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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 16, 2016

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC) moved that Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (firearm — definition of variant), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (firearm — definition of variant). This is a straightforward piece of legislation that will provide much-needed clarity for law-abiding firearms owners across Canada.

Today, I would like to explain to the House why I am bringing this legislation forward, the problems surrounding variant firearms, how this legislation will help solve the problem, and why I believe this bill should be considered further at committee.

Before I do so, I would like to take a moment to thank the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies for seconding the bill and for all of the important work that he does for hunters, anglers, and sports shooters in Canada.

I have owned and handled firearms for a number of years, basically all of my life. I am a very proud and law-abiding gun owner. However, one thing that has always bugged me and irritated a lot of law-abiding gun owners and hunters is the stigma that some people attach to the firearms community. Let me be very clear: owning a gun does not make someone a criminal. As I said, I am a law-abiding gun owner. I have many friends and family who are law-abiding gun owners. Most people who own firearms in Canada are law-abiding gun owners.

Sadly, though, time and time again, we see gun owners who are presumed to be dangerous. The stigma has worked its way into our regulatory system and, in my mind, it is high time that we bring some common sense, fairness, and clarity to the system.

There were two pieces of legislation, which were brought in under the previous Conservative government, that worked toward creating

a better system for law-abiding firearms owners in Canada. I was proud to support Bill C-19, Ending the Long-gun Registry Act, and was pleased that it received royal assent in 2012. This legislation was extremely important to hunters and firearms owners across the country. The long-gun registry was a colossal waste of money, was ineffective, and it simply did not make sense.

Furthermore, in 2015, Bill C-42, Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act, received royal assent. Measures in this bill included merging the POL and PAL licences, giving the Governor in Council the ability to reverse arbitrary firearms classification decisions, a grace period at the expiry of licences, authorizations to transport as conditions of licence, mandatory firearms safety courses for first-time gun owners, and prohibitions for those who are convicted of domestic violence offences. That is just to name a few of the measures.

These were all very common-sense reforms that were welcomed by firearms owners across the country. I would like to highlight one of the measures in particular, as it deals directly with the purpose of my Bill C-230.

Bill C-42 came in response to a seemingly random classification decision in 2014 regarding the Swiss Arms Classic Green rifles. This was a decision that was made overnight, wherein the RCMP classified the Swiss Arms as a variant of the SG 540, a restricted firearm in Canada.

There were a number of problems that resulted from this decision. Since 2001, the Swiss Arms rifles had been legal, non-restricted firearms in Canada, and with the stroke of a pen, many owners of these firearms found themselves in unlawful possession, without a clear explanation of the decision to reclassify. In simple terms, one night these guns were legal, and the next morning they were not. I think members can understand the frustration of law-abiding gun owners.

Private Members' Business

This all stems from the fact that there is no legal definition for the term “variant”. Firearms are under the purview of two different acts in Canada, part three of the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act. These two acts form the basis for the regulatory framework that is used when it comes to firearms. Specifically when it comes to classifications of firearms, it is the Criminal Code and the Regulations Prescribing Certain Firearms and Other Weapons, Components and Parts of Weapons, Accessories, Cartridge Magazines, Ammunition and Projectiles as Prohibited, Restricted or Non-Restricted, that are the two important legislative pieces.

● (1110)

Furthermore, it is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Canadian firearms program that is responsible for the administration of legislation and regulations, which includes determining the classification of firearms based upon criteria in the Criminal Code.

It has been in my mind, and in the minds of many other firearms owners across Canada, that there is a significant disconnect between the legislation and regulations surrounding the term variant. This term is used nearly 100 times in the regulations to classify firearms as prohibited, restricted, or non-restricted, but there is no clear sense of what this term actually means. It has been used extensively to reclassify firearms in cases similar to the Swiss Arms decision, without any clear explanation of the purpose for the reclassification. In simple terms, it is continually misinterpreted, and therein lies the problem.

Firearms owners have been left scratching their heads wondering how is it possible for these seemingly random decisions to be made. This is my reason for bringing this legislation forward. We need some clarity here. There is no room for vague interpretation on a case-by-case basis. In fact, if the bill were passed, it should actually make the job of RCMP members who are responsible for this law much easier.

As legislators, it is our job to ensure that those who are tasked with interpreting the laws we create are clear on the intentions of the legislation. This would provide clarity, not only for firearms owners but, as I said, also for the RCMP firearms program. They will finally have a benchmark on which they will be able to make clear and consistent classification decisions.

Bill C-230 proposes that a variant of a firearm be defined as “a firearm that has the unmodified frame or receiver of another firearm”. This will ensure that firearms that are classified as variants do in fact share fundamental mechanical pieces and therefore warrants the firearm to have the same classification as the previously classified firearm.

Having this definition added to the Criminal Code will ensure that the regulations surrounding firearms classifications are well informed and consistent with the intent of the legislation on which they are based. It will eliminate inconsistent and arbitrary interpretation and provide much-needed clarity for firearms owners and, as I always like to point out, law-abiding firearms owners.

It is rare that a piece of legislation is perfect on the first draft, and I want to pledge that my goal is to fix a problem. I have worked with a lot of people on this, and I am willing to work with the government to fix a problem that needs to be fixed. Basically, I am saying that if

there is an amendment to the bill that makes it better, I am open to it and we will see where it goes. There may be members and outside stakeholders who will have concerns with certain elements of the bill. I welcome all feedback.

I feel that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security would be the perfect place to have this discussion. I see both the chair of that committee and the parliamentary secretary are here today. I want to thank both of them for their interest in being here and hearing what I have to say on the bill.

I see this legislation as less of a partisan matter and more a matter of clarity and responsible legislation. No matter what one's ideology on firearms and gun control is, I think that all members can and should agree that we need clear legislation that is free of vague and inconsistent interpretation. This is what I am hoping to accomplish with the bill.

Finally, I would like to thank the Canadian Shooting Sports Association for all of the help and guidance it has provided in the drafting of the bill. The CSSA knows this issue well and has heard loud and clear from its members that this problem must be solved. President Tony Bernardo and his team have been strong advocates for this legislation, and I would like to thank them for that support and for their input.

● (1115)

I also want to thank Mr. Greg Farrant of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters for his input as well, and the many responsible firearms owners across the country I have heard from. I have received support and suggestions from firearms owners in every province and territory across this country, and I still welcome that.

In closing, I want to make it very clear that I fully support good regulation and legislation that ensures that only responsible Canadians own and operate firearms in this country. Criminals and irresponsible gun owners affect the reputation of people like me, and all law-abiding gun owners. We do not want or need that.

Leaving it at that, I look forward to the debate today in the first hour of second reading. I am very happy to take questions from my honourable colleagues.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for that particular input with respect to his private member's bill.

Being a firearms owner myself, I understand the legislation that the member is supporting and trying to put forward. It brings clarity to the bill, and I think that is why parties from across the way can be supportive of it. It is not just necessarily a pro firearms bill; it is pro clarity.

How does the member see this as a cross-partisan issue where all parties can be supportive of his motion?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, not only for seconding the bill, but for a great question. He is also chair of the all-party outdoors caucus, which I know has wide support for my bill.

Private Members' Business

It is not a partisan issue. Regardless of one's politics, this is an issue that needs to be addressed. From comments I have heard from some colleagues in all parties in the House, I think that is recognized. I will let the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and others speak on this, but I believe we all realize that this is a problem. It is not a partisan problem. It is something that can be fixed by us all working together here.

This bill is my approach to how we get there, but I am willing to look at anything that will address this.

● (1120)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, for bringing forward this bill for debate today.

I understand, from the same source cited by the hon. member, the Canadian Shooting Sports Association, that, as of last year, there are some 162,972 firearms listed in the firearms reference table and that over 4,000 of those are variants.

The bill would purport to do something very simple. It would amend the Criminal Code to define “variant” as meaning “a firearm that has the unmodified frame or receiver or another firearm”.

Would not the admirable interest of trying to create clarity and take away the vagueness in fact make it difficult for sports enthusiasts to deal with the variety of issues that would come forward, if there are that many firearms in this country, and that simply defining it as narrowly as that would perhaps defeat the purpose intended by the hon. member with this bill?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, the answer simply is no, it would not. In fact, it would do the opposite. It will clarify the definition so that we take out a wide range of interpretations. Sometimes when we use the number “4,000”, a lot of people say, “Whoa, that's opening it up to something we don't want.” That is not the case, at all.

When we have a term like “variant”, which is mentioned almost 100 times, I believe it is exactly 97 times in the Firearms Act, and there is no clear definition of what that is, I think it is very logical and understandable that from time to time, and far too often, we have misinterpretations of what is trying to be explained.

I think the bill will fix a huge problem, not create one. That is certainly not the intent. As a firearms owner and law-abiding citizen, that is the last thing that I want. As I said earlier, I am willing to talk or work with anyone in order to make this a better bill, if that is possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to the legislative measure introduced by the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, which proposes changes to Canada's firearms classification system.

Our government pledged to take measures to protect Canadian communities from armed violence. We believe in balanced and effective gun control that puts public safety first without subjecting law-abiding firearms owners to unfair treatment. Unfortunately, the

legislative measure we are debating is contrary to both of those principles.

Bill C-230 would amend the Criminal Code to provide a definition of the term “variant”. This term is already used in the Regulations Prescribing Certain Firearms and Other Weapons, Components and Parts of Weapons, Accessories, Cartridge Magazines, Ammunition and Projectiles as Prohibited, Restricted or Non-Restricted made in accordance with the Criminal Code, to indicate variants to prescribed firearms that are already listed.

It was added in 1992 in response to the considerable increase in new firearm models available in the civilian market. The intent was to ensure that new firearms entering the market between regulation updates would be covered until the next update.

Although the term is not explicitly defined, the RCMP determines what constitutes a variant by using long-standing, well-established criteria and a standardized process to assess whether there is a connection between the firearm in question and a firearm prescribed under the regulations. If the RCMP determines that a firearm is a variant of another weapon that is already included in the regulations, the firearm is automatically classified as a restricted or prohibited firearm.

Under Bill C-230, a variant would be defined as “a firearm that has the unmodified frame or receiver of another firearm”. That would be a change from the RCMP's long-standing, well-established criteria.

The bill would also amend the definitions of restricted and prohibited firearms in the Criminal Code by making all newly defined variants prohibited or restricted firearms.

● (1125)

[*English*]

While I am certain that the intention behind the proposal is honourable, I must acknowledge that it is not one our government can support. If such a definition were to be established, it would have a number of significant and problematic sequences. During my time today, I will focus on the two most problematic elements from our government's perspective.

It would mean a massive and indiscriminate reclassification of firearms. Because the proposed definition does not reflect the well-established criteria that the RCMP uses to assess whether a firearm is a variant, it would cause tens of thousands of firearms to be reclassified. Many firearms would move unnecessarily from their present classification to a more-controlled class, including certain hunting rifles and shotguns. Indeed, some currently non-restricted hunting rifles and shotguns would become restricted. We should keep in mind that restricted firearms are not permitted to be used for hunting.

Private Members' Business

Given that many gun owners may have the licence privileges to own a restricted firearm, they would suddenly find themselves in illegal possession of their firearms. To come back into compliance, they would have to apply to the RCMP for a restricted licence, which is available under the Firearms Act for use in lawful occupation, gun collecting, target shooting, or competition at an approved shooting range or club. Therefore, in effect the bill would mean that many hunters and other responsible gun owners would have to dispose of their firearms because those would simply not be the purposes for which they owned their guns.

On the one hand, Bill C-230 would move many firearms to a more restricted class to the detriment of law-abiding gun owners. Yet, on the other hand, it would also have the effect of reclassifying thousands of firearms to a less controlled class, with potentially serious repercussions.

Permit me to draw the attention of members to one particularly troubling example from a public safety perspective. Under this legislation, certain prohibited assault weapons would become non-restricted. Presently, for example, a semi-automatic firearm that is a variant of the AK-47 assault rifle is prohibited based on the regulations. However, if we were to adopt the proposed definition of a variant in Bill C-230, in other words, a firearm that has an unmodified frame or receiver of another firearm, a firearm virtually identical to the AK-47 could become non-restricted. This would occur because, according to the proposed definition, the slightest change of the design of the frame or receiver of the firearm would mean that it would no longer be considered a variant of a virtually identical gun.

[*Translation*]

As a result, we would likely see a dramatic increase in the circulation of firearms that are currently prohibited because they would become available to some two million licence holders. People would be able to import, own, transfer, and transport these firearms more freely. What is more, we would not be able to track these weapons because it is not mandatory to register unrestricted firearms.

I hope that members on all sides of the House will agree that this raises serious public safety concerns and provides a lot of food for thought. This bill also flies in the face of our government's promise to get dangerous assault rifles off the streets.

I can guarantee members on all sides of the House that the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness are working diligently to keep this important election promise.

As I said from the start, we will maintain a balanced and effective firearms policy that makes public safety a priority while ensuring that law-abiding gun owners are treated with fairness and respect.

Our government will continue to work with all Canadians, including gun owners, to meet our common goal of reducing gun violence in Canada.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-230, an act to amend the

Criminal Code. I would like to thank the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for bringing it forward for discussion and debate in the House. I can understand his clear desire to produce greater clarity and regulations concerning firearms. As he said, it is a laudable goal of the non-partisan nature. I salute him for doing so. However, I will be speaking against the bill, which in my view fails, despite its best intentions, to provide the kind of clarity that the member is seeking.

What would the bill do? It is a very simple bill. It would define the term “variant” in a different way. It is not defined now. It is left to the discretion of the regulator under the regulations. It would simply say in the statute, the Criminal Code, that “variant”, in respect of a firearm, means a firearm that has the “unmodified frame or receiver” of another firearm. That is all it would really do. It would take away the discretion that currently exists and narrow it in that way. In so doing, the member obviously seeks to provide greater clarity.

It then applies that criteria to the existing definitions of “restricted firearms” and “prohibited firearms” by affecting future classifications of a restricted and prohibited firearm, which would have a significant effect on access to firearms across our country.

I understand the member's motivation is to bring clarity to the process of classifying firearms. Law-abiding owners of firearms have often expressed frustration at what they see as the arbitrary classification or reclassification of firearms. Cases like the controversial case surrounding the Mossberg Blaze-47 or the Swiss Arms rifles, to which the member referred, illustrate the need for a more transparent process and a better, more open communication with Canadians. Yet these very firearms enthusiasts have raised serious concerns about the bill before us. Their analysis suggests that this bill would, and they believe, unintentionally, lead to the restriction or prohibition of firearms that would be currently available to properly licensed Canadians as non-restricted firearms. I believe the member is seeking to clarify, not to confiscate, but they fear that is precisely what the unintended consequences of the bill would do.

As I said in a question for the hon. member, there are something like 163,000 firearms currently listed in the Firearms Reference Table, of which over 4,000 are variants. Therefore, the question I would pose to the member is this. Why would one not want to provide continuing flexibility in the regulations themselves so officials could look at various criteria and make their determinations rather than perhaps unintentionally narrowing it, which would be the subject of concern to firearms enthusiasts by simply leading it to the very narrow category that the member has stated, namely of firearms that have the “unmodified frame or receiver” of another firearm? There may be many other criteria, and time permitting I will describe what they are, that need to be taken into account by officials as every day of the week they make this kind of interpretation. Inevitably, there would be some vagueness, I think one has to accept that, but that may make some sense in the public interest, I would suggest.

Any change to gun laws needs to be done with care and precision. The safety of Canadians must always be our top priority. We should be aiming for greater transparency, openness and certainty, not sowing, unintentionally, fresh confusion and concern.

The real question for every Canadian who is concerned about illegal guns and violence, whether they own firearms or not, is this. What is the government's policy?

In the last federal election, the Liberal platform promised four things: first, to take pragmatic action to make it harder for criminals to get and use handguns and assault weapons; second, to repeal elements of the Conservative's Bill C-42; third, to "put decision-making about weapons restrictions back in the hands of police, not politicians", and, fourth, to provide \$100 million each year to the provinces and territories to support guns and gangs police task forces to take illegal guns off our streets and reduce gun violence.

• (1135)

Those are the key things I was able to find in the platform to deal with comprehensive firearms reform. Unfortunately, the Liberals have already broken an election promise by once again delaying the gun-marking regulations to help police trace guns used in crimes.

We have not yet seen any legislation to deliver on the promise to make it harder for criminals to access guns or to repeal dangerous elements of Bill C-42, or to put decision-making about weapons restrictions back in the hands of firearms experts. In other words, the opaque and politicized system that the current government inherited from its Conservative predecessor remains unchanged.

Canadians expect the government to do better. When it comes to firearm classification, Canadians expect these vital public safety decisions to be made by experts in an open and transparent manner, based on all the available evidence.

Canadians expect their laws to be kept up to date and to be flexible enough to adapt to changing needs and fresh developments without compromising public safety, and it is that which is of concern in this particular bill. There is the lack of flexibility, the lack of giving the officials the tools they need to exercise their discretion appropriately under law. If they make a mistake, they are always subject to judicial review, and there have been several cases in which their discretion has been called to account in the courts. That, I suggest, is how it should be.

The government has promised legislation to meet these standards. It is time the government started to deliver. We should not be making piecemeal reform of firearms legislation on the fly through specific bills from time to time by private members. This bill does not provide the certainty, openness, or transparency that Canadians expect from any reform to firearms legislation.

Again, I thank the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for raising this issue and for representing his constituents who are looking for that clarity from their government. However, given the concerns I have heard from firearm law experts, it is clear the bill may not have the effect that the member intends. Even a more precise bill in this area would only be one part of the broader solution promised to Canadians by this government during the election.

Private Members' Business

As the government finally develops that policy, I hope the Liberals will consider the member's proposal and consult with Canadians in all parts of the country. Instead of repeating the mistakes of the past or pitting Canadians against one another in this sensitive area, the government has a great opportunity to bring people together around common sense solutions that work.

Although we cannot support a flawed bill, I hope the hard work of the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound spurs the government to make this important public safety issue a priority.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be the seconder of the bill put forward by the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. I commend him for bringing this legislation forward.

Bill C-230 addresses a long-time concern of law-abiding firearms owners in Canada. I support this legislation for three main reasons: it is simple, effective, and most important, just plain common sense.

First, on simplicity, the bill does not attempt to make any sort of wide-sweeping broad reforms as mentioned by the government and the other opposition party. Bill C-230 does not propose to reinvent the wheel when it comes to firearms regulation. It contains three simple clauses that would accomplish a targeted goal: ensuring consistency and transparency for law-abiding firearms owners in Canada.

Second, the bill provides an effective definition of the term "variant" that ensures that firearms that are classified as a variant of another firearm share similar mechanical components and are derived from the original prohibited firearm. The proposed definition states that a variant is defined as a firearm that shares the same unmodified frame or receiver of another firearm. This is an effective definition that would provide greater clarity for law-abiding gun owners and would ensure that decisions surrounding variants will be based on this fundamental definition rather than an inconsistent interpretation of an undefined and vague term.

Third, this legislation is a common-sense reform that would simply bridge the gap between legislation and regulations to ensure greater clarity for gun owners.

The term "variant" is used extensively when it comes to the regulatory framework surrounding firearms, but does not have any kind of legal definition in the Criminal Code or the Firearms Act. For example, the term "variant" is used 99 times in the regulations that govern firearms classifications. A term that is used this extensively in the regulations warrants a formal definition in the legislation. Furthermore, a recent access to information request stated that as of October 16, 2015, there were approximately 4,030 firearms that had been identified as prohibited, restricted, or non-restricted variants. Again, a term that impacts this many firearms deserves to have a clear definition to ensure that it is applied uniformly in all decisions.

I want to take a few moments to present an example of an issue that was created by the term "variant" being undefined.

Private Members' Business

The recent controversy surrounding the reclassification under variants of the Swiss Arms Classic Green rifle, of which I was an owner, is a prime example of the negative consequences that can arise from inconsistent interpretation of this undefined term.

This issue goes all the way back to 2001 when the RCMP determined, based on documentation provided by an importer and the manufacturer, that Swiss Arms Classic Green rifles were semi-automatic variants of the Swiss Arms SG 540. Therefore, they were considered non-restricted or restricted, depending on the length of the barrel of the individual rifle. As a result, these firearms were allowed to be imported and sold in Canada. They were not prohibited firearms. However, in 2014, following a complaint about Swiss Arms rifles, the RCMP determined the rifles and their variants to be descendants of the Swiss Arms SG 550 and therefore were deemed prohibited firearms in Canada.

This was an arbitrary reclassification that made a long-time legal firearm owner, a firearm that I used to own, illegal overnight. With the stroke of a pen, law-abiding owners of Swiss Arms Classic Green rifles found themselves in illegal possession of a legal firearm. The decision eliminated the ability of Swiss Arms owners to obtain a licence to transfer and acquire these firearms, limited the locations where they could be possessed, and imposed enhanced storage and handling obligations by the owners. Furthermore, as I previously stated, it immediately criminalized law-abiding owners of Swiss Arms rifles who found themselves in unlawful possession of a firearm and at the risk of prosecution for unauthorized possession of a firearm under section 91 of the Criminal Code, and again, as the member stated, overnight.

Members may recall that when this decision was made in 2014, the Conservative government reacted strongly to protect law-abiding firearms owners.

●(1140)

The government brought in an amnesty to ensure that Swiss Arms owners would not be prosecuted for owning their once-legal firearms. Furthermore, the government then brought in Bill C-42, the Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act, which enacted a number of important measures to reduce the red tape for firearms, as well as measures that allow the Governor in Council to respond to arbitrary classification decisions, such as the Swiss Arms decision.

Bill C-42 was a very important piece of legislation for firearms owners in Canada. Likewise, Bill C-230, is yet another responsible measure to protect law-abiding gun owners from arbitrary and inconsistent interpretation.

If Bill C-230 had been in place when the decision on the Swiss Arms rifles was made, the RCMP would have had to demonstrate that the rifles in fact shared the same unmodified frame or receiver as the SG 550 and were prohibited on this basis.

To wrap up, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for introducing this legislation. As I stated in the questions, it is not a partisan issue; it is a clarity issue. There is quite clearly a disconnect between the legislation and the regulations that Bill C-230 is looking to bridge.

This is an important bill for legal firearms owners. I look forward to seeing it pass at second reading, although it looks like there is

some opposition. I hope there is some serious second consideration by the parties across the way and beside us to have a real strong second look at this strong legislation.

●(1145)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to speak to the private member's bill. The Parliamentary secretary for the government has already indicated that Liberals do not support the private member's bill as it is written; and it is important to provide a bit of background.

I have had the good fortune of being around for a number of years, and at different times in my career, the issue of rifles and guns has risen quite significantly. I can recall in the early 1990s, for example, the whole issue of the gun registry came up. I was first elected back in 1988 and it was almost two years afterward that the massacre occurred in Montreal, when 14 young women were killed at École polytechnique. Even today, the local high school in my riding, Sisler High, commemorates, remembers, and reflects on what took place in Montreal back in 1989.

The reason I raise it is that, for me, my political career began on the issue of rifles and guns and wanting to make sure there is sound, good government policy, whether at the provincial or national level. I have had a significant interest in it from the onset of my political career, and I am very much aware of the politics of it. Many people, for example, would be quite surprised to know that Kim Campbell was the first advocate for the gun registry and it was a Conservative senator who actually pushed it forward; and a lot has happened since then.

I appreciate the member's comments about law-abiding gun owners. That is something we need to reinforce. Law-abiding gun owners deserve the respect given to all citizens. Rifles and guns play a very important role in today's society. When we talk about regulations and elements of public safety, it is not to demean law-abiding gun owners in any fashion whatsoever.

In fact, if we were to speak to many of the individuals who have been cited, we would find that some of the strongest advocates for public safety and good, healthy, strong regulations, and so forth, come from responsible, law-abiding gun owners. It is a common interest that I believe that a vast majority of Canadians have and would advocate for.

In the last federal election, the Liberal Party made a number of commitments. The member from the New Democratic caucus made reference to them. I want to highlight that in the 2015 Liberal party platform, we clearly stated that as a government we would take action to get handguns and assault rifles off our streets. This commitment was reiterated during the throne speech. Bill C-230 would run contrary to that promise, by classifying some assault rifles as non-restricted weapons, making them easier to import and acquire.

Private Members' Business

There is no doubt that there is a great sense of public awareness on this public policy issue. The member, in his attempt to provide more definition, might have actually made things more complicated. At the end of the day, even some individuals who advocate for the legislation might be surprised at how providing this definition of a variant would ultimately change the classifications of some rifles and guns in a way that even the member himself might not have initially intended. What the current law states with regard to the variant, I believe, should be left as is.

• (1150)

The member made reference to Bill C-19. I will refrain from commenting on Bill C-19. I gave many speeches inside the House in regard to Bill C-19. He also made reference to Bill C-42. That was a piece of legislation for which there was great concern from all regions, on issues of transportation and classification. There was a great deal of concern in terms of why the government, at the time, felt that it was in a better position to make determinations as opposed to those experts who are making decisions not based on politics. I am referring to the RCMP.

I know there was a great deal of concern raised with the Swiss Arms issue and how that firearm was reclassified. That ultimately led to, I believe, at least in part, why Bill C-42 was brought forward. I do not believe that the government, back then, made progressive steps forward in attempting to address that issue.

I do not think the Conservatives realized the valuable contributions that our experts and, in particular, our RCMP experts have to play in this whole area. Every day, they have to deal with issues related to guns and rifles. Over the years, they have compiled a great deal of expertise. As legislators, we would do well to listen to what the experts actually have to say on the legislation.

My colleague pointed out a number of important facts that are worth repeating. He stated that the Government of Canada believes in a balanced approach, and that we have effective gun legislation that prioritizes public safety, while ensuring that law-abiding firearms owners do not face unfair treatment under the law.

While the bill's intent is in fact to bring more precision to the Criminal Code, it is the unintended consequences that would criminalize many law-abiding gun owners, while at the same time making it easier to import or own certain assault rifles.

This is what I meant when I said that I believe not even the sponsor of this particular bill has realized the consequences of the bill, if in fact it were to pass as it is. I would also point out that if the bill were to pass, it would lead to massive and indiscriminate reclassification of literally tens of thousands of firearms among the non-restricted, restricted, and prohibited classifications system, something I suspect we should all be concerned about.

It is also important that we recognize that reclassifying many hunting rifles and shotguns from non-restricted to restricted would result in thousands of law-abiding gun owners needing to apply to the RCMP for a restricted licence and be approved, or dispose of the firearm itself, or be in violation of the Criminal Code. It does not really leave very much in terms of options.

Before I run out of time, I just want to emphasize that the parliamentary secretary and the government believe that public

safety is priority one. We recognize those individuals who are law-abiding gun owners. There is an overwhelming consensus that public safety is number one and that we do in fact respect those law-abiding gun owners.

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate. I will advise the hon. member for Huron—Bruce that I will have to cut your debate a little short.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to some of the speeches here in the House today and I would like to make a comment about the last member who spoke and not be too critical of him. I think his speech is a great opportunity for all members in the House and for hopefully Canadians listening at home, because of the utter lack of knowledge of what he speaks to. That is honesty from my perspective, and I am one member who observes this, but to allude to guns and safety on our streets and to reference that back to the term “variant” is ridiculous.

If we talk to detectives, whether from the Ontario Provincial Police, Toronto Police Service, or anywhere coast to coast, and ask them if the term “variant” would make our streets safer or less safe, they will scratch their heads and say that whoever brought that up does not know what they speak of.

The guns that are on our streets, in our inner cities, and even in rural places like mine that have not been purchased through legal means are the guns that are committing crimes in this country. There is no doubt about that. They come here through the border and go into our streets and commit the crimes.

I do not know if the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound mentioned this, but there are 162,000 guns that are listed in the reference table. There are over 4,000 recently classified as a “variant” and listed as prohibited or restricted. The bill would help streamline this. It would help to eliminate all the cases where people purchase a gun legally, with an acquisition licence—a legal store, a legal gun—and then find out later, because someone looked at it and made a determination that it needs to be prohibited at this point in time. We have seen examples like this.

It also highlights a flaw in the system, in which we see a Mossberg Blaze. There are two variations of a Mossberg twenty-two. That is not an assault rifle; it is a twenty-two. It can be used to shoot rabbits or whatever people need to shoot around their property. It was simultaneously listed as prohibited and as non-restricted. So any gun owner who knows this will see the utter stupidity in the system. Why was one classified as prohibited and the other classified as non-restricted? The one that was non-restricted had wooden features and the other had black plastic around it. That is how the determination was made.

That is an example for members of House to see why the whole issue of these classifications and reference tables needs to be fixed and streamlined. The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is serving it up here on a silver platter.

Government Orders

I heard other members say that we should look at the whole act and we will finally get it right. Canadians do not trust the Liberal Party for one second for any reform that has anything to do with the Firearms Act. It has been one disaster after another. In previous Parliaments, we saw many members, who had held certain positions for over a decade, flip-flop for the sake of Michael Ignatieff, and we know how that worked out. There might be one here in the House of Commons today.

Canadians do not have trust in the Liberal Party or the Liberal government to make any determinations on this. The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound brings about a better way to make a little more common sense in guns and how they are classified.

Let us look at one issue that is not efficient, and the determination on a variant is as wide as the country. Not to criticize the RCMP, but on its website the classifications are listed and below that is a list of re-classifications. That tells us about how often guns get classified and re-classified, variants, and so on.

● (1200)

People should go to Cabela's, or local gun owners, or a shooting club and ask them what they think makes sense. They should ask people who have owned guns their entire life what they think. They will say that the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is on the right track and that there needs to be a determination.

Some people in the House of Commons may think that buying a gun is wrong, but it is right, it is legal, and there is a process which Parliament and the RCMP have set up to establish the legal way to acquire a gun. There is a legal way to bring a gun into the country and to sell it, and that way is not efficient. The right thing to do is not to reject it on the first run-through but to look at it.

We know the Liberal Party wants to try to have rural members elected. The rejection of this bill is certainly not a good start. A member from Toronto brought forward his bill on the way in which farmers should handle their livestock, which certainly is no way to gain favour with rural Canadians. The Liberals should have an open mind and take another look at the bill. When they are back in their constituencies next week, they should talk to gun owners and to the people at places that sell guns. They should call a U.S. manufacturer and ask him or her what it is like to try to import a gun into our country.

Again, I want to go back to the Mossberg example. It is a .22, not a high-powered rifle. It is not an assault rifle. It is a rifle that would be used on a farm to shoot a groundhog out in a pasture so cows or steers do not break their leg when they are out grazing. That is what we are talking about. Whether it has black plastic around it or wood on it should not make it, as an example, non-restricted or prohibited. That is ridiculous. The inner workings of it are laid out very clearly as well.

I hope we have further discussion on this. I hope when we get back to the next reading of the bill, the Liberals will have taken a second look at it, talked and consulted with people, and understand the value perhaps in doing this. I also hope they understand that what the member from Winnipeg has said has no connection to what we are talking about today. Fighting crime our inner cities and rural areas and guns that were brought here illegally have nothing to do

with the classification of a .22 rifle. It is unfortunate that those kinds of references are made in the House, but they do happen from time to time, incorrectly.

I am pleased to support the bill. I know the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound has been a long-time advocate for safe hunting, safe licencing, and safe purchasing. His father is probably over 80 years old and has owned a gun his entire life. He grew up on a farm and understands safety. That is what we are talking about, and I believe if we change this, we will improve.

As I said, 162,000 guns are registered here. In addition to that, 4,000 guns have been used through the variant classification. People who are trying to sell these guns in their business and people who are trying to purchase these guns do not want to be made into criminals just by the snap of a finger. The member from B.C. referenced that he owned a gun, the Swiss Arms gun, which was classified as prohibited, overnight. Other members in the House, who still sit here today, with the stroke of a pen, would have been criminals if it had come to that. That is not what we are trying to do.

I am a gun owner. I have taken the course. I have a non-restricted classification. To be honest, I am not so sure if I will buy a gun right now with the Liberal government in power. I will likely wait until the Conservatives get back in before I buy another one because I want to ensure my guns do not get taken away. I am pretty sure the member from Winnipeg does not want to take the gun I own away, but we never know with these strokes of a pen.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

AIR CANADA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Some motions in amendment had been proposed but unfortunately, the mover of the motions is not here and therefore they will not move forward. Therefore, the question will now be put on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

● (1210)

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (for the Minister of Transport) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

(The House divided on the motion:)

(Division No. 57)

YEAS

Members

Adag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bittle
Blair	Bossio
Bratina	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chen
Cormier	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhillon	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Gould	Graham
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightboun
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendicino

Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Robillard
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Samson
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sikand
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tootoo
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 139

Government Orders

Murray
Nault
Oliphant
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Simms
Spengemann
Tan
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Aubin
Barlow	Benson
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brosseau
Brown	Calkins
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk	Fast
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genius	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hardeastle	Harder
Harper	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Jolibois	Julian
Kelly	Kenney
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Lebel	Leitch
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Malcolmson
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saanch—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Mulcair	Nantel
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	Obhrai
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Plamondon	Poillievre
Quach	Raitt
Ramsey	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Richards	Ritz

Government Orders

Saganash
Saroya
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer — 139

Sansoucy
Scheer
Shipley
Sorenson
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Weir
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

● (1250)

And the result of the vote having been announced: Yeas: 139; Nays: 139

The Speaker: How about that. As I am sure members know, the Speaker does not normally vote; it is only in the case of a tie. However, when the Speaker votes, it is not just on the basis of what the Speaker might think about a particular motion or a bill. The Speaker votes in accordance with precedents, past decisions of Speakers in these such cases, and those precedents hold that the Speaker votes to allow debate to continue on a matter before the House, which in this case, means that I would vote yes. On another occasion, it might mean that I vote no, so keep that in mind.

I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (for the Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-10, an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures, be read a third time and passed.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a somewhat unique situation. I know enough about this bill to know that it is important and it must be supported.

I rise here today to participate in third reading of Bill C-10, which is about modernizing the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

This bill amends the provisions of the Air Canada Public Participation Act dealing with Air Canada's operational and overhaul centres. More specifically, the bill amends paragraph 6(1)(d) in the provisions requiring Air Canada to maintain operational and overhaul centres in the City of Winnipeg, the Montreal Urban Community, and the City of Mississauga and replacing that with a reference to the following three provinces: Quebec, Manitoba and Ontario.

This bill also removes all references to “operational and overhaul centres” and replaces them with a broader reference, namely,

“aircraft maintenance activities”, stipulating that this includes work relating to airframes, engines, components, equipment or parts.

The bill also specifies that Air Canada is not under any obligation when it comes to the type or volume of the aircraft maintenance activities it undertakes, either directly or indirectly, in Manitoba, Ontario, or Quebec. Nor is it under any obligation as to the level of employment it must maintain.

These changes seek to modernize the legislation, which is very important, in order to help Air Canada respond more effectively to the changing market conditions, while continuing to maintain jobs for the skilled workers in Canada's important aerospace sector.

● (1255)

[*English*]

First, I would like to say a few words about the privatization of Air Canada.

The House may remember that the main objective of the Air Canada Public Participation Act was to convert a crown corporation into a thriving and competitive private company. The new company would be expected to evolve in an aggressively competitive market that is highly cyclical and sensitive to external shocks.

The act came into force in 1989 to provide the federal government with the legal framework to privatize Air Canada. It also required Air Canada to have provisions concerning, in particular, the maintenance and overhaul of its aircraft, the use of official languages, and the location of its headquarters. Air Canada's competitors from Canada and abroad are not subject to such conditions.

Since privatization, and despite some challenging times, Air Canada has survived as a private company without direct government support.

[*Translation*]

Today, Air Canada is the only Canadian airline that offers a wide range of regional, national, and international services. Its fleet includes a wide range of aircraft from the world's largest manufacturers such as Bombardier, Boeing, Airbus, and Embraer. We are quite proud of that.

In 2015, Air Canada and its Air Canada Express partners served more than 40 million passengers and provided direct passenger service to more than 200 destinations on six continents. Air Canada alone employs nearly 28,000 people, including 2,400 for its maintenance services.

This bill comes at a very important time for a sector that is booming, but one that is also subject to a great number of fluctuations. We fully realize that this bill gives Air Canada more flexibility when it comes to maintenance, but other restrictions on Air Canada still fully apply, as most of the legislation will remain unchanged.

Other conditions that are important for Canadians, such as the location of the head office and official languages requirements, will continue to exist after the changes we are proposing come into effect.

Government Orders

I would like to remind members that Air Canada is the only Canadian industry stakeholder with such restrictions. None of its competitors are subject to the same restrictions. In a global market and in a sector such as air transportation, which is undergoing major changes, maximum economic flexibility is required to ensure viability in the medium and the long term.

Making this section of the law more flexible will make Air Canada even more viable and, above all, allow it to remain relatively competitive with its national and international competitors.

[*English*]

In this regard, I would like to quote one comment made by Mike Tretheway, chief economist and chief strategy officer at InterVIS-TAS Consulting Group, who appeared before the standing committee, and stated:

If you choose to have a competitive environment as the basis for your policy, there is a range of competitive issues there, and maintenance is one of the important ones because it's such a large portion of aircraft cost, and you have one airline that has to compete with other airlines that don't have these restrictions.

To give an order of magnitude, in 1980, the International Air Transport Association consisted of 100 airlines from 85 countries. Today, less than 36 years later, its membership consists of 260 airlines, accounting for approximately 83% of total air traffic.

Now more than ever the aviation market is characterized by open skies agreements and the emergence of important new international players. These market conditions offer Air Canada significant global growth opportunities, but also challenges in terms of global competitiveness. Air Canada provides vital connectivity both within our vast country and the outside world. It is also a very important source of jobs.

As Mr. Tretheway said:

...airlines operate with about a 2% profit margin. It's one of the thinnest profit margins of any transport industry, and we can and do see airlines go bankrupt. We've had 60 airline bankruptcies in Canada, and Air Canada itself has gone through one bankruptcy.

Mr. Tretheway further noted:

...[this bill] will have an impact on air travel costs for people flying Air Canada. It will help [Air Canada] get better competitive choices to maintain the high safety standard that Canada requires.... As they become more competitive that I think will get translated, not just for their customers, but customers of the other airlines they compete with, both Canadian airlines like WestJet and Porter as well as foreign carriers that fly in and out of Canada.

[*Translation*]

The day after Bill C-10 was introduced, some people wondered whether the government was suddenly abandoning skilled workers in the maintenance, overhaul and repair sector in Canada. Some people went so far as to publicly say that Air Canada could limit or even completely stop its maintenance activities that are carried out not only in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba, but elsewhere in Canada.

