claiming territory. Its members were seizing equipment that had been abandoned. They were committing atrocities on civilian populations, and were threatening Baghdad itself.

Thanks to that initial deployment of air power, the advance of ISIL was checked. The United States central command, which has overall responsibility for coordinating the coalition's efforts, has stated that the areas under ISIL control are shrinking. Thanks to the coalition's efforts, the complete effort of air strikes, we have reduced them from 30,000 to 19,000 and we continue to do battle with them.

Yes, there will be a need for air power in the short term, and those needs are being met by the coalition as a whole. The coalition has conducted more than 10,000 air strikes, most of them by newer fighters, but in addition to Canada, many of our close allies have also been participating in the air campaign. They include almost a dozen countries, including Australia, France and the United Kingdom, and beyond the air strikes, more than 65,000 sorties have been flown by the coalition's assets as a whole.

As I said earlier, the government acknowledges that there is a continued need for air power in the fight against ISIL, but that need is covered. We should get it straight. There is strength within which the coalition brings its whole community together. What remains truly needed to defeat ISIL is a trained, well-equipped, motivated, local force. This is an area where Canada as a whole has a great ability to provide that need.

Government Orders

• (1230)

That is why, when Canada changed its mission, the Pentagon spokesman, Peter Cook, said the following, “The Canadian announcement is the kind of response the secretary's been looking for from coalition members as the United States and our coalition partners push to accelerate the campaign against [ISIS]...”. He was speaking of the U.S. defense secretary, Mr. Ashton Carter, who met with the Minister of National Defence last week in Brussels, where Canada was held up as an example of what other countries should be doing in the fight against ISIL.

He wants other countries to follow our example, because it is the right way to do it, such as: adjust to the evolving conflict; bring our strengths to the table and put forward what is truly needed; do a gap analysis and determine what the coalition requires; and, above all, work with our allies to ensure the coalition mission is a success.

As a Canadian, I am proud of the work of our men and women in uniform and what they have done to date, including the pilots and support crews who fought to stem the advance of ISIL and pushed it even further back. They have done good work and they deserve the thanks and appreciation of all Canadians. However, the situation has evolved, the mission has changed, and the needs of the coalition are different than they were a year ago. This newly focused mission will bring our strengths to the table and allow us to make a meaningful contribution to this global effort.

As we move forward, Canada will continue to be a major contributor to the coalition efforts in Iraq and Syria. By ending air strikes in Iraq and Syria, the Canadian Armed Forces will increase its presence on the ground and increase the number of trainers and advisers to train and support the local ground forces to deal with the security threat and, ultimately, lead to sustained stability in the region.

I will end with a quote from Colonel Steve Warren, who was the Operation Inherent Resolve spokesman. He said:

We are not going to bomb our way out of this problem, right? It's never going to happen. So we've got enough bombers — you know, we always could use more but what we have has worked — but we can't lose sight of the fact that we have to train this Iraqi security force. This Iraqi army needs to be trained, it's one of our primary lines of effort and as we see nations like the Canadians agree to triple their presence, we find that extraordinarily helpful.

I am thankful our friends and allies who have our backs, just as we have theirs.

• (1235)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week when I was travelling from my home riding to Ottawa, I happened to listen to a radio interview of the mayor of Cold Lake in northern Alberta, where our fighter pilots are trained. It was interesting to hear his somewhat reserved comments that he was glad that the fighter pilots were returning home, and they are always happy to return home to their families. Their families have lost a sense of meaning the fighter pilots are no longer going to be doing the job for which they had been trained. They had trained to fight when there was a fight that needed to be taken. I sensed the whole community was feeling some sort of loss because of the responsibility that was being taken away from these fighter pilots.

I often wonder now what incentive there is for new pilots who are entering the training system. How is the government going to incite new recruits into becoming fighter pilots, some of the best in the world, if they are never going to be given the chance to fly missions like this in Iraq and Syria?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the concern of the pilots. I look at my profession. If I am trained as an accountant, I do not just do debits and credits; I have to do a wider business assessment. Therefore, having been to Cold Lake, the pilots do not only focus on bombing people.

As the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has said, bombs do not clear out the problem. In fact, we could bomb civilians and create more problems. It would be better if the training the pilots have is used to train the Iraqi forces. We cannot be in other countries forever.

We need to train them. That is why it is important for us to refocus this mission. It is for them to sustain. They know the culture, they know the language, and they know the strategic thinking. It is very critical that we train them.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech. We were invited a little earlier today by the parliamentary secretary to revisit our decision to oppose the amendment to the motion, and the main motion. I am sitting here, weighing whether I should do that.

One thing I am unclear about is whether this is a combat mission. We heard the Prime Minister the other day compare this mission to World War I and World War II. This member has now compared it to other combat missions. However, we have heard the Minister of National Defence say that it is not a combat mission.

I am confused about it. I am sure Canadians wonder what the exact nature of this mission is. Could the member clarify whether this is a combat mission?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, for someone who regards combat as fighting on the ground or fighting in the air, it is important for us to understand that the fight for ISIL is going to be done by the Iraqi and the Syrian forces. We need to train them.

We need to provide intelligence. We have not had that type of sophistication on the ground with the Iraqi and Syrian forces. We need to train them. We need to show where the intelligence is for the theatre to operate effectively.

It depends on how one defines combat, but the mission is really to train the Iraqi and Syrian soldiers to take the fight to their own fighters.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is the member indicating that air strikes are no longer necessary and that we are not leaving a gap by not participating in the air strikes?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, I make no such suggestion. I said that we were withdrawing our CF-18s.

I quoted the Americans saying that we were not going to bomb ourselves out of it. The coalition partners are using the air strikes, and they need us, as coalition partners, to help train the army on the ground. That is exactly what we are doing.

Government Orders

• (1240)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Burnaby South.

Yesterday, like every Thursday, there was a peace vigil in downtown Regina. Activists distributed literature warning against endless war in Iraq and Syria. Some of those activists, like Florence Stratton, are adamantly non-partisan. Others, like Paul Gingrich and Stephen Moore, worked hard on my election campaign and I would like to thank them for their support.

Now whether we agree with a particular political party or not, the peace movement in Regina and around the world has been warning against misguided western intervention in the Middle East for years. I believe that the House should listen.

Some of the new MPs that occupy these fold-down seats in the outer reaches of the House were born at around the time that the Soviets started fighting in Afghanistan. What did the west do in response? We started funding and arming the mujahedeen, which led to the Taliban taking over Afghanistan, which really enabled the September 11 terrorist attack and ultimately entangled us in a prolonged war in Afghanistan with decidedly mixed results.

Also in the wake of the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration decided to invade Iraq on the false pretext of there being weapons of mass destruction there. Of course, the Conservatives were clamouring for Canada to participate in this invasion. Although Prime Minister Chrétien ultimately decided to keep Canada out, it is worth remembering that Paul Martin and many other Liberals were also agitating for Canada to engage in that invasion. I am very proud of the fact that it was only Jack Layton and the NDP that provided a consistent and credible voice against that misguided war.

After years of death and destruction, what has been accomplished? Western countries validated the jihadist narrative that we are crusaders who want to invade Muslim countries. We created a power vacuum in Iraq which was filled by ISIS. We sent large quantities of arms to Iraq, many of which fell into the hands of ISIS. We laid off the former officers of Saddam Hussein's army, many of whom are now leading the ISIS army.

In Syria we see a somewhat similar pattern more recently. Western countries and allied Gulf monarchies decided to fund and arm rebels against President Assad, but most of the rebel groups in Syria are jihadist organizations that are not much different from ISIS. Unsurprisingly, many of the weapons and many of the funds sent to the Syrian opposition ended up in the hands of ISIS.

We are now left with a situation where ISIS controls large parts of both Iraq and Syria. And what solutions have been proposed in the House? We have heard calls for more bombing. We have also heard calls for more arms to the Kurds. What could possibly go wrong?

At least the Conservatives have been consistent in constantly calling for bombing of the Middle East. It seems that they hope that democratic governments will magically rise like a phoenix out of the embers of that bombing. However, the Liberals campaigned against bombing. The Liberals campaigned against Canada playing a combat role, but being Liberals, they cannot just make a progressive promise and then follow through on it. They have to play both sides of the

issue. I think it is in their DNA to campaign from the left and then govern from the right.

Today, we are looking a motion to keep their election promise to end bombing, but then to send in ground troops. We will not often hear the government describe it that way, but I was interested to hear the Minister of National Defence say almost exactly that just now in question period.

• (1245)

The Liberals cannot say they are ending Canada's military mission. They will not admit they are expanding Canada's military mission. Instead, they say they are "refocusing" Canada's military mission. It is a verb that we have heard from the Prime Minister and from the previous speaker, the hon. member for Don Valley East. However, it is an odd choice of verb, because the motion has absolutely no focus. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that the motion is the opposite of focused. We have no clear objective, no way to measure success and, of course, no exit strategy.

What should be done to counter ISIS? First, Canada should be using diplomacy to try to negotiate a peaceful settlement. That would be very difficult to do if we are directly engaged in the fighting.