Naturally, we listened and expressed our concerns about the impact that the Aveos Fleet Performance bankruptcy had on the workers and their families. At the time, we put pressure on Air Canada and the previous government to act in the best interests of the workers. However, today's conditions are completely different. Let us ask this question: what concrete gains have former Aveos workers made in the past four years?

There is no guarantee that the existing lawsuit would restore the same number of jobs lost four years ago in 2012. The opposition has implied that Bill C-10 would in some way legalize the outsourcing of aircraft maintenance jobs and that the alternative to this bill would be to rehire all the former Aveos workers. In fact, there is nothing in the existing act or the recent Quebec court decisions to require that Air Canada conduct its maintenance in Montreal, Mississauga, and Winnipeg, or to require that the airline go back to doing what it was doing in 2012, with exactly the same employees, before Aveos filed for bankruptcy.

My colleagues are unfortunately creating some unrealistic expectations. That is why we welcome the recent agreements of intent that Air Canada has signed with Quebec and Manitoba. These agreements mention the concrete possibility of jobs, in line with the modern reality of the air transportation sector.

● (1300)

[*English*]

In 2012, the aerospace review noted the growing importance of lower-cost providers of maintenance, repair and overhaul, what we also call MRO, from developing countries, many of which are closer to the growth markets in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. While Air Canada does not outsource its aircraft maintenance suppliers in developing countries, many of its competitors do. We must be aware of the global development of these types of services.

It is interesting to note that despite the closure of Aveos in 2012, the MRO sector has experienced significant growth in recent years. Based on data from the report on the state of the Canadian aerospace industry in 2015, the MRO sector experienced strong economic growth from 2004 to 2014, with a 37% increase in direct GDP.

[*Translation*]

Data from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada also indicate that MRO accounted for \$3.8 billion of the gross domestic product, that 31,298 people were employed in MRO activities, and that the MRO sector generated revenues of \$7.6 billion in 2015. This represents 26% growth in revenue compared to 2010.

Our aircraft maintenance sector remains strong, despite Aveos' bankruptcy, and it continues to be a source of jobs for skilled workers. Over the years, the MRO industry has adapted to the realities of the market. This industry is very competitive in certain leading-edge sectors.

The industry has had to adjust and has become specialized over the years. This industry looks nothing like it did some 30 years ago. It has evolved into a sector that now includes major economies of scale and economies of specialization.

Government Orders

In Canada, our strengths lie mainly in MRO work on engines, landing gear, and simulations. We are fortunate to have many companies working on aerostructure, but not all of them can work on all types of aircraft, so it would be difficult to say whether they would be competitive, in light of the big variety of aircraft operated by Air Canada.

Consider companies such as Air France-KLM and Lufthansa, major global players in aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul.

• (1305)

[English]

Looking closely at the maintenance structures of these important carriers, it appears that they generally maintain line maintenance within their respective countries for certain types of aircraft. However, their global supply chains are also very important. They are present in major markets, such as Asia and South America, where maintenance centres specialize in certain types of services. Of note, for example, is Air France-KLM, which has an MRO laboratory and innovation centre in Singapore.

The various announcements made by Air Canada, either with regard to the development of centres of excellence in Quebec and Manitoba or its intention to buy C Series aircraft from Bombardier, will result in huge job opportunities in the aerospace industry, and will especially favour continued growth in the MRO sector in Canada for the foreseeable future.

We must stop looking backward and take concrete actions to think about the future in the short, medium, and long term, in light of the very important changes that I have already mentioned.

[Translation]

I see the centres of excellence and the purchase of Bombardier's C Series aircraft as concrete measures that will produce real job opportunities for lots of Canadians.

When Peter Wallis, president and CEO of the Van Horne Institute, appeared before the standing committee, he said that the opportunity to create a centre of excellence in Quebec to maintain Bombardier's new planes is huge for the sector. It would enable that sector of Canada's industry to set itself apart from the global competition.

I strongly believe that in light of various Air Canada announcements, Delta's decision to purchase C Series planes, the creation of centres of excellence, and the decision to drop the lawsuit with Quebec and Manitoba, we will have a much better chance to create jobs and grow our aerospace sector, which is so crucial. Instead of sitting on our hands and waiting for other people to step in and do the work, we will have an opportunity to work and put forward solid proposals.

These promises, which will be fulfilled in the coming years, offer real opportunities for us to distinguish ourselves globally and create a Canadian hub of expertise and innovation. Projects like these will generate better long-term economic growth for Canada and create permanent skilled jobs. I think that is where what we are doing now differs from what was done in the past. Let us stop trying to do things over. Instead, let us look ahead and work for the future.

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, Quebec's minister of the economy has asked the Government of Canada that the legislation only come into force once it has concluded its litigation against Air Canada.

Why is the government not respecting that request? Why is passing this legislation so urgent that a specific request from the Government of Quebec cannot be fulfilled?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her important question. I also want to congratulate her on her interest in this issue.

As my colleague knows, we have worked very closely with the aerospace industry, very closely with the industry in general, and very closely with the Government of Quebec, in particular. We are very proud of the spirit of collaboration that has allowed us to work very hard together, as I was saying earlier, not only to learn from past lessons, but more importantly, to work for the future of our aerospace industry in order to ensure that partners like Bombardier, Air Canada, the Government of Quebec, and the Government of Canada can build that future and create dependable, quality jobs for the future.

• (1310)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, although I was somewhat disappointed, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I am sorry, but there is almost an Orwellian feel to some of the terms being used, for instance the "concrete possibility of jobs", "future concrete jobs", and "concrete ways to create opportunities". This is unbelievable. Every time the Liberals use the word "concrete", they are talking about something intangible, some sort of vague promise without any real commitment, when legislation had been negotiated to ensure that Air Canada's maintenance work is done here in Canada.

The only thing that was concrete for 2,600 families was the jobs they had, and the government is turning its back on them. They won their case before the Quebec Superior Court. They won before the Quebec Court of Appeal. To prevent the workers from maintaining their rights and keeping their jobs, the government is simply amending the legislation so that they cannot win their case before the Supreme Court.

How does the member explain his plan to create concrete jobs?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague and commend him on his interest in this subject.

As he knows, this is not just about the aerospace industry. It is also about creating promising jobs for the future. It is about the importance of listening to our partners in the different provinces and working with them. He knows that, he is aware of that, and I am certain that he appreciates that.

The Canadian government conducted this exercise out of the greatest respect for the concerns of the Government of Quebec. This was all done in partnership. We believe that is the best and most useful way forward.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on February 17, 2016, Air Canada announced its intention to purchase 45 Bombardier C Series aircraft, with options for 30 more.

Heavy maintenance on these aircraft will occur in Quebec for at least 20 years following their delivery. Air Canada will also collaborate with Quebec in the creation of a centre of excellence on aircraft maintenance in Montreal. Quebec expects that this will create 1,000 jobs over 15 years, beyond the work generated by the manufacture of the aircraft.

Within Manitoba and Ontario, can we expect more jobs to be created under the plan for centres of excellence?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, let me start by thanking my colleague for his great question, and more importantly for his interest in this very important topic for the future of our economy, our jobs, and for the future in particular of the aerospace industry. He has well noted the importance of the investments that Air Canada will make in Quebec, Manitoba, and Ontario.

He has also signalled the value of the jobs that we hope to create through the centres of excellence, which will have the good news of making all kinds of important partners, including the governments of these provinces, Bombardier, and Air Canada, work together to build a better economy, strong growth, and great jobs for our citizens.

Again, let me thank and congratulate the member for his attention to this matter. I hope we will be able to continue our collaboration in the work for Canadian families and those who are looking forward to a better future.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member who just spoke again referenced Bombardier. Of course, Bombardier is not mentioned anywhere in this legislation, but Liberals continue to reference Bombardier as if it were part of the discussion.

I want to ask the minister a question that we have asked before without a clear answer. Was there a quid quo pro? Did the government agree with Air Canada that it would make these changes to the act in its favour if Air Canada made purchases from Bombardier? Was that something that was agreed to? If not, then what in the world does Bombardier have to do with changes to the Air Canada Participation Act?

• (1315)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, my honourable colleague is correct. Bombardier is not part of this law. However, what I am alluding to is a broader picture in which our government is working. We are working collaboratively with industry, with all kinds of sectors, and with provincial governments, in order to make sure that the growth that Canadians expect and want of the government does happen. It is very much a collaborative exercise, which is shown in this particular context, but which, as I mentioned earlier, appears in many other contexts, some of them more related to this particular question.

I would like to signal to him that the process of good job creation for our economy involves strong collaboration, strong listening. We are very proud, as in this case today, of some of the outcomes that we have been able to achieve.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a quick question. When the hon. minister was speaking earlier, he said that Bombardier could not continue to have its maintenance done in Montreal because of international competition. He said that its competitors were at an advantage because they could go wherever they wanted to have their aircraft repaired. Now he is saying that the Bombardier aircraft that are being purchased will be fully maintained and repaired in Montreal.

Why would the international competition that has played a role now and in the past not play a role in 2022 when Bombardier's new planes are delivered to Air Canada? Why would the impact of international competition be any different then?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to remind the House that the last time my colleague spoke, I pointed out that he is the dean of this House, as everyone knows, and his comments are always greatly appreciated. I thank him for his interest in this matter.

The member rightly pointed out the importance of international competition in the context of this bill. We therefore want to position Air Canada and the workers who will be supported by Air Canada in a very strong competitive environment.

We are proud of Air Canada's growth in Canada and abroad. We are also aware that in order for that growth to continue, we need to create the right conditions. That is what this bill does since, as I said earlier in my speech, the competitive conditions have changed a lot in recent decades. As a result, we want to create the right new conditions so that Air Canada is with us in the short, medium, and long terms.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the minister could provide some further thoughts in regard to how important the aerospace industry is to Canada. We highlighted my home province of Manitoba, but also Quebec and Ontario, in that we are assisting in setting that framework, whether it is through this piece of legislation or through our budget, to ensure that we have a long-term, healthy aerospace industry.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, Air Canada is indeed a very important company in Canada. Along with its partner, Air Canada Express, Air Canada carried 40 million passengers in 2015 and offered service to 200 destinations on six continents. Air Canada alone employs 28,000 people, 2,400 of whom work in aircraft maintenance.

We are extremely proud of this company, and we are going to continue to support it in the coming years.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, while I welcome this opportunity to speak once again to Bill C-10, an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures, I am disappointed that the bill has come back from committee without amendment, after Liberal members voted unanimously against an amendment that would have respected the requests made by both the Government of Quebec and the Government of Manitoba to delay the bill's coming into force. However, I will speak to this specifically later on in my remarks.

Upon its privatization in 1989, Air Canada was subject to four conditions: the carrier would be subject to the Official Languages Act; the carrier's headquarters would be in Montreal; 75% of the company's voting shares had to be held by Canadians; and overhaul maintenance was to be done in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Mississauga. The last condition of the act regarding aircraft maintenance is the subject of the legislation that we are debating here today.

I do not think this point has been made clear enough, so I will repeat it again. The Government of Quebec, with the Government of Manitoba as an intervenor, brought Air Canada to court to challenge the carrier's assertion that it was fulfilling its obligations under the Air Canada Public Participation Act, after Aveos Fleet Performance, its primary maintenance provider, went bankrupt and Air Canada was forced to get its overhaul maintenance work done outside its traditional maintenance centres in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Mississauga.

The Superior Court of Quebec ruled on February 4, 2013, that Air Canada had not fulfilled its obligations under the act. The Court of Appeal of Quebec ruled on November 3, 2015, that Air Canada had not fulfilled its obligations under the act, and again, just two months later, on January 5, Air Canada asked the Supreme Court, Canada's top court, to overturn the Quebec court of appeal's decision.

Bill C-10 would, for all intents and purposes, remove Air Canada's obligation to do its overhaul maintenance in these three specific geographic locations that were named in the original act. According to the Minister of Transport, the legislation was introduced, "As a result of the decision by the Quebec government and Manitoba government not to litigate any further against Air Canada, we felt this was an appropriate time to clarify the law and modernize it so that Air Canada can compete with the rest of the world."

The minister also noted that the legislation would help additional litigation against Air Canada in the future. This statement is fraught with problems. First, it goes without saying that if we change the law that governs Air Canada's privatization, it will become more difficult for anyone to challenge Air Canada in court on whether the carrier is respecting the law as the maintenance provisions will be deemed never to have come into force.

Second, the governments of Quebec and Manitoba do not need to litigate further against Air Canada, because they have already won in court twice. It was Air Canada that opted to continue litigation all the way to the Supreme Court.

The minister's statements lead me to believe that he does not have his facts straight. We have heard the Minister of Transport, and every single member of the Liberal Party in their defence of the legislation, talk about job creation in Manitoba and Quebec, and Bombardier and centres of excellence in aircraft maintenance. However, I do not understand the link these topics have with Bill C-10.

Bill C-10 would replace the paragraph of the original act that described Air Canada's obligations on aircraft maintenance with the following:

(4) For the purpose of carrying out or causing to be carried out the aircraft maintenance activities referred to in paragraph (1)(d) in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba, the Corporation may, while not eliminating those activities in any of those provinces, change the type or volume of any or all of those activities in each of those provinces, as well as the level of employment in any or all of those activities.

The floor on the number of jobs in each province is one. Although it does not specify the nature of the work that has to be done, line maintenance would probably apply. However, neither the minister nor his officials were able to provide the committee with the minimum number of maintenance jobs Air Canada will have to keep in the country. His officials stated that they could not speculate on how Air Canada would operationalize the centres of excellence, or the 150 jobs in Winnipeg, yet that seems to be all that the Liberal members can talk about.

• (1320)

We are here discussing the Air Canada Public Participation Act, not Bombardier, not the C Series, not the centres of excellence. I hope that members will keep that in mind and try to keep their comments on the Air Canada Public Participation Act for the rest of this debate.

If members would like to discuss agreements between Air Canada and Quebec, and Air Canada and Manitoba, for the creation of centres of excellence, I would expect that they could table these agreements because, despite my best efforts in requesting them, I have not seen any.

Coming back to the sequence of events that have brought us here today, Air Canada likes the C Series airplane. That has been made clear. It made that clear during its appearance last week. However, as recently as January 5, Air Canada's plan was to appeal the Quebec court of appeal's decision to the Supreme Court. Something changed and Air Canada decided that it was better off settling these lawsuits than pursuing this matter in front of the Supreme Court.

Whether the federal government was somehow involved in this change of heart is unknown, beyond a statement made by Air Canada's representative that it is acting under the assumption that the section of the Air Canada Public Participation Act that we are discussing right now will be repealed, and if it is not repealed, then Air Canada would consider its next steps concerning the creation of centres of excellence and aircraft maintenance.

On February 17, 2016, Air Canada announced that it had signed a letter of intent to purchase the Bombardier C Series aircraft and maintain these in Quebec and that it would undertake the overhaul maintenance of those aircraft in the province. On the same day, the Minister of Transport announced that he would lessen Air Canada's obligations under the act.

Government Orders

Just imagine the coincidence. On the same day that Air Canada throws a lifeline to Bombardier by signing a letter of intent to purchase C Series aircraft, the Minister of Transport announces his intention to introduce legislation that would directly benefit the carrier by allowing it to get its overhaul maintenance done, legally, outside of Canada. The minister did not even wait a day to make this announcement. It leads me to wonder if the minister would have removed Air Canada's official language obligations if the carrier had made a firm order for 75 C Series aircraft, rather than a letter of intent for 45, as is what has happened.

I would also note that in its latest earnings report, Bombardier announced that it would record an onerous contract provision of approximately \$500 million as a special item in the second quarter of 2016 because it is believed to have sold the C Series aircraft to Air Canada and Delta at a loss of \$4 million to \$5 million per aircraft.

However, I digress.

The Minister of Transport has attempted to justify the legislation by stating, repeatedly, that the governments of Quebec and Manitoba have dropped their lawsuits against Air Canada.

This is simply not true. On two occasions, the governments of Quebec and Manitoba won in court against Air Canada. That is what gave them the power to bring Air Canada to the table to negotiate an acceptable settlement. In the case of Quebec, the reasonable settlement appears to be the purchase of the C Series aircraft and the commitment to undertake that C Series maintenance in Quebec and create a centre of excellence in the province. In the case of Manitoba, the reasonable settlement appears to be the transferring of approximately 150 jobs from around Canada to the provincial capital.

We should be under no illusion that these negotiations are concluded. Air Canada has not even converted its letter of intent for the C Series into a firm order yet. There are no centres of excellence in either Quebec or Manitoba.

On February 10, Air Canada and the Government of Quebec informed the Supreme Court of Canada that an agreement was reached to report the decision on the application for leave to appeal until July 15, 2016. That means that the parties have until July 15 to negotiate a settlement.

If Air Canada is unwilling or unable to fulfill the terms of their agreements concerning the centres of excellence to the satisfaction of the Government of Quebec and the Government of Manitoba, it can be presumed that Air Canada will continue to challenge the Quebec court of appeal's decision in front of the Supreme Court.

● (1325)

It is critical for members to understand that if this law is changed today, then there will be no incentive for Air Canada to remain at the table and negotiate with the governments of Quebec and Manitoba. Both the minister of the economy of Quebec and the deputy premier of Manitoba, who is also her province's attorney general, understand this basic fact. That is why both have asked the federal government to wait until their negotiations with Air Canada are complete before passing the legislation.

Here is the relevant part of a brief from Quebec's Liberal minister of the economy:

...in order to provide for all the aspects of the agreements reached, the Government of Quebec is asking that, once Bill C-10 receives royal assent, the legislation come into force after the final agreements described above have been concluded.

As it is presently drafted, Bill C-10 would come into force immediately upon receiving royal assent.

The deputy premier of Manitoba was equally clear in her appearance in front of the committee. She said:

The federal government's approach to Bill C-10 simply put is jumping the gun. Bill C-10 is being rushed through the process before the necessary specific investments and binding commitments by the federal government and Air Canada have been secured.

There we have it. Two provincial governments have asked the federal government to respect their process and not immediately pass the bill in its current form. However, these reasonable requests have fallen on deaf ears.

This is not the first time the Liberal government has railroaded processes undertaken by local governments that they do not agree with. We all remember that the Minister of Transport's first act was tweeting that he would unilaterally impose his will on Toronto city council by ending any discussion on the future of the Billy Bishop airport. However, once again, I digress.

I presented an amendment in committee last week, the effect of which would ensure that the bill would not come into force until at least August 1, 2016, or two weeks after Air Canada and the attorney general of Quebec inform the Supreme Court on whether they seek to continue litigation or have settled outside of court. The member for Central Nova was the only Liberal who at least attempted to justify why he was voting against such a minor amendment that would have simply fulfilled the requests made by two provincial governments to give them more time to negotiate with Air Canada. My amendment would not have changed the bill, just when it would come into force.

His justification was as follows, "I believe the legislation is sound. If it will be a good idea in August then I believe it's a good idea today". I like the member for Central Nova. However, as a lawyer, surely he knows that litigation and settlement negotiations take time, while the pace at which the current government is pushing the legislation through can only be described as lightning speed.

Hearings in the Superior Court of Quebec on this matter began on November 19, 2012, over three and a half years ago. The first time parliamentarians heard that the minister planned to amend this act was February 17, 2016, not even three months ago. If it is the member for Central Nova's contention that Parliament's stepping in and effectively siding with Air Canada in this dispute with the legislation, after Quebec and Manitoba were in court fighting for this act to be enforced for three years, is sound public policy, then I guess we know to what the lengths the Liberal Party will go to help out its friends.

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Moving on, during the second reading debate on the legislation, my friend from Winnipeg North, who is a frequent commenter in this chamber, asked the member for Beloeil—Chambly if he would “at the very least acknowledge that provinces do matter and that their discussions and their beliefs should be taken into consideration”.

As I have noted earlier in my remarks, the deputy premier of Manitoba explicitly asked for the legislation to be delayed. That is the will of the government from the member for Winnipeg North's home province. I hope that he will consider Deputy Premier Stefanson's comments when he votes on Bill C-10 or makes his next intervention.

● (1330)

Everybody here wants Air Canada to be a viable company that offers safe, reliable and affordable air service to Canadians, while competing against international giants. If the purpose of the legislation is indeed to make Air Canada more competitive, the government has failed to make this case on how it would do so.

In response to a lob from his own member on how Air Canada's maintenance obligations affected its competitiveness, the minister responded, “It is a big, serious question and I do not have the answer”. If it is the government's priority to make Air Canada more competitive with the expectation that Air Canada will be offer lower fares to consumers, there are a number of better options available to it to reach this objective.

For example, the government could tie all airport improvement fees to specific projects with explicit sunset provisions, which would save many travellers more than 20% on their ticket. It could increase the foreign ownership limit of Air Canada, and all Canadian-based air carriers for that matter, to 49%, which would give the carrier access to cheaper capital to finance improvement.

The government could replace the current one-size-fits-all passenger screening approach which treats all passengers equally with an intelligence-driven risk-based passenger screening process. The airport security charge in Canada is \$7.12 for domestic travel, so this adds up for frequent travellers.

All of these measures would stimulate Air Canada while maintaining jobs in Canada and would not cost the taxpayer anything. If anything is clear it is that the government has missed an opportunity to truly allow Air Canada to compete against U.S. and international carriers by only bringing forward such a narrow proposal to Parliament.

In conclusion, I remain extremely disappointed that the government is once again imposing its will on local governments that do not share its views, in this case Quebec and Manitoba, by forcing this legislation through Parliament before Air Canada has even converted its C Series letter of intent into a firm order.

If the federal government is actually committed to improving the competitiveness of Air Canada and the entire aerospace sector, it has come up short with this legislation.

● (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it most interesting to hear the comments

coming from a Conservative member. Back in 2010-11, when Air Canada was taking these actions, I stood in my place on the opposition side of the House and challenged the government of the day, ministers and the prime minister directly about what they were prepared to do.

They did absolutely nothing for the workers or the industry, whether it was in the provinces of Quebec, Ontario or Manitoba. In less than a few months we saw a new national government actually work with the different provinces and stakeholders. As a direct result of that effort, we now see a more promising future as opposed to a government that previously did absolutely nothing.

When the Conservatives were in power, why did they do absolutely nothing for the industry and nothing for the workers at the time when it really mattered?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I do not agree at all with the premise of that question, certainly when the member talks about carving out a bright future for the aerospace industry through Bill C-10.

Bill C-10 does absolutely none of that. It does not stipulate any of the measures that the members across the way continue to talk about when they raise Bombardier and the centres of excellence. None of that is referenced in this bill. We will continue to assert that the federal government could have gone much further if it truly wanted to ensure that all of the aerospace in Canada was more competitive by contemplating other measures that would support all carriers and that would not affect jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

I can understand the fact that the Conservative Party is focusing on the time frames, the government's haste, the opportunity for the provinces to continue negotiations, and the Supreme Court appeal that must be heard. However, beyond these technical considerations, which have real consequences, there is also the the root problem: Bill C-10 eliminates all the guarantees that were in place to keep jobs in Canada, whether in Winnipeg, Montreal, or Mississauga.

When I moved an amendment at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities that would delete this part of Bill C-10 and keep the job guarantees, the Conservative Party voted against the NDP amendment. I would like the member to explain why.

● (1340)

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I always enjoy and appreciate my colleague's interventions, both in committee and in the House. His passion is unmatched by many in the House.

The purpose of clause-by-clause consideration in committee is to propose amendments that approve a bill. My assessment of the amendment was that it did nothing to modify or improve the bill. All it did was propose removing the amendment in one clause of bill.

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If members oppose a clause, they should simply vote against it, rather than putting forward an amendment that has no substance, the result of which is achieved by voting against the clause, and has no hope of receiving support from government members. We knew that. It was clear. The Liberals did not accept any amendments that were made by members in the committee.

The amendment we put forward was substantial and would have at least addressed the concerns of the Governments of Quebec and Manitoba, and probably could have led to a very similar outcome as the amendment those members proposed.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed pointing out the inaccuracies with the Liberal member from Winnipeg. He made comments about the strength of Air Canada. I would point out that the last two years have been two consecutive record years for Air Canada, with this year being better than the year before. That is pointing in the right direction.

Could the member from Saskatchewan take a look at two things? One is on the annual report. For the last two years at least, Air Canada has referenced exchange issues on labour for maintenance. That would lead me to believe it should be doing more maintenance in Canada. The other one is this. We just went through a massive Transportation Act review by Mr. Emerson. Why not take a larger, broader look at it instead of this piecemeal approach at which the Liberals are looking?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the hard work he does as the deputy critic for transportation.

What he referenced is one of the glaring gaps in this legislation. This is one of the first pieces of legislation the government has introduced, and then has forced closure on it. The Emerson report, to which Air Canada provided a submission, was in the minister's hands. In Air Canada's submission, there are 66 recommendations that the federal government could have considered in making the aerospace industry more competitive, efficient, and cost effective for Canadians. Yet the government came forward with simply one measure, and it did it one day after Air Canada announced it would buy the Bombardier C Series.

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to make reference to something the member said.

You said you wanted Air Canada to be competitive. Do you believe the Air Canada Public Participation Act still applies as is, that Air Canada should not have the capability of being competitive by having these changes made?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the parliamentary secretary to address her remarks through the Chair.

The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, when we contemplate the change that has been put forward by the government in Bill C-10, we need to take a step back and look at the benefits Air Canada has received as a legacy carrier over the last number of decades.

We need to look at what Bill C-10 would do and then contemplate a number of measures the Liberal government could have contemplated when it looked at amending the Air Canada Public

Participation Act. The government chose to keep it so narrow. Therefore, I would put the question back for the parliamentary secretary and the minister. If the government is determined for Air Canada to become more competitive in a progressive aerospace industry, why would it not have entertained the other 60-some recommendations Air Canada made in the Emerson report? Why did it not look at other measures to ensure Air Canada would be more competitive without costing jobs in Canada?

● (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated the work that my colleague did in committee on Bill C-10.

We heard several times from union and management representatives. We also heard at length from the minister, who tried repeatedly to explain why it was urgent that the bill be passed.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that. Did the minister manage to convince members of the House of Commons of the urgency of passing Bill C-10?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the good work he does on the transportation committee as well and for the key points he has raised in this debate.

Quite simply put, there is nothing that the Minister of Transport has presented in the House or at committee that would cause me to believe there should have been this kind of urgency applied to the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House today to once again defend good jobs for the people of Air Canada, who are unfortunately being left high and dry by the new Liberal government.

Sometimes, political events remind us of songs from our childhood, works of art, or moments during our upbringing that suddenly apply perfectly to the situation, even though that was not the original intent. I am thinking about a Jacques Dutronc song that I love.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Is it *Les cornichons*?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, no, it is not *Les cornichons*. I apologize to my colleague. I am talking about *L'opportuniste*. I will not sing today, although I have in the past. Nevertheless, here is what Mr. Dutronc said in this song:

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There are those who do contest
Who make demands and who protest
There's just one thing I always do:
I change my tune, I change my tune
Always singing the right song

I don't fear those who take advantage
Or people who are causing damage
I trust in voters, as I should
It's how I make my livelihood

There are those who do contest
Who make demands and who protest
There's just one thing I always do:
I change my tune, I change my tune
Always singing the right song

...

I've changed my tune so many times
No longer are there any rhymes
With the next big thing that comes along
I'll be singing a brand new song

That song describes the Liberal Party's stance from 2012 to 2016 to a T. The Liberals said they stood strong with working men and women. Right here on Parliament Hill, the current Prime Minister, who was then the leader of the Liberal Party, said that we had to keep these good jobs here at home. He had the nerve to chant "so, so, so, solidarity". Today, barely four years later, they would have us believe the situation has changed completely and all of that is in the past, as though 2012 were a very long time ago.

The Liberals say they sympathize with the 2,600 families that have lost their jobs because of the Aveos debacle and Air Canada's illegal actions. They are crying big old crocodile tears. In 2012, they said they supported those people, but they show no remorse about ditching them now that they are in government. Oddly, we have seen that kind of attitude from the Liberals before.

I hope that those 2,600 families will remember the Liberal government's attitude and how it broke its promises and did the opposite of what the Liberals asked the government to do when they were in opposition. They wanted to keep good jobs here. Now, they are saying it is okay to export huge numbers of jobs abroad to places like Israel, the United States, and Honduras. They could not care less whether our own people work or not.

The Liberals were perfectly happy to chant "solidarity" when they were in opposition, but now that they are in government, they are not walking the talk. They do not have the courage of their convictions, and the current Prime Minister is the biggest hypocrite of all in this abysmal production.

We cannot trust the Liberal Party when it comes to Air Canada workers. In 2012, it told the then Conservative government that it absolutely had to enforce the law to protect these good, well-paying jobs in the aerospace sector across the country. It said that we must stand up for the people in Montreal, Mississauga, and Winnipeg. That attitude has gone out the window.

Not only is the Liberal Party not enforcing the law, but it is changing it in order to suddenly make it legal to export these good jobs. Workers who have been fighting to keep their good jobs for the past four years have been brought to their knees.

I think this is pathetic coming from a government that promised real change if elected to power. To the Liberals, change does not mean enforcing a law to keep good jobs here in Canada, but rather changing the law to legalize job losses.

This about-face is not just about changing their tune. It is also about language. I noted that earlier today in the speech by the Minister of Families. He promised a better future and a rosy outlook for people in the aerospace industry when in fact the Liberals are authorizing the loss of 2,600 jobs.

● (1350)

The interesting thing about the Liberal minister's comments was the use of certain words. Earlier, in a question, I referred to his use of Orwellian language, language used by the author George Orwell, who wrote *Animal Farm, 1984*, and *Homage to the Catalonia*, among other works.

Since taking office, the Liberals have not just changed their tune; they have also changed their language. Before, they wanted to stand up for high-quality jobs in Canada. Now, they are making vague promises about the future and telling us that everything is going to work out. Earlier, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development used the word "concrete". That is just great because, in my experience, every time the government is trying to be vague or evasive about something, it uses the word "concrete" more and more. The Liberals are trying to hide the fact that, in reality, there is no concrete possibility of jobs. The jobs they are talking about do not exist. The government is killing 2,600 jobs with Bill C-10, but it has not made any promises or given any guarantees that Air Canada will create any aircraft maintenance jobs in Canada. It is rather fascinating. The government is talking about how Air Canada may one day establish centres of excellence to take care of the C Series planes that the company plans to buy because they may need to be maintained. We will see who is in office then. It certainly sounds good, but for now it is all talk. The government is using words like "concrete" when it has absolutely nothing to put on the table.

Bill C-10 will gut all the provisions of the Air Canada Public Participation Act that keep jobs in Canada. There is no mention of a minimum number of jobs, volume of activity, or the percentage of the Air Canada fleet that must be maintained in Canada. Ultimately, what the Liberal's Bill C-10 means is that there could be one part-time job in Manitoba, another in Ontario, and another in Quebec, and that everything would be fine because the law will not have been violated. We were previously talking about 2,600 good jobs; that is obviously being scrapped.

I wonder if that is the Liberal Party's job creation plan. Are they authorizing the massive export of our jobs to other countries? All we have heard from the government is that we have to help Air Canada be competitive. What can that really mean? Does it mean that we are going to export all jobs abroad because people elsewhere just happen to be paid miserly wages and that our families will no longer be able to put food on the table? Does it mean that to be competitive we will help companies that make winter coats and boots send their operations to Sri Lanka or Bangladesh because the people there work for one dollar an hour? Is that what will be done routinely? Are we going to let all our companies manufacture and maintain things abroad and not have any good jobs left in Canada? Is that the Liberals' job creation plan?

I am extremely concerned about this because the Liberals keep going on and on about how we have to look forward and be competitive and support Air Canada. The minister said that the government met with people from the industry. Yes, they met with people from Air Canada. Did they meet with any workers? No, they did not. Did they meet with any of the machinists' union representatives? No, they did not meet with them, not once.

The Minister of Transport was patting himself on the back for meeting with Air Canada representatives 12 times, but he did not have a single meeting with any Aveos workers. Is this the kind of balance and new governance we can expect from the Liberal Party? It is extremely disappointing and extremely shocking.

We have seen no evidence over the past few weeks that Air Canada needed to be rescued so badly by the Liberal Party, so that the company could then send jobs out of Canada. Air Canada needs help. The Liberals would have us believe that as an absolute truism. Air Canada made a net profit of \$531 million in 2014. Its operating profit that year was \$815 million. Air Canada was also profitable in 2013 and 2012. Why the urgency? What is the justification for this? Why break a promise and not keep those good jobs here?

The other thing the current Liberal government keeps saying that does not make sense is that it has a deal with Air Canada that will allow for the manufacture of Bombardier C Series aircraft because Air Canada may or may not buy 30 or 45 of them. That is not clear either. That is what we call mixing apples and oranges. That is what we call pitting one economic sector against another, in other words abandoning aircraft maintenance in favour of the aircraft manufacturing sector. The two can go together, and that is how it should be. Canada's aerospace sector is one of our economic and industrial jewels. We must keep it intact. We had the opportunity to do so.

• (1355)

We had a law that allowed us to do so. Let me be clear: I am thrilled that Air Canada is purchasing Bombardier C Series aircraft. No one here could be happier than I am because I know how much that will benefit the metropolitan area, Quebec's economy, and Canada's economy.

However, Air Canada is not buying the C Series out of charity or to please the federal or provincial government. The C Series are damned good aircraft, and Air Canada needs them for the future. Let us not give in to blackmail that pits one economic sector against another. Air Canada can very well buy the Bombardier C Series aircraft and still keep the jobs we have had here since 1988. Part of

Statements by Members

the initial agreement on privatizing Air Canada was to keep these good jobs here at home. That is something the Liberals forgot sometime between 2012 and 2016, unfortunately.

The workers at Aveos, the Air Canada affiliate, had the law on their side. The Quebec Superior Court ruled in their favour. The Court of Appeal ruled in their favour on November 3, 2015. The judge, Marie-France Bich, noted that Air Canada was clearly breaking the law by closing the maintenance centres in the municipalities concerned.

The company broke the law. That could not be any clearer. Air Canada appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court. What takes the cake is that while these workers would in all likelihood win their case to keep their jobs in Canada, we have a Liberal government that is trying to pull the rug out from under them, imposing closure, and trying to ram Bill C-10 through without giving workers the chance to continue litigating the case they won because they were right.

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie will have about seven minutes to continue his speech after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE SAINT-JEAN

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, this past weekend, we learned that the Minister of National Defence intends to restore university-level education at Royal Military College Saint-Jean.

After 21 years, it was high time that the Liberals recognized their mistake. Military officers have not had access to quality post-secondary education in French for 21 years. Our francophone officers have been in exile for 21 years.

Since 1995, the Bloc Québécois has been campaigning against this foolish decision made by Jean Chrétien's Liberal government, which was disrespectful to Quebec and French speakers across Canada. The Bloc Québécois was worried that this cut would result in the anglicization of our military officers, and that is exactly what happened.

We hope that tomorrow's announcement will restore justice. The Quebecers and francophones in our armed forces are not second-class soldiers.

Thank you to Claude Bachand, my former critic—

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

The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday, May 15, was International Day of Families, and this year's theme was "Families, healthy lives and sustainable future".

Statements by Members

Our government made families the focus of its budget, and it has adopted such measures as the Canada child benefit, which will lift 300,000 children out of poverty.

The more flexible measures to allow for a better work-family balance will let parents focus on the well-being of their children and their families. We are also working to implement new policies to support seniors and caregivers.

As we celebrate International Day of Families, I am proud that our government is giving priority to families, which are at the heart of our society.

[English]

Happy International Day of Families.

* * *

FORT MCMURRAY FIRE

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand in this House today as the member of Parliament for Edmonton West.

The city of Edmonton has a big heart and is known for its hospitality. The people of Edmonton care for all who travel to our city. This very fact has been beautifully displayed over the past few weeks, as thousands of evacuees from Fort McMurray flee the devastating wildfire to seek refuge in Edmonton.

In a heartbeat and with a big heart, Edmontonians opened their doors and welcomed evacuees, providing them with food, water, shelter, and all the necessities they required. The city itself opened up the Northlands exhibition centre to act as the main location for evacuees seeking assistance. Necessities were handed out, and families were fed, housed, and cared for by numerous volunteers and staff.

While the evacuees of Fort McMurray are only now getting a chance to learn about the extent of the damage, Edmontonians are still helping out in every way possible.

The city of Edmonton is behind Fort McMurray. Edmonton is with it, and together, we are Alberta Strong.

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PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to a Canadian who is making a difference for people living with Parkinson's disease.

This Canadian is Harry McMurtry. Harry is a former colleague of mine. We practised law together at Affleck Greene McMurtry. More importantly, Harry is also my friend. A few years ago, Harry was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. He refused to let this diagnosis slow him down.

In fact, on May 7, Harry began walking 500 miles, from New York City to Toronto, to raise awareness and money for Parkinson's. The walk will be finished on June 22 in Toronto. During that time, Harry will walk 15 miles a day, no small feat for someone with Parkinson's. To find out more or to contribute, please visit fivehundredmiles.org.

Harry is a great community leader and serves as a shining example of positivity. Once again, I rise to celebrate Harry and his courageous undertaking, and to thank him and his colleagues for their important contribution to Parkinson's research in Canada. Good luck, Harry.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Madam Speaker, in the early 1960s, several Inuit kids from the north were taken away, selected as part of a Canadian government experiment to assimilate the Inuit into non-indigenous cultures.

These children have come to be known as the “experimental Eskimos”. As with the residential school system, the impacts and consequences the policy would have on the children were never considered.

This past week, the parties involved in the class action suit for residential schools in Newfoundland and Labrador have finally reached an agreement and settlement, which, as a survivor myself, I applaud.

It is in the same spirit of reconciliation that the Government of Canada needs to do the same in favour of the experimental Eskimos. The survivors of this other dark chapter of our history are calling on us to help them, so they too can turn a page on injustice, with dignity and honour.

* * *

● (1405)

FORT MCMURRAY FIRE

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of the Prime Minister and the House a little Canadian with a big heart.

An elementary school student, Malachy Haran, while participating in an annual village cleanup held by local Councillor George Carlson, with his father, asked me for a donation to help those affected by the Fort McMurray fires. In his blue Tupperware container, he had already collected \$100.

I do not need to remind the House of the devastation that the Fort McMurray fires have brought. However, it is uplifting to see young Canadians like Malachy willing to take it upon themselves to get involved and make a difference.

I was happy to hear that the idea to raise money for those affected came from Malachy himself. If there are more young Canadian leaders like Malachy, the future of Canada is in good hands.

* * *

GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is Gender-based Analysis Plus Awareness Week.