Second, Canada should be stopping the flow of arms to the Middle East. One way of doing that would be to sign the UN Arms Trade Treaty. I am concerned that the government's plan to arm the Kurds carries great risk of escalation. I am also concerned that arms that we may sell to Saudi Arabia will likely end up in the wrong hands.

Third, Canada needs to stop the flow of foreign fighters into the Middle East. That means real engagement with our Muslim community and a strong de-radicalization program.

Those are some concrete steps that we could take to counter ISIS.

I do not have a perfect or complete solution to the problems of the Middle East, but I do believe we need to stop making those problems worse. Therefore, I ask the House to vote against the Conservative amendment, to vote against the Liberal motion, and to vote for peace.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting listening to the member attempt to twist, or possibly even rewrite, history. Canadians widely supported Prime Minister Chrétien's approach to Iraq. History will clearly indicate that the Liberal government did not participate in Iraq.

The member may want to try to portray divisions within a caucus. He should get his own caucus somewhat united on different issues before he tries to portray or rewrite history.

When we look at what the Liberal motion is all about, we are very different from the New Democrats. The New Democrats talk a lot about an exit strategy. Their exit strategy is a no-entry strategy. They do not recognize that Canada does have a leadership role to play in the world in combatting terrorism.

My question for the member is very specific. Does the NDP believe that it should be using the Canadian Forces in any way whatsoever in combatting terrorism in the world, and if so, how?

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Winnipeg North that Prime Minister Chrétien, thankfully, did keep our country out of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. I was one of the Canadians who supported his approach. All I noted in my remarks is that Paul Martin and various other Liberals were clamouring for Canada to participate in that invasion. As is so often the case, the Liberals were on both sides of the issue. I do not necessarily regard them as being a consistent voice for peace in the House.

The member for Winnipeg North also talked about the NDP's exit strategy being a no-entry strategy. That is true. We do not think we should get involved unless we have a clear path to success and a clear way of getting out of it. In saying that, the member avoided, yet again, explaining what the government's exit strategy is, which leads me to believe that it does not have one.

Yes, the NDP is very much supportive of using the armed forces to defend our country against terrorism and other threats, but we do not think that dropping more bombs, or having a greater military intervention in Iraq and Syria, is an effective way of doing that.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I posed a question to my colleague who gave a very important speech on this serious issue. In recent weeks he met with NATO colleagues, so I asked him how our international allies perceive this important issue. He answered that our allies are very disappointed with the position taken by Canada and the current government with respect to our contribution and the withdrawal of the CF-18s.

What does my colleague make of the fact that all our partners believe that our contribution to the mission is lacking?

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, it is true that our allies have different positions on this issue. I find that the Conservatives like to look for examples where our allies criticize our position. The Liberals sometimes have quoted our allies as saying that the government is doing the right thing.

I think that it is not a true assessment. We really have to figure out what will work to bring peace to the Middle East. That is the point of my speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to stand here to speak to this issue today. It is also a great privilege to be in the House in general.

As this is my first speech, I hope I will be allowed to thank my constituents in Burnaby South who elected me for the second time. It

Government Orders

was a tough-fought campaign, but I am happy to be here to serve my constituents.

Burnaby stands at the centre of what I do in the House and it has an important place in this debate. Over 100 languages are spoken in Burnaby. It is probably one of the most diverse places in the entire world, in Canada definitely. I have meetings every week with people who have come from four corners of the globe. There is a huge refugee population in Burnaby. This motion specifically talks about refugees and that is an important component of what we are doing here in this Parliament. We are making sure that refugees are properly taken care of.

We have to be careful to represent the views of Canadians, and this debate is an important part of that. Most Canadians, and most of my constituents, would say that peace is a central component of our foreign policy, that peace should be the main driver of our foreign policy. That is why this debate is so important to us here today.

We know what the Conservatives think about our place in the world because we had 10 years of their government. This debate is really about defining what the new government will do for Canada, what will be our face to the world. The decisions that we make with respect to this mission will tell the world what Canada's new position will be and how the world should think of us. We in the NDP hope that the new government will be one of the main drivers of peace in the world and will get us back to our role.

The Prime Minister has said that Canada is back, but Canada is not back yet. We are not back to the point of previous Liberals like Nobel Peace Prize winner Lester Pearson, who was known for bringing peace to the world. We are not there yet. We are not at the point where the previous government was, but we are not back to where we should be and that is a driver of peace in the world.

The parliamentary secretary put forward an interesting invitation for us. He asked us to reconsider this motion. I have been looking over the Conservative amendment and the Liberal motion and they both have merit worth considering. The government's motion calls on the House to expand our mission in Iraq and have more boots on the ground. The second component of the motion calls for the withdrawal of the CF-18s and the third calls for more investment in humanitarian assistance. From my reading of the Conservative amendment it asks to reverse the decision to withdraw the CF-18s and then to limit humanitarian relief.

Government Orders

That is really what we are debating here. We are debating whether we should amend the Liberal proposal with the Conservative amendment. I have looked at this and I think we can safely reject the Conservative amendment to the motion. We did not think the jets should have been there in the first place and we definitely do not want them to go back.

It is disappointing that the minister did not wait for a vote to make that decision. That was raised here earlier in question period. We were promised a debate and a vote on this issue but the decision seems to have already been made. As somebody who tries to defend the institutions of Parliament, I think that does not seem to be the way we are supposed to work here. The minister should have carefully considered both sides of the situation, waited for the vote in the House, and then made the decision. Perhaps he is not used to how this place is supposed to work and that is why he made this early mistake.

With respect to the planks of the main motion, expanding the mission to put more boots on the ground is really the core of what we have been discussing here and something I cannot seem to get a straight answer on. We hear examples from the other side of the House about how we have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with people in other wars, but that is combat, that is us shooting at other people and people shooting at us. That is about killing other people and being killed. That is a combat mission. It is unclear as to how the government views this mission. We hear about training people and marking targets for other bombing runs and those kind of things. That sounds like forays into enemy territory where our soldiers would be at risk.

● (1255)

Of course if they are fired at, they will fire back. To me that is combat, otherwise there would be no shooting at people and no getting shot at. It is very unclear and the government needs to clarify. As the debate continues on for the rest of the day, I hope we will get that clarification as to whether this is a combat mission or not. That would be crucial to us deciding whether or not to change our minds and perhaps consider a different approach to this motion.

I believe that withdrawing the CF-18s is a good idea. They should not have been there in the first place.

Increasing humanitarian assistance is a key proposal. I hope that if the Liberals decided to entirely withdraw the troops from the region that they would always consider sending humanitarian assistance because the way that peace moves forward is by wealthy nations like ours investing in and helping people in troubled areas.

On balance, I have not heard anything here that would convince me that this is a good thing to do for either the Conservative motion or the Liberals' main motion.

We are talking a lot about Iraq. I think the Liberals have a right to be proud about Mr. Chrétien's decision back in the 1990s to not follow the U.S. and the U.K. into Iraq in a fighting capacity. However, right after that, Canadians put a huge amount of effort, money, and troops into Afghanistan. A lot of us saw that as a bait and switch. We do not go into Iraq and the Liberals get all the kudos for not doing so, and rightly reinforcing the idea of Canada as a peaceful nation, but then going to Afghanistan almost covertly and

almost tricking Canadians into thinking that these two things were somehow not connected. I feel that this might be what is happening here as well, that they will withdraw a few jets but then greatly increase the number of troops and send them to Iraq. I do not feel like we are getting the whole story.

I asked a question earlier today of the parliamentary secretary about casualty counts. It is uncomfortable to talk about people dying but we need to have an estimate. The defence minister said that there was an increased risk. An increased risk to whom and by how much? What is the risk that I as a parliamentarian, representing the people of Burnaby South, have to consider? When I stand up to vote yes or no to this motion I have to answer to my constituents. If I said that I changed my mind and I voted for this motion, they would ask if I had all of the information I needed, to which I would have to say no. I do not have any. I do not know what the exit strategy is here. I do not know the constraints of this operation. I do not know whether we will have a lot of casualties or none. I do not know how much this would cost. I know that some of those things have to remain secret. However, I think the Liberals could divulge more information about this, and they are not doing that.

The last thing that is not in this motion is increased aid for soldiers who are returning and for veterans. My wife teaches at Douglas College, which is a good educational institution. A lot of soldiers who return there do so to get more education and go to her classes. They have been traumatized by what they have seen in these regions and suffer from PTSD yet there is very little support for these veterans. What I would like to see in the motions and the government actions going forward is a firm commitment for more resources for returning soldiers. If we in the NDP cannot stop the Liberals from what we think is a mistake in action, at least we can call for more assistance when these soldiers return to Canada.

Therefore, I will be opposing this motion and, unless I hear something very different from the other side of the House, I will be opposing the Conservative amendment.

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this debate began, we have been hearing people say that we should be there and others saying that we should not. On this side of the House, we have always believed that Canada must be present.

However, one thing I remember is that we decided to send the CF-18s because we did not want to put our soldiers at risk. Now, that is what is going to happen. We are going to put them at greater risk. We must always remember why we sent the CF-18s. At that time, we had just completed another military intervention.

How does the NDP believe that we can combat the so-called Islamic State if we do nothing and we are not even there? Should we send our soldiers flowers?

What does the NDP suggest the government do to combat ISIL, a group made up of bloodthirsty and barbaric people who kill women and children without remorse? I would like to hear a real proposal from the NDP.

Government Orders

[*English*]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member saying we send flowers is perhaps not appropriate for this type of debate. This is a very serious issue and we are talking about people dying. That is why we raise the point that we do. We have a legitimate concern that this mission is not thought through, that it has no exit strategy, that it really will not share any conception of casualties.

The Conservatives are keen to rush in any time the dog whistle is blown and they have to go off and kill people. That is fine, but that is not how we think in the NDP. We think that we have to have clear guidelines and parameters of missions. It is also very helpful to have clear directives from the UN Security Council, which we do not have in this case.

Again, we have hawks, always hawks, on that side of the House, and that is not how we work here in the NDP.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to flesh this out a little more in terms of when the NDP would feel it appropriate to get engaged.

I do not think there is any real surprise on this side of the House that the NDP will be voting against the motion. However, the challenge is trying to understand what role the NDP believes the Canadian Forces should be playing regarding combatting terrorism, particularly terrorism abroad. I wonder if the member could provide some sense to Canadians of the NDP's perspective. What does it take or to what degree are the NDP members at all inclined to use members of the Canadian Forces?

Members of the Canadian Forces do phenomenal work for us, and we are all very honoured by the things they do. However, to what degree and what would it take for the NDP to actually support using the Canadian Forces to combat terrorism? I think Canadians have a right to know that.

•(1305)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, my family has a long military history. No one in past generations related to me would shirk from any fight, especially when it comes to defensive wars, like World War I and World War II. I do think that the NDP would say in those circumstances that, of course, we have to have armed forces ready to fight in those circumstances.

However, it is the government's responsibility to convince us that this is a good mission, and it has not done that. It has waffled.

The one word I have not heard from the Liberals through this whole debate is "peacekeeping". We have had this kind of light commitment to it during the election, but I do not hear it from that side. It used to be Canada's pride and joy that we were the peacekeepers of the world. We were the country that people came to when they wanted to settle disputes. I don't hear it from that side.

I hear combat missions and how we have to beat people into submission. That is not the image that I want to portray Canada to be, and my constituents do not want that either. I would like to hear more about peacekeeping from these members.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

I am pleased to take part in this important decision regarding Canada's refocused approach to the situation in Iraq and Syria.

We must always keep in mind our ultimate goal: peace and stability in the region and the eradication of ISIL. As we debate our current and future involvement, we must consider how this conflict is evolving, the critical follow-on phases of the mission, all possible contributions the Canadian Armed Forces can make, and which roles and capability the coalition needs the most.

In past missions, following the initial military engagements, control of regions had fallen to extremists in some parts of the world. Part of the reason for this is because some may have underestimated the importance of those follow-on phases. We do not want to make the same mistake again. By taking a leadership role as we transition to the next phase, we will secure and safeguard all the gains made by our CF-18s and the other forces in the air campaign, and all the work that has already been done.

[*Translation*]

It is the overwhelming consensus of the coalition that a well-trained and properly equipped local security force is of critical importance as we transition to this critical next phase.

We will stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies on the ground by providing them with the appropriate training and tools to set the conditions for their success. While our support is necessary to set these conditions today, we aim to ultimately enable our local partners in the region to maintain this stability themselves.

This is why just last week, in consultation with our allies and consistent with the evolving needs of the mission, we made the commitment to tripling our training, advise, and assist capacity in Northern Iraq.

[*English*]

The Canadian Armed Forces has a strong record in training local forces.

While no two missions are the same, there are lessons to be drawn from past experiences.

From May 2011 to March 2014, Canadian Armed Forces members were deployed on Operation Attention, a training mission based out of Kabul, Afghanistan. They did incredible and invaluable work, establishing basic individual recruit training institutions and helping to train more than 160 battalion-sized units. Canadian Armed Forces members also provided specialized training in fields such as combat first aid, logistic signals, and target designation.

Government Orders

However, the mission provided so much more. The advice and assistance we provided helped Afghan forces become self-sufficient, so that they are now protecting their own national sovereignty.

We are also seeing positive results from our ongoing training efforts in Ukraine, through Operation Unifier, in which a contingent of 200 Canadian Armed Forces members is providing military training and capacity-building to Ukraine's personnel. Working closely with our allies, we are supporting the country with its efforts to maintain sovereignty, security, and stability in the region. The Royal Canadian Engineers are training Ukrainian forces in the skills they need to prevent the devastation from explosive threats, including unexploded ordnances and mines.

Due to the nature of the recent Ukrainian armed forces' operations, military personnel are required to operate in urban environments, a skill that the Canadian Armed Forces mastered during our tours in Afghanistan. We are also teaching them how to efficiently conduct searches for weapons, ammunition, and parts used to build improvised explosive devices that may be deliberately hidden or disguised. These practical and tactical skills will dramatically increase the effectiveness of the Ukrainian armed forces.

Through these missions, such as Op Attention and Op Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces is helping nations set the conditions for long-term peace, stability, and prosperity in troubled regions all over the world, and we are viewed as experts in just this kind of mission.

With the help of a training program designed by the Canadian Armed Forces members, and in conjunction with the United Kingdom and the United States, Ukrainian soldiers are learning advanced military skills.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces have been training, advising, and assisting Iraqi security forces since September 2014. The Minister of National Defence visited the region in December to spend time with our troops, assess the situation on the ground, and meet with coalition partners.

This trip provided the minister with valuable insight into hardships faced by those living in the region, the challenges our Canadian Armed Forces members are facing, and what precisely is required to achieve our goal: the eradication of ISIL and stability in the region.

The work our Canadian Armed Forces members are doing is absolutely essential. Without this work, the chances of long-term success in the region would be greatly diminished. We are extremely proud of their efforts and stand behind them 100%. First, they are aiding local security forces in operational planning. This has led to more precise and successful operations. Second, they are working with commanders to determine, design, and implement the skills they need to defeat ISIL on the ground. They are assisting local security forces by implementing a training regime to hone these fighting skills. Then our mentors will be able to create development programs to build on the skills that local forces have already acquired. The Canadian Armed Forces are also providing advice and

assistance to local security forces on how to apply these valuable lessons on the battlefield.

[*English*]

We are also teaching Iraqi security forces in basic shooting and marksmanship skills, platoon, and indirect weapons support skills. This enables them to fire more accurately and more effectively and to engage targets farther than before. It also reduces the risk of casualties and collateral damage.

The men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces currently deployed have also assisted by providing combat first aid training. Another focus of our training mission is providing tactical mobility by teaching the Iraqi security forces how to detect and avoid IEDs. We learned a lot from our experience in Afghanistan through our counter improvised explosive device task force, which focuses on disarming these explosive devices and dismantling the network responsible for financing, creating, and planting the explosives. I am happy to let my colleagues know that according to Canadian Armed Forces' reports, these local forces have successfully located and neutralized several IEDs, saving tens, maybe even hundreds, of lives.

Furthermore, our men and women in uniform are intimately aware of the need to respect the rule of law, and the tenets of the law of armed conflict are infused in every program of instruction they offer.

The success of our mission in Iraq will be determined by the effectiveness of local ground forces in co-operation with our security partners. We are proud of the progress to date. In other words, local security forces are manifestly better now than they were when we started, but more is needed. They are now taking the fight to ISIL. We are helping, but they are the ones fighting, and that fight is more efficient and effective, thanks to our men and women in uniform.

• (1315)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today in the valley it is known as Red Friday. During the Afghanistan mission, two military wives, Lisa Miller and Karen Boire, started a tradition that spread right across Canada, wearing red on Friday to remember every week the soldiers who gave their lives and spilled their blood in Afghanistan.

How can the member over there stand under the pretext of representing military families when today the minister admitted to withdrawing the CF-18s before putting other proper protection in place? The best way to ensure that military families are taken care of is to ensure that their loved ones come home all in one piece.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, I am a military family. Using cheap political rhetoric to score points on the backs of military families is way below the dignity deserving of this House. That is absolutely unacceptable.

The honest thing to admit is that I got splashed yesterday. The nice gray suit I normally wear with my red shirt, well, I am afraid it was unsuitable to be worn this morning. Sometimes those kinds of things just happen.

Government Orders

I have been to Afghanistan. I have flown the skies of Afghanistan. I have driven the roads. I know what it takes to make these kinds of missions a success. This coalition needs Canada's leadership in these follow-on phases, because without it we will not be able to secure and safeguard the progress we have made.

This is Canada's role. This is the kind of leadership this coalition needs. We are stepping up to the plate to provide it.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening all day, trying to find out what the end goal of this mission is. I think I have found it. It is to eradicate.

That is the word that was spoken on the other side of the House. Eradicate, similar to exterminate. Is this the end goal of this mission, to eradicate ISIS? Is it to have zero left?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, we want the eradication of all of the evil that has been perpetrated by ISIL. This is what needs to happen.