Statements by Members

Gender-based analysis is a methodology to review changes to policy and procedures to ensure they are fair for all genders. The Plus version is an excellent web-based tool on the Government of Canada's website that will enable all parliamentarians to consider legislation through the lens of gender fairness as well as diversity.

All of the committee members on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and our staff have completed the online training. Today, we are challenging each member and their staff to complete the training this week, Gender-based Analysis Plus Awareness Week, or at least by the time we adjourn for the summer.

All will receive a link to the training, and a certificate once completed. I ask that members please do their part to help continue to move towards gender equity and a fair environment for all.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize an extraordinary young woman from Upper LaHave, Nova Scotia, whose curiosity and drive is bringing attention to an important environmental issue.

Stella Bowles has been testing the LaHave River for fecal coliform bacteria for a number of months now, with alarming results. What started out as a neat idea for a science fair project has brought national attention to a river on which some homes still use straight pipes for sewage disposal.

Because of Stella's work, there are now signs posted alerting people to poor water quality. More importantly, this has led to many public conversations about how to tackle this complex problem to make sure the river is clean and healthy for all to enjoy.

Stella was recently recognized by the David Suzuki Foundation with a nomination for the Top 25 Environmentalists Under 25 award. Stella did not win the award this time, but do not worry, Stella is only 12 years old and she still has a lot of time.

Well done, Stella.

* * *

PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION AWARD

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to acknowledge Jim Ross of Fredericton, and John Wood of Oromocto, named 2016 recipients of the Fredericton Community Foundation's Philanthropy in Action Award.

A member of the Order of Canada, Jim Ross left the Senate in 1993 and devoted his time to the noble task of building Partners For Youth. Under his direction, this province-wide, community-based organization has developed highly effective programs to help youth at risk meet their potential.

John Wood was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy at age four, and by aged 16 needed a ventilator and the use of a wheelchair. An avid sports fan, he is today known as a community leader and an inspiration for many. The John Wood Foundation provides financial support to people living with significant disability.

As Canadians of whom we can all be proud, I celebrate and thank Mr. Ross and Mr. Wood, influential leaders in our community.

● (1410)

INTERNET ACCESS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, imagine a child trying to do homework these days without the Internet. His classmates have the biggest library in the history of the world, and he is stuck with a few textbooks from school. That is why Rogers and Telus have both announced that they will offer \$10-a-month Internet to the less fortunate.

How can the companies ensure that the discount goes to families who actually need it without demanding a person's private financial records? Telus has now suggested using the child benefit mail-out that the government sends twice a year. An insert in the mailer would provide families earning less than \$33,000 with a password to sign up for ultra low-cost Internet.

CRA already has the data and already pays for the postage and mailing, so the cost would be very minimal. Families could choose to sign on voluntarily and confidentially, and no government data would be provided to the companies. This could be expanded to word processors, e-book libraries, and other learning tools.

Low-cost, free-enterprise solutions like this one are the future of poverty fighting. Let us embrace them to help the underdogs among us work, learn, and achieve great things.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate and offer my support to the Saint-Jean-l'Évangéliste parish and the group of citizens in the Saint-Jean riding who have sponsored a Syrian family.

It is important for us to commend our constituents when they do good things. Josée Desranleau is actively involved in this sponsorship project. The buttons my colleagues and I are proudly wearing today are helping her put together a welcome package for this family.

The original idea came from two Montreal women who worked together to spread a message of peace. This beautiful button offers words of welcome to all refugee families in Canada.

This humanitarian project reflects the show of solidarity we are seeing in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. We have even set up a committee in my riding to develop a permanent system for welcoming new refugees.

*Statements by Members**[English]***RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this May 14th marked eight years of incarceration for Iran's seven Baha'i leaders. They have been imprisoned for practising their faith, a fundamental right guaranteed under international and Iranian law. They are among hundreds of prisoners of conscience held in Iranian jails on the grounds of their religious beliefs, political opinions, and civil activities. Some potentially risk torture and execution.

These prisoners are still languishing in Iranian prisons. Many of them have restricted access to crucial medical care, regardless of life-threatening illnesses.

During this Iran Accountability Week, at the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, we stand in solidarity with these prisoners and the people of Iran to ensure that constructive engagement with Iran will go hand in hand with our continued focus on human rights.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during Mental Health Week, I had the pleasure of participating in a very special mental health awareness campaign initiated by the Paul Hansell Foundation. The foundation and others took to Twitter and posted under #ConvoPlate in order to keep the conversation going around mental health and to finally end the stigma surrounding it.

I also attended the official launch of the #ConvoPlate campaign on May 5 and can confirm it was a tremendous success.

I would like to congratulate Brian Hansell, a good friend of mine, who also happens to be the founder of the Paul Hansell Foundation, on an incredible job around this project, as well as his tireless efforts to address mental health issues.

I would also like to thank my colleagues in this place who took pictures of the plate and posted them under #ConvoPlate on Twitter.

Again, I thank all who participated.

Mental health is one of those most important topics of our lifetime. I hope we can all encourage each other to talk about it, share experiences, contribute to causes, and end the stigma once and for all.

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ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE KINGSTON

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed emotions that I speak to members today. On what would normally be a joyous occasion, I am torn. This Thursday, my oldest son is graduating from the Royal Military College.

However, the RMC family is also in mourning. Two officer cadets and squadron brothers from RMC passed away recently: accomplished fencer and athlete, Harrison Kelertas, and second-year student and pilot, Brett Cameron. Harrison would have been graduating with my son this Thursday.

Their recent and sudden passing has left a gaping hole in many hearts, but they shall not be forgotten. They served their country with dignity and pride. I call upon their classmates to carry on their legacy.

I also ask my fellow members of Parliament to join with me in honouring their service to Canada.

Harrison and Brett will be missed.

* * *

● (1415)

VIA RAIL

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, VIA Rail is a long way from fulfilling its mandate to provide intercity passenger rail services in Canada. The Auditor General's report on the crown corporation identified flaws in the way that our rail passenger service is managed and delivered. VIA Rail does not have a long-term plan or direction approved by the federal government. This compromises the corporation's viability.

The Auditor General recommends that VIA Rail review its existing governance systems and practices in consultation with the government, and develop a long-term strategic plan so VIA Rail can fulfill its mandate, economically, efficiently, and effectively.

VIA Rail agrees with the Auditor General.

The Minister of Transport says he takes these findings seriously and will address the deficiencies created by government in action.

I hope that the government transforms its sunny ways into real action on VIA Rail. Safe, accessible, affordable, and sustainable passenger rail service is vital for London and area. Our economic future depends on it.

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FORT MCMURRAY FIRE

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand here today humbled by the generosity of Canadians who have provided their support and prayers to the evacuees of Fort McMurray.

When the evacuation order was made, families were forced to leave their homes, their jobs, and their lives. Albertans reacted instantly. People from the south loaded up their trucks with fuel, water bottles, and food to bring comfort to those who were stranded on Highway 63. My office was flooded with offers from Albertans who had empty bedrooms, hotel rooms, and campers to help house the more 80,000 evacuees.

To the firefighters and emergency service workers who put their lives at risk to save our city, words cannot describe how much we appreciate them.

Some of the evacuees were forced to leave so quickly that in many cases they and their children only had the clothes on their back. In our darkest hour, Canadians from across this country came to our aid from coast to coast to coast.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Canadians. Their generosity will never be forgotten. God bless.

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ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May is Asian Heritage Month.

We can find Canadians of Asian heritage making a difference in communities from coast to coast to coast, including in my riding of Scarborough Centre, where more than one-third of residents are of Asian descent. The Asian community is a diverse one, including people of Chinese, Bangladeshi, Filipino, Pakistani, Tamil, and Indian heritage, and many more. Scarborough is made a better place to live thanks to their cultures, cuisine, and commitment to community and family. We work together, shop together, and our children learn and play together.

I am also proud to be one of the many Canadians of Asian heritage in this House. We are stronger not in spite of our diversity but because of our diversity. Our Asian-Canadian community helps make Canada one of the best countries in the world.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the President of the Treasury Board: “We want to make it absolutely clear that we are ending the ability for any government...to use tax dollars to fund what are partisan or quasi-partisan ads.”

What about the video starring the Prime Minister that was released by a crown corporation? Why did the government break its rules right after announcing them? Why is the Prime Minister breaking his own rules?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, we put an end to partisan government advertising. The policy on advertising clearly states that it applies to any message paid for by the government for placement in media. That is not the case in this example. We were and will continue to be clear. We have put an end to partisan government advertising.

• (1420)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the minister just said is that that organization is not receiving money from the Government of Canada for its operations. We will be following this very closely.

The rules are very clear: advertisements must be devoid of any name, voice, or image of a minister, member of Parliament, or senator. Canadians are of course shocked by this ad.

Oral Questions

Can the Prime Minister tell us why the rules do not apply to him?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was not paid advertising. That is a little rich for the Conservatives, who spent hundreds of millions of dollars in some cases advertising programs that did not exist, in some cases spending \$100,000 for a 30-second ad in the NHL playoffs.

The Conservatives ramped up government spending on partisan advertising at the same time that they slashed funding for Canada's summer jobs for students. We have cut the advertising budget because we are doubling the amount we are investing in summer jobs for students. We believe that it is a better priority to invest in young Canadians than to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals just cannot stop breaking their own promises. The same day that they announced new rules for government ads, they broke them with polished visuals of the Prime Minister. The hypocrisy is astonishing.

Will the Liberals pull the government-funded ad?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the policy was very clear that in terms of paid advertising, no minister or member of Parliament or prime minister will be in ads. We brought in these new policies, which for the first time define clearly what is acceptable in terms of government advertising and what is not, in response to 10 years of taxpayer and power abuse of this under the Conservatives.

We are serious in that we are ending partisan advertising. We will continue to do this because it is the right thing to do. We will invest in Canadians.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Liberals falsely claimed that taxpayers' dollars would not be used for any kind of advertising that included the image of politicians, but it did not take long for the Prime Minister to break his own rules. If the Prime Minister wants to appear in a taping of *Celebrity Chef*, he should do so on his own dime, not the taxpayers'.

Can the Liberals confirm that no taxpayers' funds were used from any department, crown corporation or agency to pay for any aspect of this self-promotion, including its production?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly we define in the policy what is acceptable. Ads must be objective, factual, and explanatory. They must be free from political party slogans or images. It is clear the policy defines that for advertising it is any message paid for by the government for placement in the media.

It is very clear as well that this was not paid government advertising, so the Conservatives should change their questions now having learned the truth on this.

Oral Questions

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer should come with a disclaimer. It is too bad that the Liberals did not tell Canadians to check the fine print on their election promises. They have more disclaimers than a pharmaceutical ad.

The PMO is parsing words to justify their skirting of the rules so that the Prime Minister could still appear in this vanity video. Will they just stop this blatant self-promotion on the taxpayers' dime?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, the policy defines, and we are being very clear on this, that it is for any advertising message paid for by the government for placement in media. It is very clear that this example was not paid government advertising.

The Conservatives, who spent hundreds of millions of dollars promoting themselves in partisan advertising, abusing the taxpayer, abusing our democratic system, should be ashamed to attack a government that is actually cleaning up the mess that they left.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, government monies were used to produce those ads. They should stop playing games.

After the secret deal to protect the scammers in the KPMG tax fraud, today we learn that the RCMP is investigating corruption, collusion, breach of trust, and fraud at the Canada Revenue Agency, a parallel system within a government agency that has seen three senior executives fired. Canadians have a right to know how this happened. When will the Prime Minister call an inquiry into the shadowy system at the CRA?

• (1425)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want Canadians to know that all allegations of misconduct on the part of agency employees are taken very seriously and are systematically investigated.

My colleague across the aisle knows very well that I cannot comment on any matter that is currently under police investigation. However, all agency employees are expected to adhere to a rigorous code of integrity and professional conduct at all times.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a system within the CRA to help the richest avoid paying their taxes. That answer just does not cut it.

[Translation]

The agency is making headlines for giving the rich preferential treatment to help them avoid paying their taxes. We are hearing about corruption, collusion, and fraud. A number of senior executives at the agency have been fired.

Who is in charge at the Canada Revenue Agency?

Will the Prime Minister stand up and confirm that he plans to get to the bottom of this shocking affair immediately so that those

Canadians who pay their taxes will know why it is that the rich are not required to pay their taxes?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes how important it is to combat tax evasion and international tax avoidance, as indicated in our election platform and my mandate letter.

Regarding the Panama papers in particular, I instructed my officials to get the list. We now have it. This is a problem of global proportions. We are taking a close look at all the data we have today and will do the same with the data still to come.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does her mandate letter allow her to leave a system in place that allows the richest Canadians to avoid paying their taxes? We need an answer for those taxpayers who pay their taxes.

Important projects are going to lose millions of dollars because of the government's infrastructure mismanagement. The Université de Montréal is waiting. They have been talking about infrastructure for months. A \$350-million project may have to be postponed for a year.

Why are the Liberals unable to implement a system to—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Communities.

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that we are building a very strong relationship with the Province of Quebec. I met with three of the ministers last week when I was in Montreal to talk about the infrastructure needs of the community not only within Montreal, but also within the entire province of Quebec. We will be moving forward in delivering the commitment and also approving some of the priorities that are currently under review.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have this little custom in Montreal. It is called winter. This project at the University of Montreal is going to miss a full year. The university calculates it will lose \$12 million. This is the number one project on the list of the Government of Quebec. Liberals are incapable of giving any indication of when this project will actually be able to begin. That is incompetence. They have talked about infrastructure for months. They are doing nothing. Talk is cheap. When are they going to start acting?

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we look at the funding that was allocated to the province of Quebec in 2014, up until last October, zero dollars were delivered. So we understand the need that the province is facing. We are building that relationship in order to deliver on the commitment, in order to ensure that \$1.7 billion that belongs to the province of Quebec is delivered on time. That is why we are working so hard to sign the agreement with the province on many projects and we will continue to work with it in order to deliver on this.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a referendum in which every voter in Canada would be able to cast a vote and in which every vote would be equal to every other is by far the most inclusive democratic tool. After all, almost 26 million Canadians are eligible to vote. They are young and aged, disabled, indigenous and newly arrived, women and men, and those who live in rural or remote areas. They are every type of Canadian the minister can imagine.

The minister should do more than just claim she will listen to these people. She should give Canadians the final decision. Why will the minister not let Canadians vote?

• (1430)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has suggested that there is only one valid way to consult Canadians. While it may be one option, I remain to be convinced that it is the best option.

When Ontarians voted on electoral reform in 2007, nearly half did not vote. When British Columbians voted on electoral reform, nearly half did not vote. Do we ignore these people?

This is the 21st century. We have modern tools to engage the public and tools capable of reaching those who do not traditionally engage. We intend to employ these tools.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1995, 92% of Quebecers voted in a referendum. It is illegitimate to argue that somehow the fact that only about 15% of total voters in Ontario voted for an electoral reform system is a reason it should be rammed through without a vote. That is outrageous.

The Liberals' words do not match their actions, and increasingly they do not represent any kind of recognizable logic. They say that Canadians gave them a mandate to design a new system, but they are afraid Canadians may say no thanks. The Liberals say they want to listen to every Canadian, but they will not use the most democratic means available.

Every voice can and should be heard. Every voter in Canada can and should vote in a referendum. Why will the Liberals not hold one?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not share the desire of the member opposite to put all his consultation eggs in the referendum basket. Half the people impacted by past proposed electoral reforms in Ontario and

B.C. did not participate. I am not surprised that talking to only half of Canadians is an acceptable approach for the Conservatives. However, this is not good enough for me, it is not good enough for our party, and it is not good enough for Canadians.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have stacked the deck on electoral reform. All the decisions would be made by six Liberals who have given themselves a majority on the committee. Without a referendum on electoral reform, six Liberal MPs will make the decision on the future of Canadian democracy for the entire country. The minister needs to stand today and say if the Liberal government is truly interested in what Canadians have to say. Will the Liberals give each and every Canadian a direct say through a referendum, yes or no?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to hear from all Canadians. We intend to use a multitude of methods, including the special committee, town halls by all MPs in their ridings, social media platforms, and additional processes designed to reach every Canadian to build a consensus on how to achieve electoral reform.

Our commitment is an opportunity to engage with the 49% of people who have not participated in this process in the past. If the hon. member does not agree that this is a priority, then I am afraid he has missed the boat.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what will happen is that Canadians will miss the boat unless the Liberals give them a referendum.

The minister claimed that she is going to consult. However, back here in reality, it is six Liberal MPs who hold all the power. Those six Liberal MPs are the only voices that seem to matter to the current Liberal government. Does the Prime Minister really think it is fairer to have six Liberal MPs decide the future of our democratic system, rather than holding a referendum where every Canadian gets a vote?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while that approach may have been the acceptable norm in the previous government, that is not the way forward with our government. This government is committed to bringing all parties to the table to be part of this important dialogue at an all-party committee to act as a conduit between all Canadians and this House. Ultimately, we as a House will decide the best way to move forward on electoral reform.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in any case, if referendums were the norm in the previous government, then I am extremely proud of the people on this side of the House today.

Last week, the Minister of Democratic Institutions referred to Twitter as a way of consulting Canadians. In reality, less than 20% of Canadians use Twitter. Meanwhile, nearly 70% of Canadians exercised their right to vote in the last election.

Oral Questions

Can the minister tell us why she thinks that a referendum is not the right way to consult all Canadians?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's view to engage all Canadians in this conversation. It is a view we all share in the House. The question is this. How many Canadians does he want to hear from?

In the last two electoral reform referenda, almost half of the population did not vote. Talking to only half of the population may be good enough for the party opposite, but it is not good enough for us. This is the 21st century. We have modern tools to engage the public, tools capable of reaching those who, historically, have been marginalized, and we will employ these tools.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister always talks about how she wants to consult different segments of the population, such as youth, women, indigenous people, people with disabilities, and people living in remote and rural regions.

To listen to her, one would think that the only people who would vote are men aged 65 and over living in urban areas. Nevertheless, everyone that I spoke to this past weekend was in favour of a referendum.

Could the minister acknowledge that a referendum is the best way to consult all Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the 21st century, we are privileged to have a wide range of tools available to us to engage with Canadians. I appreciate the enthusiasm of members opposite to be part of this discussion. I encourage them to bring forward ideas other than a referendum.

Do they agree that the status quo must end? Do they agree that we need to modernize our democratic institutions? Are they willing to be at the table, to be part of the solution? I hope so. Canadians are counting on us.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Prime Minister said that he was proud that his government was going to use its majority to reform our electoral system. However, that does not make any sense.

We are talking about a major reform to get rid of an archaic system that creates distortions and false majorities. Let us follow this absolutely amazing logic through: they are going to use their false majority to control the committee. We believe that much more open, transparent, and inclusive rules are needed.

Will the Liberals do the same thing as the Conservatives and reform our electoral system without the support of anyone else in the House?

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our proposed motion includes both the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party members on the committee. This goes beyond the normal practice of not allowing unrecognized parties to be at the table. We have invited them to be part of the process, to contribute to the witness list, to travel, and to question witnesses.

I will add one other thing. If the Bloc Québécois and Green Party do not agree with the majority report of the committee, I will receive, consider, and respond to any alternative report they may wish to present.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): My beating heart be still, Mr. Speaker. She is going to receive an alternative report.

We are talking about the very heart and foundation of our democratic system. When Conservatives were in power, they shut down debate and did not seek support from other parties and used their false majority on committee to ram through changes to our electoral system. After promising to be different, Liberals proposed a process that has given themselves the power to change our democratic institutions without the support of any other party and use their false majority to do the exact same thing.

Here is an opportunity for the minister. Will she commit today that her government will not act unilaterally to pass changes to our democracy, yes or no?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the efforts to modernize our electoral system need the participation of all 338 members in the House. The special all-party committee is one essential tool that acts as a conduit between the House and the people of this country. If we are going to modernize our electoral system, if we are going to further connect constituents to this place, then we need to work together, set aside partisan interests, and deliver on the commitments that two-thirds of us made to Canadians this past election.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Cabinet is going to do whatever it wants to do, anyway, Mr. Speaker.

Canada's largest lumber companies are moving more and more of their operations south of the border at the expense of high-quality, well-paying jobs in this country, all because of uncertainty over the Liberals handling of the softwood lumber agreement. These same companies are now backed by powerful U.S. lobby groups that are advocating for a deal that will put our small producers at a disadvantage.

When will the Liberals stop playing both sides of the border and stand up for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians employed by the forestry sector here at home?

• (1440)

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully aware of the intricacies of this file. It remains a priority for our government.

Oral Questions

We are within the negotiation period in which we will come out with a framework for this agreement.

We understand the nature of the industry across this country and the particularities of the industry in each province, and we will come back with the right agreement.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the small producers are on the outside looking in.

From that response, it is clear that Liberals do not care about protecting Canadian forestry jobs that are the backbone of this country.

They have pitted Canada's small producers against our large producers, the very same large Canadian forestry companies that are increasingly growing their U.S. operations and moving jobs out of this country.

The government has left our small producers again on the outside looking in. How can the Liberals sit idle while Canadian jobs are moving to the United States because of softwood lumber uncertainty?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is far from the truth that we are sitting idle. We have consulted with every single part of the industry, including small producers. We understand the nature of what we have to do in the negotiation process.

It is completely misleading to say that we are not aware of what is happening in the industry. It is a priority for us, and we will get the right deal done.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just forestry; it is Canadian pipelines that are leaving Canada. In fact, in the last six months there have been no new pipeline projects proposed.

Instead, Canadian pipelines are being built in other countries. TransCanada's pipeline building in Mexico is just the latest example.

Why are the Liberals driving oil investment and jobs out of Canada with their high taxes and bad policy?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said many times in the House, we as a government support our natural resource sector.

This is a terrible time as a result of low commodity prices, and we have Canadians around this country suffering.

The government has put in a transparent process with the National Energy Board that needs to run its course, so we ensure we have environmental protection for our country and the confidence of Canadians moving forward.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is developing a bad investment reputation because of the uncertainty the Liberals have created.

At the same time, countries like Mexico are welcoming Canadian oil companies. Canada has one of the best reputations when it comes

to our regulatory system, responsible natural resources development, and our standard of living.

The only reason investment is leaving and not coming here is because of the Liberals. When will the Liberals realize that they are killing investment and jobs in Canada and in the pipeline industry?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I would like to say, which we have repeated numerous times in this country, is that we are so proud of our oil and gas sector. They are some of the best innovators, and the companies are helping create jobs in our country and helping to grow our economy.

We recognize that in order for our economy to grow and the oil and gas sector to be part of that, we need to ensure that the economy and the environment go hand and hand.

We are working very hard with our partners to make sure that happens.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the NDP asked about regions left out of extended employment insurance benefits, the government's response was "stay tuned".

On Friday the Prime Minister tuned out Regina. Our city is now the only part of Saskatchewan and Alberta excluded from extended employment insurance, even though Regina has been hit by recent layoffs, and families are in urgent need of help.

Why is the Liberal government continuing to ignore Regina?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, any increase in the number of unemployed workers in this country is of great concern to all Canadians and to this government in particular.

Recent results have shown that three additional regions have met the existing definition of a sharp and sustained economic downturn.

Therefore, just one short week after that new data was released, our Prime Minister announced extended EI benefits to three further regions, and we are proud of this.

● (1445)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not only the people of Regina that the Liberals have left out in the cold.

In their campaign, the Liberals promised to restore the extra five weeks to workers in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec, but now in government, the Liberals have left these workers behind.

Liberals also promised to fix EI so that precarious workers can access the fund; yet again in government there is still no help, and 800,000 unemployed Canadians are unable to access EI, and the Liberals are breaking their promises one after the other.

The question is, when will the Liberals step up for Canadians who are unemployed?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, that important question is part of our mandate, part of my colleague's mandate to reform both the EI system and to promote the EI services.

We have engaged in the budget with very important measures to do precisely that. Just a few days ago, we announced that three further regions would be eligible for important enhancements in the EI system.

* * *

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DEATH

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government, we believe in the importance of parliamentary debate, all the while keeping in mind issues such as Supreme Court deadlines.

I believe we have a responsibility to ensure that all members of Parliament who want to participate in debate on legislation such as Bill C-14 should be able to do so.

Could the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons inform the House as to the intention of the government in regard to the debate on Bill C-14 at report stage and third reading?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of respecting the Supreme Court's June deadline, but this should not stop members of Parliament from participating in this important debate.

On Friday, as members know, we attempted to extend the sitting hours of the House to ensure that as many MPs as possible were able to speak. Unfortunately, the opposition blocked that attempt.

I hope the opposition will reconsider and allow the House to extend its hours so all members can be heard on this very important legislation.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the six months that the Minister of Justice has been in office, she has yet to make a single judicial appointment.

Last week, Chief Justice Wittmann of Alberta said that due to judicial vacancies, cases were being thrown out of court, including one serious fraud case.

How many cases is the Minister of Justice prepared to see thrown out of court due to her own inaction?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring we make appointments to fill the vacancies.

Our government recognizes the concerns that have been raised, including the concerns raised by Chief Justice Wittmann. We are moving forward to ensure that we have short-term procedures in place to fill some of the most needed vacancies, while ensuring we have a comprehensive process that will diversify the judiciary across the country.

We are committed to ensuring that we fill all of the vacancies.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, Chief Justice Wittmann said this of the judicial vacancy crisis, "Sooner or later there's going to be a serious delay in a serious offence, by that I mean a violent crime."

This week we find out that at least two sexual assault cases in Alberta will likely be thrown out of court due to delay.

When will the minister stop dithering, stop the delay, and start appointing judges?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure the member opposite that we do, very much, recognize the pressing nature of this matter.

As I had indicated, we will be moving forward with short-term vacancies in the very near future, and ensure more comprehensively that when we make appointments to the judiciary right across the country, we are committed to ensuring that the diversity in the judiciary reflects the diversity in our country.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under a new proposal from the Liberals, pain relievers like Tylenol would no longer be readily available to Canadians on store shelves.

Under another initiative, Liberals are proposing that we make it legal for drug addicts to receive heroin. We cannot make this stuff up. The Liberals would actually ban Tylenol from pharmacy shelves, while making it legal for addicts to access heroin.

Could the Minister of Health explain why they are enabling hard drug use but creating barriers for Tylenol users?

● (1450)

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify that there is no attempt to ban the sales of acetaminophen or Tylenol from pharmacy shelves.

On the matter of the other question that was raised, our government ensures that drug policy decisions are made on the basis of strong, scientific evidence.

Where traditional drug treatment options have not worked in the most difficult cases, evidence has shown that the use of diacetyl morphine or heroin can result in better outcomes for those patients. This kind of therapy only happens rarely in Canada, and it is under the close supervision of doctors in a clinical setting such as a hospital.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not exactly what Health Canada is saying, and it is not unlike the Liberals to send mixed messages to Canadians. They are making dangerous drugs easily accessible by promoting the use of prescription heroine, legalizing marijuana, and opening more supervised injection sites in our neighbourhoods. At the same time, the Liberal government is creating barriers for people treating their chronic pain with Tylenol.

Will the Liberals do the right thing and fight drug abuse and dependency instead of enabling it?

*Oral Questions***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to addressing problems such as prescription drug abuse. It is something I am quite familiar with as a family doctor myself.

Our approach to drug policy in the country is firmly founded on the best scientific evidence. We will be using a public health approach. That approach will seek to maximize education and to minimize harm. We will respect human rights, and ensure this problem is addressed correctly.

* * *

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CBC/Radio-Canada board of directors is meeting tomorrow in Ottawa to discuss the sale of Maison de Radio-Canada, but the whole thing appears to be a secret. In the past, CBC/Radio-Canada used to publish the minutes and documents from the board of directors meetings once a month. Since the Liberals came to power, not a single document has been made public. What a joke.

Six months after the Liberals' election the board of directors is still riddled with Conservatives, and the board continues to make major decisions in absolute secrecy.

Does the minister think our public broadcaster should be operating in secret?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

He raised some important points, and I am following this issue very closely. I assure my colleague that appointments to the CBC/Radio-Canada board of directors are a priority. However, we want to do things right. As stated in my mandate letter, the process must be independent, open, and transparent. I am working to ensure that the process will be made public in the coming weeks.

* * *

[English]

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the historic and tragic fire around Fort McMurray, communities like Buffalo River, Clearwater River, Black Point, Garson Lake, Bear Creek and La Loche are being affected by low air quality and are increasingly concerned about the spread of the fire in Saskatchewan.

What is the government's plan to ensure that people in communities across northern Saskatchewan are safe should the fire come too close, or if a state of emergency is called?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been really engaged in what has been happening in western Canada, in Fort McMurray, in Saskatchewan, and in other areas. We are there to help and support wherever possible. The Minister of Public Safety has been fully engaged, and so have all the resources of the Government of Canada.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, Perry Bellegarde, the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said that not only did Canadian law need to be harmonized with UNDRIP, but that indigenous people had the right to say “yes” and the right to say “no”.

As the *Ottawa Citizen* noted, we now have a declaration of confusion. Could the minister clarify to Canadians in indigenous communities if the job-creating energy projects will be subject to a veto?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said in the past and will continue to say, we do not see any agreements or working relationships with indigenous people as an impediment to resource development in Canada. We see both as being complementary for moving forward for a progressive society.

Our government has historically accepted the United Nations declaration of indigenous peoples. We are moving forward with it, and we will do so in consultation with all Canadians, especially indigenous Canadians.

● (1455)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ron Tremblay, a grand chief in New Brunswick, stated that with the UNDRIP implementation, energy east would be subject to a veto.

Once again, confusion over this issue mounts. Canadians do not know if the declaration on indigenous rights is, as *The Globe and Mail* says “scary, exciting or just a muddle”.

Could the minister please explain, without her usual platitudes, will veto be part of the implementation of UNDRIP, yes or no?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this process of evaluation with major projects, we continue to engage with our indigenous communities. In fact, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Natural Resources have said that it is their top priority.

We understand that resource development cannot go through unless there is consultation and negotiation with all communities involved in major proponents. We will continue to do that work, and we look forward to doing so.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister once famously said that “budgets will balance themselves”. It seems that the agriculture minister believes similarly that issues will resolve themselves.

Oral Questions

Hog producers have been asking the minister to help him implement a plan to reduce the spread of a virus that has killed over eight million pigs south of the border. Unfortunately, the minister's office told these people that the minister would not intervene. It is the minister's job to intervene. When will the minister stand in the House, start doing his job, intervene, and help hog producers?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that the safety of food in our country is a major priority. I can assure the member that the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the CFIA will inspect food and ensure it is safe for consumers in the country.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes in gender equality. Gender-based Analysis Plus is one of the tools used by the government to foster this equality.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women tell the House why this analysis is important to our efforts to end gender discrimination?

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is marking Gender-based Analysis Plus Awareness Week from May 16 to 20.

Encouraging the use of this analysis leads to decision-making that takes into account the needs of all Canadians. As parliamentarians, we can promote equality by applying GBA+ to all projects we undertake on behalf of Canadians.

I therefore encourage all my colleagues to take up the challenge and complete the online training course available on the Status of Women Canada website.

* * *

[English]

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jasper National Park in my riding of Yellowhead is in trouble. From the west along Mount Roberson to the east park gates, the park has been overtaken by the mountain pine beetle. Local government and forest companies are counting on Parks Canada to stop this epidemic before it moves into Alberta's west central forest area.

The Liberals say they have a plan but, as usual, nothing is being done. What is the Liberal plan to stop these evil weevils?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member is very passionate about the park. As I have offered to him in the past, I am more than happy to have a conversation about issues relating to Jasper National Park.

The parks are the jewels of Canadian nature. We are working very hard to ensure that we are not only expanding the parks, but ensuring the ecological integrity of the parks that currently exist. We intend to work on that as we go forward. I am certainly willing to sit down and talk with the hon. member about those issues.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the *Kathryn Spirit* has been languishing in Lake Saint-Louis at Beauharnois for five years now. It may well be jeopardizing people's health and the drinking water supply.

The four surrounding RCMs, Beauharnois-Salaberry, Haut-Saint-Laurent, Jardins-de-Napierville, and Vaudreuil-Soulanges, have had enough. They want to know what pollutants are still on the boat and who will pay to dismantle the vessel.

We know the working group is figuring out a timeline, but the minister needs to step up by making funds available and informing the public about any pollutants still on the vessel.

When will he do that?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her continuous efforts with respect to this file. We are dealing with an important matter.

As she knows, at my directive, a working group was established to look at this issue. A discussion paper will be done this month and the mid-term report will follow next month. I believe we have everyone working together. That means we are on the right track. All parties are committed to finding a permanent solution. I am proud to say that the Government of Canada has been leading this effort.

* * *

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been an important part of groundbreaking scientific discoveries in many disciplines. One specific area where we have made a great contribution is in stem cell research. From Canadian discoveries regarding cancerous stem cells to nearly mapping stem cell genomics, we will continue to help further scientific advances for years to come.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary for Science tell the House how our government will provide new funding to support stem cell research?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to strengthening Canada's leadership in research excellence. Budget 2016 announced up to \$12 million over two years to support the stem cell network's research, training and outreach activities.

Stem cell research has evolved into one of the world's great promises, with significant implications for medical treatments, commercial products, and public policy. Our investment will support discoveries that will help to fuel Canada's economic growth, while positioning us to succeed in the knowledge-based global economy.

* * *

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, American missionary Kenneth Bae had been imprisoned in North Korea but was released after high-level engagement by the Obama administration. Bae is in Canada this week to raise awareness about the case of Pastor Hyeon Soo Lim, a Canadian imprisoned under similar circumstances. Bae and other North Korea experts say that Canada should follow the successful strategy used in his case and undertake direct high-level engagement with North Korea on this issue.

Will the Prime Minister undertake the necessary engagement, or will he leave the work to someone else?

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like Mr. Lim's family and friends, the Government of Canada is highly concerned about Mr. Lim's rights and well-being. We have been engaged with Mr. Lim's family and his advocate. I have met in the past and will continue to engage anyone who is interested in helping us work on this file. Our officials have been providing consular assistance. We are highly engaged on this file and we will not stop until Mr. Lim is back home.

* * *

[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa is still demanding an end to family control of Bombardier, and now, apparently, it wants the company to issue \$1 billion in stock. That stock could be purchased by foreigners and would further dilute Quebec control of the company.

Worse still, the suggestion seems to have come from the Wall Street consultant whom the government hired because its own officials recommended offering just a line of credit.

Why is the Canadian government determined to dismantle Bombardier? Is it trying to provide us with further proof that its 40 Quebec MPs are mere puppets?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the exact opposite. The 40 members from Quebec and our entire caucus are very supportive of the aerospace sector. That is why we are working with Bombardier to make sure we set it up for success in the long term. We are engaged in a solution with it. We are making sure we are focused on jobs, on R and D, and ensuring the head office is here in Canada.

It is about serving the public interest. We are going to make sure that any decision we make will be in the best interests of Quebecers and all Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the medical assistance in dying bill is not consistent with the Carter decision.

Rather than act courageously to comply with the court's ruling, the government decided to wash its hands of the whole thing. People who are gravely ill and suffering will bear the burden of challenging this law right up to the Supreme Court or going on a hunger strike to fulfill the reasonably foreseeable natural death criteria.

Why is the government so lacking in courage and compassion as to place that burden on people struggling with intolerable suffering?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a deeply personal and complex issue, which I have been working on with the Minister of Health and with every member in the House. We are committed to ensuring that we move forward with Bill C-14, to hear robust dialogue and debate, and to ensure that we strike the right balance between ensuring personal autonomy and doing as much as we can to protect the vulnerable.

This is what this piece of legislation does. I am hopeful that we will continue to have discussion, because this is not going to be the end of this discussion. We will consider this as a country—

● (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there has been a deluge of gag orders in the House: Air Canada, medical assistance in dying, and budget implementation.

Now the government is pushing ahead with democratic reform, all the while rejecting democracy. The government represents 39% of voters, but is giving itself full powers, while at the same time depriving two parties of the right to vote in committee. Consulting Canadians is also out of the question; six Liberals suffice.

I would remind the Prime Minister that we form a legislative assembly here, not a king's court. We are elected to represent our constituents, not to reign over them.

When will the Prime Minister finally show some respect for the parliamentary system?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is out of a great deal of respect for Parliament and our democratic institutions that we committed to bringing our electoral system into the 21st century. The proposed motion includes both the Bloc and the Green Party at the table, which goes beyond the normal practice for unrecognized parties. We have invited them to the table. We are looking forward to the constructive and effective conversations that they will help to have with Canadians across this great nation as we bring our democratic institutions into the 21st century.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, in his answer, the government House leader tried to reference the thinly veiled attempt to bring in closure last week through Standing Order 56.1. Therefore, I have a motion that I was wondering if I could get unanimous consent on. It is that, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, on Tuesday, May 17, 2016, and on Wednesday, May 18, 2016, the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment until midnight for the purposes of considering Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other acts, and at midnight or when no member rises to speak, the House shall adjourn until the next sitting day.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, the minister stated twice in the House that she had invited members of the Bloc and the Green Party to join her committee. What she failed to mention, however, is that we will not have the same rights as the other members, since she denied us our right to vote on this committee.

Are the members of the Bloc Québécois second-class MPs?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Speaker: This is a matter of debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I just asked a question and some of those people had the gall to answer in the affirmative.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. The hon. member has been here long enough to know that.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the order of the second reading of private members' bills introduced in the Senate and recommended that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

• (1510)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

[English]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics entitled "Main Estimates 2016-17".

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration entitled "Apply Without Fear: Special Immigration Measures for Nationals of Haiti and Zimbabwe".

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

[English]

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration have prepared the following dissenting report in response to the report tabled by the committee that addresses the special immigration measures for nationals of Haiti and Zimbabwe.

Canada is the most generous and welcoming nation in the world and the Conservatives believe that strong, evidence-based immigration policies are important in continuing that legacy. While there are recommendations within the committee report that we stand behind, such as increasing publicity and outreach efforts to individuals impacted by these special immigration measures, there are certain recommendations that we cannot support in the absence of a thorough evidence-based review and analysis.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**[*Translation*]

We have prepared this dissenting report to encourage the implementation of strong, evidence-based immigration policy that will allow Canada to be welcoming and hospitable for generations to come.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions with the parties and I am hoping that if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, on Tuesday, May 17, 2016, and on Wednesday, May 18, 2016, the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purposes of considering Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other acts (medical assistance in dying).

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 56.1(1), I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, on Tuesday, May 17, 2016, and on Wednesday, May 18, 2016, the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purposes of considering Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other acts (medical assistance in dying).

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

And 25 or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Twenty-five or more members having risen, the motion is deemed to have been withdrawn.