As long as we leave them with territory they can control where they can influence the lives of the people who live there, there is definitely the potential that ISIL can return and start the fight over again.

We know these people will not give up easily, and neither should we. This will not be an easy fight. It will go on for a while, but what we are going to contribute to this mission is worthwhile. Without controlling, without eradicating that kind of ideology, the one that is spread by ISIL, we will not be able to create the kind of long-term stability and peace that we want in the region.

• (1320)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have stated regularly that we do support the humanitarian efforts, the efforts on the ground, that the government has talked about. We do support that.

However, I have yet to hear anyone say that these air missions are no longer needed. Did the allies say they have enough capacity and can do it without us?

What we are missing, and I have not heard a good explanation for this, is the still critical role of air strikes. How can the parliamentary secretary justify stepping back from combat when it is perhaps needed the most?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, I worked in the NATO air headquarters for four years in Germany. I understand the power of the coalition. I understand their capabilities and what they have to offer.

I also know what role Canada is prized for. Our F-18s, our air power, yes, it is recognized as amongst the best, top of the scale, but so is our ability to go on the ground, train soldiers, and create the long-term stability.

We are just saying that we are changing our focus, because we need to get in there and protect what we have gained. That will not get done unless we are there training local security forces.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address Canada's diplomatic engagement in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and

Lebanon. As the Prime Minister and members of cabinet have said, we are approaching the fight against ISIL through a comprehensive, integrated, succinct plan strengthened by active diplomacy.

Our diplomatic engagement builds on military efforts, and on humanitarian assistance and development support that we will be providing to the region. Our comprehensive strategy will contribute to the security and stability of the entire region, both in Iraq and beyond Iraq. Our integrated strategy will bring together resources and experience drawn from throughout government and Canada's international partners. Our multi-year commitment addresses the nature of this complex and protracted conflict, and enables us to seek and support long-term solutions.

Diplomacy is a long-term proposition, and so too is our diplomatic engagement strategy which seeks lasting political solutions. After all, the Syrian crisis we are facing today started as part of the Arab Spring, when the Syrian people called for freedom and dignity. We all know that they need our help. They need our support as they work to repel ISIL, and to build a better future for themselves. The people of the region need our help in ways that are non-military. They need our leadership to engage with key players in the region to support efforts at mediation, reconciliation, and peace negotiations. They need our assistance to strengthen local conflict management and local governance. If we are not doing these things now, we cannot defeat ISIL over the longer term. Canada is well placed to play a strong diplomatic role. We have expertise from years of hard work at the centre of peace negotiations, regional security initiatives, conflict prevention programming, transitional justice, and institutional reform. The international community welcomes our engagement in this way.

Turning to our diplomatic effort in Syria and Iraq, it is quite clear that without a broader political settlement in Syria and without inclusive government in Iraq, together with the greater capacity of Iraqi forces, the crisis will continue. This has been mentioned by every member of the House over the course of this debate. Our approach recognizes this fully and recognizes that this has been raised very well by everyone. Without ongoing diplomatic effort, the sources of instability will remain and will re-emerge, even though the threat from ISIL may have been defeated. In Iraq, we will work with the Iraqi government to ensure that our support reflects our desire to respect and protect the territorial integrity of the country.

Government Orders

Iraqi Prime Minister al-Abadi inherited a daunting set of challenges when he was appointed over a year ago. Since then, he has made notable progress on the political front. He has established a balanced government that is inclusive of major ethno-religious groupings. He has undertaken reforms in the security sector, improving the collaboration and recruitment of Sunni tribal forces in the fight against ISIL. He has reached out to leaders of the Kurdistan regional government and taken steps to resolve long-standing tensions related to revenue sharing and oil exports. More recently, he has undertaken an ambitious reform agenda, aiming to root out corruption and improve the delivery of basic services. Though progress has been made on the political front, significant challenges remain. Obviously, years of division and mutual distrust cannot be undone quickly. The Iraqi parliament remains heavily polarized, which has slowed the pace of reform and impeded the advancement of key legislation.

Iraq's internal fragility is exacerbated by the conflict in neighbouring Syria. Syria requires a lasting political solution as well, endorsed and supported with the full weight and intent of the international community. Otherwise, we cannot create the conditions for the Syrian people to withstand extremism. To that end, Canada will remain a steadfast partner for the United Nations and the International Syria Support Group in our mutual ongoing effort to reach a solution. We urge all parties to undertake necessary steps to make it possible to return to the negotiating table to save lives and to advance peace. We will stick with Syria in this.

The conflicts in Syria and Iraq continue to destabilize the very neighbouring countries that are key to ensuring broader regional stability. Jordan and Lebanon are among the countries of the region most affected by the Syrian crisis. Along with Turkey, they have absorbed the burden of hosting millions of refugees, with thousands more arriving at their borders every day seeking shelter from the horror.

● (1325)

This is the greatest human crisis since World War II. Lebanon and Jordan are struggling under the weight of a crushing burden. Lebanon currently hosts over one million refugees from Syria, and yet its population is barely more than four million. As such, Lebanon has the highest rate of refugees per capita in the world. This unprecedented flow of refugees threatens the stability of the Lebanese state and its institutions.

Tensions in adjacent host communities are heightened, as people experience the strain of severe competition for underfunded services and the stress of scarce employment opportunity. The Jordanian and Lebanese people need the support of the international community. These continuing pressures threaten to widen the sectarian fault lines in Lebanon, with consequences for the precarious political and social balance that holds this country together, barely.

The influx of refugees also presents challenges to Jordan's ability to respond to the expectations of its own population, and this fuels the type of socio-economic and political marginalization that can potentially drive individuals toward extremism. Countries such as Jordan and Lebanon need sustained support. Their ability to withstand pressure from the crisis in neighbouring Syria is integral to the wider stability of the region.

The recent outpouring of generosity by Canadians welcoming refugees throughout our country reflects Canadians' desire to act and to make a difference, in the same way that Canadian individuals, families, associations, and communities have become actively involved. This government is making a positive difference to our concerted regional engagement effort to strengthen economic, social, and political resilience in Jordan and Lebanon. We will encourage those political leaders to embrace compromise and work together to secure a stable future.

Only realistic and lasting political solutions, achieved through sustained diplomatic efforts, will help to resolve the challenges that Syria and Iraq face. Moderate, tolerant, local voices, supported by Canadian diplomatic efforts in concert with our international allies, can help to stabilize the region. A Canadian policy of diplomatic engagement utilizes our strength and complements the wider coalition efforts.

Canada is among the foremost humanitarian donors to this crisis. We are a leader among development donors in targeting assistance to building the resilience of the region. Canada has set an example by opening our doors and committing to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees. We have demonstrated that this can be done efficiently and without compromising our security or values. In the process, we have strengthened Canada's role in the world.

The warmth and generosity of Canadians has not gone unnoticed by the Syrians, nor by our Turkish, Jordanian, and Lebanese partners in this operation. The broader international community has recognized Canada's compassion and contribution.

In conclusion, our strategy recognizes the scope and complexity of the ongoing crisis. It recognizes the need to reinforce Iraq's capacity and to assist Jordan and Lebanon. It recognizes the role that Canada has to play in this effort, and increases our contribution to the coalition. Diplomacy is a fundamental part of our comprehensive plan for the fight against ISIL, and I am very pleased to share that with members of the House.

● (1330)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for her intervention. As she knows, we support the parts of the mission that involve more humanitarian relief. It follows on what we started as the Conservative government in the last Parliament, making sure we are there to help those who are most in need: displaced people, refugees; and providing education opportunities, shelter, clothing, food, and working with all of the credible agencies in the region.

Our concern with some of the comments from the Minister of International Development is around whether aid dollars may end up in the hands of some of the terrorists. I am trying not to be discriminatory in how aid dollars flow, but I do not think there is a single Canadian who will accept any of their tax dollars being used for humanitarian relief that flows into agencies that direct them into the hands of ISIS terrorists, Hezbollah, or Hamas. We know of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, which has taken dollars and aid and generated revenues to put back into the Assad regime so he can continue his civilian war: bombing, poisoning, and killing his own citizens.

Government Orders

I want to receive assurances from the government that will not happen. If the Liberals continue on the path of saying they will not discriminate or try to dictate how Canadian dollars are spent on relief, I want them to rethink that. I want them to make sure we are only providing humanitarian relief to the most needy, those who are being displaced and persecuted by ISIS and the other terrorist groups in the region.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his assiduous attention to my comments. It is very good when members of the House come together in support of the fight against ISIL. Of course, I am happy to extend my assurances with regard to aid money that flows. We have said this repeatedly and we will pay strict attention to that, particularly because of the outpouring of support and confidence that Canadians have shown toward each and every one of us in the fight against ISIL.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we truly are seeking clarity on the government's proposal to help Canadians decide if this is the correct approach, so I have three questions for my colleague.

First of all, stopping the flow of arms to ISIS is critical. It cannot fight a war without weapons. Why has the Liberal government not yet signed the UN Arms Trade Treaty?

Second, what criteria would the member use to gauge the success of Canada's mission, and, third, what is the government's exit strategy?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased to be acceding to the UN Arms Trade Treaty. It is unfortunate that the previous government did not do that. However, once we have conducted our due diligence, we will absolutely be joining the original signatories to that.

The success of the Canadian mission will be gauged partly by our ability to work with the 65 countries that are in this coalition to make our contribution. As I have said in my remarks, this is a long-term strategy. We are making a diplomatic effort that we see going far into the future. As the military effort has success, we are there on the ground rebuilding civil society and working in advance around the areas of conflict to ensure that it takes hold.

With regard to our exit strategy, I would think we will be moving ultimately from our military effort toward attenuation, even with the humanitarian effort, because ultimately we have stable, independent democracies operating in that area. That is a long-haul vision for our government, and we are approaching it by this integrated manner which I described.

●(1335)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

I am pleased to rise on this debate in part as the former minister of defence, to thank the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces for their brilliant service to this country in her defence, in the defence of human dignity against a genocidal terrorist organization which simply must be stopped.

[*Translation*]

Daesh is not a traditional political movement. It is an organization that is trying to eliminate all peoples, including the oldest Middle Eastern peoples, who do not share their ideas or their theology of violence and murder.

[*English*]

This is a death cult that seeks the complete destruction of all of those who do not share its distorted theology, its effort to create a caliphate, and to impose on the entire region, and perhaps the entire world in their distorted minds, a particularly violent iteration of 7th-century sharia law.

It is always important in this debate that we remind ourselves of the nature of this organization. This is where the position of the Liberal government has gone wrong. Quite simply, if we listen carefully to many of the statements of the right hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Minister of National Defence, and other members of the Liberal government, we will hear what I submit is a radical misunderstanding of the nature of threat that we face.

We heard in this place the bizarre suggestion by the Minister of Defence that the millenarian death cult of ISIL was somehow the creation of climate change. We recall the statement of the right hon. Prime Minister following the Boston bombing, which was motivated by the same kind of ideology and hatred. He suggested that somewhere there must be people who feel excluded. We have heard from Liberal MPs the suggestion that Daesh is just another manifestation of a reaction to western foreign policy, or an unequal distribution of wealth. All of these attributed motives indicate a radical misunderstanding of the nature of the threat that we face.

Let us be clear. Daesh does not seek a conventional political outcome. It does not seek a change in economic policy. It is not a reflection of climate. It is a death cult that is motivated by dystopian theology that seeks to impose a caliphate and to eliminate, in the most brutal fashion imaginable, all of those who stand in its way. This is why we, the civilized world, can have no quarter in, not opposing, but eliminating this threat.

Here is the challenge. As long as Daesh is seen by potential recruits, often young men who are seduced by its idea of a caliphate, as long as it is seen to be on the winning side of history, as long as it is seen to be the fulfillment of that Quranic prophecy, more and more will go to join Daesh. That is why we, the civilized world, must demonstrate that it is on the losing side of history, that it is not the realization of the prophecy of a caliphate but rather, just a bunch of murderous thugs, and incompetent ones at that.

It is in diminishing and eventually destroying the organization, and in the long run its affiliated organizations around the world, that we can stop the flow of new recruits, new energy resources, and prestige to that organization.

That is why the previous government in consultation with all of our allies, including the sovereign Republic of Iraq, the United States, and all of our traditional allies, decided upon a multi-faceted strategy to counter and ultimately destroy Daesh.

Government Orders

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

I find the current government's claim a bit puzzling.

That is why we invested. I find it puzzling that the current government claims to have invented the idea of a multi-faceted strategy to counter Daesh, including development and diplomacy.

The previous Conservative government was the fifth-largest donor of humanitarian assistance for victims of Daesh in Iraq and the region. The previous government welcomed nearly 25,000 Iraqi refugees. The current government, on the other hand, has closed the door to these refugees with its current policy. The previous government engaged all of the partners on the diplomatic front.

I was in Baghdad with the former prime minister to meet Iraqi Prime Minister al-Abadi. We were in Erbil, in northern Iraq, to meet Barzani and the leaders of the Kurdish regional government. That is why we organized the summit for the most important partners in the military campaign against Daesh last year in Quebec City. I think it is disgusting that Canada was not included in the same meeting this year.

That means the former Conservative government had a comprehensive strategy: humanitarian, diplomatic, for refugees and military. All of our partners called on Canada to contribute to the air campaign. I am very proud, and we should all be proud of the men and women of the Royal Canadian Air Force, who flew over 2,000 sorties since the beginning of the mission and conducted more than 200 air strikes.

[*English*]

Our men and women in the RCAF have successfully hit over 200 ISIS targets, degrading that organization, eliminating equipment, reducing its personnel and its power to inflict genocide on the innocent people of that region. Let us all express our gratitude to them.

However, the government has invented endless, often contradictory, and typically incoherent rationale for its policy of retreat from the combat element of this campaign. By the way, the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister do not even seem to be able to answer the question to whether the mission they propose in the motion constitutes a combat mission. Of course, it does not, as clarified by the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Vance, yesterday.

Let me be clear about this. The rationale is simple, crass, and political. When the previous Conservative government proposed to participate in the international air campaign against Daesh, the current Prime Minister, then leader of the third party, said infamously that the only reason for this was that the former prime minister wanted to "...whip out our CF-18s and show them how big they are". This was a juvenile, puerile, immature reflection on the most serious security question the House had faced in a very long time.

It was a political calculation in a competition with our pacifist friends in the NDP not to participate in that mission. It was criticized by former Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff, by former Liberal leader Bob Rae, by former ministers like Ujjal Dosanjh, Jean Lapierre, and so many others who understood that the Liberal Party used to represent a spirit of responsible internationalism, that we never stood

by idly when others were in the fight against evil, particularly of a genocidal nature.

The government suggests that an air campaign is not sufficient to defeat Daesh. Of course, it is not. Nor is a ground campaign led by the Iraqis sufficient to defeat Daesh. However, both are necessary. Both elements are necessary but not sufficient. This is why we will oppose this motion. Canada should have a strategy that operates at all levels, including at the level of combat, and it is not in keeping with the best values and traditions of our country to abandon the fight as the government is doing.

• (1345)

Mr. David Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives talk extensively about their support of soldiers, of veterans, of wars, of fights. While pushing that agenda, the Conservatives attempted to destroy peacekeeping as a Canadian value. I suppose having peace is not good for those who prefer war.

However, it is very important to check with the member, the former minister of defence, why, if his leadership in war has been so good, if his vision in war has been so clear, did every one of the Afghanistan war veterans in the House, and there are four here who served in that theatre under that former minister of defence, choose to endorse his brilliant leadership by running against him as Liberals?

Does he doubt the wisdom of those military personnel to whom he claims to have listened?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his election. I would point out that I did not have the honour of being minister of defence during our mission in Afghanistan, a mission that was launched by previous Liberal government, under the premiership of the former prime minister, Paul Martin.

However, if he wants to talk about military-serving personnel, when I visited our Royal Canadian Air Force personnel at our two bases in Kuwait, every one of them, the pilots, the ground personnel, the junior and senior officers, all said that this was the mission of their lives, that this was why they joined the Royal Canadian Air Force, that this was why they donned the Canadian uniform. It was precisely to fight against a genocidal organization like this on behalf of Canada.

Does the member suggest that this party prefers war? Does he really believe that? Does he really believe that peacekeeping is the appropriate response to the genocidal terrorism of Daesh? That speaks volumes about the mentality in today's Liberal Party. It does not share the values of Canada's historic defence of human dignity.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before in the House earlier today, I am the parent of two Canadian Forces members. As such, I understand the role they have decided to play in protecting our country. I understand that Canada is playing a part in a coalition, and that is part of a team. We have something to bring to the table and therefore we are.

Why is the hon. member so convinced that he has to send my sons to war?

Government Orders

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her election. I would like to thank her sons, through her, for their service to our country. Of course men and women who join the Royal Canadian Air Force, the army, and the Royal Canadian Navy do so because they want to serve our country and they are prepared to serve when Canada's interests are at stake and when they are deployed.

However, quite honestly, I find the member's question somewhat confusing because the policy of the government which she supports, reflected in the motion before the House, actually elevates the risk for our military personnel.

There is no contention, I believe, that the air campaign is an extraordinarily low-risk campaign. There is no aerial threat to the operations of the RCAF, and the government proposes to continue most aerial operations, though the Polaris refuellers and the Aurora reconnaissance aircraft. However, the government proposes to increase the number of ground personnel that are situated close to the forward line of our own troops, which is clearly where there is an elevated degree of risk.

If the member is concerned about the level of risk in Canada's participation in the fight against ISIL, I cannot understand why she supports the motion.

• (1350)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here today. Those of us who have been here for a while have almost seen this conflict roll out in several chapters. Some of us will remember 2003, the beginning of the Iraq War, when the conflict began with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the conflict that took place in Iraq over the period of time following that. It ended up with almost a civil war in the country.

In 2005-06 I believe it was then that Nouri al-Maliki became prime minister of the country. There was some hope when he was elected that there would be some elements that would put peace in place, and that he would build some institutions there that would serve the Iraqi people very well.