(Motion withdrawn)

* * *

• (1515)

PETITIONS

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by approximately 50 Saskatchewan residents calling upon the government to rescind the proposed legislation on physician-assisted suicide.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today on behalf of my constituents calling on Parliament to hold a referendum on any proposed changes to the Canadian electoral system.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

AIR CANADA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. He has seven minutes remaining.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to carry on with this important debate. This morning, we tried to neutralize the destructive aspect of Bill C-10 and put it on ice in order to continue to guarantee good jobs for the people back home.

However, since we must resume this debate, I will hammer away at some critical points. Today, I talked about the legal aspect of these actions and how the Aveos workers assigned to an Air Canada subsidiary had every right to keep doing what they excel at.

These very skilled people in the Montreal metropolitan area, Winnipeg, and Mississauga did an excellent job maintaining large aircraft such as Boeings and Airbuses. That allowed them to support their families and contribute to the economic development of the cities named in the 1988 Air Canada Public Participation Act.

Naturally, these workers, whose right to be protected by federal law was violated, took action and decided to sue. When they won in the Superior Court, Air Canada appealed, and the workers won in the Court of Appeal as well. Now, Air Canada wants to push these employees all the way to the Supreme Court, where they are likely to win again, which would force Air Canada to recognize the law and its obligations and to keep its heavy maintenance operations in the cities set out in the act.

Now, the Liberal government is renegeing on its own promises and is retroactively legalizing an activity or decision that had been deemed illegal by two courts of law.

I have to wonder, and this is an essential question under the rule of law. Since when can a government retroactively make something legal? This is quite worrisome. Where will it end? Is this how a country makes laws? Is this how we show people how to respect legislators' decisions? I do not think so. This sets quite a dangerous precedent. I do not want it to become the norm to change the rules of the game, not just during the game, but after the game is done. The NDP is very worried about this.

The 40 Liberal members from Quebec, those from Manitoba, and those from Mississauga should stand up to protect jobs in Quebec, Winnipeg, and Mississauga. Aside from one MP from Manitoba who stood up a few weeks ago to vote against Bill C-10 at second reading, not a single other Liberal member had the courage to stand up for the Air Canada employees who have been left high and dry by this government.

Government Orders

Earlier today, that same Liberal MP from Manitoba changed his version of the facts and refused to let Bill C-10 die at report stage as the opposition members proposed this morning.

The Liberal MP from Manitoba is trying to pull the wool over our eyes when he says that it is a matter not of conscience but of procedure. He said that he might oppose the bill at third reading even though his vote today ended up extending the debate when we could have just pitched this bill in the trash and saved 2,600 jobs across the country, including hundreds in the Winnipeg area.

• (1520)

I invite all of my Liberal colleagues from Manitoba and Quebec to step up and honour their own word as well as what the Liberal Party leader said in 2012 here on Parliament Hill in defence of the good jobs held by Aveos workers. What happened to those good intentions? Why give Air Canada this gift? Why are they abandoning our economic development in such a high-tech sector? Canada has very few sectors that are thriving quite as much as aerospace and aeronautics. The Liberal government just dealt the industry a very harsh blow. Governments everywhere else in the world support this sector.

They talk vaguely about Air Canada's future investments in future centres of excellence, which may come with future jobs to maintain future planes that have not yet been purchased so are not yet operational and therefore not in need of maintenance. None of this guarantees a thing. It is all hot air. At best, it is a house of cards.

The Liberals are trying to cling to Air Canada's slim promise that it will establish a centre of excellence in Trois-Rivières. However, they know full well that the runway at the regional airport is not even long enough to accommodate the jumbo jets that provided most of the work for Aveos employees in Montreal. We already know that this is not a viable option, that it is a flight of fancy, pun intended.

The Liberal Party fought tooth and nail for the good jobs in Quebec. However, now the Liberals have changed their tune and are passing a bill that will waive any requirement for Air Canada to have its aircraft maintained and repaired here in Canada. We do not understand. Does the Liberal Party think that legalizing the massive export of our good jobs is a job creation plan?

The New Democrats think that people deserve better. In our opinion, Canadians deserve a government that keeps its promises and stays true to its word.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have noticed about New Democrats is that they talk a fine line until it comes time to actually deliver. I experienced this first-hand in the province of Manitoba with the NDP government and the MTS issue. The NDP fail the worker all the time.

The member is not being fair in his comments. He tries to give the impression that if this bill were not to pass, over 2,000 jobs would be saved. That is bogus. There is no merit to that whatsoever.

The New Democratic caucus needs to realize that this legislation is before us today because of extensive negotiations with many

different stakeholders, including different levels of government. As a result of this legislation and the fine work of the many different stakeholders, there will be a healthier aerospace industry in Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba. There are going to be some guarantees for jobs.

Would the member not agree that the industry as a whole would benefit when the stakeholders, the different provinces in question and the federal government work together to ensure that the industry is healthy into the future?

• (1525)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Manitoba should be ashamed of his comments and his position.

Under the bill that the Liberals had the nerve to introduce, the only guaranteed work will be one part-time job in Montreal, another in Winnipeg, and yet another in Mississauga. That is all it takes to comply with the act.

When it comes to letting workers down, the Liberals do not need lessons from anyone. On the contrary, they could give lessons in that regard. That is exactly what they are doing with Bill C-10. That is exactly what they are doing with the employment insurance fund. They pilfered \$55 billion belonging to unemployed workers from that fund and they are continuing to help themselves now that they are back in office. That was very clear in their last budget. What is more, no pilot projects were extended for workers and unemployed workers in Quebec.

We will take no lessons from the government.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

[English]

I want to go deeper into detail on the lack of job creation that the Liberal government seems to be coming with. Fourteen bills have been brought forward, but there does not seem to be any about job creation. They are about removing transparency, giving citizenship to terrorists, unionizing the RCMP, helping to kill people, but not about job creation.

As opposition, we bring motions with respect to Billy Bishop airport, Bombardier to try to create jobs, pipelines, and my colleague brings forward things to do with the dairy industry to try to create jobs, and the government votes them down. It just appears that its focus is everywhere except on job creation.

I wonder if the member would comment.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Indeed, we have been very disappointed in this government when it comes to job creation.

Government Orders

Any time decisive action is needed to really help workers or grow or diversify an industry, the Liberal government is missing in action.

I am glad my colleague mentioned our dairy producers and small-scale farmers. Once again, the Liberals say one thing and do the opposite. Because of a customs loophole regarding how diafiltered milk is viewed, American powdered milk is allowed into Canada by the tonne, and this is costing our dairy producers and small-scale farmers significant revenues.

When the NDP moves a motion to stand up for our dairy producers, lo and behold, the Liberal members vote against our motion and in favour of American products.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I too want to thank my colleague for his speech.

I find this legislation quite unbelievable.

[*English*]

We have court cases that are being withdrawn simultaneously with this legislation, and apparently, the government does not believe that we need to have the time to adequately debate this legislation and is imposing closure. It is the closure piece that I find even more bizarre than the fact of the legislation itself.

I would like my hon. colleague's opinion as to why now there is such a hurry to bring forward legislation to amend the 1988 act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

We thought that the Conservatives were the champions of closure motions. However, surprise, surprise, after promising a new way of doing politics and a new approach, the Liberals are going down the same path and imposing closure motions one after the other.

In the case of Bill C-10, first, there is no evidence that Air Canada absolutely needed to be freed from its legal obligations toward the maintenance workers.

Second, why impose closure and rush things? That is a very good question. I think the lawsuit the workers won in Quebec Superior Court and then in the Court of Appeal will soon be heading to the Supreme Court. The Liberal government is in a hurry to help its friends, the bosses at Air Canada, win their case in the Supreme Court. Why is it in such a hurry? The Supreme Court resumes hearing this case on July 15, right after Parliament rises for the summer around Quebec's national holiday.

It is no coincidence. They are trying to get rid of something unpleasant. They do not want to be seen as the ones who killed 2,600 jobs, and they do not want to allow the Aveos workers to win their case in the Supreme Court. They are therefore getting rid of the hot potato as fast as they can.

However, I am sure that people are going to cotton on to the Liberal hypocrisy and the fact that they completely changed their tune in the span of just four years and they are doing nothing to help the aerospace sector when it comes to aircraft maintenance.

• (1530)

[*English*]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my hon. colleague if, in fact, he sees any reason to delay this bill on the Air Canada Public Participation Act, considering that we do need competition in the aerospace industry and this is exactly what the bill would do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I gather that once again, on the pretext of competitiveness, we are going to sacrifice 2,600 good jobs in Canada even though these jobs were protected by federal law.

The government has not provided any economic or financial proof that Bill C-10 is crucial to Air Canada. On the contrary, it is trying to give the company a present at the expense of the workers who have lost their livelihoods.

Is that surprising, given that the Minister of Transport told us in committee that he met with representatives from the industry and Air Canada 12 times and he never met with the workers?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the members of the government have told us that the government is working collaboratively on this. However, let us talk about who is against this bill. The Government of Manitoba is against this bill. The Government of Quebec at least wants it delayed. All of the parties in this House except the Liberals are against this bill. The unions are against this bill.

I would like to ask the member if he has a comment. If the Liberals say they are working collaboratively, I wonder who they are working collaboratively with. Everybody except Air Canada seems to be against this bill. What exactly does it even mean for the Liberals to claim to be working collaboratively here?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

This new approach to politics that involves sitting down together, reaching a consensus, and finding solutions to everyone's liking is just smoke and mirrors.

I fully understand why the Conservative Party has chosen the angle of the Government of Quebec's request for more time, which was ignored by the Liberal government, and the Manitoba government's desire to save jobs in that province, which was also ignored by the Liberal government.

I am just a little surprised that my Conservative colleague is asking the government to work more closely with the unions. I will let the irony of that drift through the House. However, I welcome this new tone and the change in the Conservative Party's position.

The Liberal government is acting unilaterally and imposing closure and does not want to speak with anyone. Once again, it is using parliamentary tactics to end debate and, unfortunately, get rid of 2,600 good jobs in Canada.

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to debate Bill C-10, proposing amendments to the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

I would like to take a few minutes to explain why the Government of Canada believes this is an appropriate moment to modify the almost 30-year-old act. This is about promoting Canadian industry at home and giving Canadian companies the best chance to compete in global markets.

By amending the provisions of the Air Canada Public Participation Act dealing with Air Canada's aircraft maintenance activities, this bill seeks to ensure that the air carrier can compete in keeping with the evolution of the global transport sector.

The amendments to paragraph 6(1)(d) modernize the legislation by increasing the flexibility of Air Canada to make business decisions in response to market forces and competition. The amendments will remove reference to specific cities, recognizing that this work may take place in wider regions. As has already been noted, the Montreal urban community, which is currently referenced in the act, only included Montreal Island and did not even embrace Mirabel.

The bill also clarifies that the act is not prescriptive in terms of particular types or volumes of such maintenance in each location. Through this bill, a new subsection would be added to the Air Canada Public Participation Act. It would be clarified further that Air Canada may change the volume or type of aircraft maintenance that it will carry out or cause to be carried out in each of the aforementioned provinces, or the level of employment in those activities.

Let us first recall that the Air Canada Public Participation Act's primary purpose was to convert a crown corporation into a thriving and competitive private corporation, in an industry that is characterized by aggressive competition, strong cyclical business patterns, minimal profit margins, and sensitivity to external shocks.

The Air Canada Public Participation Act was brought into force in 1989 to provide the federal government with the legal framework to privatize Air Canada. It also requires the airline to have provisions regarding where it will carry out maintenance, the use of official languages, and where its headquarters will be located.

Other airlines, Air Canada's competitors from Canada and abroad, are not subject to such conditions. This dated legislation now runs the risk of inhibiting Air Canada's ability to be competitive, both domestically and internationally.

Other carriers, Air Canada's competitors, are not subject to the same rules, which means that foreign carriers and other Canadian carriers are able to conduct their aircraft maintenance activities in ways that drive efficiencies and enhance their cost competitiveness.

On May 2, 2016, witnesses at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities said that costs are one main component that any airline has that must be addressed. Indeed, costs are very much tied up in maintenance. Maintenance costs are around 10% to 15% of any airline's cost structure.

The market conditions in which Air Canada operates are now greatly different from that of 1989. The 1980s were characterized by deregulation, and since that time the world has seen a proliferation of new air carriers as well as new airline business models. In June 1980, the then president of the International Air Transport Association reported that its membership was composed of 100 airlines from 85 nations. Today, its membership is composed of 260 airlines.

In short, the air carrier marketplace is now much more competitive. This is a good thing. It benefits travellers, and it pushes the airlines to be as efficient as possible. However, we must ensure that our carriers are able to compete themselves, or we risk limiting Canadians' connectivity and threatening the economic viability of these carriers.

The Canadian marketplace has also evolved. By the end of the 1990s, Canadian Airlines International ceased operations, reducing the extent of competition. Other carriers, like Canada 3000, also came and went. However, since then, there has been a flourishing of growth among Canadian companies. WestJet, Porter, Transat, Sunwing, and others provide travel options for Canadians. I should also note the important role by foreign carriers in offering travel options to and from Canada.

●(1535)

New carriers have emerged that are changing the global competitive landscape. In key competition markets, such as the United States and the European Union, carriers have restructured or merged.

We heard in committee from key industry experts. As mentioned in committee by one witness:

We no longer see government-owned airlines in any meaningful way as we did 30 years ago, and this is especially important in the maintenance industry. This industry today is very unlike the maintenance industry of 30 years ago. This industry has evolved into huge economies of scale and specialization

Air Canada continues to provide vital connectivity both within our vast country and to the outside world. It is also an important source of employment and opportunities. In 2015, Air Canada, with its Air Canada Express partners, exceeded 40 million passengers and offered direct passenger service to more than 200 destinations on six continents. Air Canada alone employs around 28,000 people, and that number rises to 33,000 when its partner air carriers are included.

Our air sector has also weathered some difficult times, including the tragic events of 9/11, global pandemics, and the recent economic crisis, yet it continues to robustly offer service options to Canadians. In short, we have come a long way since the 1980s when the government of the day created this law and we left behind a highly regulated sector.

Government Orders

The Air Canada Public Participation Act has achieved its primary objective of successfully privatizing Air Canada. Now, given that times have changed and the air transport sector has evolved, it is also important to ensure that this statute remains up to date. In particular, the provisions of the act that deal with aircraft maintenance risk hampering Air Canada's competitiveness by limiting its ability to organize its activities in a way that responds to the evolution of the sector. Furthermore, given Air Canada's role in providing Canadians' connectivity, this could also impact on the overall competitiveness and cost of air transport throughout the country.

It has been suggested that by way of Bill C-10, the government is not supporting workers in Canada's maintenance, repair, and overhaul sector. It has also been suggested that this legislation would allow Air Canada to eliminate its aircraft maintenance work in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. Of course, we expressed great concern about the impact on workers and their families as a result of the bankruptcy of Aveos Fleet Performance in 2012. Furthermore, at that time, we pressed Air Canada and the Conservative government to act in the best interests of workers.

By placing limits on Air Canada's ability to drive efficiencies in its operations, we are increasing its costs. This in turn will be felt by Canadian travellers and shippers. This could also cause Air Canada to lose market share, resulting in reduced employment in Canada. We have heard in testimony that maintenance accounts for about 15% of Air Canada's costs. Therefore, if our legislation pushes up those costs, it could have important implications for the company's competitiveness.

We have also heard that heavy maintenance is increasingly concentrated in locations specializing in particular aircraft. I note that Air Canada is the only Canadian carrier with a significantly varied fleet, involving large numbers of wide and narrow-body aircraft. It is also the only Canadian carrier with a complex global network, covering multiple continents, and thus in competition with the world's major carriers.

In 2015, Air Canada, with its Air Canada Express partners, exceeded 40 million passengers, and offered direct passenger service to more than 200 destinations on six continents. Air Canada alone employs nearly 25,000 people.

This leads me to the second point, which is about economic opportunities for Canada's aerospace sector. Air Canada and Quebec have indicated their intention to end their litigation regarding the carrier's compliance with the Air Canada Public Participation Act. This announcement came on the heels of Air Canada's declared intention to purchase up to 75 Bombardier C Series aircraft and to ensure that these planes will be maintained in Canada for at least 20 years, as well as to collaborate in the establishment of a world-class centre of excellence in Quebec.

• (1540)

This announcement was followed by another significant piece of news. Quebec and Air Canada decided to seek an end to their litigation, which had been based on the Air Canada Public Participation Act. As part of the agreement between Quebec and Air Canada, the carrier committed to supporting the creation of a centre of excellence for aircraft maintenance in Montreal, as well as committing to maintain its fleet of newly acquired Bombardier

CS300 aircraft in Quebec for 20 years following delivery. This is an important development for Canada's aerospace sector. It further underscores Montreal's position as an international aerospace cluster with big industry players located there, such as Pratt & Whitney, CAE, Bombardier, and of course, Air Canada itself. This is an excellent opportunity for Air Canada to assist in ensuring that Canada is the global centre specializing in the maintenance of this aircraft.

The Air Canada-Quebec agreement will allow the carrier to benefit from cutting-edge aircraft technology produced here in Canada. It will also result in significant benefits from the aerospace industry, including aircraft maintenance right across the country. This is the sort of investment that the aerospace sector needs. Quebec and Manitoba indicated that these conditions create a context in which they would be willing to discontinue their litigation against Air Canada. These developments provide us with an opportunity to rethink our approach and look for opportunities for improvement.

Beyond business, let us not forget that the United Nations International Civil Aviation Organization is headquartered in Montreal, along with the International Air Transport Association and Airports Council International, among others. Federal officials identified specific concerns around the maintenance provisions of the Air Canada Public Participation Act because they create challenges for Air Canada's ability to be competitive. Specifically, they prevent Air Canada from doing what other carriers do, which is to organize its supply chain to optimize efficiency.

The intention of Air Canada, Quebec, and Manitoba to discontinue their litigation creates an appropriate context to modernize the act, and indicates that the parties are working together toward a similar objective: the growth of Canadian prosperity. However, let me be clear. We continue to believe that Air Canada should commit to undertaking aircraft maintenance in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. As well, we intend for this to be stipulated in the law.

However, we need to provide Air Canada with the flexibility to meet these requirements to compete in an evolving global marketplace. We cannot predict how the airline industry will evolve in the future. Whatever happens, our carriers will need to adjust to meet the challenges and remain competitive. Air Canada needs the flexibility to enable it to adapt to changing market conditions. Bill C-10 would allow us to target the right balance between such flexibility and the continued expectation that the carrier will undertake aircraft maintenance in Canada.

I believe it is important that Air Canada continue to bring high value-added aircraft maintenance work to Canadian communities. The recent announcements regarding additional work in Montreal and Winnipeg show that the carrier is willing to do that; and Bill C-10 would further reinforce this expectation. The time is now to modernize the Air Canada Public Participation Act to reflect the reality that, to be able to compete effectively, Air Canada must have the flexibility to take decisions for its business in response to evolving global markets. This is good for the carrier, and it is good for Canadians.

Government Orders

The opposition members would have us believe that Bill C-10 would legalize the offshoring of aircraft maintenance and that the alternative to this bill would be that the former Aveos employees would be re-employed. Let me be clear. The alternative to Bill C-10 is not the reinstatement of jobs lost as a result of the failure of Aveos.

• (1545)

Also, Bill C-10 would not legalize the offshoring of aircraft maintenance. It was the choice of Air Canada and Quebec to announce that they were willing to seek an end to their litigation with respect to Air Canada's compliance with the Air Canada Public Participation Act. However, it is important to underscore that the litigation did not hold out any guarantee that the carrier would recreate the level of employment that existed prior to 2012 or hire back the same workers who lost their jobs.

I repeat, the time is now to update the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to achieve this balance. I encourage all members to vote in favour of this bill.

• (1550)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, competitiveness is important. It is the ability to have revenue exceed costs in a sustainable business over time. The government talks about being fact and evidence based in its decisions, but the Minister of Transport could not say what per cent of operating costs for Air Canada were involved with maintenance and what the expected quantitative impact of this legislation would be on Air Canada's profitability.

Can the member tell us here in this House what factual, evidence-based benefit this legislation would bring to Air Canada, so we can know that this is really the needed course of action?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, maintenance amounts to about 15% of the cost of doing business. I think we can all make sense of that. It is a very large number.

We need to be clear. We believe that Air Canada should commit to undertaking aircraft maintenance in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. We intend to make sure that this is stipulated in the law, so that aircraft maintenance will continue in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our colleague is telling us not to worry about jobs in the future. However, I would like to know what the government will do to maintain good working conditions for workers in the aerospace industry, when SMEs in Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba will be competing for contracts?

[*English*]

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, our government is focusing on growing the economy and creating jobs across Canada. The Government of Manitoba, the Government of Quebec, and Air Canada have made an agreement to stop the legal action. This is an excellent start. However, it is certainly just a start. We need to bring new net good aerospace jobs to Quebec, Winnipeg, and Ontario. We remain committed to working with Air Canada to make that happen.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would repeat the comments made by my colleague

with respect to Bill C-10, which is obviously a very important piece of legislation for the aerospace industry. Something that really needs to be highlighted is that, in a relatively short time span, we have seen the federal government working with the different stakeholders to try to protect our aerospace industry in three provinces in particular. However, it goes beyond just Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, because we believe in Canada's aerospace industry and want to see it excel.

Could the member provide some of her thoughts or comments as to why it is important that, as a national government, we demonstrate leadership in working with the different stakeholders, which in good part is what ultimately has led to seeing this legislation that we have here today? At the end of the day, we will have a healthier aerospace industry, because that is something on which this government is committed to work.

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is right. The aerospace sector has grown significantly since the Air Canada Public Participation Act came into force 28 years ago and a lot has changed. We need to help make Air Canada more competitive. This legislation would allow Air Canada to organize its supply chain so it can be competitive and respond to evolving market conditions. It is important for our government to help companies remain competitive. That is exactly what we would do with this bill.

• (1555)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in reading the bill, I actually find the description of where maintenance could take place to be rather open-ended, and I have to admit I am not entirely clear on the intention.

It is clear that the volume and location of maintenance activities in Ontario and Manitoba could change, but I do not see anything in legislation that makes it clear that those maintenance activities must not be offshore, that they must take place in Canada.

I am curious as to why that is not in the legislation to make it clear. Surely we want to ensure that jobs with Air Canada stay in Canada, and frankly, as an Air Canada traveller, maintenance to high-quality standards in Canada gives me an assurance of well-maintained aircraft and a strong safety record for Air Canada.

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, without a doubt, we intend for it to be stipulated in the law that we expect Air Canada would commit to undertaking aircraft maintenance in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

However, we do need to provide Air Canada with the flexibility to meet these requirements to compete in an evolving global marketplace.

We cannot predict exactly what will happen in the airline industry and how it will evolve into the future, but whatever happens, our carriers will need to adjust to meet the challenges and remain competitive. The bottom line here is that we must make Air Canada more competitive.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from this member and other members on the government side about working collaboratively and about all the people with whom they are supposedly undertaking negotiations.

Government Orders

As far as I can tell, everybody is opposed to the bill except Air Canada, everybody including the provincial governments.

Aside from government members themselves, who support the bill, and aside from Air Canada, which obviously supports the bill, with everybody else seeming to be lining up on the other side, how does it all make sense for the Liberals to claim that this is the result of some kind of project of collaborative work?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that others are in agreement with this because it would continue to make Air Canada competitive and hopefully more jobs would be created because of that. If we do not go through with the bill, the chances are that we could lose jobs.

We cannot go back. We have to look forward, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. parliamentary secretary on her excellent comments.

I am very pleased that the Air Canada head office needs to remain in Montreal, and I understand the obligations of the bill to retain Air Canada jobs in maintenance in Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba.

One of the concerns that continues to be expressed is that, as soon as this law is passed, Air Canada would suddenly move some 2,000-odd jobs out of the country.

Is the hon. parliamentary secretary aware whether Air Canada has any obligation beyond keeping the head office and these maintenance jobs in Canada? There are tens of thousands of other Air Canada jobs that exist with no legal obligation to keep them in Canada, and somehow the vast majority of them have been retained in Canada.

Is the hon. parliamentary secretary aware of why Air Canada has kept so many jobs in Canada, even though there is no legal obligation to do so?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is right. Air Canada has continued to have 28,000 jobs in Canada, and that is because it knows the quality of the work we do. Whether it is maintenance or any other area of Air Canada's business, it knows the best work can be done in this country.

It is Air Canada and it will continue, and we will stipulate in the law that it must continue maintenance work in Canada.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and address at third reading this very important subject of the government's proposed changes to the Air Canada Public Participation Act. I am sure for many people watching this at home their first reaction when they hear the Air Canada Public Participation Act is to ask what is that.

The reality is that the bill is important. The changes the government is making are important, in part because of the substantive effect of those changes on the workers and others who will be impacted, but also because of what it tells us about the government's broader economic philosophy and the direction in which it is going perhaps on a wider variety of files. There are some things we should say about the bill right off the bat.

First of all, there is a strong multi-party consensus, at least outside of the government, opposing this legislation. Conservatives, New Democrats, and the leader of the Green Party have all spoken very forcefully against the changes the government is making, and for different reasons coming from different economic philosophies, but it is very clear we all have concerns about it. We on this side are collaborating in our opposition.

On the government side we hear an abuse of language and that is consistent with many of its arguments. The Liberals talk about modernizing, moving forward, that it is the 21st century. This is the all-purpose argument with the government. Stating the current century, stating the current year and talking about modernization is the all-purpose argument which can be used to justify anything, it seems. It is not an argument at all, but we hear this coming from government members and we hear them talking about collaboration on this file.

However, as I mentioned in questions and comments and alluded to already, there is actually a strong consensus in this House of opposition to the bill among a wide range of different parties and philosophies. Within civil society there is an opposition to it from a variety of different quarters. The previous Manitoba government had concerns about this as well. The Quebec government said that we should not be rushing into this right away. As well, the union representing the workers who are affected has concerns about it. There is broad concern about the government's agenda for reasons that I will get into later on.

What we saw at second reading is pretty clearly a government which did not want to talk about the bill. This is strange because it is actually the first new substantive legislative idea we have seen from the government. Yes, the government has proposed bills to implement court decisions. The Liberals brought in a budget. They proposed repeals of measures which the previous government brought in. However, in terms of something substantive and new, this is the government's one big idea so far. It would be strange that the government which has put this degree of importance on the bill actually does not want to talk about it. This is the first bill that the Liberals moved time allocation on. Even before they moved time allocation, they were not keen to put up speakers and the debate was sustained back and forth by Conservatives and New Democrats speaking about concerns about this legislation.

This is a strange situation we have. We have a piece of legislation that is presumably important to the government, and certainly it is important to the people whom it affects, and yet the government is not very keen to talk about it. The Liberals are abusing language around it and there is a growing consensus of opposition to the bill. That is important to underline as we move forward.

In fact, we had a vote today on the bill and it almost was defeated. We had a member of Parliament from Manitoba who voted against the bill at second reading, but who voted for it at report stage, which is disappointing because that member had an opportunity to actually stop this bad legislation from going forward at a time and in a way that would have mattered much more than at the second reading vote, but he chose to follow the government whip instead of to line up behind his constituents.

Government Orders

What is happening with the bill? What is the substance of the bill and why is it important? Let us go over the background one more time.

In 1988-89, Air Canada was privatized and the mechanism of privatization was through a share issue privatization. This means that the government previously had owned Air Canada. It issued shares, and sold those shares. At the time, those shares were subject to certain conditions. There were four main conditions proposed on Air Canada at the time of this share issue privatization: Air Canada had to be subject to the Official Languages Act; it had to maintain its corporate headquarters in Montreal; 75% of its voting shares had to be held by Canadians; and it had to maintain operational and overhaul centres in Winnipeg, Montreal, and Mississauga. There were four different conditions that were placed on Air Canada.

• (1600)

Of course, when we put conditions on the sale of something, it is going to have some impact on the share price. That is fairly obvious. To use a simple analogy, if I sold my house but said to the new owners that I had to have access to the backyard even after I sold the house, the new owners might agree to that, but they might say that they would pay less for the house if it was subject to that kind of condition, because that condition would be inconvenient for them and any subsequent owner.

This is essentially what happened when the government privatized Air Canada. These were not arbitrary conditions that the legislature came up with at a later point and chose to impose on a private company. These were conditions of sale. They were built into the deal. They informed the share price at the very outset of that deal. That is fundamental to understanding what is fair and what is right going forward in terms of these conditions.

Now, albeit significantly later, the government has decided to sort of unilaterally just give up those conditions. To extend the backyard analogy, it is writing off that condition that was previously written in the deal with no kind of compensation, for no obvious reason, not getting anything in return, giving Air Canada shareholders these windfall gains, giving value to Air Canada free from the state that was not there before. Had these conditions not been there in the first place, the government could have received more for those shares. It does not really make sense to say, "Here you go Air Canada, here are some total windfall gains". It does not make sense to do it on that basis.

I should note that, despite all this talk about competitiveness and a level playing field, the government is removing one of four conditions and maintaining the other three. It does not appear to have any interest in removing conditions around official languages, corporate headquarters, or around the number of voting shares that have to be held by Canadians. This is not some grand latter day conversion to market liberalization by the Liberal government; rather, the Liberals are removing one specific condition, which allows the outsourcing of jobs. They are not undertaking a broader shift to try and enhance competitiveness. As I will get to later on, I think there are a number of other things the government can do, and might be wise to consider doing, which would in fact have a better impact on competitiveness.

We are certainly for strengthening the aerospace sector, and we are certainly for measures that will increase competitiveness, but not at the expense of basic fairness in the marketplace, not at the expense of taxpayers, and not at the expense of jobs.

Given the conditions that were put on Air Canada as a condition of the purchase of those shares, and given where we are now with this process, I think many people listening to this debate will wonder why in the world the government is doing this. Why did the Liberals decide now all of a sudden that they were going to give this nice little gift to Air Canada? It does not make a lot of sense unless one knows that there is something else going on.

The arguments the government gives do not really add up. However, there is one thing we hear consistently from government speakers, and there have not been that many over the course of this debate. However, when government members want to speak to this debate, what we hear them alluding to is Bombardier. They are saying there is this thing happening with Bombardier, that it is going to have these centres of excellence, and Air Canada is making these investments. This is very much something happening that is separate from the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

The Air Canada Public Participation Act does not mention Bombardier. The member for Winnipeg North was alluding to negotiations that have taken place, that the government has undertaken negotiations. There is no specificity at all. I have asked repeatedly in questions and comments if the government could establish the link here. What are the Liberals talking about when they say that there is something happening over here with Bombardier and therefore they have to bring in a bill on the Air Canada Public Participation Act? There have been repeated questions about this link. They are hinting at it, but they are not willing to acknowledge it. I think there may well be a link between those events, but we have to understand why the government is not actually willing to talk about it.

• (1605)

Here is the connection between these events and the timeline that goes with it: On February 17 of this year, Air Canada announced that it had started negotiations with Bombardier to purchase C Series aircraft. These were aircraft, incidentally, that it had not previously expressed interest in. That was on February 17. Very shortly after that, on March 8, the minister put this bill on notice. Then the governments of Quebec and Manitoba suspended litigation and there was a variety of commitments made in the context of that by Air Canada.

It is interesting that this litigation has been suspended; it has not been halted. The government, by introducing this legislation, has actually pulled the rug out from under the provinces, should they wish in the future to continue litigation. That is an important point which I will get back to in a few minutes.

We see these events following very closely one after the other. Air Canada expresses interest in a purchase from Bombardier and then right after that, Air Canada receives the benefit of the proposal of this act. What seems to be happening is that Air Canada is receiving the free removal of a condition of its privatization at the same time as it is exploring a previously unplanned purchase from Bombardier.

Government Orders

I can only suspect that is because a direct bailout of Bombardier is unlikely to be acceptable to the public, especially at a time when Bombardier, like Air Canada, is outsourcing jobs, and so it has come up with this scheme of an indirect bailout. That is what appears from these events and certainly that is what is hinted at by the government, even though it will not answer a direct question about the relationship between the Air Canada Public Participation Act and Bombardier.

The benefit of the removal of conditions flows freely from the government to Air Canada and the benefit of a previously unplanned large purchase would then flow from Air Canada to Bombardier. Again, the benefit of the removal of conditions would flow from the government to Air Canada and the benefit of the previously unplanned large purchase there then flows from Air Canada to Bombardier.

This is what appears to be happening. If it is happening, it is something that Canadian taxpayers and workers should be very concerned about, because normally, if one were going to undertake a bailout, not that that is ideal under any circumstances, one would impose conditions on that bailout. Instead, there is only the removal of conditions of a previous privatization and there is no guarantee that there will be economic benefits or jobs here in Canada.

If people are skeptical about this connection, this connection was actually made explicit by the Quebec government when it discontinued its litigation against Air Canada. Here is what it said: "Subject to...final arrangements, the Government of Quebec has agreed to discontinue the litigation related to Air Canada's obligations regarding the maintenance of an overhaul and operational centre following Air Canada's agreement to collaborate with the Province to establish a Centre of Excellence for C Series". Of course, tellingly, the Quebec government does not want this legislation passed at the breakneck rate that the government seems to be pushing it forward, because it suspended its litigation subject to "final arrangements".

Air Canada has expressed interest in the purchase from Bombardier, but the deal has not been closed. There has been talk of opportunities by centres of excellence of new investments and jobs in Quebec and Manitoba, but these are all things that Air Canada has dangled as possibilities. Meanwhile, the government has not just dangled this legislation, it is trying to push it through. It is trying to push it through very quickly, with limited discussion, with time allocation, and with, it seems, as few government members speaking to it as possible.

If the government proceeds with this legislation this quickly before these investments have even been made in Manitoba and Quebec, then it will have pulled the rug out from under those provincial governments. Even then, given what the government may be trying to do to produce this kind of indirect bailout effect, it has gone about it in a very ham-fisted way that will likely not have—I should not say "likely", but may well not have the effect that it wants it to have.

•(1610)

This is underlined by a press release that the Government of Manitoba released on May 9, "Government of Manitoba opposes Bill C-10". It said:

[The deputy premier] presented to the federal Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to reiterate the Manitoba government's opposition....

"There are significant implications to moving forward with Bill C-10 without further dialogue and consideration,".... "The Government of Manitoba is requesting specific commitments from our partners in the federal government to ensure the proposed changes to the Air Canada Public Participation Act will provide a net benefit in terms of investment and job creation for Manitoba's aerospace industry."

The press release goes on:

In February 2016, the previous government wrote the federal government requesting that amendments to the Air Canada Public Participation Act be limited to expanding the geographical scope of Air Canada's commitments within Manitoba. The proposed amendments go significantly further than the geographical scope.

It is interesting that in Manitoba, as well as here, there is a unity between the previous NDP government of Manitoba and the new PC government. They are both concerned about the act, just as in the House, Conservatives and New Democrats are both very concerned about the direction this is going.

To come back to this point, it is clear that there is a strong consensus in terms of opposition between different political parties at different levels, and throughout civil society, as well.

However, what are the arguments we hear from the government in favour of this bad and unpopular legislation? We hear talk about the health of the aerospace industry. All of us want to see a stronger aerospace industry. All of us would like to see Air Canada do well.

My colleague from Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek has done a very good job of outlining other things that could be done that would actually be stimulative. What about following through on the government's plan to lower taxes for small business? It made a previous commitment to do that. It is raising taxes on small business, which flies in the face of a commitment that not only it made during the election, but all of the parties in the House made during the election.

Aside from the aerospace industry, just thinking about the economy as a whole, what about follow-through on the commitments they made with regard to business taxation?

Here are some things specifically toward the industry that could improve competitiveness: tying airport improvement fees to specific projects with explicit sunset provisions; overhauling the financing model for security; increasing the number of existing trusted traveller programs; increasing the foreign ownership limit of Canadian-based airlines to 49% for air carriers operating commercial passenger services; reforming Nav Canada to reduce costs imposed on airlines; improving governance in airport authorities; establishing a set of principles to guide all airports in Canada when determining fees; better aligning regulations with U.S. and Europe; and continuing to streamline immigration and customs processes.

These are a number of things that the government would be very wise to do and they would have our support in doing them, in terms of actually seeking to improve competitiveness. However, this is not about competitiveness. If this were about competitiveness, the government would be looking at a broader range of things. It is moving one specific condition, which was a condition of Air Canada's privatization, which allows Air Canada to send jobs overseas, and it is doing it at a time when Air Canada is perhaps suspiciously doing something else that meets with the government's objectives.

Government Orders

If we put this picture together, it clearly is not about competitiveness. We would have seen a much broader strategy if the government was actually interested in the health of the aerospace sector and improving the competitiveness of the aerospace sector. Like so many things, such as its emphasis on modernization, these are just words that the government uses with seeming disconnect from the actual, substantial meaning of those words.

Let me just wrap up by saying that I think this really is crony capitalism at its worst. There are three different parties in the House. Our party generally believes in the value of the market mechanism. Our friends in the NDP are more skeptical about that. However, we at least believe in a rule-based market system, that an effective market system requires adherence to rules. It means that if there are obligations that are part of a condition of sale, they have to follow through on those obligations. They cannot change the rules in the middle of the game for the workers.

The government does not really have a concept of a functioning rule-based market capitalist system. Its idea is that it gets together with the Air Canada executives and they talk about what they are going to do, and then it tries to get a few peoples' interests working in one direction. However, it ignores the interests of the workers, of the taxpayers, of broader society.

That is why we would say this is a crony capitalist bill. There is something to object to, for Conservatives, for New Democrats, or anyone in between.

I hope members stand up and oppose the bill.

• (1615)

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar made a statement that Air Canada had some loosening of these rules and that the government had received nothing for them. He was quite adamant about that. Earlier today another member of the Conservative Party from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan made the link saying that the government had traded off orders for Bombardier planes to get that loosening up. There is an inconsistency that I would like to try to understand. Which of the two members is right? Did we get something for it, as was hinted at, or did we receive nothing for it?

Second, the Conservatives moved a motion not that long ago saying that the Billy Bishop airport should be expanded because then we would get something for it, for example, the sale of Bombardier planes, yet a member said earlier that would be a bad move.

There are two sets of inconsistencies that I am trying to understand. Did we get something or not, since we have two opinions here? If we did get something, is it a good thing or a bad thing?

• (1620)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, respectfully, I did not quite follow the question because of some mix-up in constituency names. I am the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. The member referred to a member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, which is the name of a constituency in the previous Parliament. Maybe he meant to refer to our colleague from Carleton—Eagle Creek, who in the previous Parliament was the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar. I think that is where he was going.

Unfortunately, the economic philosophy that informed the question is even more confused than the constituency names.