Unfortunately, he chose to be a leader who was more divisive than helpful. The Sunni minority was soon alienated there, and many of the problems that we are still facing today came out of the activity of that government and the failure of that government to be able to welcome and bring people together within Iraq. It came at a time, as well, when the support the government needed there, the strength that was being supplied by some of the military from outside Iraq, was reduced as well.

We saw those kinds of conflicts begin to re-emerge in Iraq. We are all familiar, as well, with Syria, and the fact that the Assad family has been in power there for many years. If I remember correctly, I think we are all aware that was considered one of the rogue governments. It was on a par, basically, with North Korea and some others that were seen as sponsors of terror, but also basically terrorist governments that were holding their own people hostage, threatening them, torturing them, and had one of the worst human rights records in the world.

In 2011, when the Arab Spring unrest began in the Middle East, Syria was impacted by that as well. It took a little longer than with

some of the other countries, but certainly unrest spread there, and soon it began to respond as it always did with violent crackdowns, and basically a civil war has emerged out of that.

We find that area in the conflict that it is in today, the conflict that has been so much a part of its past. Through all of this time, there were different organizations that were arising, kind of forming and reforming within the area. In 1999 to 2003, we saw the development of a number of organizations that ended up coming together and then forming what is now known as ISIS or ISIL.

In 2013-14, virtually everyone was surprised by the sudden emergence and the surge that this organization was able to show and the amount of territory it was able to take over.

It was interesting that in July 2013, I believe the Syrian government had approximately 40% of the country's territory and 60% of the population, and two years later it had shrunk to an area of about 30,000 kilometres, and only 16% of the country was controlled by that government. That was an example in Syria, but it was similar in Iraq, the area and the territory that the government lost because it was not able to provide security for its people.

We are familiar with the situation that took place in Mosul, the massacres that took place when ISIL moved through there, and particularly in the Sinjar Mountains with the Yazidis who were living their lives. They had their own religion, their own culture. ISIL swept through there, slaughtered as many of the men as they could find, and took the women and girls hostage. Many of those young women and girls have been turned into sex slaves. They have been traded, bought, and sold.

I had the opportunity to be on the foreign affairs committee last Parliament, and that was a topic of conversation. Several of our meetings were talking about the situation that particularly the Yazidis find themselves in. However, many other minority groups in the area were obliterated by ISIL as it moved through the area.

Through all of this, we have been partners in a coalition that has been trying to push back ISIL, and particularly recently has been very successful in that. We can see the area that ISIL had earlier on and the area that it has now. We can see that it is being forced back. It cannot happen any too soon.

We have been very effective. We have been a part of a coalition that started in 2014, kind of on the sidelines of a NATO meeting. Countries came together and put the coalition together. Canada was proud to be part of that. Our contribution has been large. It has been in a number of areas. It has covered most of the areas that we see mentioned in the Liberal motion today. I want to talk about that a little later, if I have time.

We have been particularly successful in terms of how we have been able to use our fighter jets.

• (1355)

Our CF-18s have been a major part of the coalition. Canada has been a major contributor to it. From the information I have received, we have run almost 1,400 sorties, 800 aircraft flights, over 250 air strikes, and over 400 ISIS targets have been destroyed.

Government Orders

One of the reasons this is critical is because ISIS depends so much on oil revenue. It depends on foreign currency and being able to buy and sell that oil. Canada has been effective in destroying those targets. We have seen recently that we have been able to disrupt that supply line.

My colleague talked a couple of days ago in the House about how those supply lines have finally been disrupted, to the point that ISIL fighters are now fleeing to Libya and other places. ISIL has lost its money. It has lost its source of revenue. It is not able to pay its fighters and it is starting to break down. It is unfortunate that just at the time when these things are taking place, our government has decided that it is time to cut and run. This is not the appropriate time to do that.

I want to talk a bit about the government's motion. From those of us who have been here and understand the situation, a lot of this looks like window dressing. Most of what the Liberals are suggesting we have been doing effectively.

There is one place, among others, that we would completely disagree with the government, and that has been the government's focus on changing the mission. When I read in the motion that the government wants to refocus, I do not see this as refocusing a military contribution. I see it as weakening the military contribution.

We have talked here in the last few days about why the government would elevate the risk. The last question that was asked in here was about the risk that our troops would be put under. Why would the government want to elevate risk? There may be good reasons why we need to elevate risk if we are engaged in a situation like this, but why would we reduce our combat capability at the same time? It does not make any sense. The government is going to move ahead with putting people in place who will be at risk. The government does not seem to be able to answer the questions that we have been asking in the House. It cannot tell us how it is going to protect our troops there. We completely disagree. This refocus is not a refocus but a weakening of our military capacity that will put our troops at risk.

The motion talks about improving the living conditions of conflict-affected populations. We have been a big part of that discussion over the last few years on the foreign affairs committee. We talked a lot, particularly to refugee communities, and asked them what they would like, what we could do to help.

In light of our discussion about our refugees over the last few months, it is interesting to note that virtually all witnesses who came to committee said they would like to go back to their home village. They would like to have peace. They would like to go back to the life they had before. Whether it was Yazidis, Syrian Christians, or Kurds, they wanted this settled so they could go back and live their lives as they did before.

We needed to build strong institutions. That continues to be a need in the area. That was one of the reasons why, when the Arab Spring broke out, a lot of people in that area had great hope for what would happen. However, the institutions that needed to be put in place at that time were not strong enough to handle the opportunity that they had.

We talk about investing significantly in humanitarian assistance. We have done that in the past. We are proud of the commitment that we made. There is a challenge. In order to deliver that humanitarian assistance, we need to have a secure situation. We have heard time and time again about the challenge to deliver, for example, food aid securely. We heard that food aid was being hijacked. We heard that in Syria in particular the government would take over the food aid. There was no idea where it was going. Without a strong military presence, without that strong military capacity, we cannot even guarantee that humanitarian aid will get to where it needs to go.

It is all fine and well for the government to talk about these things but we need to understand that it is not going to have the capacity to be able to deliver on the kinds of things it is talking about.

We have heard from the other side that there are all kinds of reasons why this has happened. Climate change was mentioned. The defence minister talked about how this is a criminal organization, that this is all about criminal activity. The reality is that in order to deal with this death cult, as my colleague called it, we need to have a strong military capacity, a strong military response. We need to be part of a coalition that can do that.

I am afraid we are just not doing our job. We are not pulling our weight. We did in the past and we need to do that again. The Liberal government needs to reconsider the direction it is going in.

• (1400)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed working with my colleague on many committees here in Ottawa.

We heard a rather extraordinary statement from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs just a few minutes ago. She thought the whole purpose of the Liberal mission was to eradicate ISIS. I used the word "exterminate" and she did not disagree. It seems that eradicate seems to be the end goal of the Liberal mission.

Could the hon. Conservative member tell me if his party agrees that is the objective of this mission?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, we need to get rid of ISIS. We need to get it out of that place. This ideology is not going away easily.

I spoke earlier about having witnesses at committee who talked about their status and the fact that they wanted to get back to their communities. What people in these war-torn areas want to see is peace and quiet so they can go back to their lives, raise their children, and put their families back together. We will not be able to do that as long as this ideology is being permeated throughout the area.

One of the ways that we can deal with that is with a strong military capacity. The government wants to weaken that, and it will be unable to deliver the things it has talked about, such as institutional strength and humanitarian aid without a strong military capacity.

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear a number of phrases being used by the members opposite, such as the weakening of our military contribution, and cutting and running. I fear this seriously diminishes Canada's contribution to this, and the strong contribution we continue to have. By suggesting that removing our jets means we are no longer providing a constructive contribution to this is seriously concerning.

Could the member opposite explain his comments? Does he think our contribution now, and others who are contributing, is not worth anything?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the difference in the reaction of the government over the last few months to that of other governments around the world, governments that we consider to be allies. For example, after the November 13 Paris attacks, France thought it was important to expand its air strikes. The United States has expanded its air strikes against ISIS following the attacks on Paris, Beirut, Mali, and San Bernardino. It is committed to investing more into the forces working on the ground as well. The United Kingdom recently approved a motion to expand its air strikes.

Therefore, while our partners understand the need for this, the Liberal government has completely failed to understand that. It is pulling back instead of participating in moving ahead.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reflect back on the comments from across the House this morning made by the parliamentary secretary who admitted there would be an increased risk for the troops on the ground and that simply increasing that number would multiply that effect. He seemed to show no regard for what that risk might lead to or the number of casualties that might cause. I was as if the Liberals had no concern with respect to that.

I want to ask the member on this side if they would have a different concern about that increased risk and what his thoughts would be on that.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, there is an increased risk in at least two places.

The first is the increased risk it poses for our troops. Yesterday my colleague asked the minister if he was prepared to take full responsibility for removing the protection that our troops needed.

The other place that the increased risk shows up is on our territory, in our country. Clearly, ISIS has called for attacks against Canada. It wants to operate here. Thankfully, to this point, we have been able to hold it back, and we expect that to continue. My question for the government is this. If it does not believe that threats like these require some sort of military participation and a strong military response, when would it fight?

• (1405)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure and a privilege to stand in the House to address many of the issues that come before us. Let there be no doubt that on the issue of putting our men and women of the

Canadian Forces in harm's way, we should all take this very seriously and, where possible, try to contribute to the discussions.

I have listened at great length to members on all sides of the House who have contributed to the debate and in many ways we will have to agree to disagree. I like to think of some of the strengths on the government side.

I served in the Canadian Forces, which was a great privilege, for just over three years. That is a rather small period in number of years when compared to a number of my caucus colleagues. Whether they are generals or leaders of regiments performing in Afghanistan or anywhere around the world, there are Liberal caucus members who have been engaged. As indicated earlier, mothers of young adults are engaged today.

There is a great deal of interest in the issue of when we call upon our men and women to go abroad or even to perform work within Canada. We cannot express enough gratitude and appreciation for the sacrifices they and their family members make.

I want to specifically comment on a number of issues, to which the Conservatives need to listen. They seem to be of the impression that for Canada to be engaged, there have to be CF-18s, and that if the CF-18s are not engaged, then the Canadian Forces are not engaged.

I am very proud of our CF-18s and the many people who have flown them over the years. In fact, I served in Edmonton, in Lancaster Park, which had the longest runway at the time, 14,000 feet. I was an air traffic control assistant, which means I watched CF-18 after CF-18 touch down and take off. I was also afforded the opportunity to meet with numerous pilots. No doubt we have some of the best-trained pilots in the world, but along with that, we have technicians and engineers, and many different personnel in occupations within the Canadian Forces. We should be proud of each and every one of them and the contributions they provide when it comes time for Canada to get engaged.

Here is the difference between the Government of Canada, the Conservative Party, and the New Democrats. The Conservative Party, on the one hand, says that there is no such thing as getting the Canadian Forces engaged unless the CF-18s are there. On the other hand, the New Democrats seem to be of the opinion that Canada has no role to play when it comes to fighting terrorism or, at the very least, fighting ISIL. That is what is becoming very clear and apparent in the debate.

We disagree, and it is not only Liberals in the chamber who disagree. We just went through an election and there was a very clear indication from the Prime Minister that if Liberals formed government, the CF-18s would not be part of the Canadian Forces' contribution in fighting ISIL in that area. It was very clear that we would support the combat of terrorism in a different way, a more appropriate way, based on what our coalition partners had to say and possibly ask us to do.

Government Orders

Members of the Conservative caucus have stood and said that Liberals did not get 50% of the vote plus one. No, we did not get 50% of the vote plus one, but on this issue, the Liberals, the New Democrats, and the Greens, which far exceed 50% of Canada's population, believe the CF-18s should not be engaged any longer with regard to what is happening in the Middle East.

• (1410)

It was a very clear platform issue, and I listened to Conservative after Conservative say we have to have the F-18s. What they are asking us to do is to break our election platform. Time after time, the Conservatives stand up and ask about our election promises. I will remind each and every one of them that this was an election promise, and it was a good, sound election promise.

I was here for those debates, and I participated in the debates when the government brought in the CF-18s and its approach to combatting ISIL. When the Conservatives did that, even prior to the debate—and *Hansard* no doubt will show it—I made reference to the Kurdish community that I met in Winnipeg. Their take on this was really interesting. We know that bombing plays a critical role, yes. However, bombing is not going to determine the issue finally and bring it to rest. It is going to be the infrastructure, both social and capital infrastructure, the buildings and so forth. The individuals I met reaffirmed what many are being told, not only here in Canada but all over the place, which is that we have to look at other ways in which Canada can contribute and to question whether providing the CF-18s is the most effective way for Canada to participate.

There is a huge expectation that Canada demonstrate leadership in combatting terrorism, and Canada will do that. A Liberal government will ensure that takes place. Let us look at what the Liberal government is actually doing. It is significantly different from what the previous Conservative government did. We are saying that it is time that we pull the CF-18s out, but that does not mean the bombing will end. There are coalition partners, many of which are very content with Canada's new role in combatting terrorism.

What is Canada actually doing? We are tripling the size of our training force in northern Iraq. That is a significant increase. We will be increasing our intelligence-gathering resources. Intelligence is absolutely critical when combatting terrorism, especially in that region of the world. Actually, all over the world it is critical. We will be increasing our diplomatic role in helping to find a political solution to the crisis in Syria by supporting the UN-sponsored peace process and assisting the efforts of the Iraqi government to foster reconciliation.

More specifically, we will expand our capacity-building efforts with Jordan and Lebanon to help stop the spread of violent extremism. Our humanitarian assistance is going to increase by hundreds of millions of dollars, with a special focus on those who are vulnerable, including children and survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence. We will be looking for international partners to build local capacity to provide basic social services, maintain and rehabilitate public infrastructure, foster inclusive growth and employment, and advance inclusiveness and accountability in governance.

I listened to the former Conservative government's minister of defence. He talked about ISIL. I would not question many of the

comments that he made about it, but who is he trying to kid? I do not think there is anyone inside the chamber who supports ISIL. We all want to see the demise of ISIL. My colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs said that she was in favour of the eradication of ISIL; I think all Canadians would like to see it eradicated. We are familiar with the horrific, barbaric actions that it takes. No one here supports it. However, we have to acknowledge that sometimes there is a better and more effective way of using our Canadian Forces. We have a lot to offer.

• (1415)

The parliamentary secretary referred to Ukraine as an example. We have members of our forces and others participating in Ukraine today. I am very appreciative of that. As we know, the president of Ukraine also wanted to see Canada involved, and this government has responded to that need by using the Canadian Armed Forces.

I often hear about the issue of peacekeeping. Canada at one time had a very strong reputation in peacekeeping throughout the world. That was greatly diminished by the Conservative government. However, a Liberal government under our leadership is also committed to restoring Canada's leadership role in peacekeeping. Let us not just sell our Canadian Armed Forces short by saying, well, if it is not the CF-18s, we are not contributing.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces cannot be fooled. The forces operate as a team. It is not just one branch here and another branch there and so forth. Even though I was in the regular force for three years, I never participated overseas. However, I had the opportunity when I was in the forces to support that. All members of the Canadian Armed Forces are a team, and that can be extended to include members of their families. All participate in ensuring that we have the most effective forces in the areas we engage in. That is really what is important.

When we talk about tripling our contribution to assisting other forces become better at what they do, we actually have the expertise, the numbers, and the support service to make sure that will happen. Other coalition partners maybe do not have the same qualifications or qualities that we can provide or bring to the table, so why would we not do that?

I believe that the bombing is important and will continue, but it is not necessarily the role that Canada needs to play. We have enhanced significantly our contribution, not only in terms of people resources but also in terms of financial resources, equipment resources, and departmental resources in making our world a safer environment.

That is why we in Liberal caucus recognize that when we talk about world peace, we just cannot stand by and do nothing. That is the attitude of many New Democrats. They do not think outside of Canada's borders. We believe that Canada does have a role to play that goes beyond our borders. If we are going to fight terrorism, we do not wait for it to occur here in Canada. There are other things we can do that will make a difference and that will ultimately make our backyards safer. However, that is not the only motivation.

Government Orders

Canadians have very strong values of compassion and caring, which is one of the reasons we are increasing dramatically the amount of humanitarian care we provide to the region. Not only are we sending resources into the region dealing with that issue, we are also taking in and fast-tracking a significant number of refugees. Some would say that we are fast-tracking them a little too much; others might say we are not doing it fast enough. We will maintain, at the very least, the numbers that we committed to in the last federal election.

● (1420)

We said we would take in 25,000, and I can tell the House that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, other ministers, and many members of the Liberal caucus have talked about how many refugees we have coming to Canada.

We do it because it is the right thing to do, and it is something that Canada has done over a hundred some years. We are getting very close to our 150th anniversary as a nation, and I expect there will be a lot of wonderful events for it, but when we talk about Canadian heritage and values, we have members of this House who came to Canada as refugees. Most individuals here, at one point or another, have come through generations of immigration. We are a very diverse country. We are a country that understands and appreciates our role.

As a relatively young country, we carry a great deal of influence. Based on our population, we do exceptionally well in being able to contribute to what is happening in societies around the world. I think that we should, as much as possible, encourage our government to continue to demonstrate leadership on this issue.

I was very proud of what took place yesterday in the debate on foreign affairs and of the Minister of Foreign Affairs' comments about reaching out and providing education. There is so much more that we could be doing as a country.

At the end of the day, this is a motion that people should get behind. We want to indicate to members with the motion that the issue we are debating today will in fact come back to the House. It will come back two years from now with a new motion on Canada's contribution to the region and on where we might want to go at that point.

One of the things I have noticed, in the name of transparency and accountability, is that members, whether Liberal or from other caucuses, should feel free to communicate what they believe should be taking place, not only formally on the record in the House, but also in the standing committees, or the informal discussions after question period with other ministers. We very much want to build a consensus on this issue.

At the end of the day, I believe everyone agrees that ISIL is a problem in the world today. I believe that most recognize that Canada does have a role to play, and if there are ideas out there, then we should encourage them. We should look to what is taking place with our global partners on the coalition and work with them. I am confident that the coalition will be there going forward, making sure that nations of goodwill that want to be engaged will in fact be able to participate in a way that is most effective.