The removal of the conditions would provide no specific benefit to the taxpayer. The removal of the conditions would be a gift to Air Canada. If Air Canada buys Bombardier planes, there would obviously be some benefit to that. We would want to see Air Canada make investments in Bombardier. What we would be concerned about though is if there were some kind of quid pro quo involved, if the government had undertaken these negotiations to do an indirect bailout in a way that was not transparent. The government should make any efforts here transparent, at the very least.

Just to be clear, I strongly support the motion we put forward with respect to the Billy Bishop airport. I spoke in favour of it. I voted in favour of it. There was certainly no division on this side of the House on that question at all.

Our party has been consistent about wanting to see reasonable measures that are pro-market and respect the rules but also support the development of the aerospace sector. We cannot just give some windfall gains to one company and call that a strategy for the sector. That is not a strategy for the aerospace sector at all.

[*Translation*]

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

As my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie already said, we are pleased to hear him speak in favour of workers.

When he was going over the sequence of events, it would have been good for him to point out that the previous Conservative government could have worked to keep the jobs at Aveos. If we are going to talk about workers' rights, I would like to know what he thinks about the government bringing in voluntary measures to protect workers in Canada's aerospace industry.

How does he think this will make it possible to protect jobs and working conditions for workers in Canada's aerospace industry?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, our party is committed to standing up for workers and supporting them. We do have a somewhat different economic philosophy from the member's party. We believe that a strong system of market incentives that encourages economic growth will benefit workers across the board. We have stood up for that kind of a system, a system that is fair to workers and has predictable rules that encourage more investment.

The member asked what we could do to benefit workers in this sector. I will refer back to the list of suggestions I made in terms of things that could enhance the competitiveness of the sector. We in the Conservative caucus believe that measures to enhance the competitiveness of businesses in this country to allow them to hire more workers are important. We were concerned with the budget when the government removed the hiring credit for small business. That is a clear example of the government doing something that is bad for business but more importantly, it is bad for workers. Removing the hiring credit hurts the ability of businesses to hire workers and create jobs.

Government Orders

We are concerned about some of the broader economic competitiveness things that the budget has moved away from. Specifically, in terms of the aerospace sector, there are a number of measures we have talked about, such as raising the foreign owner limit on Canadian-based airlines and tying airport improvement fees to specific projects. These would be good for workers and good for the Canadian economy as a whole.

• (1625)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his usual intelligent speech.

I agree there is something fishy going on here. I hear a lot of rhetoric about consulting broadly, but we have seen that the provinces do not agree, the ones that are involved, and other parties do not agree. I think that is indicative of what we can expect when the Liberals consult broadly. They will just do what is good for them and their buddies.

Then there is the openness and transparency, and the fact that on the day that Air Canada buys some planes this deal will be done, and the link to Bombardier, and all these things that people do not want to talk about. It does not seem to be very open and transparent.

Then, for me, the real deal is the fact and evidence-based thing that is missing here. If it is really about competitiveness, where is the analysis of price versus cost in the operation, and what is going to happen to the margins? I wonder if the member has any information about the profitability and the facts about that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent comments and all the important work she is doing here.

I will say, yes, it is fishy when we hear the government talk about consultation because it is very keen to use the word to pay lip service to consultation. However, in almost every case, it appears that, for the government, consultation means holding meetings and then doing what it wanted to do anyway. It talks about consultation in the context of the Air Canada Public Participation Act, yet it is proceeding on a course that is incredibly unpopular with almost everybody involved.

On pipelines, which is another example, the government talks about extending the consultation process, yet it wants cabinet to retain final approval. That is not meaningful consultation at all. There will be more meetings but still the government gets to do whatever it wants at the end.

Again, on electoral reform, it is similar. The government is talking about having this extended beautiful consultation, which will include Twitter and more Twitter, but at the end of the day, it seems dead set on doing exactly what it planned to do all along. That is not meaningful consultation.

I think Canadians need to ask, when the government talks about consulting people and about looking at the evidence, who it is going to consult and whether those consultations are actually going to inform the final product. Is it going to do more than just hold meetings? Is it going to listen to the concerns that are being raised?

I can say very clearly that in the legislation before us, there does not seem to be a lot of listening going on. We have concerns raised by the Government of Manitoba, by the Government of Quebec, by

opposition parties, by the unions, by virtually everybody except Air Canada.

I asked the parliamentary secretary, who is in favour of this, then? She sort of alluded to the fact that there were others in favour of it but did not name a single stakeholder group that was in favour of it. That does not mean that there might not be some out there, but it is clear that the vast majority of those with the clearest stake in this issue are very concerned about what the government is doing here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan talks about this bill as though it were designed to bail out Air Canada. I do not agree. This is absolutely not the case. This bill is designed to modernize the existing act. If, for example, we had not modernized the Parliament of Canada Act, we would still have about 200 seats here.

Does the member think it is important to modernize the Air Canada Public Participation Act, or should we leave it as is forever?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I have a hard time believing that the hon. member was serious when he asked that question. He applies the label “modernization” to this piece of legislation with no sense of irony. We could apply the word “modernization” to almost any piece of legislation and say, “Oh, this is modernizing it”. We could do the opposite and say, “We are modernizing it”. Then, he associates that with the expansion of the House or any number of other reforms. What utter nonsense.

He is using the word “modernization” without any concept of what that actually means in this context. This is allowing the outsourcing of jobs. This is changing the rules of the game midstream, giving windfall benefits to Air Canada with no broader economic strategy at all, and saying, “It is fine because we will give it the nice label of ‘modernization’. It is 2016, after all. It is the 21st century.”

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, National Defence; the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, CBC/Radio-Canada.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit much, actually somewhat overwhelming, to hear members of the Conservative Party try to pretend that they have an ounce of credibility when it comes to the aerospace industry, whether it is my home province of Manitoba, or Quebec or Ontario.

Government Orders

I have listened to member after member being critical of the government, a government that has done more for the aerospace industry, trying to resolve an outstanding issue that has been there because of Conservative neglect five years ago. They stand in their place today and try to tell us that we are not doing our homework, we are not doing consultation and so forth. It is incredible that they would have the courage to stand in their places and say some of things they are saying.

The previous speaker asked who was interested in this bill. Individuals who are genuinely concerned about the future of Canada's aerospace industry have an interest in the bill.

The Conservatives say that the Manitoba government opposes the bill. We just had an election in Manitoba where there was a change in government, and yes, I am okay with the change in government. I congratulate my daughter who is sitting in the Manitoba legislature for the first time today as a part of that change, and there will be a throne speech from Manitoba today.

We need to recognize that we had two provincial governments taking action many years ago because the Conservative government refused to take action. That is the reason why there was a need for consultation. Had it not been for the provincial governments of Quebec and Manitoba, who knows where we would be today. The Conservative government adamantly refused to get engaged on what I thought was a very important issue.

I will get into that right away, but the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport said something that I thought was very appropriate. This is about perception. She said, "The opposition members would have us believe that Bill C-10 would legalize the offshoring of aircraft maintenance and that the alternative to this bill would be that the former Aveos employees would be re-employed. Let me be clear. The alternative to Bill C-10 is not the reinstatement of jobs lost as a result of the failure of Aveos." She went on to say, "Also, Bill C-10 does not legalize the offshoring of aircraft maintenance."

If we listen to what Conservatives and the New Democrats are talking about in regard to Bill C-10, that is the impression one would get. How could we possibly pass Bill C-10 because thousands of jobs would be permanently lost, that we would see an exodus of jobs leaving Canada because we did not support maintenance being done in Canada, in particular in the provinces of Quebec, Manitoba and Ontario?

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport pointed out so accurately, that is just not the case. When we look at Bill C-10, what I believe we have is part of an equation that would be in the long-term best interests of Canada's aerospace industry. When I say the long-term interest, I am referring to good quality jobs for this industry and ensuring that Canada will continue playing a leading role in the development of an industry that has so much potential worldwide. It is important that the government do what it can to not only save the jobs that are there today, but look at ways in which we can invest in industries.

•(1635)

We recognize that the aerospace industry is worthy of government attention. That is why we have a collective vested interest with

respect to Bombardier to ensure we do what we can to protect those jobs. I know that Cromer in my home province of Manitoba is having some issues. I am concerned about those jobs also. There jobs are of great importance. We want the government to give some attention to where it can and play a leading role.

What I like about the budget is it recognizes the importance of research and development. It recognizes the importance of how we shape industries going forward. This is where the previous Conservative government was lacking.

Before I provide more comment with respect to Bill C-10, it is important to go back a number of years when this whole issue began, so members will have a better understanding with respect to where I am coming from, and ultimately the Liberal Party when it was in opposition.

When the decision was made with respect to the reallocation and shifting over of maintenance jobs, the decision was being implemented at a time when I had just recently been elected in a by-election. Therefore, I very much wanted to get a good understanding of it. I virtually went from the Manitoba legislature directly into opposition in Ottawa. I was very aware of the importance of the aerospace industry to the province of Manitoba.

We had many debates inside the Manitoba legislature with respect to just how important that industry was, just as it is today, to our province and the city of Winnipeg. There was a lot of focus on Air Canada and the Air Canada Public Participation Act, whether with respect to pilots, trainers, or individuals who provided all forms of different services. Therefore, I was already somewhat aware of the importance of the issue.

I saw what Air Canada was doing. Therefore, when I came to Ottawa, I took it upon myself to dive into it. Members of the Liberal caucus at the time were very supportive because collectively we recognized the importance not only to the province of Manitoba, but also to the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, as well as other provinces, in particular the province of British Columbia. Therefore, on several occasions I was afforded the opportunity to express the feelings and thoughts that were coming out of the caucus.

In fact, going back to 2011-12, the previous government made the decision that it would not intervene. One of the first things I did was challenge the then prime minister directly in question period with respect to what he would do to protect our workers and aerospace industry. The record should show that I attempted to bring an emergency debate on the issue of Air Canada. I can recall participating in rallies and in numerous meetings with workers and industry representatives in my home province. We even started a petition through a postcard campaign in which I received hundreds of cards from many different constituencies.

Government Orders

● (1640)

The concern was there and it was very real. We had petitions. We spent a great deal of time trying to get the government of the day to recognize its responsibilities. However, for whatever reasons, it chose not to. I had written the provincial government at the time and encouraged it to take legal actions against Air Canada, believing that this was in fact what the province of Manitoba needed to do. I was glad when the province of Quebec recognized the importance of taking legal action.

I worked with many of the different union workers in particular. I can recall walking up to our new airport where we had a significant rally in support of the workers, in support of getting Air Canada to do the responsible thing. I focused my attention on the Conservatives when they were in government, but I really do not recall that proactive action coming from today's third party, then the official opposition, and it had far more tools than we had. We are very much aware nowadays, because we see some action being taken and that third party being somewhat exercised, proclaiming it is interested in the worker today. However, the best I can recall, at least at the rallies I attended, I did not see any representation from that third party.

When I look at Bill C-10 today, I see legislation that has ultimately been brought forward because of the efforts of the provinces of Quebec and Manitoba, and many different workers and their unions, which played a very important role in keeping the issue alive. Today we have governments and stakeholders recognizing that there is a window of opportunity for a real, tangible settlement. As my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, has pointed out, that does not mean individuals who were so poorly treated and impacted by what took place years ago will be reinstated. It is most unfortunate, and I feel very passionate about those workers and the manner in which they were treated.

However, where we do see some hope and a silver lining, is that it would appear there could be the opportunity through the different levels of government and the different stakeholders where we will get some guarantees that will help our aerospace industry going forward. I am pleased to see this. For many years when I sat in opposition, I did not see any national leadership or initiative that would have seen our industries protected in any fashion whatsoever. I did not see a proactive Conservative government on the issue.

Here we are, having been in government since October. Months ago we expressed the interest in working with the different stakeholders and listening to what in particular the province of Quebec had indicated with Air Canada, not wanting to continue to seek that legal action because there would appear to be some sort of an agreement in place.

I do not want to say that I know all of the details. I do have a sense of what is taking place. I love the fact that Winnipeg would get a centre of excellence out of this. I love the fact that many jobs would be created in Winnipeg because of this, that there would be a guarantee.

● (1645)

One of the amendments is to recognize that it is being changed to Manitoba, not just Winnipeg. As with the province of Quebec, it is not going to be just Montreal; it is being expanded. We need to be

sensitive to our rural communities that are trying to develop their aerospace industry. That is a positive change being seen in the legislation.

At the end of the day, members have a choice. They can say that they support the Conservative approach from the past, which we know did nothing to support the aerospace industry, or they can recognize what the Government of Canada has been able to accomplish. Is it absolutely and totally perfect? I would love to see a much-expanded aerospace industry. Does the bill guarantee it? There is no absolute guarantee that the bill will lead to thousands of jobs. However, it will lead to many jobs.

If we take this legislation, the budget, the party's commitment to research and development, and the idea of trying to get the middle class empowered and working more, we will see a healthier aerospace industry, not only for the short term but for the long term.

We have a government that is taking a more comprehensive approach in terms of dealing with a very important industry to all of Canada, and not just in the three places that have been listed most often during this debate. I recognize that there was a change in government in the province of Manitoba. Greg Selinger, the former premier of Manitoba, was very much in support of what was taking place. The Province of Quebec also sees the opportunity to get some of those job guarantees that are so critically important to the province. We would have a tangible, solid commitment from Air Canada. There would indeed be benefits from the passage of Bill C-10.

If people say they are concerned about the aerospace industry in our country, or they are concerned about the workers and the potential workforce going forward, then they should seriously look at supporting Bill C-10. Members ask who else supports it. There are many direct and indirect opportunities through the aerospace industry that I believe will ultimately materialize in jobs. Given the opportunity to now make a change that is going to allow a stronger sense of security and build on an element of trust going forward, I believe the aerospace industry as a whole will benefit.

I would encourage members to support the bill. This is perhaps a good way for me to conclude. When I reflect on the workers who were shafted four or five years ago by government inaction, my heart and prayers go out to those families who had a great deal of hardship as a direct result. Whether the bill passes or does not pass, there are at least some members who are prepared to fight for the aerospace industry. It is critically important that we have a healthy aerospace industry that includes jobs of maintenance, that appreciates the work that is not only being done within the legislation, but as part of the federal budget. That will make a difference, and more Canadians will be employed in that very important industry.

● (1650)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his comments. He has made a voluminous set of comments so far in the House.

Government Orders

I would like to remind the member that when we are speaking about the provinces that will be affected by this, and I am speaking about the province of Manitoba, then I would always defer to the premier of the province to decide what is best for the province, especially on the issue of jobs. They are the ones saying that the bill will have serious impacts on the aerospace industry in Manitoba.

I am looking here at the press release of the current Manitoba government. It is referencing February 2016, and it says, "In February 2016, the previous government wrote the federal government requesting that amendments to the Air Canada Public Participation Act be limited to expanding the geographical scope of Air Canada's commitments within Manitoba."

This is the current government saying that the previous government was basically not onside on Bill C-10. The current government is not onside with Bill C-10. In fact, the minister was saying seven days ago, and it was reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, that the bill would affect jobs, that it would lose jobs, and that it is bad for the aerospace industry.

Therefore, my question to the member opposite is, why does he not support Manitoba jobs in the aerospace industry?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, back on February 25, 2011, I wrote to the premier. I sent a copy of the letter requesting a response to what was taking place in the aerospace industry, and Air Canada in particular, specifically in regard to the jobs that are being lost and the whole Air Canada Participation Act. Unfortunately, the Progressive Conservative Party did not even respond to that. Now we have a new government. As I indicated, it is tabling its throne speech today. I understand there was a presentation that was made.

I am not perfectly clear, and maybe in a follow-up question the member can indicate. Is he is trying to say that the Province of Manitoba is in opposition to the bill and believes that the bill serves no purpose? Is that what the member is actually saying?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the member for Winnipeg North was wondering why members of the opposition are reporting the bill as being a licence to ship jobs overseas. I am happy to illuminate as to why that would be the case, and I will give him three specific examples.

First of all, the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley had the courage to stand up for his constituents and break away from the government. He was an hon. member of Parliament on that side who listened to his constituents and stood up for jobs. That is reason number one.

With regard to reason number two, I have been present for the debate for Bill C-10, and Liberal after Liberal has stood up in the House and talked about finding efficiencies. For me, that is a subtext that corporations use to justify shipping jobs overseas.

Third is the most important reason, and maybe I will help the member by actually reading the text of the bill:

the Corporation may, while not eliminating those activities in any of those provinces, change the type or volume of any or all of those activities in each of those provinces, as well as the level of employment in any or all of those activities.

That is in the legislation. That is legalizing layoffs. It would allow the corporation the freedom to ship jobs overseas.

My question for the member is this. Is there any wonder as to why we are left with this impression?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is a false impression. The member can say what he wants to and provide his interpretation, but there are assurances and guarantees, in particular for Manitoba, as the member wants to make reference to the province of Manitoba. Manitoba will be given jobs. We are going to have jobs as a direct result. It might not fit into the member's speaking notes, but at the end of the day, there are going to be jobs there. There is going to be a centre of excellence. I would hope that our aerospace industry will continue to grow and prosper.

As I alluded to earlier, the NDP wants to say that it is the working-class, working-man party and so forth, as they applaud in the background. However, I sat for many years in opposition, and I witnessed NDP governments first-hand. I can assure members that they are no friend to the workers. I can give endless examples as to why I believe that to be the case. I suspect that we are hearing a lot of rhetoric coming from the New Democratic Party, and it is unfortunate.

Bill C-10 should be about protecting jobs into the future, and working in collaboration with the different stakeholders so that we are able to come together. Ultimately, this is a part of the solution.

We on the government side recognize that Bill C-10 is part of a solution. The NDP seems to be fixated on something that is just not there.

• (1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before I go to the next question, though it is nice to see government and opposition members cheering each other on and that collegiality, I would ask members, when someone is speaking, to keep their cheering very low or tell the person next to them how wonderful he or she is.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in the chamber is absolutely wonderful.

I have a question for the member for Winnipeg North. As the hon. member is well aware, Air Canada has more than 28,000 jobs. There are no legal requirements, other than to keep the head office in Montreal, or to locate maintenance jobs in the Montreal urban community, Toronto, and Winnipeg, yet Air Canada has chosen to keep almost all of these jobs in Canada. It knows that Canadian workers are the best workers there are.

I would ask the member for Winnipeg North if he has any concern about Air Canada and Canadian workers competing with workers anywhere else in the world.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe that Air Canada plays a very important role in Canada's aerospace industry. I cannot emphasize that strongly enough. The member referred to Air Canada having in excess of 25,000 direct employees, not to mention all the indirect jobs created as a result.

Government Orders

In good part, my concern has been and always will be the overall health and well-being of our aerospace industry because of how important it is. The aerospace industry is an industry around the world that can be very competitive. I can assure everyone that this government will take the action necessary to ensure that Canada continues to dominate in that particular industry. We believe in research and development. We believe in investing in and being there for the aerospace industry.

By supporting the aerospace industry in a tangible way, we are committing ourselves to good solid jobs in the future. As the member pointed out, we have some of the very best, if not the best, aerospace industry workers around the world. That is the reason we have companies like Bombardier and others, with the C Series, as well as Magellan, that provide so much for the aerospace industry worldwide.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan talked about how this law would change the rules mid-game. If we never change rules or bring things up to date, we end up with very weird situations. Things become outdated very quickly.

I am wondering if the member could talk about the importance of modernizing the rules around Air Canada, and any other part of the industry in this day and age.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government completely ignored the law. It did nothing for many years. The third party, when it was the official opposition, paid virtually no attention to the issue whatsoever. It is only recently that they have taken an interest, because they have seen a government bring forward legislation to change the law that will ultimately be healthier for the industry as a whole.

We need to change the law as opposed to completely ignoring it, and we are doing it primarily because both the Province of Quebec and the Province of Manitoba acknowledge, along with the different stakeholders, that there would appear to be a consensus that this is the right thing to do and now is the time to be doing it.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people watching might be wondering why the member for Winnipeg North is making comments that are categorically untrue.

Having read and published in the field of legislative drafting and interpretation, I would remind the member that the three basic rules are as follows: read the act, read the act, and read the act. That is what I am about to do for him, so that he can understand what it is all about.

[*English*]

Bill C-10 is the reflection of the fundamental Liberal belief that, if one is rich and well connected, one can break the law. We saw that in the KPMG file: scofflaws and millionaires hiding their money in tax havens. It is not for no reason at all that we seen the Bronfman family being the Liberals' fundraisers. We remember when the Bronfmans went through their lawyers to Quebec City to try to change the law to allow them to bring back from the tax havens

without tax. It was put to rest very quickly when they would not answer one simple question: how much would that cost taxpayers? Now, the new Liberal government here in Ottawa, in the KPMG file, has done everything to suppress the names of the scofflaws who hid millions of dollars in tax havens. They did not even charge them anything in terms of penalties when they brought that money back to Canada. What is the message there? It is to go ahead and break the law, because nothing will happen to them.

What are the Liberals doing with Air Canada? They are using all sorts of arguments and excuses, specious as they may be, to say it is really not fair in terms of competition that Air Canada is required to do its maintenance here. I remind members that the bill is called an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act. Why did we have a bill called the Air Canada Public Participation Act? It was because those brilliant managers, those extraordinary capitalists, those guys who really know that a buck is a buck is a buck came here to Ottawa with their hats held out and said, "Can you fill these with a bunch of taxpayer's dollars?" The government said they would have to do a couple of things in return. They would have to guarantee that they would respect provisions that required them to do their maintenance in Canada, and it specified the cities where that would take place. They are Montreal, Mississauga, and Winnipeg. That is written down in a law.

[*Translation*]

One of the very foundations of democracy is that the law applies equally to everyone. No one is above the law, no one, that is, unless they are rich, well connected, and a friend of the Liberal government. It is false to claim that this bill is simply an update to modernize the existing legislation. This bill is meant to allow people who broke the law to do so with impunity, both retroactively and retrospectively.

Once again, I want to read something for my colleague from Winnipeg North.

[*English*]

These subsections that require the work to be done here in Canada "are deemed never to have come into force". It would erase, retroactively, the crimes committed by Air Canada. Also, they are repealed retrospectively, making sure that no such offence exists anymore. That is called being connected to the Liberals. That is what entitlement looks like.

We hear the member of Parliament for Pierrefonds—Dollard, the member of Parliament for Mount Royal, and the member of Parliament for Laurentides—Labelle come into the House and try to justify the unjustifiable, and I can guarantee each and every one of them that we will never let the people of their ridings forget that they betrayed the aerospace workers in Quebec.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

How shameful to listen to the members for Pierrefonds—Dollard, Mount Royal, and Laurentides—Labelle.

Government Orders

Everyone knows where the Laurentians are and how much aerospace there is in that region. The member stands up here and tries to justify the loss of 2,600 aerospace jobs in Quebec and Canada. How shameful for a member who calls himself a Quebecker.

[*English*]

I remember that, in Charles M. Schulz' *Peanuts* comics, every year Lucy would ask Charlie Brown if he would come and kick the football. Every year, Charlie Brown would say that she was going to pull it away and he was going to wind up flat on his back. Every year, he was promised that this time it would not happen.

I really have a feeling that the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North probably had a picture of Charlie Brown on the wall of his room when he was a kid, because he emulates Charlie Brown all the time.

He stood up here in the House of Commons today and said—and I wrote it down; it was quite something to hear—that we should not worry about it because we have “a tangible, solid commitment” from Air Canada, the company that has been breaking the law. If it is written in a law, duly enacted by the Parliament of Canada, nah, who cares, but we have “a tangible, solid commitment” that it will not pull the football away this time.

Guess what? We do not have anything from Air Canada. It has not set any of this down in the deal. This malarky about a centre of excellence, it is not going to happen. How can we trust a company that breaks the law to respect a deal that is not even enforceable?

It is interesting to listen to the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North, because he pleads against himself every time he stands up in this House. He said that there are people across the aisle who said this is about legalizing the offshoring of jobs. Yes, that is what this is about. It is about legalizing the offshoring of jobs. That is what he is in favour of.

Then he said that, when he was in opposition, he used to stand out there with the workers. In solidarity, he would stand there. I remember the member for Papineau, today the Prime Minister of Canada, standing there with his fist in the air. By the way, it is a little bit like the Prime Minister's promise to restore door-to-door mail delivery.

The funny thing about people who like selfies and things like that is that they should remember that there are actually recordings of this stuff. We have the recording of him promising to bring door-to-door mail delivery, something he has forgotten in the meantime. However, there is also the recording of him standing there, when he thought it would help him get votes with workers, saying that he was going to stand up for them. Here is what he is doing now; he is standing up to vote against them. Shame on him.

My hon. colleague, the member for Winnipeg North also should read the part of the act that says that Air Canada is allowed to determine the type and volume of any or all of these activities. He is trying to pin some vague hope that he is not going to get slammed in his home province on the fact that there is this clause that says there should be work in Quebec, Manitoba, and Ontario. The only problem is that, when it is written into law, it can get rid of any and all of that; if Air Canada does one repair on one motor in one year,

then it has met what is now in the bill that the Liberals are putting forward.

We have lost thousands upon thousands of well-paying manufacturing jobs in this country, including thousands of well-paying aerospace jobs, and there is nothing that the Liberals are willing to do, except vote for a bill to let Air Canada retroactively off the hook. It is unprecedented in the history of the Parliament of Canada.

I do remember, a little while back, when another Liberal member of Parliament from Manitoba, the member of Parliament for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley—and for the people who do not know where that is, it is another Winnipeg riding—stood in this House and voted against the Liberal Party. That takes a certain amount of courage. He received accolades, well deserved, for his political courage.

I know a little about that, having been through it myself when I refused to sign an order in council that would have transferred land in a provincial park to developers to put in condos in Mont-Orford provincial park in Quebec. I quit cabinet rather than sign that, so I know that it takes courage.

● (1710)

What is astonishing today is to see the same member of Parliament for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley stand here in the House of Commons and vote against those same workers. Realizing he had created perhaps a bit of a conundrum for himself, he took to Twitter and other social media and started explaining that today's vote, in his view, was not that important because in third reading he could stand again and vote against the bill. The only problem is that, if the member of Parliament for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley had kept his conscience that he claimed to have had just a couple of weeks ago, then he would have managed to defeat the bill that he said was the problem. When he comes back in at third reading and votes against it as he claims he will, nothing is going to happen; the bill is still going to pass.

It is convenient to be a Liberal and to claim to have principles when it does not have any consequence, but when it could mean that a toxic bill from that same Liberal member's government that would be harmful to workers could be defeated, all sorts of rationalizations are found and that individual starts crowing on social media that he had no real intention of doing anything. That sort of hypocrisy deserves to be called out here in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Let us be clear that the aerospace industry is the backbone of Canada's manufacturing sector. Because of the inertia, incompetence, and mismanagement of the Conservative government, which put all of our eggs in one basket, the oil and gas extraction sector, we lost hundreds of thousands of good jobs in the manufacturing sector.

All we have left is the aerospace sector, and the business geniuses in the front row on the Liberal side are telling us that they are waiting on a business plan from Bombardier. This is unbelievable. People who have never managed so much as the night shift at Burger King are saying they will demand that Bombardier come up with a business plan they agree with. Unbelievable.

I just want to say one thing: if the Liberals cared one iota about protecting and promoting Canada's aerospace industry, they would not be fooling around like they are right now. They would be standing strong and telling Air Canada, loud and clear, that the law was written and duly passed by the Parliament of Canada, that there is no escape clause for anyone, and that Air Canada must obey the law.

[English]

We hear the exact same argument from Air Canada in another field.

[Translation]

That is worth reiterating to the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, the hon. member for Mount Royal, the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle, and the other members from Quebec who end up giving in and selling out Quebec every time. I am talking about systematic non-compliance with the Official Languages Act. We get exactly the same entitlement argument from Air Canada. The company wonders why it should be required to comply with the Official Languages Act because, after all, it is a matter of, you guessed it, being competitive.

What is the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle going to serve up as an excuse to justify this non-compliance with the Official Languages Act? He is going to say this is about modernization. Members only have to look, as I do every day, at the number of answers given in English to questions asked in French to see the truth in the old saying that in Ottawa there are two official languages: English and French translated into English.

Here on the front benches of the Liberal Party of Canada, the government, French no longer has a place. Instead of requiring Air Canada to comply with the Official Languages Act, the Liberals are going to do exactly the same thing. The Commissioner of Official Languages will soon be releasing his report on Air Canada's non-compliance with the Official Languages Act.

Does anyone think that the people who just gave Air Canada a free pass when it comes to keeping jobs in the aircraft repair and maintenance sector here in Canada are not going to do the same thing? Get real.

• (1715)

I am wondering if they believe their own argument that this is simply a matter of modernization when that is clearly not the case. The Liberals are giving a company that is not complying with the law a loophole, and that attitude is not going to change.

I look forward to seeing how the member for Laurentides—Labelle will attempt to justify the failure to comply with the Official Languages Act. When people ask an Air Canada flight attendant in French where to catch their connecting flight and the flight attendant responds, "I'm sorry, I don't speak French", will the member tell the House that it is no big deal, that it is modernization, and that Air Canada should have the right to do what it wants?

That is the free pass that the government has just given Air Canada. That is the precedent the government is creating with regard to Air Canada. It is shameful that a rich and well-connected company is being given the right to break a law of Parliament.

Government Orders

Rather than giving Air Canada a free pass, the government should be honouring its obligation to enforce the law. It should be strictly enforcing the law and imposing sanctions on Air Canada, rather than doing the company favours by saying that it is no big deal and acting as though the law never existed.

[English]

Tangible, solid commitment—horse hockey, as they used to say on *M*A*S*H*.

There is nothing on the table from the scofflaw management at Air Canada that we can count on. They do not even think they have to obey the law. They do not think they had to obey the law that they dealt to get the money from Canadian taxpayers. They do not think they have to back up and respect the Official Languages Act because they have all of these Quebec MPs, every one of them, standing up one after the other doing nothing.

We had one person from one of the provinces affected. He was from Winnipeg. He stood up and got accolades for his courage. What did he do today? He folded his tent, he threw in his lot, and gave them the one vote they needed so that the 2,600 workers who lost their jobs at Aveos because of the non-respect of this legislation by Air Canada are now going to lose all hope. It is because of people like the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North that they are losing that hope. There is a large aerospace sector in Manitoba, and it is shameful that the member is letting Air Canada off the hook.

[Translation]

I listened carefully to what the Liberal members had to say. Although there are 40 Liberal members representing Quebec, only one member from Manitoba had the courage to rise and vote against this bill. They should all be ashamed of themselves. Not one Liberal stooge from Quebec had the decency and courage to say, "Enough is enough. The law applies to everyone, including Air Canada."

The NDP members are going to do the same thing that we did this morning. I am pleased that the official opposition, the Conservative Party, is standing with us on this. I am also pleased that the member of the Green Party, who is still here this afternoon, is voting with us. If any of our Bloc colleagues were here, I would commend them too. However—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. I would remind the member that we do not mention the absence of other members.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, excuse me for pointing out that all the Bloc Québécois members were absent. I apologize. I will not do it again. There were five missing this morning; they went looking for the others.

The centre of excellence is smoke and mirrors. It is unthinkable that anyone could be so naive as to believe an empty promise made by a company that systematically breaks a law, as if this promise could make up for the jobs being created.

If the Liberals believe in a modern aerospace industry with good jobs, they will stand up and do as we are going to do: vote against this bill.

Government Orders

• (1720)

[English]

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that the member for Outremont cares deeply about the workers at Air Canada, as no doubt does his whole caucus, the entire NDP caucus, as well as even the caucus of the Conservatives, and our caucus as well. Fundamentally, the difference is how we go about protecting those jobs, and all jobs.

I was a businessman and engineer, and now I am a politician, but I came here to work on one area specifically, industry, and jobs, the creation of good jobs.

I know that the airline business is one of the most competitive businesses in the world. We are looking to help the entire aspect of Air Canada, not one little part, but the entire aspect.

Does the member recognize that the airline industry is one of the most competitive industries in the world?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, does the member of Parliament for Pierrefonds—Dollard recognize that he represents an area of Canada where the aerospace industry is crucial?

[Translation]

When he says that he will vote for this bill, does he not understand that he is saying that we can justify the unjustifiable? They have no problem retroactively changing the law for a rich and well-connected company that has always helped the Liberal Party.

How can someone who claims to be a businessman, an engineer, a politician, and much more be so naive and believe that a company that thinks it is above the law will create the centres of excellence it has promised while crossing its fingers? How can we trust for a nanosecond a company that blithely breaks the law and believe that it will keep a promise that is not even formally written into a contract? That is incredibly naive, and it is appalling that someone of his experience and intelligence would swallow those arguments. If he wants to be worthy of his position as the MP for Pierrefonds—Dollard and a Quebec MP, he should do what his colleague from Winnipeg did: have the courage to stand tall and fight for good jobs in his own riding instead of caving in and voting with his government. That is unjustifiable.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, given that the legislation purports to say that maintenance can move around in ways that it was not allowed to in the 1988 agreement and given statements made by Liberal members in the House this afternoon that there will be a law that says that maintenance cannot be offshore, done outside of Canada, does the member have any speculation or has he heard an explanation as to why it is not clear in the legislation now that we would not allow maintenance operations to take place outside of Canada?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the Green Party for that intervention.

Of course, the reason that the Liberals are changing the law is that a law actually exists right now that does require that work to be done in Canada. That is why Air Canada has managed to convince the naive Liberals that it can be trusted, “Don't put it in the law. We

won't actually have a contract. We're not going to really be bound by any penalties. But we promise this time, scout's honour, that we're going to be trustworthy. We're going to keep some of the work here, but would you mind just putting in a little clause in the bill that says it doesn't really matter what the type of work is or what the volume is, and even if it's 500 bucks a year, in Quebec and in Manitoba and in Ontario, we're off the hook.”

This is an exercise in political naivety, but it is also the tip of the iceberg of the Liberals' sense of entitlement: “If you're rich and well-connected and you've hidden millions of dollars in a tax haven and KPMG gets nailed, bring your money back. We're not even going to impose penalties and we'll fight like hell to make sure your name is never made public.”

The essence of our court system, of our justice system, is that everything is public. The public gets to see when there is a sweetheart deal letting millionaires off the hook—oopsy, not when the Liberals are in power. They have broken the law systematically for years and years: “No problem. We'll change the law retroactively.”

I was there. I saw the person who today is our Prime Minister stand on the picket line, fists in the air, fighting for the workers of Aveos.

I guess that was then and this is now. He is standing in this House; he is taking away the rights, and he is letting that company off the hook retroactively and protecting it retrospectively. It is a political and parliamentary scandal. We have the guts to denounce it. We will stand and vote against it.

• (1725)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to the hon. member for Outremont, and he sounded quite angry in his speech, not his best look.

I got elected to this place, and hopefully other members will recognize that up until this point I have never once got up in this House and said anything personal or said anything about the NDP, the Green Party or the Conservatives. However, when I was accused today of betrayal by the leader of the NDP, by the member for Outremont, I think that is shocking. There are a lot of other people in this House he might accuse of betrayal, but certainly not people on this side.

I want to ask the member, you brought up in your comments the question of official bilingualism. You know very well that there is nothing in the proposal to amend the Air Canada act—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to remind the hon. member that he has to speak through the Speaker.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: —changing the official bilingual status of Air Canada, and that Air Canada is still required to provide all services in French and English.

How does the member for Outremont suddenly raise the issue of bilingualism when he knows very well that is not the subject of this proposed amendment to the law?

Government Orders

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, when the member for Mount Royal stood and said he had listened very attentively, I was a bit surprised, because he did not seem to be listening very attentively and he just proved it by his intervention.

What I was saying when I referred to the Official Languages Act is that there is going to be a report from the commissioner very soon that shows that with regard to the Official Languages Act, Air Canada also thinks it does not have to obey the law, and that is a real problem because it is something that the member is reinforcing.

If the hon. member does not want to be accused of selling out workers, maybe he should stop selling out workers, because that is what is being done here with 2,600 jobs, most of them in Quebec. His riding had a lot of people who had these well-paying jobs. I will make it my business to tell everybody in his riding that he did betray the workers of Aveos; he did betray Quebec's aerospace industry; he failed to stand up for the enforcement of the law.

The hon. member thinks that his job here is to stand up and vote for a bill that lets a company retroactively off the hook. I have news for him. His job is to stand up for the principles of the institutions of Parliament, and that includes the rigorous enforcement of the law, its application evenly to everyone, because the basic principle of this Parliament and of the rule of law is that the law applies evenly to everyone and no one is above the law.

Shame on the Liberals for voting to let Air Canada off the hook retroactively. Shame on them for selling out the workers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Outremont, the NDP leader, for an impassioned speech that gets right to the point.

We have before us a bill that would retroactively change Air Canada's obligations to Mississauga, Montreal, and Winnipeg. Morally and ethically, this kind of thing has no place in a state governed by the rule of law. I am glad our leader singled out, as he could have done for every sitting Liberal MP, how unfair this measure is and how unethical it is to make this change retroactive, thereby releasing Air Canada from its obligations.

By virtue of a single clause, the law is deemed never to have come into force and is now repealed. When that kind of thing happens once, it can be considered an isolated incident. Now, however, it is becoming a trend. The Liberals are doing the same thing with their bill on balancing the books. With the one, they are letting Air Canada off the hook, and with the other, they are letting themselves off the hook.

I would like the NDP leader to comment on that.

• (1730)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, it is just astounding. We checked.

I have been drafting and interpreting legislation for a long time, and I have never seen a clause written like this. I checked, and this is unprecedented. Passing a bill to enable a company to wipe the slate clean retroactively and act as though something never happened is unprecedented. That is exactly what George Orwell predicted would happen one day in *1984*.

"Sunny ways", yes, we are going to be transparent. They are so transparent that the member for Winnipeg North said that most of the jobs will be created in Canada. I have news for him. The jobs we are talking about, 2,600 good Canadian jobs, are being exported to Israel, Germany, and Central America because the Liberals did not have the courage to enforce the law even though that is their main responsibility. The Liberal Party of Canada should be ashamed.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a performance. People at home had a chance to hear the leader. I have a great deal of respect for my colleague, a fellow lawyer who likes to lecture us every day in the House. After seeing another performance much like the ones we see every day, let us now talk about the facts.

I hope the member for Outremont reads the official transcript of our deliberations, as it will set the record straight, and I hope he tells the workers of my riding just how hard we fought to keep aerospace jobs in Mauricie. I hope all his colleagues will remind him that 52% of my interventions have been delivered in French. As for his accusations against the Liberals regarding official languages, he could just as easily apply them to himself.

Here are the facts. After all the oratorical rhetoric we have heard, people listening at home probably want to take a break and hear the facts, so here they are.

The hon. Minister of Transport introduced a bill to modernize the Air Canada Public Participation Act. Many of my colleagues have already risen in the House to address the nature of the changes proposed in the bill regarding Air Canada's maintenance activities.

I would like to talk more in detail about an important aspect of the operations of an airline such as Air Canada, and that is the aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul services industry. This is an important sector that contributes significantly to our economy and creates very good jobs, including back home in Mauricie.

The hon. member for Outremont bragged about standing up for the workers. Today, I rise in this House to stand up for the workers in my riding, who are subcontractors for Bombardier. Those jobs also help Canada to shine brightly on the world stage.

I want to share some figures with the House to illustrate how important our businesses that work in the aerospace sector are and how much they contribute to making Canada a world leader.

The Canadian aerospace manufacturing industry ranks fifth among OECD countries in terms of GDP. Canada ranks first in civil flight simulation, third in civil aircraft production, and third in civil engine production. Those are facts. What we saw earlier was show. Now, I am presenting economic facts to illustrate the industry's importance to Canadian society.

The Canadian aerospace industry is national. Quebec and Ontario account for the majority of the manufacturing industry, while western Canada plays a dominant role in providing maintenance, repair, and overhaul services.

Government Orders

Atlantic Canada was the fastest growing region in maintenance, repair, and overhaul over the past five years. By maintenance, repair, and overhaul services, we mean activities related to the maintenance and repair of aircraft, engines, components, and other systems. This sector also includes aircraft servicing at airports or line maintenance, aircraft ferrying services, inspections, flight trials, and interior cabin maintenance.

To provide a little more detail, the share of aerospace maintenance, repair, and overhaul by region is as follows: nearly 44% for western Canada, 24% for Ontario, 18% for Quebec, and 14% for the Atlantic region.

I really would have liked the member for Outremont to hear those statistics so that he could understand the economic considerations surrounding the bill we are debating today.

The Canadian aerospace industry ecosystem is interlinked with the space and defence industries. The maintenance, repair, and overhaul industry includes both civil and defence aerospace activities.

The Business Registry and the Canadian socioeconomic database, otherwise known as CANSIM, indicate that both the maintenance, repair, and overhaul industry and the manufacturing industry experienced a period of strong economic growth over the past 10 years.

• (1735)

Canadians benefit thanks to the direct and indirect economic spinoffs of this sector. In their speeches, parliamentarians in this place recognized the importance of the aerospace industry across the country in maintaining excellence, research and development, and the number of workers here in Canada.

In 2014, this sector alone contributed \$3.1 billion to our GDP, an increase of 5% over 2013. The sector employs no fewer than 32,100 workers and helps maintain almost 24,000 spinoff jobs. That also represents an increase of 5% over 2013.

I listened as the member for Outremont made himself out to be the champion of Quebec. I can say that as the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, I stand up for the workers in my riding because I know that the SMEs in my region contribute to the success of the aerospace industry, help provide good jobs for people in the area, and help do research and development that is important not just in our urban centres, but also in regions across the country.

Finally, the aerospace industry generates almost \$7.4 billion in revenue and invests about \$40 million in research and development. Based on these figures, no one can dispute the importance of this sector to our economy. Today, all parliamentarians are rightly acknowledging its importance.

According to the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, MRO represents 27% of the industry's activities. A number of Canadian companies conduct aircraft MRO, such as Premier Aviation, which is located in my riding, Standard Aero, Cascade Aerospace, Vector Aerospace, L-3 MAS, Provincial Aerospace, IMP Aerospace & Defence, Field Aviation, and KF Aerospace. These are Canadian companies that will benefit from the bill we are debating today. Other manufacturing companies also conduct maintenance

activities, and we are quite familiar with them. There is Héroux-Devtek and, obviously, Pratt & Whitney, back home in Quebec.

Although this sector is alive and well and is experiencing positive growth, I do not want to forget the essence of the bill my colleague, the Minister of Transport, introduced in the House regarding Air Canada's maintenance activities.

As all members know, the air transportation sector has evolved quite a bit since Air Canada was privatized in 1989. That is exactly what was missing from the speech by the member for Outremont. He did not demonstrate an understanding of the sector's evolution. Members on the other side of the House do not seem to want to understand that the industry and the partners are evolving, and that the global aviation industry has evolved as well. This is why I want to talk about this point.

New international players have obviously helped change the rules of the market, forcing traditional airlines like Air Canada to adapt to the new market realities with respect to operating costs. All parliamentarians can understand that.

For example, the major airlines in the United States underwent a significant downsizing, when almost all of them filed for chapter 11 protection under the American bankruptcy laws. Europe was not immune either. A number of major airlines had to merge or partner up, to face the new competitive conditions of the market. All of these examples show a common need to find economies of scale in order to remain competitive and profitable.

In this era of the global economy, our businesses are definitely not immune from the same concerns. Although Air Canada is this country's largest carrier, it also faces stiff competition from carriers like WestJet, Porter Airlines, Air Transat, and other foreign airlines.

We cannot predict how the airline industry will change over the next few years or what Air Canada or any other airline will have to do to remain profitable in such a highly competitive environment. That is why Air Canada needs enough flexibility to be able to adapt to the ever-changing market conditions.

• (1740)

The bill before us allows us to achieve that balance, contrary to what the member for Outremont was saying. He was launching personal attacks against the Liberal members and saying that we lack vision. On the contrary, the 40 members from Quebec understand that this is an important industry that is rapidly evolving and that we must adapt in order to reap the rewards here at home for our workers, our research and development sector, and our businesses here in Canada.

There is ample evidence of the good reputation and vitality of the maintenance, repair, and overhaul sector. Consider, for example, the commitment made by Air Canada and the Government of Quebec to create a centre of excellence for aircraft maintenance in Quebec and have the future C Series aircraft serviced here in Canada for the next 20 years.

Government Orders

These are solid commitments. I know the member for Outremont is a lawyer. I am also a lawyer. I am sure he understands that we are talking about solid commitments for the benefit of our workers and businesses here at home. When we talk about a centre of excellence, of course that is what will allow us to create growth in Canada.

On March 14, Air Canada announced an agreement with the Government of Manitoba, again to create a centre of excellence for aircraft maintenance and to hire local, highly skilled workers with real opportunities for growth. It is important that Air Canada continue to hire in our communities and carry out the maintenance, repair, and overhaul of its aircraft in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

This bill allows us to keep and support the aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul sector as an important player in our economy and creator of good jobs here at home in Quebec, in Mauricie, and in Canada.

NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take too much time because I know that my colleagues are looking forward to making comments on the excellent speech by my colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

[*English*]

I want to advise that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the third reading stage of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of the proceedings at the said stage.

[*Translation*]

THIRD READING

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain talked about the importance of the jobs in the aerospace sector, including in Quebec, and rightly so. Speaking of facts, when Industry Canada shows the tremendous growth in outsourcing aerospace jobs to Asia, I worry about the fact that the only concrete commitment that we have is the maintenance of new aircraft that have not yet been sold. I do not feel reassured because there is no clear guarantee that the aerospace jobs will stay here. The hon. member has not convinced me. I would like him to elaborate.

• (1745)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. I have a lot of respect for her work and her commitment.

I come from the Mauricie area. The aerospace industry is not one of our major industries, but I want to tell my colleague that our industry has grown. I have confidence in this bill because of the centres of excellence that we are going to create with the help of quality workers, their skills and their excellence. The Mauricie region is home to the Trois-Rivières airport, which has a

maintenance centre for aircraft that come from around the world to be repaired and to get the maintenance services they need.

We created this excellence even in a region like ours, which is not naturally an aviation centre of excellence. We managed to do that. I believe that this measure will result in positive spinoffs for our workers. Even in Mauricie, Quebec, we managed to create a centre of excellence for aircraft maintenance that is the envy of many large cities throughout the world.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain for his extremely positive speech. I say “extremely positive” because the speech given by the member for Outremont was decidedly negative. I think that is why Canadians chose the Liberal Party in the last election.

The member for Outremont was trying to scare Quebecers and French Canadians by saying that bilingualism at Air Canada is in question.

I have a question for my colleague. Can he tell us whether there are any changes in the bill that would affect Air Canada's official languages obligations?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I respect the member for Outremont, but I am appalled that he is bringing up issues that are not even in the bill during the debate. As a lawyer, the member for Outremont, like all our other colleagues who worked in the legal profession, will understand that it is not productive to try to sow fear among Canadians by creating mass confusion. Other political parties have long used this kind of divisive politics to pit one community against another.

We have been extremely positive, as my colleague said. I assure my colleagues that this bill in no way affects official languages. As a Quebecer, I can say that comments like those I heard affect us all deeply, because they are an affront to our identity. Every time I travel by air, with Air Canada or with any other Canadian airline, I make sure that I am served in both official languages, in English and in French.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague provide a brief comment on what I indicated earlier? We have had different stakeholders, from provinces to union representatives to many other industry representatives, that have ultimately played differing roles in trying to build a consensus. Bill C-10 is just one component of a bigger picture in the importance of our aerospace industry. The passage of the bill would be a healthy thing for the long-term best interests of the aerospace industry.

Government Orders

• (1750)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I have heard my colleagues, and I have respect for all my colleagues' views. The purpose of having a Parliament is to listen to each other. I have heard some of them criticizing that we call it modernization. However, having lived across the world, the airline industry, not only in Canada, is subject to pressure from the international sector. We know the aerospace sector is becoming more and more globalized around the world. We talked about the case of the United States having a number of airlines filing for chapter 11.

I was in Europe when Swissair went bankrupt. I saw first hand how the airline industry had to reshape itself in order to succeed. Today we are giving the means and the tools to Air Canada to compete globally. I think it is the aspiration of every member in the House to see Air Canada be one of the most respected and cherished airlines around the world, one of the most efficient, one that translates our Canadian values.

When I used to live abroad, every Canadian I knew, and many international travellers, were very proud to embark on an Air Canada flight. I am very pleased to see how over the years Air Canada has been able to compete with some of the Asian, Middle Eastern, and U.S. carriers.

What we are talking about today is in the best interests of the workers and of Canada. That is exactly what we will do during our term in government. We will always work for the best interests of the workers of our country.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is curious to hear the member talk about the best interests of workers when, explicitly, the purpose of this legislation is to change the law to allow Air Canada to no longer employ workers in Canada for the purpose of their maintenance.

We have talked on this side of the House about other measures that the government could take to enhance the competitiveness of the aerospace sector, things like increasing the foreign ownership limit and tying airport improvements fees to specific projects. We have listed them before. I will not list all of them again. However, could the member comment on the many different options for increasing the competitiveness of the sector, which are not only for increasing the competitiveness of companies but also for benefiting workers? Why is the member not looking at some of these other options rather than simply supporting the bill, which provides a windfall gain to one particular company?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy listening to the member's speeches. It is by debate that we can come to the best solution.

To the point of his question, there is an assumption on the other side of the House that the bill would inevitably lead to less employment in Canada in the maintenance and refurbishment of airplanes. I am not at all convinced of that. I have given an example of my own riding where we have created a centre of excellence and we refurbish planes coming from the United States. Trois-Rivières is not exactly one of the major urban centres around the world for refurbishing planes. People fly from across the United States to get their planes refurbished and serviced in our community.

I do not understand why, by necessity, the member would assume that a bill like this would necessarily lead to less employment. If we make the right investment in excellence, we will not only attract more work here but we will create and continue to expand our aerospace industry.

Everyone in the House realizes what the aerospace industry has done for our country, even in small non-urban communities like mine. We have benefited greatly by having a centre of excellence which provides highly paid jobs and R and D. It also makes a town like mine proud. The workers in the companies that are based in my own community, who service planes from all over the world, would tell us that the best way to retain jobs is to strive for excellence.

• (1755)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House, especially to talk again about Bill C-10. I have risen a couple of times on this important legislation.

It is curious that the government is picking to run through this so quickly. It is legislation that the Liberals continue to say is for the best interest of Air Canada, to keep Air Canada competitive. They talk about the official opposition and its war on the aerospace industry, because we oppose the bill being rushed through.

The Liberals talk about their aerospace strategy but, really, the floor on the number of jobs in each province that Bill C-10 would impact is one, or it guarantees is one. It does not specify the nature of work that has to be done, but only that line maintenance could and probably does apply. Therefore, it is interesting that they talk about their aerospace strategy.

It should also be noted that the Liberals talk a lot about the centres of excellence that Air Canada will be building. It is critical for members of the House and for those Canadians who are listening to understand that if the law is changed today, there will be no incentive for Air Canada to remain at the table to negotiate with the Governments of Quebec and Manitoba, whether for this legislation or for the centres of excellence and the jobs associated with those. However, the government rides in on its white horse, saving the day for the aerospace industry.

The deputy premier of Manitoba was equally clear recently when she said:

The federal government's approach to Bill C-10 simply put is jumping the gun. Bill C-10 is being rushed through the process before the necessary specific investments and binding commitments by the federal government and Air Canada have been secured.

It is interesting that the member for Winnipeg North said that the Conservative Party did nothing. Again, the Liberals have ridden in on their white horse and are saving the day for the aerospace industry.

It is interesting again that, if their contention to saving the day is resolving litigation between Air Canada, Quebec, and Manitoba, then is Parliament stepping in and effectively siding with Air Canada in a dispute, with the legislation before us, after Quebec and Manitoba were in the court fighting Air Canada? Is it sound public policy? I guess we know what lengths the Liberal Party will go to help out its friends.

Government Orders

I sat through every debate. Obviously, with my background, I am keenly interested in this. Again, there has been a great healthy debate from all sides, but the language the government side is using is that this would give Air Canada a competitive advantage on an ever-changing global environment.

I think we mentioned this before, and I will go into some detail. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport did her best to talk about airline, airport, and aviation economics. Therefore, I would remind the House again about my background with that and some of the challenges that we face, given everything Air Canada has been granted over time.

I should probably have started off by saying that I am absolutely a fan of Air Canada. We have relatives and friends who are employed by Air Canada. However, this is about keeping and protecting jobs in Canada, and nothing else.

The government would like us and other Canadians to think that this is an attack on the aerospace sector, the 170,000 aerospace jobs throughout Canada, because fundamentally we are against Bill C-10 and what it would open up in shipping jobs overseas.

The proposed amendments to the 1988 Air Canada Public Participation Act means that the jobs of 3,000 Canadians who provide aircraft maintenance would and could be affected. Under the amendment, Canada would still be required to do some maintenance work in each of the three provinces, but as I said earlier, it is one job. It could be one engine overhaul or one oil job, and that is it.

• (1800)

Air Canada is allowed to change the type or volume of any or all of those activities in each of those provinces. As well, it is also allowed to adjust the level of employment in each and all of those areas. It will be free to dictate how many people will be employed by these centres, and what work they will do.

We continue to ask the question, why the rush? Today, for the very first time, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Transport mentioned Mirabel. We also heard that there will be other legislation in place that guarantees that these jobs will not be lost.

Why the rush? Why can we not have an honest debate? Why can we not have an honest discussion? The government continues to use the excuse that the legislation will make Air Canada more competitive. We all agree that it is time Air Canada becomes a private sector company that is not supported by taxpayers, that is competitive on the global stage, and it is.

We also agree that all of Canada's aviation, aerospace, and airlines should receive the same type of treatment. We should create an environment where Canada, as a whole, can compete, can be competitive, regardless of whether it is Air Canada or Pacific Coastal. We want a level playing field, and it does not have to come at the expense of high-quality, well-paying Canadian jobs.

I spent 20 years in aviation. I am aware, first-hand, of the challenges that our Canadian aviation sector faces, airport, airline, and regulatory impediments.

Air Canada, in 1988, inherited 109 aircraft. It came hat-in-hand to the Government of Canada and asked for some support, some help.

It is the largest airline in the country, and it is an important international player in the sector. It has 28,000 employees. It goes to 180 destinations worldwide on five continents: 60 Canadian, 49 U.S., 72 international.

It is because of the government support of Air Canada over the years, and the taxpayer support over the years, that Air Canada is a global, international player, that it is one of the top carriers in the world. Today, Air Canada is the largest tenant at nearly every major airport in this country, with the exception of Calgary and Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, which we have debated before. Air Canada has significant influence over each airport's operations and access to the best landing slots in all of our major airports. It has that competitive advantage.

We welcomed the original intent of the Air Canada Public Participation Act when it was introduced in 1988, but let us remember why that act was put in place. The act put in place clear conditions to ensure that all of the support Air Canada received from the Government of Canada to turn it into a profitable crown corporation was not lost. It was to protect Canadian taxpayers.

There were four conditions. Air Canada would be subject to the Official Languages Act. It would maintain its headquarters in Montreal. Seventy-five per cent of its voting shares had to be held by Canadians, and finally, Air Canada had to maintain operational and overhaul centres in the city of Winnipeg, the Montreal urban community, and the city of Mississauga.

Given all of those recommendations, all of those parts of that legislation, the government picked one to change, to overhaul. Even the Canada transportation review released earlier this year, in February, the Emerson report, cited 60 recommendations, and it picked one.

Again, why the rush? While it is exactly unclear what level of benefit this legislative change will give Air Canada, one thing is clear and that is the intended change will make it possible for the carrier to move thousands of jobs from Canada to other jurisdictions. Today, the government informed the House that it is considering legislation that will protect those jobs.

Why now? Why, at this point, is the government bringing that up? It could have brought it up earlier on.

• (1805)

If we are talking about giving further competitive advantages to one of our national carriers, why do we not look at the industry as a whole? If Air Canada, after being afforded all of these competitive advantages previously and the protection of successive governments, is still having difficulties remaining competitive, it might be a sign that our national aviation industry needs a little overhauling.

Government Orders

Let me talk about some of the challenges that our aviation industry is facing as a whole. Air transport is a critical economic and social infrastructure. It provides access to trade and investment; connects people to jobs, friends, and family; and delivers vital goods and services to remote areas, such as medevac and critical life support. Geography, population size, and the environmental conditions in Canada increase the operational costs of air transport compared to other jurisdictions. While being a distinct advantage for some, it is a disadvantage for other carriers in Canada.

The Canadian passenger market is relatively mature and we have had some significant gains over the years. We are a market of about 122 million to 125 million emplaned and deplaned passengers. It pales in comparison to the emerging and developing markets around the world. In some measure, it is due to the very same policies developed for the industrial and economic environment of the 1990s. Simply put, the very same policies that were designed to protect our industry are now the ones hindering it.

Most of Canada's domestic air services are provided by Air Canada and WestJet nationally. We have a small number of regional and local air carriers that help serve the underserved market. Some of these small tier-three airlines are aligned with our national carriers and they allow for better customer service and connectivity. In the 1990s, Canada saw the Southwest Airlines low-cost model introduced by WestJet. This came at a time when consumers and communities were held hostage by predatory pricing by Canada's two major carriers at the time, Canadian and Air Canada.

Smaller communities throughout Canada and Canada's north are served by regional local carriers. Canada's main charter carriers are Transat and Sunwing, and those are focused primarily on seasonal vacation destinations. WestJet's entrance into the Canadian market in the early 1990s created excitement by offering low-cost travel. Actually, it allowed Canadians to experience air travel, some for the very first time. There was a time when air travel was only for the elite. It was considered glamorous and accessible only to those who could afford it. At one time, the cost of a round-trip ticket into my riding of Cariboo—Prince George from Vancouver was in the thousands of dollars; now it is in the hundreds. With the entrance of low-cost carriers and competition, air travel became easily afforded, and this stimulated market growth.

Both Air Canada and WestJet have now introduced lower costs, low fare, or charter subsidiaries such as Rouge and Encore. This has stimulated the growth in a number of markets. As we speak, there are currently a number of start-up low-cost carriers at various stages of financing that are expected to enter the market in the short term. This will ultimately lead to a price competition with existing carriers. For a time, our national carriers will react with greater seat sales and maybe even a few new routes. However, ultimately as the past will dictate, only new entrants with deep pockets will survive.

All this is to say that maybe it is time to reconsider policies that served us well when the Canadian aviation industry needed protection to flourish, but now impair our competitiveness. Of course, such protectionism comes at a cost that is largely borne by Canadian consumers who pay relatively high airfares and by a Canadian travel and tourism sector, which, also due to higher costs, has been losing market share for over a decade, unable to compete or go head to head with the big boys because the deck is stacked against

them. Airline start-ups and failures are frequent, and ultimately the ones that suffer the most are the communities and ultimately the consumer.

I want to talk a bit about airports. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that Canadian airports in 2012 accounted for \$4.3 billion in real GDP, but had a total economic footprint of \$12 billion. Generating almost 63,000 jobs and contributing over \$3 billion in federal and regional taxes, Canada's airports are vital to the success of the Canadian economy. They are key gateways for inbound and outbound tourism, business, and personal travel. Domestic, commerce, and international trade are all predicated on access to our Canadian public.

● (1810)

Canada is blessed with a strategic geographic location. We are at the crossroads of great circle routes between Asia, Europe, and the Americas. We have this competitive advantage that we as a nation have never fully taken advantage of. Our competition has successfully negated this competitive advantage with integrated policies and programs aimed at stimulating inbound tourism and facilitating connecting traffic through its global hubs, essentially overstepping, or to use an aviation term, overflying Canada.

Canada's airports face increasingly aggressive competition, competition from countries that have recognized the importance of air transportation as a driver of economic growth. Our neighbouring U.S. counterparts market directly to and easily access a large portion of Canada's U.S. transborder and international travel market. Our cargoes are shipped to U.S. ports and airports and then trucked across the line.

Canadian airports also compete with each other for the allocation of limited carrier capacity. Our regional airports and communities are oftentimes pitted against one another in competition for airline service. As mentioned during the Billy Bishop debate, Canadian airports also face challenging times, along with changing aircraft capacity, and a continued focus on environmental issues, such as noise and residential encroachment.

Government Orders

With the introduction of the national airports policy, a new framework was defined in relation to the federal government's role in aviation. This happened in the nineties. NAS airports, composed of the 26 airports across Canada that were deemed as critical links for our country, were deemed essential to Canada's air transport system. The airports served 94% of the air traffic in Canada. They were transferred under lease to the airport authorities, and in some cases, the municipalities. The infrastructure at many of these airports, if not all, was antiquated and in need of attention.

Through the transfer negotiations, reinvestment monies were given with the expectation that these airports were to do everything in their power to be self-sufficient. Airports have very few revenue-generation streams. With the transfer of airports and the new-found independence also came the realization that user-pay systems were needed. Airport improvement fees became the norm, and today we have airports that are incredible examples of the NAS transfer. We also have airports that have struggled to remain competitive and viable.

There are a number of things that we should be talking about with respect to our aviation policies and aerospace industry. For example, airport rents can represent up to 30% of airport operating budgets, far more than what would be expected in dividends and income tax from private, for-profit airports, such as those in Europe. Canada collects \$300 million from airports across Canada, and they reinvest \$50 million. Our NAV and security fees are among the highest in the industry. If we really want to become competitive, we need to fully integrate parts of our local transportation system. We need to look at aligning our foreign trade policy and our free trade policy with our air policy. We need to look at our tourism policies and align them with our trade policies.

As we speak, we have carriers and airports that are struggling. The current government wants to give one carrier a competitive advantage. It continues to stand before us and say that it will give Air Canada a competitive advantage. If it wants to show true leadership, it could align our policies and promotions. It could stimulate air travel to and from Canada. It could look holistically at our tourism, aviation, and trade policies and bring them all into alignment so that carriers, regardless of whether it is Air Canada, WestJet, or Pacific Coastal, to name a few, or the dozens of Canadian air carriers, can remain competitive.

This is low-hanging fruit, and the government is rushing it to look after its Liberal friends when really what it could be doing is taking a step back and re-evaluating Canada's aviation system as a whole. This is not an attack on the aerospace sector, as the government would like Canadians to believe, this is giving one company, one organization, a competitive advantage over others.

•(1815)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to my colleague across the way, on two fronts: one, the very strong arguments he made that legislation can in fact protect good-paying jobs; two, that government interaction can generate growth in the employment sector.

However, what I would like him to comment or reflect upon is that the previous Conservative government had carriage of this file. It

came to the conclusion—I think I am paraphrasing it correctly—that effectively it agreed with Air Canada that there was no provision to legislate there. It concluded that the legislation was weak and that it was not going to intervene. Effectively, it decided to do nothing.

Was doing nothing on this file preferable to securing the jobs that would be secured through Bill C-14? Was the previous government's position of doing nothing on this file but agreeing with Air Canada on it having no obligation to do any work in any one of these major cities in fact the responsible direction to go, or is this position an advancement, by the fact that it protects real jobs in real cities?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, again, I am part of this Parliament. The Liberals like to point fingers and say, "It was this government that didn't do this, and these guys didn't do this". The reality is that they are the ones who have been campaigning on open and transparent ways. Instead, what they are doing is muddying the waters and colluding with third parties. They are ensuring that their friends are looked after.

It was our government that legislated the back-to-work legislation that protected Air Canada in 2012. It was our government that told Air Canada that this was before the courts and that it should be fighting its battles to ensure this was done the right way, that we did not want to interfere with the courts.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many of the members who spoke today mentioned that they were lawyers. I am not a lawyer. However, I am very uncomfortable with the idea of voting in favour of a bill that legalizes job losses that are illegal today.

Our colleague talked about his experience in the aerospace sector, and his remarks speak to that.

I would like to know if the member is as uncomfortable as I am about voting in favour of a bill that legalizes job losses that are currently illegal.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I was leery about the government before, and I am increasingly leery as we go. The government likes to tell us, "Just trust us. Just hang in there. You'll get it to committee and we'll have the discussion. We'll have a collaborative effort." All we have seen with the government is that it gets its way, enforces its way, then it gets it to committee and forces the majority anyway.

The reality is that if the Liberals do not like what is being said, they grab their toys and move to the next sandbox. It is like they do not have to listen to what we have to say.

Government Orders

The reality is that the government continues to say, “Just trust us. Trust us.” Well, Canadians are learning what it means to trust it. It is broken promises. Nothing about the government is open and transparent. As a matter of fact, all it is doing are backroom deals and looking after their friends.

I do not trust the government. I am with the hon. member from across the way. There is more and more ambiguity with the government, and more fuzziness. I think we should all be afraid.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do want to take this opportunity to correct the member for Spadina—Fort York, who wants to say that the previous government did nothing on this and nothing on that. Of course, our previous government made substantial investments in the aerospace sector. One example is the \$900 million for the strategic aerospace defence initiative. It was a significant investment, administrated through Industry Canada, that is supporting the aerospace sector.

The current government is not helping the aerospace sector. In fact, it is going in the opposite direction. It is changing the rules in the middle of the game to allow jobs to go out of the country.

I wonder if the member would comment further upon some of the significant changes we made, not just for the aerospace sector, but for all businesses and all workers. It made Canada a more competitive environment to create jobs by lowering business taxes, by increasing our trading relationships.

We did so much for the aerospace sector, for every sector, and now the government is selling out workers by changing rules in the middle of the game.

• (1820)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, coming from the aviation sector, the Conservative government invested in our ports and airports.

The Conservatives recognized the importance of trade. They recognized the importance of our supply chain and our transportation networks, and the significant investments, whether it was the Asia-Pacific gateway and the marketing program, marketing our western provinces and Canada as a whole into one of the fastest growing markets in the world, or was it the introduction of 46 trade agreement from the previous government?

Our Conservative government got it. Conservatives saw the importance of trade. They saw the importance of connecting our goods and our people to the world. They got it. They understood it. The Liberal government is not understanding it, and they are never focused.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an odd experience in this place. I have a new friend in the member for Cariboo—Prince George. We have actually found mutual friends. We are friends.

However, he was not here in the 41st Parliament. I do not like Bill C-10, but it is hard to sit and listen to accolades for a previous government that so disrespected Parliament and showed such contempt for democracy, and that in a daily way did violence to the things that I hold dear.

I just needed to stand and make the comment that even as I oppose Bill C-10, I continue to rejoice that the people I see across the way are trying to do better.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what to say to that. As with my hon. colleague from the Green Party, the leader of the Green Party, I have deep respect for all members of this House. Indeed, I came here with an open mind. I came here with the hope that we would be able to work collaboratively and we would be able to make a difference.

However, what we have seen with the government and the folks across the way is indeed going back to the previous Liberal government, that it is not open and transparent, but more about looking after their friends and not Canadians.

It is disappointing. I look across the way every day. I saw so much hope, and all I see is despair.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although I appreciate the comments of my honourable friend from Cariboo—Prince George, I certainly do not feel any despair.

I listened very attentively to a lot of the different arguments that have been made, including those from my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who I very much admire in terms of the way that he portrays arguments.

I understand the concern expressed about security and jobs and 100% legal certainty being somewhat whittled. That I do understand, and I understand that concern.

The hon. member was talking about creating parity, creating a level playing field, and how this law takes away a level playing field. That I completely do not understand because regardless of what we think about this law, and we can reasonably agree to differ, this law does create a level playing field. There is no other airline company in Canada that has these obligations put on it, except for Air Canada.

The Air Canada Public Participation Act requires that maintenance jobs be in one certain part of the country, or in one location. Other private airlines, because Air Canada is now a private airline, do not have that obligation. Yes, there is the argument that 28 years ago when Air Canada was first established, became privatized, we imposed obligations because we gave them stock, etc., but right now that stock has been completely depreciated.

I would like to understand, on the argument of not creating a level playing field, how does the hon. member argue that this creates a distinction between Air Canada and the other airlines by changing the law?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment by my hon. colleague.

Every day, when we are in aviation, when we are either meeting with a carrier that is not Air Canada or meeting with an airport that deals with Air Canada, we understand both the importance, but also the breadth of Air Canada's reach.

I spoke with members of the government off-line about this and spoke to them about their language. They are using this language about making Air Canada competitive.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Canada Transportation Act review was issued in February. There were 60 recommendations for Air Canada, and the government chose to pick one of them. If the Liberals wanted to have a huge impact and be the white knight on the horse, they could have taken a step back, took some time and actually looked at all of our aviation policies and trade policies, aligning that to make all of us, to make Canada as a whole, competitive.

• (1825)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate and the hon. member for Central Nova, I will let him know that there are only five minutes remaining in the usual time for government orders. I will have to interrupt him at approximately 6:30, but he can get started. He will have the remaining time, of course, in his ten minutes, or twenty minutes, as he may choose, when the House next returns to debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Central Nova.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was planning on sharing my time with my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle. However, today we will not necessarily even get to the end of my own remarks.

Today we are debating an important economic bill in a high-value strategic industry. I was hoping to provide a snapshot of the historical context in which we find ourselves, the role of government in promoting this important industry, and then turn to the specific changes that Bill C-10 will make and the benefits it would have, not only for Air Canada, but for the aerospace sector and for Canadians at large.

An appropriate starting point is that the privatization of Air Canada in the 1980s, which has been canvassed well in the House, created a series of conditions that sought to retain the benefits that this airline presented within our own country's borders.

Fast forwarding to 2012, the conditions led in part to the bankruptcy of a major supplier when Aveos went bankrupt. This had a serious and significant impact for 2,600 workers. One thing I can say, from my experience on the committee and listening to debate in the House, is that every member of the House, from each party, takes seriously the importance of jobs to Canadians and to their families. Where we have a conceptual divide is how we tackle that problem.

When the government had the opportunity to deal with the final condition that was put on Air Canada when the Aveos litigation was suspended, we determined it was important to take action. This requirement put Air Canada in a narrow box and required that it conduct its maintenance operations in three specific urban centres, namely, the Montreal urban community, Winnipeg, and Mississauga.

Before I get too far down that path, it is important that we talk about the role of government in creating economic growth in this sector.

Some members of the House take the view that legislating how many jobs an industry player should have in different locations is a wise economic policy. However, in my view, the role of the government is to create economic conditions that would allow these important engines to create growth and employ Canadians. That is what Bill C-10 seeks to do.

This sector is extraordinarily important to Canada. Over 180,000 individuals are employed in the aerospace sector in Canada. There are 33,000 of them who are employed by Air Canada or its subsidiaries.

Mr. Speaker, I see that you are giving me the two-minute warning, so perhaps I will cut to the chase.

Bill C-10 will level the playing field. My friend from Mount Royal indicated that there are no other airlines that are bound by the same conditions as in Canada. In our deliberations on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, we asked whether there were any in the world. None of the witnesses, including Transport Canada, who looked into it, could find a single example of an industry player who was hamstrung by the same economic conditions that we have placed on Air Canada. The playing field is not level, and Bill C-10 seeks to correct that issue.

By making Air Canada more competitive, our potentially most important player in this strategic sector will have the flexibility to allocate its resources so it can grow. When it has the freedom to choose its own economic policy, it can make investments into the sector that helped grow the economy for all of us. A perfect example is the recent purchase of the C Series jets. Air Canada has committed to 45 jets, with an option to buy 30 more. This will not only create jobs in the maintenance sector, through the centres of excellence that we referred to, but will also provide a boost to the manufacturing side of the aerospace industry, which represents 73% of the GDP contributed in this industry. Now 73% sounds like a lot, because it is, and in this sector there is \$29 billion at stake annually; seventy-three per cent of that is on the manufacturing side.

If we allow Air Canada to be competitive, it will invest in the industry, which will have benefits not just in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Mississauga, but in different parts of the country. My own riding has the Halifax International Airport, and we have a small but important aerospace presence. Companies like Pratt and Whitney would love to be part of the manufacturing of these C Series jets. These jets are not only important because Air Canada is purchasing them, but with an anchor client in place, other clients come onboard, as can be evidenced by the recent purchase by Delta.

I see you are prepared to rise, Mr. Speaker. I take it that I am at the end of my time.

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Central Nova will have another five minutes for his remarks when the House next takes debate on this particular question and, of course, the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the response by the Minister of National Defence to my question of February 19, regarding the short-sighted decision by his government to withdraw Canadian air support that was being provided to our soldiers by CF-18 fighter jets in the international war against terrorism raised more questions than answers.

The minister confirmed that, with the withdrawal of Canadian air support for our ground troops, it would be essential to acquire a portable, anti-armour capability, a capability the minister is now claiming is necessary when air support was in place, let alone when it is no longer being provided.

More disturbing was the admission that CF-18 air support had been withdrawn before this defensive system, a portable, anti-armour capability, was in place to protect our soldiers.

While the minister was quick to criticize our Conservative government by saying anti-armour defences were not provided when they should have been in addition to air cover, how then can the Minister of National Defence justify pulling air defences when the anti-armour capability that he has identified as being necessary is not in place?

He cannot have it both ways. Either that capability is necessary or it is not.

This changing story reminds me of the attempt by certain government apologists in the media to now blame Afghanistan roadside bomb casualties on Brian Mulroney, when it was Jean Chrétien who cancelled the Sea King helicopter replacement contract. Under his watch, he went ahead with the disposal of Canada's medium-lift Chinook helicopters.

The EH-101 replacement helicopter could be reconfigured for troop transport.

The Chrétien Liberals knew they were cancelling the troop transport replacement helicopters. They should have stopped the sale of the Chinooks until a replacement was purchased, or not sent Canadian troops into a battle zone without the proper equipment and air support.

The Chrétien Liberals' decision to cancel the Sea King replacement helicopter was a cynical political act to get elected on the backs of the women and men who serve their country in uniform, just like the decision to cancel air support today.

I remember the names of the pilots who died when their ancient Sea King Helicopter crashed.

The assessment to retire the CH-147 Chinook helicopter, in Canadian service from 1974 to the early 1990s, by the government of Brian Mulroney was done on the basis of having a contract being signed to replace the Sea King helicopter.

While the sale was negotiated prior to the 1993 federal election, the Dutch government did not start to take possession of our old Chinook helicopters prior to December 28, 1995.

The sale to dispose of Canada's only military medium-lift helicopter was completed by the Liberal government. This was done with the full knowledge that the Sea King replacement had been cancelled and that it would create a huge equipment gap in our military, similar to what is happening today with the federal government decision to so-call delay, postpone, or more likely, cancel equipment for our military earmarked by our Conservative government.

The Liberals immediately moved after that election to break the helicopter replacement contract, so why did they not break the contract to sell our old Chinooks to the Netherlands? Breaking contracts is not a new idea invented by the leader of the third party, even if it is payback for lost union votes in the London area this past election.

Mr. Chrétien gave him the idea of breaking the LAV contract with the Saudis years before when the Liberals broke the helicopter contract.

In Afghanistan, the difference it would have made would have been in the lives of Canadian soldiers.

Even the former lieutenant general, now the MP for Orléans, talked about the need for transport helicopters to reduce casualties in Afghanistan. "We have to have helicopters to move our kids around the battlefield so they don't suffer unnecessary casualties", he said.

Likewise, the integrated soldier system project, the ISSP, is much more than a glorified cell phone, as it was mischaracterized by the media.

Sensor suites and systems currently under development represent an increased understanding to efficiently monitor a soldier's status as well as environmental conditions.

If survivability of the soldier of the future is as important as I believe it is, then Canada should not be cancelling or delaying the ISSP any more than it should have cancelled air cover for our troops fighting the international war against terrorism.

● (1835)

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must admit I was having difficulty following the hon. member when she was bouncing around from Chrétien-cancelled helicopters to integrated soldier systems to F-18s to the new mission in Afghanistan. Therefore, let me see if we can try to bring this down to some level of coherence as to what the question or issue is that the member seems to be interested in.

In 2002, there was a friendly fire incident. That was a tragedy. There is no question that was a tragedy. However, to try to link that to the decision to withdraw the F-18s some 14 years later seems to be a stretch beyond imagination.

Adjournment Proceedings

If we do not actually accept that the minister has the best interests of the troops in mind, surely the hon. member thinks that the chief of the defence staff has the best interests of the troops in mind. I would say it is quite clear that both the minister and the CDS are at one on this, that the safety and security of our troops are foremost. They are the number one priority. There is no linkage between the withdrawal of the CF-18s and the re-profiling of the mission, which is not in the context of trying to keep our troops safe but also simultaneously trying to keep their position so that it is effective.

We are very fortunate to have a world-class military. It has an exceptional reputation among our coalition partners. Therefore, when the mission was re-profiled, our coalition partners welcomed the idea. The hon. member seems not to understand that there is something in the order of 200 airplanes in that theatre, all of which are interoperable, all of which know where our troops are at any given time, whether they are Canadian, American, or other coalition partner troops. Therefore, to try to somehow or other suggest that our troops are less safe because our own airplanes are no longer in theatre is disingenuous to the extreme.

We have put together an integrated and comprehensive whole-of-government strategy tailored to what is an evolving situation, a strategy that increases our train, advise, and assist mission, and provides expanded intelligence capability. The objective is to train and empower our Iraqi security forces so that they will be able to counter the scourge of ISIL.