I would like to conclude my remarks with what I started off with, which is recognizing the fact that our men and women of the Canadian Forces have done phenomenal service for our country throughout the years, and they will continue to do so in whatever is asked of them by the House. However, let us not just limit the applause and give thanks to one small faction. I believe that every one of our forces has contributed to combatting terrorism. I believe that whatever it is that we ask of them, they will do it in an honourable fashion and represent our country well in doing so, keeping all of us safe in our homes.

● (1425)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening, and it happens that I am from the region. I am from Lebanon. I do understand, in great depth, the conflict in the Middle East, and the threat that ISIS is to the region and the whole world. I am amazed and concerned by how short-sighted the government is in the approach it has taken to fighting ISIS, and to finding a solution to being part of the world community in fighting an evil called ISIS.

With all due respect to the insight of members opposite, it is very light. It has no depth whatsoever as to the historical background in the region, how much that is going to affect the whole world, and how we can tackle that. How can it be fought? Instead of trying to pull the CF-18s, which are usually the most effective tools we have, we are pulling our most effective tools and putting troops on the ground for so-called training. It is going to take more than training. It is going to take a battle and fighting. We need to have the power and force in order to fight and win this battle.

Election promises do not win a battle. Election promises do not eliminate ISIS and its threat to the world. This is a great reminder. I would appreciate if the government would stop operating on election promises and its election mood, and move to the real world to work with others to make sure we can fight and win this battle with our allies across the globe.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I wish the member would have more confidence in the abilities of the global coalition that is there today to fight ISIL. If he did, I am sure it would address many of the concerns that he just expressed.

However, I want to pick up on the point where he indicated that he is of Lebanese heritage. If the member were to read the text of the motion, it states:

(b) improving the living conditions of conflict-affected populations and helping to build the foundations for long-term regional stability of host communities, including Lebanon and Jordan;

The Government of Canada's approach is far more holistic than the Conservatives' approach. When I debated their motions sending our men and women into combat, I do not recall any consideration of that nature being incorporated into their motions. What we need today is a holistic approach when it comes to issues of this nature.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Seeing that it is 2:30 p.m., the next time this motion will be debated, the hon. member will have 6 minutes and 50 seconds remaining for questions.

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, February 22 at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, February 19, 2016

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada's Contribution to the Effort to Combat ISIL

Motion	1119
Mr. McKay	1119
Mr. Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	1120
Mr. Stewart	1120
Mr. Leslie	1120
Mr. Leslie	1120
Mrs. Gallant	1121
Mr. Stetski	1122
Mr. Longfield	1122
Mr. Paul-Hus	1122
Mr. Wrzesnewskyj	1123
Mr. Généreux	1124
Mr. Lukiwski	1124
Mrs. Gallant	1124
Mr. O'Toole	1125
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	1126
Mrs. Romano	1126

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Religious Freedom

Mr. Peschisolido	1126
------------------------	------

Naming of Federal Institutions

Mr. Barsalou-Duval	1126
--------------------------	------

Elves Special Needs Society

Mr. McCauley	1127
--------------------	------

Winter Carnivals

Ms. Hutchings	1127
---------------------	------

Natural Resources

Mr. Stewart	1127
-------------------	------

Homelessness

Mr. McKinnon	1127
--------------------	------

Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry

Mr. Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	1127
--	------

Arts and Culture

Ms. Young	1128
-----------------	------

Medical Residents

Mr. Aldag	1128
-----------------	------

Dave Chatters

Mr. Viersen	1128
-------------------	------

Travel Smart App

Mr. Alghabra	1128
--------------------	------

Heritage Day

Mr. Boissonnault	1129
------------------------	------

Taxation

Ms. Gladu	1129
-----------------	------

International Mother Language Day

Mr. Erskine-Smith	1129
-------------------------	------

World Day of Social Justice

Mr. Saganash	1129
--------------------	------

Human Trafficking

Mr. Rayes	1129
-----------------	------

Community Organization in La Prairie

Mr. Poissant	1130
--------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Finance

Mr. Deltell	1130
-------------------	------

Mr. Brison	1130
------------------	------

Mr. Deltell	1130
-------------------	------

Mr. Brison	1130
------------------	------

Physician-Assisted Dying

Mr. Deltell	1130
-------------------	------

Mr. Brison	1130
------------------	------

Natural Resources

Mr. Scheer	1130
------------------	------

Mr. Brison	1130
------------------	------

Mr. Scheer	1131
------------------	------

Mr. Brison	1131
------------------	------

Air Canada

Mr. Julian	1131
------------------	------

Mr. Brison	1131
------------------	------

Mr. Julian	1131
------------------	------

Mr. Brison	1131
------------------	------

CBC/Radio-Canada

Ms. Sansoucy	1131
--------------------	------

Mr. Boissonnault	1131
------------------------	------

Ms. Sansoucy	1131
--------------------	------

Mr. Boissonnault	1132
------------------------	------

Natural Resources

Mr. Waugh	1132
-----------------	------

Ms. McKenna	1132
-------------------	------

Mr. Kitchen	1132
-------------------	------

Ms. McKenna	1132
-------------------	------

Mr. Fast	1132
----------------	------

Ms. McKenna	1132
-------------------	------

Mr. Fast	1132
----------------	------

Ms. McKenna	1132
-------------------	------

Intergovernmental Relations

Mr. Albas	1133
-----------------	------

Mr. Bains	1133
-----------------	------

The Economy

Mr. Maguire	1133
-------------------	------

Mr. Champagne	1133
---------------------	------

Royal Canadian Mounted Police			
Mr. Saganash	1133		
Mr. Picard	1133		
Mr. Rankin	1133		
Mr. Picard	1133		
Taxation			
Ms. Watts	1133		
Mr. Bains	1134		
Air Transportation			
Ms. Watts	1134		
Ms. Young	1134		
Public Services and Procurement			
Mr. Berthold	1134		
Ms. Alleslev	1134		
Mr. McCauley	1134		
Ms. Alleslev	1134		
Telecommunications			
Mr. Caron	1134		
Mr. Bains	1135		
Mr. Johns	1135		
Mr. Bains	1135		
Government Accountability			
Mr. Eyking	1135		
Mr. Brison	1135		
National Defence			
Mr. Bezan	1135		
Mr. Sajjan	1135		
Mr. Bezan	1135		
Mr. Sajjan	1135		
Mrs. Gallant	1136		
Mr. Sajjan	1136		
Mr. Paul-Hus	1136		
Mr. Sajjan	1136		
Labour			
Ms. Benson	1136		
Mr. Cuzner	1136		
Statistics Canada			
Mr. Stewart	1136		
Mr. Brison	1136		
Foreign Affairs			
Mr. Sweet	1136		
Mr. Dion	1137		
Mr. Nuttall	1137		
Mr. Dion	1137		
Copyright			
Mr. Poilievre	1137		
Mr. Bains	1137		
International Development			
Mr. Lemieux	1137		
Ms. Bibeau	1137		
The Economy			
Mrs. Vecchio	1137		
Mr. Champagne	1137		
Veterans Affairs			
Mr. McDonald	1138		
Mr. Hehr	1138		
Health			
Mr. Carrie	1138		
Mrs. Philpott	1138		
International Trade			
Mrs. Gill	1138		
Ms. Freeland	1138		
Aerospace Industry			
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	1138		
Mr. Bains	1139		
International Trade			
Ms. Pauzé	1139		
Mr. Poissant	1139		
Points of Order			
Oral Questions			
Mr. Scheer	1139		
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Supplementary Estimates (C), 2015–16			
Veterans Affairs			
Mr. Hehr	1139		
Canadian Organ Donor Registry Act			
Mr. Abouttaif	1139		
Bill C-223. Introduction and first reading	1139		
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	1139		
Petitions			
Democratic Reform			
Mr. Longfield	1139		
Pensions			
Mr. Lamoureux	1140		
Questions on the Order Paper			
Mr. Lamoureux	1140		
GOVERNMENT ORDERS			
Canada's Contribution to the Effort to Combat ISIL			
Mr. DeCoursey	1140		
Mr. Viersen	1141		
Mr. Johns	1141		
Mr. Lamoureux	1142		
Ms. Ratansi	1142		
Mr. Arnold	1143		
Mr. Stewart	1143		
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	1143		
Mr. Weir	1144		
Mr. Lamoureux	1144		
Mr. Généreux	1145		
Mr. Stewart	1145		
Mr. Berthold	1146		
Mr. Lamoureux	1147		
Mrs. McCrimmon	1147		

Mrs. Gallant	1148
Mr. Stewart	1149
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	1149
Ms. Goldsmith-Jones	1149
Mr. Bezan	1150
Mr. Stetski	1151
Mr. Kenney	1151
Mr. Graham	1152

Mrs. Romanado	1152
Mr. Anderson	1153
Mr. Stewart	1154
Mr. Gerretsen	1155
Mr. Arnold	1155
Mr. Lamoureux	1155
Mr. Aboultaif	1157

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