On February 15, the chief of the defence staff gave direction to cease air strike operations as part of Operation Impact. The timing was planned with our coalition partners to ensure that there was no capability gap and, may I say, no security gap.

I thank members for their time and attention.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite does not seem to appreciate is that, when we do not have our own air assets in the air, we cannot do a mission and redirect.

As the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke—a riding that includes Garrison Petawawa, the largest army base in Canada—I am concerned with the health and well-being of each and every member of the Canadian Armed Forces. Garrison Petawawa is the proud home of the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, which is currently providing boots on the ground in the Middle East.

My role as a member of the loyal opposition is to hold the government accountable, a job I take very seriously. I want all soldiers to believe that the government will do everything possible to make sure they come home safely. Let us not disappoint them.

● (1840)

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I hope that the hon. member, in her closing remarks, is not suggesting that the minister and the chief of the defence staff do not have forefront in their minds the safety and security of our troops, because that is what I interpreted from her remarks.

The priority and safety of our troops, our world-class military, is of foremost concern to everyone in the defence department, the minister's office, and the government. Therefore, to try to make the

linkage that the withdrawal of our CF-18s somehow or other puts our troops at greater risk is disingenuous and misleading.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in this House to revisit a question I asked a few months ago about the tragic situation that at the time was unfolding in our riding, and about the suicide crisis in Pimicikamak Cree Nation, otherwise known as Cross Lake, in northern Manitoba.

Over the course of a few weeks at the end of 2015 and then in early 2016, six people took their lives in Cross Lake, and there were more than 100 suicide attempts that took place in the last number of weeks, as well.

As I pointed out in this House, this did not just happen. The epidemic has everything to do with our history of colonialism, of racist policies, including the sustained underfunding of first nations. The results are truly horrifying. Half of first nation children in Canada live in poverty. In Manitoba, 62% of indigenous children live below the poverty line.

What do those conditions of poverty look like?

Almost one-third of Manitoba first nations live in reserve homes in need of major repair—the second-highest percentage in the country. In terms of health, we know that residents have a higher mortality and a higher incidence and prevalence of diabetes. Also we know, of course, that suicide rates on first nations are double those of other communities.

When it comes to education, we know that the debilitating two per cent cap imposed by the Liberal government in the nineties has meant an underfunding of education, including underfunding of infrastructure, like schools, including the lack of funds for sponsorship for post-secondary education, and of course, this has contributed to the educational outcomes of young people growing up on first nations.

We also know that the underfunding has resulted in a lack of recreation services, services that we would take for granted in non-first nation communities: access to recreation centres; access to hockey rinks; access to a simple drop-in centre and some basic programming, so that young people have somewhere healthy where they can go and be with each other.

I want to echo in this chamber, once again, the words of 17-year-old Amber Muskego from Cross Lake, who had said during the suicide crisis that there is nothing for young people to do in her community.

As I pointed out, this is the face of crushing poverty and growing inequality in Canada.

That is why first nations such as the Pimicikamak Cree Nation, and I would say the other 40 first nations that I have the honour of representing in northern Manitoba, are asking for support in terms of education, recreation, and jobs, so that young people like those in Cross Lake and in other first nations do not have to reach that point, that point of hopelessness that we hope no youth will reach.

Adjournment Proceedings

The question really here is this. Will the government listen to Amber and step up to support young people in Pimicikamak Cree Nation and first nations across the country?

I want to particularly point to the fact that, in this last budget, the government did not fulfill its original commitment to challenging the education underfunding. It also did not follow the Human Rights Tribunal directive to adequately fund child welfare services on first nations.

We know that there was no commitment made in the budget to Jordan's principle, which has everything to do with ensuring that young people on first nations have equitable access to health services.

Then, sadly, the details are still scant when it comes to addressing the underfunding of infrastructure on first nations. We know that the housing monies are inadequate, given the needs in communities. We also know that there is a reference to social infrastructure, including recreation. While that is an encouraging commitment, we have yet to see how, in fact, that fund will be rolled out.

The question is this. So we do not lose any lives like those lives that have been lost in Cross Lake, what is the government truly prepared to do to make a tangible difference in the lives of young people in Cross Lake and in first nations across our country?

• (1845)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the question posed by the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski. I thank her for her advocacy and collaboration around these particular efforts. I know that she is very sincere in the work that she does. I know that because we have crossed paths and we deal with many similar issues as they relate to first nations and Inuit communities across Canada.

My heart goes out to the families and communities that have lost loved ones to suicide. I know the great personal sacrifice that many communities and families endure. Suicide has touched many of us personally in the House and has exacted a very heavy toll on many of the families and communities that we represent. We join the communities in their grief and share with them our deepest condolences.

I know that currently the government is working with indigenous communities and leadership to provide supports for those who are grieving. Suicidal behaviour is a risk at any age and is most often the tragic consequence of a complex array of factors which, when taken together, can weaken even the strongest and healthiest people, as I have personally witnessed.

Mental health issues, such as depression, substance abuse, social and family factors, bullying or relationship issues, a lack of income, lack of housing and proper social supports all play a role in contributing to a decline in mental health. They are vital to a sense of hope, wanting to go on, and seeing oneself contributing in society.

Suicide rates among first nations and Inuit youth are among the highest in Canada. We are committed to taking action and have been taking action in the few months that we have formed government to prevent further deaths in communities like Pimicikamak and other

indigenous communities across Canada. It is vital to Canadians' shared success that we work collaboratively on a nation-to-nation basis to ensure better social and economic outcomes for indigenous people. We believe that more must be done as a vital element of reconciliation, and I share that with the member.

In addition, the minister will work with the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to launch consultations with the provinces and territories and indigenous peoples on a national early learning and child care framework as a first step toward delivering affordable, high-quality, flexible, and fully inclusive child care. A key component of combatting this ongoing tragedy is working in partnership with indigenous communities to promote and, in fact, ensure that people have a secure personal cultural identity. We have made significant investments in health research to ensure that we can provide for proper healthy promotion, prevention, and resilience.

In addition, we are committed to implementing Jordan's principle. We have ensured that there are investments across the board of government to meet that challenge and the goal that we have established. We are already negotiating with the provinces and territories around a new health accord, which will include investments in mental health.

In addition, we will invest more than \$8.4 billion over the next five years to meet many of the issues around poverty that exist in first nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, ensuring that we are investing in housing, recreation, shelters, and infrastructure that are needed in many of these communities. We are looking at how the cost of living is impacting people. We are looking at how the lack of programs and investments over the last decade is impacting people.

We are committed to ensuring that change and progress happen. The cost of doing nothing remains too high. We are all connected to this issue and committed to making progress for first nations, Inuit, and Métis people in the country.

• (1850)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I certainly recognize her commitment to this issue.

While I am heartened to hear about the government's commitment as was outlined in the budget, what concerns me is truly the lack of action. I have been in touch with a number of communities in our north. I have been visiting communities since the budget was tabled, and people do not know how the commitments in the budget are actually going to roll out. Nobody has contacted them in terms of addressing the underfunding of education, in terms of housing, in terms of recreation. This is simply not okay, because whether it is Amber Muskego, whether it is young people across the country, they have said that action is really what is going to make the difference here.

Adjournment Proceedings

Many members on the other side are very proud to talk about their commitment to reconciliation. Reconciliation requires action. I am proud of the position that we have taken in the NDP to hold the government to account, and to make it very clear that in order to work with first nations to prevent suicide, we are going to need to see real action from the government as soon as possible.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, there are so many things I could address around this issue, but there are a couple that I do want to highlight, because we know and understand the problem that exists.

We are working with indigenous governments across Canada to build a path forward that will include reconciliation, but a path as well that lifts up our indigenous communities and allows them to play a larger role in Canada. The minister will form a voices of indigenous youth council to facilitate hearing directly from indigenous youth across the country on what is needed in their communities.

We also know that the loss of life through suicide is tragic, especially among our youth. In addition to adequate health and mental health supports, we must ensure that people in the communities have hope. This is why our government is engaging on a nation-to-nation, Inuit-to-crown basis with indigenous people. It begins with addressing the youth and what their issues are. It begins with addressing the well-being of all indigenous people, and that means dealing with our child welfare system, our education system, our employment situation, and the infrastructure needs that many of these communities require.

I would tell the member opposite to continue with her advocacy work as we will continue with ours, and in partnership, we will find the better path forward.

[*Translation*]

CBC/RADIO CANADA

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Laurier—Sainte-Marie are very concerned at the moment about what is going to become of the Radio-Canada tower and facilities in the proud Centre-Sud neighbourhood.

We all know that the situation is different now. We have new technology, and things change. Radio-Canada has to adapt. However, that does not necessarily mean it should liquidate its assets at fire sale prices or get out of the neighbourhood. When Radio-Canada set up shop in what was known as the Faubourg à m'lasse some 50 years ago, it completely destroyed a neighbourhood.

The people of Centre-Sud are resilient, and they adapted to the new reality. They built their lives around that reality. If Radio-Canada were to leave, everything those people have bravely built over the past five decades would be laid to waste once again.

Radio-Canada's departure would have a huge impact on local merchants, particularly those on Sainte-Catherine and in the area known as Cité des ondes, or media city, which is home to CBC/Radio-Canada, TVA, LCN, and CTV. They are all located in that same area, just steps away from one another. The area has a unique vitality that must be protected.

As I already said, the corporation must adapt to new realities, and no one is disputing that. However, it must also consider the broader context that I just outlined. It must consider the needs of a neighbourhood that is bravely facing many challenges. Above all, CBC/Radio-Canada must consider its own commitments. When the corporation sat down with the City of Montreal in 2009, it said that it would not move. They developed an agreement with some very interesting points. There is nothing to say about that. The entire agreement is based on the fact that CBC/Radio-Canada planned to stay in the same location. Now, there are rumours. We do not have access to the minutes of the board of directors' meetings. Many rumours are circulating and people are worried.

When I asked the minister the question in the House, she answered that the government would remain at arm's length from CBC/Radio-Canada. I do not agree with that. There can be no meddling with the content broadcast by CBC/Radio-Canada. However, when it comes to selling a building of such great significance in this part of Montreal, we must remember section 48 of the Broadcasting Act, whereby CBC/Radio-Canada cannot sell a building valued at more than \$4 million without the approval of the Governor in Council, meaning cabinet and the minister. The minister cannot wash her hands of this issue and allow CBC/Radio-Canada to decide on its own. She must take a stance on this matter.

• (1855)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie for her question. I also want to thank her for caring about this issue. I want to assure the House that our government is following this issue closely.

It is important to remember that real property management is not CBC/Radio-Canada's principal activity. It is a related activity that helps the corporation fulfill its mandate to broadcast to all of Canada.

A number of buildings owned by CBC/Radio-Canada, which were built over the years for radio and television activities, no longer meet the corporation's or the industry's requirements.

Over the past few years, the majority of CBC/Radio-Canada's regional centres have migrated to new, more modern, and more digital facilities that are better adapted to today's realities.

As for Maison de Radio-Canada in Montreal, specifically, I know that the corporation is currently looking at all available options. These options include selling the building and moving CBC/Radio-Canada to a leased facility, which may be an existing facility or a new build, on the existing Maison site or elsewhere still in downtown Montreal.

CBC/Radio-Canada has also indicated that all options are on the table. The existing building, which is more than 50 years old, is in need of major renovations, which are estimated at \$170 million. That is a lot of money for the corporation.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

The tower has many underused or vacant spaces in addition to lost space owing to the building's architectural constraints. The corporation's needs in terms of space have changed significantly over the past few decades and CBC/Radio-Canada has estimated that it would need approximately one-third of the space it currently occupies in the tower and associated buildings.

While respected, the independence of the crown corporation and the role of its boards of directors, it is with great interest that our government will be following the decision-making process regarding the future of Maison Radio-Canada.

I know the CBC's decision will take into account its needs as the national public broadcaster as well as the future of the surrounding neighbourhood, Canada's cultural sector, Quebec, and francophone audiences across the country.

As we have said before, the government recognizes the socio-economic impact of CBC/Radio-Canada in Montreal as well as the importance of the regional presence of Radio-Canada.

● (1900)

[Translation]

It requires facilities that will enable it to create high-quality Canadian content and to produce and broadcast that content using digital platforms and technologies. CBC/Radio-Canada is going through a period of change, as are other media. Its needs are changing, and so are the needs of artists and professionals. It is important that those individuals have access to facilities that meet their needs and allow them to fully carry out CBC/Radio-Canada's mission, which, I would remind the House, is to provide a range of programming that informs, enlightens, and entertains, in both official languages, from coast to coast to coast.

As for the crown corporation's real property holdings, CBC/Radio-Canada is responsible for 400,000 square metres of real property that it must maintain. We must and we will make the best possible use of that real property, while respecting and supporting CBC/Radio-Canada's important mandate and the role that the Maison de Radio-Canada plays in Montreal.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I hope I was sufficiently clear in my initial presentation.

No one is disputing the fact that certain buildings, in their current state, do not meet CBC/Radio-Canada's needs or the fact that the building in question needs extensive renovations. It is also true that CBC/Radio-Canada is not a real estate company.

The two key issues are social licence. By consulting the community, CBC/Radio-Canada created an advisory board with various local stakeholders. That board's first recommendation was that CBC/Radio-Canada confirm that it would remain in the eastern part of downtown, not just anywhere, but in the eastern part of downtown. That is what the local stakeholders want, and that is CBC/Radio-Canada's moral obligation, in addition to meeting its own commitments. That is absolutely crucial.

Lastly, to come back to the issue of CBC/Radio-Canada's independence, yes, it is independent when it comes to content.

However, as we have said ourselves, it is not a real estate agency and any new projects must have cabinet approval.

I therefore hope the government will not be satisfied with simply following this file; I hope it will show real leadership.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that we have indeed heard the arguments of our dear colleague across the way.

[English]

I would like to assure you, Mr. Speaker, and Canadians at large, that our government is following this file with great interest.

[Translation]

We have said, and I will say it again, that CBC/Radio-Canada indicated that all options are on the table and this is still the main issue. No decision has been made. Public consultations were held. Everything is on the table and we are waiting on a decision by CBC/Radio-Canada.

We have already said that we wanted CBC/Radio-Canada to go over every scenario concerning its current needs with the various industry stakeholders, its employees, the community, and politicians. We recognize the importance of this file and of Maison de Radio-Canada to Montreal and Montreal East.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I assure you that the government will take into account all these aspects when reviewing the corporation's plans for the future of the Maison de Radio-Canada site.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn. The House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering all votes under National Defence in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

[English]

I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1905)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

NATIONAL DEFENCE—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2016-17

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under National Defence in the main estimates, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

The Chair: I would like to open this committee of the whole session by making a short statement on this evening's proceedings.

Tonight's debate is being held pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) (a), which provides for each of two sets of estimates selected by the Leader of the Opposition to be considered in committee of the whole for up to four hours. Tonight will be a general debate on all of the votes related to National Defence.

Business of Supply

The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual rotation. Each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time, which may be used both for debate and for posing questions. Should members wish to use this time to make a speech, it can last a maximum of 10 minutes, leaving at least 5 minutes for questions to the minister.

When a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used. Members should also note that they need to have unanimous consent of the committee if they wish to split their time with another member.

[*Translation*]

When the time is to be used for questions and answers, the Chair will expect that the minister's response should reflect approximately the time taken by the question.

[*English*]

Ordinarily, the time taken for the response should be in line with the amount of time taken to pose the question in the first place. As has been experienced in the past, the person posing the question, though, should not be under any misunderstanding, that a question put in a very short period of time that might require a more complex response, sufficient time will be provided to the minister to provide such a response. However, again, accordingly the time taken to respond should be approximate to the time that was taken to pose the question.

[*Translation*]

As is the case in any proceeding in committee of the whole, members need not be in their own seats to be recognized. Although members may speak more than once, the Chair will generally try to ensure that all members wishing to speak are heard before inviting members to speak again while respecting the proportional party rotations for speakers.

[*English*]

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, ministers and members should be referred to by their title or riding name, and of course all remarks should be addressed through the Chair. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all established standards of decorum, parliamentary language, and behaviour.

At the conclusion of tonight's debate, the committee will rise, the votes related to National Defence will be deemed reported, and the House will adjourn immediately until tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

We may now begin tonight's session. The House in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a), consideration in committee of the whole of all votes related to National Defence in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

• (1910)

[*English*]

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is indeed an honour to be here to discuss the main estimates of the Department of National Defence.

First, it is great to have everyone here for the debate tonight. I think all of us in Parliament want to express our gratitude to the brave men and women in uniform who serve us day in and day out on numerous operations, ensuring that all of us in Canada are safe. That is something we all too often take for granted. We all have that same belief and camaraderie, just different ideas about how we should go about it.

Since the new government has come to power, it is amazing what has happened in the short period of time when it comes to defence.

First, we saw the signals in the throne speech, following what was in the Liberal Party platform, and now in the main estimates. They show significant reductions in spending on national defence. In the budget, we saw a \$3.7 billion cut on expenditures for capital projects. That is delaying a number of different main acquisitions that are so necessary for the safety of our brave men and women in uniform. There was also a \$300 million reduction in the overall main estimates of the Department of National Defence.

I want to make a brief opening comment, then I will go straight into questions.

David Perry had an interesting quote after the budget came down. He said, "This budget reminds me of that episode of *Oprah* where everybody in the audience got a car...Everyone got a car here except the Department of Defence". David Perry is a senior analyst with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

I fear this is just the beginning of what could be another era of darkness that we saw under the Liberals during the decade of darkness. Just to drive home that fact, and although it was General Rick Hillier at the time that coined the phrase "the decade of darkness", the PBO report in 2015 said:

The most significant budget cuts under program review occurred from 1995 to 2004...The cumulative defence expenditure over that period of time was roughly \$13.4 billion below what our modelling showed was required to maintain the existing force structure.

That was recorded just last fall, in 2015. Again, this is a clear indication that what we are seeing now we went through before. The Liberals know how to reduce defence expenditures. In the budget we saw increases in spending in all departments except defence, which is something I think all of us are very concerned about. That happened in 1994. It was the last time we had a defence policy review, and 1995 was when we started seeing the cuts.

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I want to get to some of the specific cuts. It was reported in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 20 that based upon the budget reductions of \$3.7 billion, that would push spending on new equipment back to 2021 or later. We know for a fact Arctic offshore patrol vessels are \$173 million and that is being withheld. The project is already under way. Future fighter aircraft, the CF-18 replacements, are \$109 million. That is being withheld. The Cyclone maritime helicopter is \$90 million. That is being withheld. These are the replacements for our Sea Kings. We are taking possession of these helicopters. They are supposed to be out there doing the service. The *Halifax* class modernization and frigate life extension is \$71 million. That is being withheld. The integrated soldier system project, at \$39.4 million, is withheld.

That is just the tip of the iceberg. It is not even \$500 million in cuts. Where is the other \$3.2 billion coming from? That is my question for the minister to start.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to echo the sentiments of the hon. member in recognizing of our men and women who serve us day in and day out. They do tremendous work in supporting our great efforts.

I was asked a question by someone. "Isn't it tough to be away from your family?" I told the person that I had nothing to complain about. We have men and women right now around the world, away from their families. We have a lot to be thankful for.

The concerns that the member has raised could not be further from the truth. As I stated early on, when it comes to our government's commitment to our men and women, it is rock solid, and we delivered on that. We were going to maintain the planned increases. We have kept that commitment. The 2% planned increases have remained. That is a total of \$361 million.

In addition to that, we had \$200 million for infrastructure. The \$3.7 billion the member is talking about is money that is not cut. It is actually re-profiled to further years, which would allow the procurement to catch up. It is not a cut. It is re-profiled for the years we will need it.

● (1915)

Mr. James Bezan: I will refer, Mr. Chair, to the estimates, page 169. It shows main estimates this year of \$18.6 billion versus the main estimates last year of \$18.9 billion. That is a \$300-million shortfall, so that is a cut. There is \$3.7 billion not being spent that is needed right now on equipment that we need right now. That is a cut.

The national defence committee has been doing its work on the defence policy review and looking at the defence of North America. Jaime Pitfield appeared in committee, who is the assistant deputy minister of infrastructure and environment. As we looked back at 1994 and the lessons learned from the Liberal decade of darkness then, we saw base closures across this country.

ADM Pitfield said the following:

One thing we're looking for is to densify bases. Right now they sprawl and are very expensive to operate. We will be putting like functions with like functions....

I find it strange that in the national defence committee, members of the Liberal Party keep raising the issue that Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake should be moved over to Comox.

My question to the minister is this. Is the government looking at shutting down bases and consolidating some of our assets?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, first, as I stated earlier, our government is not making any cuts to defence. We are sticking with the planned increases. As the member talked about, the discussions that happen within committee are its own, but we have absolutely no plans to shut down any bases.

Mr. James Bezan: I am glad to hear that, Mr. Chair. I wanted to make sure I got that on the record.

One thing the Conservatives are concerned about is something that just happened on bases. During the refugee program and bringing in all the Syrian refugees, I put a question on the Order Paper that the minister responded to on December 10 about what it would cost to renovate summer cadet barracks on bases in Kingston, Valcartier, Borden, Trenton, Meaford, and Petawawa. The total cost was \$6.4 million.

I am surprised not to see in the main estimates a transfer from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to cover the costs that came out of the operating budget of the Department of National Defence for the refugees, and of course, those facilities were never used for Syrian refugees.

I would ask the minister why \$6.4 million is not being transferred from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration so that it does not come out of the operating budget of the Department of National Defence.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as you know, the project for bringing in 25,000 refugees was a vast one. The military has the ability to respond very quickly. One of the great assets we had was infrastructure in place that could be utilized for the refugees. We are very proud of that fact.

When I was advised that some of the barracks had to be upgraded, I thought it was an opportunity because our troops also use the facilities. As an added benefit, not only could they have been used for the refugees, but now they will be used for the benefit of all of our troops.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I question the logic there because I have never seen a request from the Department of National Defence to winterize those barracks. They are used mainly for cadets who are there on summer training programs.

This issue came up at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. That committee requested that officials from the Department of National Defence appear at committee, and the officials balked at appearing. Will the minister ensure that representatives from the Department of National Defence actually appear at committee?

• (1920)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I cannot comment on something I have just now been made aware of. As the member knows, I have made my department open, quite extensively, not only for briefings but I am also happy to answer these questions, whether it is at committee or not. I am happy to provide briefings from my department as well.

In terms of those camps, they are not just used by cadets. They are used by our troops in many different capacities, from temporary quarters to courses that are run. They are used by many folks and it was an opportunity for us to winterize them so that our troops can benefit from those barracks.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I will change gears and talk about the defence policy review and the consultations that are taking place.

Of course, we are hearing a lot of commentary in the media that this is just another way to have a discussion on something that might already be predetermined. As I mentioned earlier, in the throne speech, the budget, and also in the Liberal campaign platform, the Liberals talked about things like a leaner military, pivoting toward peacekeeping and away from combat operations, and cancelling the F-35 as a replacement for the CF-18.

Is the defence policy review actually something that is going to help inform the decisions made in the future for the Canadian Armed Forces, or is this just another delay tactic? We have seen in the past where Liberals often dither and delay and do not make any decisions.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, from the round of questions, I think the member wants to be given confidence that our government is going to be supporting our troops and making sure that they are going to be looked after and have the right capabilities. This defence review is just that.

We are going to have a very wide consultation among all Canadians, where all members of Parliament can participate, and we are going to have experts. This is exactly what it is for, making sure that our military is focused, that it has the ability to respond to the government's needs, that we are making sure our men and women have the right capability, that they are looked after, and that the Canadian Armed Forces is structured to better support its members.

I would also like to mention that it has been over 20 years since we have had a full public consultation defence review.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I guess we are somewhat skeptical of the defence policy review, knowing what happened in 1994. There was a defence policy review that came out, a new white paper was published, and then we saw the massive cuts in the decade of darkness. Right off the bat, the Liberals cut 20% from the defence budget in 1995, so we do have our concerns.

One thing I want to ask the minister is, in this discussion, first and foremost, will the government take in all the input in a serious

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manner. Second, has he taken a serious look at what the threats and risks are to Canada from a defence perspective?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, absolutely we will be taking in all the advice. In fact, members of Parliament here have direct access to me. When I was given the privilege of being the Minister of National Defence, I sent out a letter to all members of Parliament.

However, I want to make sure that the defence review reaches out to all Canadians to have their experience, their advice, provided to us. This is one of the reasons I have, on my minister's advisory panel, four exceptional Canadians to give me that advice through a very profound, filtered lens, so that when we do come up with a final conclusion of the defence review, it will have a significant impact.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I promised the minister earlier today, since this was new to him, I would go very easy on him, and he can see that I have.

However, the last things I want to touch on are the threats and risks, and this idea of pivoting to peacekeeping.

The Canadian Global Affairs Institute had a symposium May 2 at the Rideau Club. Major-General Doug Dempster was there as well as Lieutenant-General Stuart Beare, and both are retired. Of course, Lieutenant-General Beare was the former commanding officer of CJOCC.

Mr. Dempster spoke about the historical context of Canada's contribution to peace support operations. He cited poor outcomes in Somalia, Rwanda, and Congo in the 1990s. He urged the Canadian Armed Forces and National Defence to recall the lessons learned from those experiences.

Lieutenant-General Stuart Beare touched on the changing nature of peacekeeping. He stressed the primacy in retaining relevance and credibility in order to achieve mission success in peace support operations. He referenced the evolution of the military intervention in the Balkans. To underscore this point he said that there was ineffectiveness when it was a United Nations mission, but when it became a NATO mission, then things turned around. We actually had an impact when we had rules of engagement that supported our troops in ending the conflict.

I would ask the minister if he would agree that traditional peacekeeping is not possible in today's environment with the threats that we are facing.

• (1925)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when we discuss our government's commitment to work in a multilateral environment, whether it is the United Nations or NATO, it is about understanding conflict. We do need to learn the lessons from the past, and I have openly stated this many times.

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I have served in Bosnia and in Afghanistan, and I completely agree with the member that this is a new way of looking at peacekeeping work at a certain time. When we talk about peacekeeping now, it is about understanding conflict. We need to make sure that we are ready for high-intensity conflict, and in between, work in a much more holistic manner, as a whole of government, as we did with Operation Impact.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I will be giving my 10-minute remarks and then opening up to questions.

I stand today with an overwhelming sense of privilege, the privilege of being elected as a representative of the people of Vancouver South, the privilege of being the Minister of National Defence, and the privilege of assisting the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces in the outstanding work that they do.

I approach tonight's proceedings with the feeling of humility. Appearing before this committee of the whole is not only an opportunity to engage productively with members from all parties but also to further our government's commitment to openness and transparency. Open dialogue with members has been among my priorities since taking office. Accessibility that strengthens the democratic process is the goal.

Among my first orders of business as minister was restoring parliamentary access to Canadian Armed Forces' establishments and ensuring MPs can visit freely with the approval of the base commander alone, because we welcome their visits. In the past, this required ministerial approval for every single member of Parliament's visit.

I know that all parliamentarians have the best interests of our forces at heart. We may have different ideas about how we procure the equipment they need or where and when to deploy our troops, but I do not doubt the broad all-party support for our men and women in service.

For that reason, I made it part of our standard practice to host MPs for briefings, to make courtesy calls for major announcements, and to invite fellow members to accompany me on international trips, like my recent one to Poland and Ukraine. However, regrettably, the timing did not allow that to happen. In doing so, I hope to pave the way for opposition members to offer an effective critique of our work.

I am humbled by the important work we will do tonight, but I also stand before members with the confidence of my grasp of the issues, confidence born from having served as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces for 26 years and from the knowledge that everything I know and instruct my department to do is for the benefit of our service members and of Canada.

Much has been accomplished in the last six months. Our sailors, our soldiers, our airwomen and men, have been engaged in some of our government's most important initiatives. Most recently, the forces contributed to the massive efforts to respond to the disaster brought about by the devastating fires in Fort McMurray, Alberta. Our contribution of assistance to local first responders included the provision of five helicopters for assistance with evacuations and the transportation of nearly 125,000 pounds of humanitarian aid.

Little has made me prouder since becoming Minister of National Defence than when we did the whole-of-government effort of welcoming 25,000 Syrian refugees to our country. About 290 service personnel were deployed to Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan to process applications, assist with medical screening, provide logistical support, and airlift refugees to Canada, their new home. Eight government departments worked together in support of this noble effort, but the truth is that it was their job. The people who really deserve the recognition are the Canadians who welcomed their new neighbours to this country with a generous spirit. Thousands have donated clothing, household items, and money, so that refugees could begin new lives in comfort and with dignity.

While Canadians asked for nothing in return, their generosity is paying dividends, bringing us full circle. As I noted just last week, stories emerged about Syrian refugees leading community initiatives to offer clothing, household items, and money, so that the people of Fort McMurray could have comfort and dignity, as well.

That is a "best of Canada" model that could benefit the world. That is why our government is committed to strengthening relationships and engaging meaningfully with partners and allies around the world, and I believe we are well on our way.

Since taking office, I travelled extensively at home and abroad to ensure that Canada is engaged internationally in the most effective ways possible. Not surprisingly, refocusing Operation Impact, Canada's contribution to coalition efforts to degrade and defeat ISIL, was among one of my top priorities.

• (1930)

My first order of business was to undertake a thorough analysis of the situation on the ground. I travelled to the region twice to consult with allies and partners, as well as with our troops. I met with my American, British, and Iraqi counterparts, and discussed the progress we were making in the areas that needed reinforcement.

Once we identified the most meaningful contribution for Canada, my next order of business was to give an update to our coalition partners on the plan to refocus our efforts. In support of that goal, I travelled to Brussels, where I met with several of my European counterparts, as well as U.S. Secretary of Defense Carter.

Canada's plan to increase our troop contribution, enhance our intelligence contribution, and bolster the Iraqis' capacity to eliminate ISIL themselves was embraced without hesitation. In fact, President Obama recently said:

Canada is an extraordinarily valued member of the global coalition fighting ISIL, tripling its personnel to help train and advise forces in Iraq, stepping up its intelligence efforts in the region, and providing critical humanitarian support.

These reactions to Canada's refocused missions are a testament to the confidence our allies have in the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to contribute meaningfully to the work of the global coalition.

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It is tempting to bask in the accomplishment of our men and women in uniform, but the measure of my worth as defence minister is what my department does in support of our troops as they accomplish their mission. For that reason, my mandate moving forward is very clear. It is to support our men and women.

My department's work in the coming months and years will further efforts toward three commitments: taking care of our military members; giving them the right tools to do their jobs; and making sure that their work reflects our national ambitions.

In service of these goals, we are actively engaged in efforts to improve the process of transitioning from military to civilian life. We are facing one of the most troubling problems: the suicide rate within the forces. With an unshakeable determination, we offer hope and assistance to our members who feel that none exists.

We are tackling the issues of sexual misconduct and harassment in the military with resolve. The chief of the defence staff launched Operation Honour in order to fundamentally change the aspects of the forces culture that would have some members disregard the rights and well-being of others.

I have recently travelled to several bases, including Esquimalt, Valcartier, and Edmonton, and I can see that changes are happening. We will remain vigilant about these issues as they are critical to the morale and well-being of our troops everywhere.

On the issue of procurement, we acknowledge that there is a lot to be done. We have set ambitious goals. We will maintain current defence spending and plan increases. We have made this promise as part of our plan to implement the national shipbuilding strategy, and launch an open and transparent process to replace our CF-18s. We will address the short-term capability gaps, as we have with the interim oil tankers.

Finally, we are engaging in consultation with Canadians to develop a defence policy, one which ensures that the Canadian Armed Forces have what they need to confront the new threats and challenges in the years ahead. I will be focused on my responsibility for the Communications Security Establishment in Canada, which is also a part of my responsibility.

Tonight, let me close with a call to action for all Canadians, including the members of this House, to work with us, take part in the defence review process, and help pave the path toward a modern Canadian military that defends Canada and engages the world in a truly Canadian way.

• (1935)

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the hon. minister has been very busy in the last six months. I know he has been travelling literally around the world. It has helped inform him of not only our defence capabilities, but where we have defence gaps, and as well, our relationships with our allies.

Would the hon. minister comment on what he has learned as he has met with allies, troops, and various other people around the world, all of which has informed his present position with respect to the defence ministry?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the travel plan that I made had a method to its madness.

First, it was to get an understanding of our operations, to understand what was required in refocusing our mission. That is one of the reasons I travelled into the region twice, speaking with regional partners, like the King of Jordan and the Crown Prince in the UAE.

Second, it was very important to me to meet with our Five Eyes community, to speak with my counterparts, not just to discuss the current challenges and current threats, but also to talk about our defence review and how we can work together to make sure that as we launch our defence review, we learn from their lessons, and how we can face the challenges together.

Third, my plan is to actually visit many bases across Canada, so that I have a good understanding of their needs, not only for the defence review, but so that I can make the right choices on behalf of our government.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Chair, aid to civil authority is one of those core mandates of the defence department which, once something happens we want them there, but the rest of the time they are not as visible, if you will, as expeditionary missions and things of that nature.

In light of the call-out of the military to Fort McMurray, I wonder whether the minister could comment on two things: one, the aid to civil authority which is a core mission; and two, the role of reservists in aid to civil authority.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, one of our fundamental responsibilities in the military is the security of Canadians, whether that is directly from a counterterrorism role, to domestic operations, whether the threat may be from floods or from fires. The military is well suited for this and as part of the defence review we will be looking at ways to improve our response as we move forward. I was very pleased with the work that was done in Fort McMurray in response. I recently visited our troops to thank them for that.

Our reserves play a critical role in this. The various reserve brigades across Canada have the territory of battalion groups and within that they have various companies that can respond to these efforts. They have the ability to respond and they work alongside the regular force members on numerous occasions. We will make sure that they also have the right capabilities as we move to the future.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Chair, the minister will know that after an intense election and after an intense debate here, the mission in the Middle East has been refocused since the debate was concluded on March 8. I wonder whether the hon. minister can give the committee an update on what has happened since March 8.

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Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we have been working diligently to get the right forces into theatre. We put our intelligence capability into theatre. I was speaking with the deputy commander of the coalition just last week in Germany, and he was extremely happy about that. Our coalition partners are extremely happy with the intelligence capability. They are also very happy with our force flow that will be coming into the area to train the right ethnic mix of Iraqi security forces. This is a critical point. This is not about training Iraqi security forces; it is about taking responsibility to train the right group to take the right city. I would be happy to explain that at a later time.

● (1940)

Hon. John McKay: Madam Chair, would the minister explain what he was just about to explain?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, what I was going to explain and also answer the hon. member across the floor is understanding conflict. We have developed some great lessons. What we discuss now are the complexities of the conflict and the sectarian violence that has happened. What we are doing now is making sure that we are taking responsibility for the north to be able to train the right forces for the eventual defeat of ISIL as our coalition partners take the responsibility for other ethnic groups.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Chair, I am going to start with a brief statement and then go to questions for the minister.

I want to start, like all members of Parliament, by thanking the Canadian Forces for the job they do every day in keeping us safe, and also the civilian employees who often get left out of these debates but who make the functioning of the forces possible, and of course, the families of both, who make all of this possible with the sacrifices they make.

I also want to thank the minister for his initiatives in reaching out to members across the aisle and making himself accessible and the bases accessible. It is a refreshing change in the new Parliament and I thank him personally for doing so.

There are some other things I might not thank him for. The government appears to be continuing with some of the things that the Conservatives did. The main theme is asking the Canadian military to do more with less. We know that the dollars provided in the budget actually are not increases. They do not come near keeping pace with the inflation rate in military expenditures, and we know that there are going to have to be some cuts made somewhere in the Canadian military. I guess we will see those later.

Of most concern to me is the reprofiling, as the government likes to call it, whether it was a Conservative government or a Liberal government, of the capital expenditures. We are now to the place where \$10.4 billion in expenditures have been put off beyond the next election.

Is the Minister of National Defence convinced that we have enough life left in our F-18s, our frigates, and our long-range patrol aircraft to keep the Canadian military fully functional while we wait for these important procurement decisions to be made and while we look for the money, since it has been put off to an indefinite future?

The classic way to extend the life of military equipment is to reduce the hours. Are we facing an air force that is going to have to reduce its flying hours and a navy that is going to have to reduce its time at sea because of these delays in procurement?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, there are significant challenges that we face in terms of capability now. The joint supply ships are going to be coming online. We have a capability gap right now in how we supply our navy. That is one of the reasons we moved very quickly with the interim AOR and getting that announced very quickly.

We have challenges that are coming up, but I can assure the member that our government is committed to making sure that we move very quickly to replace our F-18s. Also, we are committed to the national shipbuilding strategy, so that we can bring our ships online as quickly as possible.

The defence review will give us a great opportunity to look at any other potential challenges we might face. The member should rest assured that our government is committed to ensuring that our men and women have the right capabilities and my immediate goal is to alleviate some of these capability gaps.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, that leads to my next question. The biggest surprise for me in the defence review was the fact that it puts on the table another potential decision that requires both operating money and capital money at a time when both are very scarce. That is reopening the question of participation in the U. S. missile defence scheme, I guess I will call it.

Given the pressing need for capital and operating expenditures from ships to jets, to new trucks, to north warning, all of these things we need to do, why would the government put on the table another very expensive capital and operating project?

● (1945)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, it is important as part of the defence review that we have as wide a discussion as possible. There are many discussions we will have as part of the defence review and ballistic missile defence is one of them. It is important for Canadians to understand all aspects of the threats that we face. It is important that we look at all factors and potential capabilities that are out there.

No decision has been made. That is what the defence review is about. We will have a thorough discussion down the road and we will make a decision accordingly.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, if we listen carefully to the minister and Liberal members on the defence committee, the government seems very enthusiastic about getting to yes on this question, so I will ask again. Why would we reopen this question when the defence committee heard very clearly in Colorado Springs that there has been no request from the United States for Canada to join the ballistic missile defence system?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, one of the reasons it was very important for the defence committee to go to NORAD was for them to have the same information that I have. As defence minister, I look at all of the threats out there and we need to look at all of the capabilities. It is important for us to have this discussion and that is what we will do. We will have a discussion and we will make a decision down the road.

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Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, when the defence committee was down at NORAD headquarters, we were briefed on the meagre success rate, I would call it, of the U.S. missile defence system. It is public knowledge that only four of its eight tests were successful, and in those tests it actually knew where the missiles were coming from and what trajectory they were on and it still only managed to hit 50%.

We are looking at participating in something that might cost us an enormous amount of money, and we are investing really in a system that clearly does not work.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I am happy to have those kinds of discussions in a more closed forum, so we can discuss some of the sensitive information. That is what this is about. It is about making sure that we do have the information.

The committee's visit to NORAD was so that all members could have the information that I also receive as well.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, we have heard repeatedly in committee from both military witnesses and civilian experts that Canada faces no imminent threat from ballistic missiles. It seems to me that, when we have many other major questions that we need to be discussing, this is some kind of diversion for us to spend a lot of our efforts on the defence review, on something that addresses a threat that does not really exist to Canada at this time.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we do face threats. We just heard on the news about the sabre-rattling from North Korea. That is a significant threat.

As time goes on, technology does get easier. As part of the defence review, we are not just looking at it now. We are looking at where technology can take us 10 to 20 years from now. This is one of the reasons why we need to have a thorough discussion as part of the defence review.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, there is a bigger concern for me, apart from the specifics of a non-working, very expensive system in which Canada would have no voice in its command, and that is the impact it would have on the larger arms race around the world. It is certainly true that building bigger and better BMD systems can only lead other nations like Russia and China to try to increase their offensive capabilities. Canada, by even opening this door, provides some leverage for those who would like to get into a large arms race.

So, again, has the minister really considered the impact of opening this door in terms of Canadian participation in ballistic missile defence? Would it not have been better to consider whether we could not do something multilaterally to try to reduce this arms race rather than promote it?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we are having the discussions. For example, in NATO we are talking about deterrents. We are looking at NORAD modernization, updating our radar. There are many aspects. This is just one discussion. I am happy to discuss BMD, but what I am really looking forward to is actually having a discussion with some of the experts on this. I want feedback.

We are looking at many different aspects from an Arctic perspective, not just from a defence perspective. Our government

is going to do far more up in the north. Replacing our fighters will be part of this, and our frigates.

There are many aspects when we look at the defence of Canada. It is far more than just DND.

● (1950)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, when the defence committee was in discussions with NATO commander Admiral Gortney, who was the commander until last Friday, he took a lot of us by surprise by suggesting that NORAD was working on a proposal that would see folding sea, maritime, and land defence into the NATO command and establishing a joint command for the defence of North America.

I asked him very clearly if this was unclassified, if I was able to make this public, and he said yes. He said that the proposal will come forward to the Permanent Joint Board on Defence at its next meeting.

Given that one of the options in that proposal being considered is to turn over the defence of Canada to a U.S. command, will the minister assure us now that he will not take part in any such plan to turn over Canada's sovereignty and its defence to an American general?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, Canada will always maintain its sovereignty. Within our context with NORAD, this is a unique relationship that we have. It is the only one of its kind in the world. It is a binational command. We should be proud of the fact that we do have this.

I was fortunate to attend the change of command ceremony when the first female combat commander took command, General Lori Robinson.

Canadians can be extremely proud of our relationship in NORAD, because it is a unique relationship and one that is not replicated anywhere else in the world.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for that answer. I still remain concerned that there seems to be more cheerleading in the discussion on ballistic missile defence on the other side, but that I guess remains to be seen.

I want to turn to some issues that come up frequently in my riding with regard to defence. One of those is the rollover of civilian contracts. Up till 2011, there was a practice with civilian employees that, if they were in a temporary contract for three years, they could be rolled over into a permanent position after that time. The Conservatives stopped that practice as a cost-saving measure. I do not think they really considered the negative impacts in terms of morale, staff relations, staff retention, or the fact that any savings they got were at the expense of families by taking away security of employment for those families.

Therefore, my question for the minister is this. Will he look at reversing that policy and returning to the policy where, if people have been in something called a temporary position for a number of years, we finally admit that it is a permanent position and give those employees the security they need?

Business of Supply

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we have started converting three-year terms to full time. However, when it comes to looking at the overall, as the member said, we have to look at the efficiency of the Canadian Armed Forces. As part of the defence review, we will be discussing how service is best delivered.

We need to be cognizant that, at the end of the day, significant cuts have been made to our support in the past. We need to have the right balance, because we can have the best teeth in the world, in a manner of speaking, but we need to make sure that the support is also there for our men and women. We are going to be looking quite aggressively at the support mechanism for the Canadian Armed Forces as well.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, that raises the next question I have for the minister, and that is regarding support service contracts. Under the Conservatives, we saw a tendency to privatize more and more of what one might call the maintenance functions of essential services within the Canadian military. That was quite often done without considering its impact on the safety of those workers involved in the workplace, but also the safety and security of Canada as we bring more and more private contractors on to our bases.

Others, like the U.K., went way down this road and now they are spending billions of dollars to roll this back, as they found it did not actually save them money, and it did cause those health and safety problems, as well as security problems, on the bases.

Therefore, as we are acquiring lots of new equipment, there is work that sometimes euphemistically is called warranty work, which is really maintenance work. I would like an assurance from the minister that he will make sure that Canadian Forces keep our own independent ability to maintain that new equipment we buy, so that we remain independent of any company that might go bankrupt or have other priorities. We really can repair our own ships and our own planes and keep the Canadian Forces working with our own Canadian Forces employees.

• (1955)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the member raised some good points. We do need to ensure that our planes and all our equipment are maintained. However, at this time it would be premature for me to make any commitments. As part of the defence review, we will be looking at many different aspects of service delivery.

However, rest assured that this is something I am spending a considerable amount of effort on, making sure that the support mechanisms are there for all our equipment. I think we can all agree that it should be done in a manner that makes sure our men and women have the right capabilities; and this capability they use has to be maintained. It has to be done in an efficient manner that is also not as costly, because any dollars we put to this is money that is taken away from their wellness or their training.

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thought I might take a crack at military economics 101, which might be close to the most boring speech ever delivered on the floor of the House of Commons, ever. My hon. colleagues are already agreeing that this might be a boring speech, so I will not be offended, Madam Chair, if you nod off.

However, Madam Chair, before you do hit the snooze button, I would just remind you that over the last six months we have had a very busy minister, a very busy department, and a very active re-engagement with the world. We have refocused our mission on ISIL. We have processed well over 25,000 refugees, in which the Department of National Defence played a significant role. We have launched a consultation on defence policy review for the first time in 20 years. We have provided assistance with the wildfires in Alberta. All of these, in and of themselves, would be significant undertakings, but they were all done by our very capable minister and our very capable department simultaneously.

The first thing we notice when we look at the budget of the Department of National Defence is its size. It is \$18.6 billion, which accounts about 6.6% of the entire federal government's revenues, 1% of our national GDP. It sounds like a lot of money, but that is only because it is. Some have described it as a small province. It has its own health care system; it has its own justice system; it has its own unique language; and it has its own culture. In fact, the budget for the Department of National Defence is larger than all of the provinces except four in our country.

Canadians expect a lot from their military; we are just not overly fond of paying for it. However, like any good restaurant meal, somebody has to pick up the cheque. So for \$18 billion to \$20 billion, we expect a navy, an army, an air force, cybersecurity, assistance to civil authority; we expect the defence of Canadian sovereignty; we expect a North American defence; and we expect participation in expeditionary missions as they arise from time to time; and may I say, a whole lot more.

With more than 90,000 regular forces members and reservists, and another 20,000 civilians, the military could be considered one of the largest companies in Canada. Given all we expect of our men and women, it is essential that they have the resources they need to do the job. That is why this government has maintained the military's budget and will honour all planned budget increases.

Our military seeks to recruit and retain the best people for the job from the beginning of their career to the end of it. Personnel accounts for \$7.5 billion of the \$13.5 billion in vote 1 under the main estimates, which is what we are talking about tonight—the main estimates. Overall, this is 40% of the entire National Defence budget. Personnel costs account for 40%. Most of it is salaries and other benefits, which are competitive with other western militaries. In fact, Canadian privates and corporals are now among the highest paid in the world, which we should view as a source of pride. It is good business sense. If our men and women can afford to raise a family on a corporal's salary, the military stands a good chance of keeping them around for a long career.

The Canadian Armed Forces also maintains a world-class health care system, education and training, and the exercises to keep members' skills up to date so that they are ready to deliver on any mission they are asked to perform.

Business of Supply

• (2000)

Operating expenditures also include some 10,000 contracts for replenishment, maintenance, and upgrading of the military's equipment and facilities. This amounts to \$6.2 billion this year alone, and it is included in vote 1. These things run from rifles, pistols, ammunition, uniforms, rations, specialized equipment, and literally, with 10,000 contracts, it goes on and on.

The department also maintains in its infrastructure the bases, wings, and stations where all the work takes place. There are approximately 21,000 buildings covering 2.2 million hectares that the military manages as its collective footprint, which is one-third the size of New Brunswick. All told, personnel costs, small contracts, and maintenance account for \$13.8 billion, or 74% of the department's budget, which is all in vote 1.

The next vote is vote 5, which is \$3.4 billion in capital expenditures. This is where it gets tricky, because \$3.4 billion sounds like a lot of money, but when we are trying to replace jets, ships, labs, helicopters, it does not take too much time to burn through it. If \$3.4 billion in cash was the only money that was available to the military, we would be finished by the end of April. This is where the magic of accrual accounting comes in.

If members will notice, the capital expenditures are reduced by \$625 million this year. This is largely attributable to several projects winding down from last year's budgetary levels. Infrastructure is down \$200 million, land combat vehicles, down \$188 million, and the maritime helicopter project is down \$172 million.

Some people get bent out of shape when money is not being spent on much-needed equipment. However, when we think about it, would we spend money if there were no helicopters being delivered this year, after having received eight last year? Therefore, not receiving helicopters does not mean that the money will not be spent this year, but for the purposes of these estimates, at this time, in this fiscal year, that is the explanation for that sum of money.

Last year, we received eight helicopters, and this year we may get more, but we do not actually know. However, we are projecting, for the purposes of the estimates, that we will not get any. The plan is still moving forward to replace the Sea King, and the same with the family of land combat vehicles. Most of the work has been done on the \$500 million project, so \$188 million comes out of those estimates.

If members are not asleep yet, let us move on to another favourite subject called "lapsed spending". There are good lapses and bad lapses, and occasionally we will all lapse. However, it starts off as money set aside by Parliament in previous years and voted on, just as we are doing tonight.

DND gives its best estimate of capital needs. Parliament says okay, and then there is an accounting at the end of the year. Therefore, in fiscal year 2015-16, DND could not spend all of the money allocated to it. At this point, Treasury Board says that it wants the money back, and then there are some negotiations. Out of the \$1.4 billion that was being lapsed, if you will, from the previous government, we have been able to reprofile all of that money, except for \$71 million.

I should be speeding up this snoozefest, but I want to get through to the \$3.7 billion. My honourable colleagues on the opposite side wish to describe that as a cut, when in fact it is far from a cut. It is actually a reprofiling, because of projects that have not been able to be secured in this fiscal year and future fiscal years. They include the Arctic offshore patrol ship, which is \$173 million, and the CF-18 replacement, which is \$109 million. It does not make a lot of sense to spend money when the platform for the replacement jet has not been picked. However, I can go on about the maritime helicopter delays, the Halifax-class modernization. Therefore, with that \$3.7 billion, those five projects alone account for about \$1.1 billion.

I see, Madam Chair, that you are hitting the snooze button. I am regretting that because I am sure you want to get into the joys of lapsing.

• (2005)

The Deputy Chair: The rules are that the person delivering the speech will be asking five minutes of questions to the minister. The parliamentary secretary can ask five minutes of questions to the minister.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Chair, I apologize. I have been around here way too long, and generally speaking the speaker asks the questions rather than the person.

I want to particularly pursue the \$3.7 billion, which is in the words of the members opposite "a cut", when in fact it is a reprofiling. The parliamentary budget officer had been asking for years for that chart that is in the budget, which shows the reprofiling. It is a request on the government's part to have these monies pushed into further years, so that the various procurements we need to secure can be secured.

I would be interested in the minister's comments around that.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, when it comes to the complexity of defence budgets, I am very fortunate to have three colleagues who do most of the heavy lifting.

Again, I want to reassure the committee that the \$3.7 billion is being reprofiled to match the funding with the procurement schedule. That is a schedule that I inherited, and that is the one I will be working with.

As I move diligently toward reducing some of the capability gaps, we will have the ability to request to have this money reprofiled if we need it, and we will. That is one of the things I will be working diligently on to make sure that we can speed up certain projects.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Chair, the minister has done a number of things to accelerate, rationalize, and co-ordinate the fiscal cycle and the procurement cycle.

Business of Supply

In the budget, the minister is proposing the hiring of 200 more procurement specialists. He is part of a ministerial cabinet working group. These are small fixes in some respects, but in the larger scheme of things may turn out to be very significant fixes, so that the fiascos we saw in the previous government are not repeated.

I would be interested in the minister's observations.

• (2010)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, on the challenges that we face, the Department of National Defence is working diligently.

The officials have done incredible work already to move the process along. We are working to get some of the decision processes cut down by 50%. At a ministerial level, I am working with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, so that instead of working separately, we are conducting joint briefings. Our officials are also conducting joint work as well, in a manner so that we can reduce the process, but at the same time maintain accountability to Canadians to spend the money in a prudent manner, making sure that we deliver the capabilities to our men and women in a timely fashion.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Chair, the parliamentary secretary almost put me to sleep with his fine words. Just kidding.

As a veteran, I am getting to know the minister, and I also recognize his human qualities and experience. He is a man who wants to do things well. He is a good man.

In another time, I would have gone to war with him. He will understand what I mean.

However, now we are politicians. The minister and I are in politics, as is everyone here today, and because of that we are asking questions today. There were negative signs in the throne speech and the mandate letters of the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, which led to the defence decision.

With respect to the budget, the parliamentary secretary said that we Conservatives did not understand the figures, that we are rather stupid, but we sometimes know how to count because we nonetheless managed to balance the budget and generate a surplus.

There are \$300 million in cuts this year. The throne speech mentions that we will have a more agile and leaner army. It mentions United Nations missions. To us, this is clearly a political signal that harkens back to the 1990s. That is why we are asking questions. We want to understand the position. It has nothing to do with the minister's experience and military skills. On the contrary, this is about the Liberal government.

That said, I want to go back to the refugee operation. In December, I was here in committee of the whole examining the issue of refugees. I asked the Minister of Immigration the question and he told me to ask the defence department. Today, I have the opportunity to ask the Minister of Defence. I would like to know the total cost of Operation Provision.

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we are talking about the total cost for the operation provision. It was \$13.3 million from our party. As I stated, there was work that needed to be done. I am happy to actually give a further breakdown.

I want to also acknowledge that member's service as well. As politicians, we all want the best for our members, regardless of the party. It is the opposition's job to ask questions, and I welcome that.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, the report of the Auditor General that was published two weeks ago contained a section on the Canadian army reserve. That report shows that, when the budget is submitted at the beginning of the year, not all of the money that is specifically allocated to the reserve forces is going to them. I would like to know where that money is going.

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the total budget when it comes to the reserves is \$744.9 million.

When it comes to reservists, if I can just explain, it is not just about having the money; it is also about the ability to spend it.

There is some work that we are doing as part of the defence review. It is not that we just give the money, we need to make sure that the money is able to be spent as well.

• (2015)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, the minister and I both know that the reserve units are currently experiencing a lot of budget problems. Will the minister take action to ensure that the money that is allocated to reserve forces and specific units gets to them and that cuts are made elsewhere instead, if necessary?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: No, Madam Chair, the reserves will get all of the funding that is needed. However, as I stated, to elevate the conversation, it is more than just making sure that they have the right money. It is allocated because there is also class A pay that they get, and then there is O and M as well.

It is making sure they have enough money to pay their soldiers, but at the same time that they have enough money to be able to conduct the training as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, with regard to the use of class A and class B budgets, when the government whip was a lieutenant general, he wrote "The Report on Transformation 2011". At that time, he recommended that class B reserve budgets be cut by 50%.

Does the minister agree with the recommendation that the whip made at that time?

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, on cutting the class B, we were on a very high tempo in Afghanistan in previous years, so a lot of the regular force positions members were being deployed and had to be backfilled by reservists. Now that some of those operations have obviously ceased, those positions have been refilled by the regular force, hence the reason why certain class B positions were not needed. However, at the same time, we need to ensure there is a right balance across the board with the various reserve brigades.

I am happy to discuss this further because there is even a lot more work that can be done in our class A, B, C system to make it more efficient.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, with regard to the recruitment of reservists, in 1994, a former Liberal government created what is known as the total force. The goal at the time was to merge the regular forces and the reserve forces into one operations group.

Over the years, we finally realized that the reserve forces had problems, particularly with regard to recruitment.

Will the minister do something to drastically change the way in which reservists are recruited?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the recruitment system has been a challenge for many of my predecessors. It is one that we are working on diligently. However, in the reserves, it is even more complex. This is not about having a full-time career; it is about part-time. It is about creating an environment. Also in the reserves, we should not just be focused on recruiting; we need to focus on retention. It is a different mindset in the reserves. We are looking at ways on how we can better attract, or more important, give better mechanism resources so commanding officers in reserve units can retain their soldiers as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, I knew that the minister would understand the problems of reserve forces like I do. I am pleased to see that we can agree on this matter.

In the last year that the Conservative government was in power, we gave the directive to increase the number of reservists to 28,500 over the next four years.

Can the minister tell us what kind of progress has been made in that regard?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, during my travels, I have talked to different division commanders, getting their perspective of what is happening in the reserves. There have been some challenges in recruiting. This is also not just because there has not been effort, there are also demographic challenges as well. In certain areas we are having challenges. If they cannot recruit, maybe allow certain other regions to recruit higher. We are going to be looking at different ways of increasing, and the defence review will be a part of that.

● (2020)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, I would like to hear the minister's thoughts on maintaining Canada's special operations forces.

In light of the changes to Canada's missions, which are being aligned with those of the UN, does the minister think that our special operations forces are still necessary?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, absolutely. The functions of our special forces and with the work they do, they are needed. We have our JTF2, our special operations regiment and the many other aspects of what they do. I have the privilege of finally knowing exactly what they do now. It is a critical capability and I am working aggressively to ensure they have all the capability to do their dangerous work.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, in the beginning, we spoke a bit about Canada's military bases.

Could the minister confirm today that he does not intend to close or shrink the Bagotville base in Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I have not looked at that, but right now I have no intention of closing anything down. We are conducting the defence review. We have a considerable amount of buildings that may not be utilized. In terms of our main bases, Bagotville is where a lot of our CF-18s are based. I look forward to visiting the area. In fact, we are going to be looking at ensuring we have all the capabilities in the right areas, and Bagotville plays a critical role.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, with respect to the bases, can the minister confirm that no reserve units or armouries will be shut down?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I do take a lot of requests from different members of Parliament with respect to our reserve units. When it comes to reserve units, one thing we have to be mindful of is ensuring the reserve units themselves remain strong. We will be looking at this. Reserves play a critical role. I have no intentions at this time. However, we will be conducting a review to ensure we remain efficient. As a former commanding officer of the reserves, I know the value reserves play for Canada and the regular forces.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, earlier, we spoke about threats to Canada. During our visit to NORAD, my NDP colleague had a different perspective than I and my Liberal colleagues did.

Business of Supply

I would like the minister to tell us how Canada can protect itself against a direct or indirect missile attack, since we are in the path between North Korea, Russia, and the United States.

How will Canada protect itself against a potential cruise or antiballistic missile?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, that is a question I would rather have in private because of the classified nature of the answer. I think the member would understand that.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, indeed, many of these conversations about national defence need to be held in private. I fully understand that.

I want to get back to the budget and budget cuts. We do not know whether there are any budget cuts. Our colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, gave a brilliant presentation. As for the \$3.7 billion—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I hear you, I am a Conservative, I am a slow learner.

The Deputy Chair: Order. I remind the member that he must address his questions to the Chair.

I ask members on the government side to show some respect and to let members ask their questions.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Chair, we are told that \$3.7 billion was deferred. Then we learned from the *Ottawa Citizen* that the Arctic offshore patrol ship project was cut by \$173 million, the CF-18 program was cut by \$109 million, the Cyclone helicopter project was cut by \$90 million, the program to modernize our Halifax-class frigates was cut by \$71 million, and the integrated soldier system project was cut by \$39.4 million.

Can the minister confirm those budget cuts?

• (2025)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I have not given any direction with respect to any cuts. We are committed to these programs. When it comes to some of the programs, in cases where there has been greater efficiency, certain equipment has been purchased early. This is the complicated nature of some of the defence procurement. However, no cuts to these programs have been made.

In fact, we want to ensure that the Arctic patrol ships will be delivered as quickly as possible. For example, with respect to the Halifax frigate modernization program, there is only one frigate left. That is one procurement project that has gone very well.

All of these projects are on line to be delivered, but every one of them has certain challenges. We are working through those challenges so we can speed up the process. However, we have to do it in such a manner to ensure that when we do have the equipment delivered, it will be done well. The TAPV is one example where something was delivered and it needed to be improved. In fact, that

work was done under warranty, and now that project is back on track.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the Department of National Defence main estimates for 2016-17.

I want to take up a point that has been made by our hon. minister on previous occasions. He has said that the most sophisticated and important weapons system that the Canadian Armed Forces has are the men and women wearing the uniform. I could not agree more. As the mother of two sons currently serving, I may, however, be a bit biased.

The members of the Canadian Armed Forces are among the finest citizens. They are men and women who have volunteered for a life of service, who have taken an oath of allegiance to our Queen and her descendants, and who have sworn to protect their country and its citizens, even if it costs them their lives.

We have seen ample demonstration of their commitment to this ideal over the past several years. The decade-long mission in Afghanistan reminded all Canadians that service members undertook great sacrifice, risking injury or even death in defence of our interests around the world. Too many members of the Canadian military lost their lives as a result of the operations in Afghanistan. As we saw following the death of Sergeant Andrew Doiron last year, public support for our men and women in uniform has not diminished. While I sincerely hope to never have to see again the sight of so many ordinary Canadians lining the Highway of Heroes paying their respects to our fallen brothers and sisters, it is truly moving.

Our military members also stand on guard to protect us at home, whether it is to help Canadians in distress, as we are seeing most recently in northern Alberta, or as part of their daily duties. The men and women who make up the Canadian Armed Forces are our most valuable asset.

The military's focus on excellence begins rather appropriately at the beginning, from the moment its members are first recruited. Canadians can be proud that their military is one of the most well-educated and well-trained forces in the world.

[Translation]

Military training is extremely difficult. It is designed and conducted in such a way that it will produce the best possible results in conditions that are particularly difficult and dynamic. Soldiers receive professional training, and the teaching standards are very high, especially for officers. There will be an emphasis on improving training for army reservists in light of the Auditor General's recent report. They are an integral part of many communities in Canada.

These citizen soldiers give up their evenings and weekends in order to train. Despite the challenges they face because of their part-time service, many reservists have served their country with distinction during operations at home and abroad. They have fought and shed their blood right alongside regular forces members, and they deserve our support.

Business of Supply

The minister indicated that he fully supported the recommendations made by the Auditor General to improve recruitment, retention, and training. Furthermore, the maximum size of the primary reserve will increase.

Pay and benefits have been reviewed, and training and development opportunities will be improved. I know the Minister of National Defence really wants to resolve this issue, since he himself is a former reservist.

Canadians can be proud of how their armed forces reflect their country. Our armed forces work in both official languages and bilingualism is a condition for promotion to senior positions. We have an ethnically diverse army that does not discriminate on the ground of sexual orientation and that supports soldiers wishing to undergo gender reassignment.

● (2030)

I see that the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jonathan Vance, recently promised to increase the representation of women in the army by 1% per year for the next 10 years.

If we look at the commanding officers of all ranks within the Canadian Armed Forces, we see people of both genders, of every race and belief, who serve proudly. This diversity is a source of strength and that is what makes our army more effective.

We certainly learned that in Afghanistan, where our integrated and incomparable forces were better able to interact with the communities and earn the trust of the locals, while also benefiting from the valuable knowledge of the women and children.

Increasing integrated forces within the Canadian Armed Forces came with its own set of challenges, including the problem of sexual misconduct, a scourge in Canada and around the world. The Chief of the Defence Staff made it an institutional priority, accepting the 10 recommendations in the 2015 report by Marie Deschamps, a former Supreme Court of Canada justice. The launch of operation Honour sought to eliminate inappropriate and harmful sexual behaviour within the Canadian Armed Forces. This translated into greater vigilance and more diligence, as well as improved support for victims, including the creation of the first sexual misconduct response centre, the drafting of more modern policies, and better training for all members.

All these measures are funded by allocations in the main estimates. The purpose is clear, namely to ensure a professional and respectful environment for all members of the Canadian Armed Forces, who so generously protect our country.

[*English*]

I will touch briefly on one last matter related to military personnel: the care given to ill and injured members. The Canadian Armed Forces maintains its own world-class health care system for its members and provides supports to their families as well. All told, more than \$1.2 billion in the main estimates will go toward the care, morale, and well-being of our men and women in uniform. The risk of injury, whether mental or physical, can never be completely eliminated for military operations. The health professionals of the Canadian Armed Forces are dedicated to ensuring members receive the best possible treatment when they need it.

We ask much of our men and women in uniform and of their families. We ask them to defend their country, to serve for long periods in far-flung regions of the globe away from their families, and if necessary, to put their lives on the line. We ask much of our men and women in uniform and we owe them much in return. As we review these main estimates, let us keep that fact in mind.

I would like to ask the minister if he could elaborate. In his mandate letter, there was mention of developing a suicide prevention strategy. As part of a family of active members of the Canadian Armed Forces, this is an issue that, as one can imagine, is of great concern to me and many Canadians watching tonight. I ask the minister if he could provide an update on the strategy to develop a suicide prevention initiative.

● (2035)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the hon. member for her moving words. It definitely puts into perspective everything we do here.

This is probably one of the most important aspects of what we do, the challenges that our men and women face. They face certain challenges. We train them physically, but the mental side is more challenging. I am working very closely with the associate minister, who is also the Minister of Veterans Affairs, on a strategy for mental health.

For the military personnel health care system there will be \$696 million, but it is not the dollars that matter. It is the strategy that we will be creating and I will announce that as time goes on.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Chair, we have heard in the past little while about sexual misconduct in the military, a very serious situation. Could the minister elaborate on how much money in the main estimates is devoted to the sexual misconduct response centre that was mentioned in the Deschamps report? Could he tell us if the centre is actually functioning at this time, and when we could possibly receive an update on this?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the money allocated to the confidential sexual misconduct response centre is \$2.2 million.

Much more work is also being done through the chain of command beyond the centre because this type of behaviour needs to be completely eradicated from the Canadian Armed Forces. Of the 246 individuals who have contacted the centre, 156 identified themselves as members of the force and 34 made contact in regard to sexual assault. Twenty sexual misconduct investigations have been started by the NIS.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Chair, we know that when members cannot continue to serve or choose to take off their uniform to return to civilian life, they face additional challenges in this regard. Could the minister tell us what money in the main estimates is focused on helping these members transition to civilian life?

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Also, could the minister tell us how the government plans to honour its commitment to our brave women and men, including our reservists, after they have completed their service?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, as it is in my mandate letter to work with the associate minister as part of the transition from service member to veteran, we are working on a plan. We have identified in this budget \$10.2 million for the transition from military life to civilian life. We do need to make it easier for a member to get into civilian life because it does pose considerable challenges.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Chair, we have heard a lot about the stress that our brave women and men are under when serving. We have heard a lot about PTSD. We know a lot more work needs to be done in this regard. Could the minister update the House on what he is doing to prevent and treat operational stress injuries, or PTSD, among our members?

• (2040)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, currently there are over 400 full-time mental health workers available to Canadian Armed Forces members and more are being hired.

In addition, we are making sure that as members go on operations, they come back and get post-deployment mental health training, which is called decompression. Many aspects need to be done. We also need to understand there is a uniqueness to each one. We are working very hard to address this issue.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Chair, as a parent I am concerned about force protection measures taken to protect our members across Canada both on bases and at recruitment centres. Could the minister elaborate on what is being done to keep them safe?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the threats to our members and our bases are constantly assessed. The Chief of the Defence Staff and I have had discussions on this. If something does change, he notifies me. However, I can assure all committee members here that we take this extremely seriously. However, the actual measures always remain confidential for obvious reasons.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Chair, the last Liberal budget was a spending spree. There was something for everyone. It was just like an all-you-can-eat buffet. However, one important department was forgotten. As an expert from the Canadian Global Affairs Institute said, this budget was like an episode of Oprah where everybody in the audience gets a car, except the Department of Defence. The Department of Defence had to go home on a scooter. That is what we heard tonight: \$3.7 billion that will not be seen for years. If they are not getting the money now, they are seeing a cut.

As we know, there are threats facing Canada. There are terrorist threats, climate change, and the opening of the Northwest Passage.

My question for the minister is about the naval strategy and the ships that are currently being built in Halifax, namely, the Arctic offshore patrol ships.

[English]

Minister, my first question is regarding the Arctic offshore patrol ships. Why are you making a cut of \$173 million to the ships that are

being built in Halifax right now? These ships are important to maintaining the sovereignty of Canada in the Arctic. Why are you cutting these important projects?

The Deputy Chair: I would remind the member to address his questions to the Chair.

The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I would like to report to the hon. member that those ships are currently being built. We are on track for building those five ships and potentially having a sixth one as well. It is budgeted for \$3.5 billion, which also includes infrastructure of the northern port, the dock repairs, and jetty replacement. However, I can assure the member that our government is fully committed to making sure those ships get built.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, can the minister inform us when the first ship will be ready and when the program will be completed?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the first ship is expected for 2018. I do not have the exact date when they will be considered fully capable. There is a lot of training that is going to be done. However, the first ship is expected in 2018.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, can the minister inform us how much money will be invested in these Arctic offshore patrol ships in the current fiscal year?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the budget for the overall program is \$3.5 billion, and the budget is \$424 million for this year.

• (2045)

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, it is a first-time program that is extremely important for our Canadian navy.

Another program that is important is the restoration and modernization of our Halifax-class frigates. We had a major program in place to modernize these frigates and it was going well. The *Fredericton* was one of the first frigates to be modernized. It was used in Operation Reassurance as part of the measures taken by the Canadian Forces in Ukraine.

Why is the government threatening the program to modernize the Halifax-class frigates by making a \$71.1-million cut?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I think we can both agree on the importance of this program. In fact, there is only one ship that is left to be modernized, and it is being worked on now. This program is actually on track and working well. It should be delivered quickly.

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I got to visit one of the ships in operation. I visited one in Esquimalt. I am happy to say now that there is one left. It is being worked on and will be delivered shortly.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, I also wanted to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Edmonton West, who is also an associate critic for procurement and public works.

The Deputy Chair: Members must have unanimous consent to split their time.

Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to split his time?

Hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, I would like to thank my colleagues.

I will continue with my questions on the Halifax-class modernization program.

Apparently, the first vessel has been modernized. Could you please tell me when the program will be completed, what is the schedule for the next vessels and how much will be invested this year?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, it is 2018, so it will be soon.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, the Halifax-class program will be completed in 2018.

Other cuts have been made to the Cyclone maritime helicopter program.

Can the minister tell me what impact the \$90 million in cuts will have on the Cyclone maritime helicopters?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the plan is to purchase 28 Cyclone helicopters. Some have already been delivered. They are going through their tests right now, as more come on line. There are no cuts that have been made to the actual program. The plan is to make sure that we have the right number of Cyclone helicopters, and we are working diligently toward that.

I am happy to say that I got to fly one of those simulators, and I was able to land one of the Cyclones, on a simulator, on the ship as well.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, we see that the Department of National Defence is now going ahead with cuts. However, climate change is making it easier to access the Northwest Passage. We are seeing other countries making investments, especially in icebreakers and vessels, in order to have a presence in the Canadian Arctic.

Does the Minister believe that sufficient investments are being made to ensure Canada's Arctic sovereignty in the far north? Is it not important to ensure that we can protect Canadian sovereignty in the far north by having a fleet that can rival the fleets of other countries?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I want to be very clear that we are making no cuts. In fact, we are committed to the national shipbuilding strategy that was developed early on by the previous government. We are working diligently to make sure we have the right ships, and that we have the ships for the Arctic. In addition, the Coast Guard is having its ships built as well. We are fully committed to the national shipbuilding strategy. I cannot say it any clearer than that.

• (2050)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Chair, we learned a new word today for cut. It is “re-profiling”, as in re-profiling like a knife, or I re-profiled my finger on paper.

The \$3.7 billion that has been re-profiled five years down the road, after this first mandate is over, could the minister tell me which projects that is for?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, there are a number of projects, and the schedule for the procurement is based on the ones that were there when I became Minister of National Defence.

In terms of the question regarding re-profiling, I just want to remind the member that the former government—

The Deputy Chair: Order, please. I am sorry. It is about an equal amount of time. I am sorry I did not get the time.

I want to clarify something. Initially, I was under the impression that it would be half and half. I am told that, if the other member wishes to ask questions, he will be able to do so as well.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I would like to find out from the minister what the projects are exactly.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the projects are the Arctic offshore patrol ships, the replacement of our fighters, the maritime helicopter project, the Halifax class frigate modernization, and the integrated soldier system. These are all on the same timeline as the previous government.

I would also like to remind the member that, when it came to re-profiling, the former government re-profiled \$10.3 billion between 2008 and 2015, so for the definition he should just look back.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the projects pushed back five years for the \$3.7 billion, the Arctic ships, the planes. Is this solely matching money to when the projects are ready, or is the matter that the money is not available right now for five years?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, actually the projects are not ready. This is to protect the money, to make sure it is there when we need it. This is a schedule that I received once I became minister. However, I am working diligently to speed up the process on different projects to make them move faster. We will re-profile the money back if and when it is needed.

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Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the parliamentary secretary discussed lapsed funding from last year. I think it was \$1.1 billion. Could he please reconfirm for me what the items were that lapsed.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Chair, the total amount lapsed was \$1.7 billion. That was from the previous government's budget; \$71 million of that \$1.7 billion has been sent back to treasury, and the rest has been pushed on to further fiscal years in order to be able to fulfill the schedules that Parliament approved initially.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, we understand one of the issues for re-profiling is the F-35 or the Super Hornet.

Could the hon. defence minister give us a ballpark timeline of when we will get going on that project, or when we will start planning it?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, our government is committed to replacing the F-18 fighter.

We are working diligently right now, as I stated. Even though the defence review is going on, this project is on a separate track. I do not have an update for the committee members yet, but when I do, we will announce it.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, could the defence minister tell us when we will have that update?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I wish I could give you a time frame for that.

However, when I have accurate information that I can provide, I will do so in an open manner, as I have done with everything else.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, when will we have an accurate update? No, I am just kidding.

We have seen that the F-35 project has already created large investments in our aerospace industry. Contractors in B.C., Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick are enjoying the fruits of the F-35 project that is going on with our allies right now.

I would ask the defence minister, when we make the decision on what plane we are going forward on, are we going to have job creation and investment in Canada as a part of that decision-making process?

• (2055)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, yes, absolutely, this will be part of any of our procurement projects, especially for the replacement of our fighters.

Just to remind the member on the F-35, it has been \$700 million; however, we had to invest \$300 million, as well, so it is a net benefit of \$400 million for that.

Regardless of what we purchase, Canadian industries will have a benefit.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the *International Business Times* reports that Canada ordering the Super Hornet would save thousands of jobs in the U.S.

I am just wondering if the hon. minister could advise us, if we go with the Super Hornet, if we have done studies on how many jobs it will create in Canada as opposed to how many the F-35 will?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, as I stated, regardless of the fighter that replaces our CF-18s, we will make sure that Canada does receive the industrial benefits.

There are many newspaper reports out there. However, I can assure you that we will make sure of, and we are fighting for, the ITBs for Canada.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, I would like to go back to a statement.

On November 13, there was a tragedy at the Bataclan theatre, in France: three terrorist attacks resulted in 127 deaths and a state of emergency was declared.

A few days earlier, the minister had been asked whether the so-called Islamic State was a threat. At that time, the minister replied:

[English]

Should we fear it? No.

[Translation]

I would like to know whether Canada should consider the so-called Islamic State as a threat to Canada. Would the minister like to correct or clarify what he said at the time?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, the question was regarding if ISIS is a threat. ISIS is a threat.

I cannot remember the exact words, but I believe it was if Canadians should fear ISIS.

It is our job as leaders to give confidence to Canadians that their agencies, whether they are the military, police forces, or other security agencies, will take care of them. Our agencies are up to the task.

Regardless, we need to remain vigilant. ISIS is a threat, and we are part of that fight against it.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, I am pleased to see that the minister recognizes the so-called Islamic State as a threat to Canada.

Does the minister also believe that, in response to another threat, it is important that we assert our sovereignty over Canada's Arctic and that we have a fleet of ships that will enable us to accomplish that?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, this is a very big topic as part of our defence review. However, when we look at the Arctic, we should not just look at it strictly from a National Defence perspective. We need to look at it from a complete government perspective. There is the Coast Guard, the environment, and the fisheries aspect of it. We will be taking a much wider perspective in terms of our sovereignty for the Arctic, and defence will be one important aspect of it.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to rise to take part in this important debate surrounding the main estimates of the Department of National Defence.

The Canadian Armed Forces must be ready to meet all of these challenges at all times, as well as our domestic security needs. We live in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world. The threats we face come from both traditional sources and from unexpected directions. These include failed and failing states, civil wars and regional conflicts, as well as the enduring threat of global terrorism. I am fully confident that the Canadian Armed Forces will be ready to meet these challenges.

However, it needs our help. Training and personal valour are not enough. It must also be equipped to meet the challenges of the future. This is an issue we can all agree on. All members of this chamber want a well-equipped military, and all Canadian taxpayers want us to acquire that equipment at a fair price. So I would like to say a few words about military procurement and how we will get our men and women in uniform the equipment they need to carry out their important missions.

Much has been said about the challenges in procurement—challenges that are shared by all modern militaries—and about the need to modernize the military procurement process.

• (2100)

[*Translation*]

Even the United States, our strongest ally and one of the most powerful military forces in the world, has been having this sort of problem for years. Some risks are inevitable. Military equipment needs to be reliable and has to be able to function in a wide variety of environments and conditions. It must also be designed to survive new threats.

When an aircraft or vehicle flees danger, the military equipment must be able to continue advancing into high-risk areas. If the equipment is not built to last, it could endanger the lives of our soldiers and jeopardize their mission. That is why military equipment is built to meet exacting standards, which makes it more costly.

[*English*]

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence stated earlier tonight, the department manages more than 10,000 equipment-specific contracts every year, with a total value of nearly \$6 billion. This covers everything from clothing and combat boots, rations and fuel, weapons and ammunition, satellite communications systems, vehicles, ships, aircraft, pens, paper, and stationery, to the maintenance of all of this equipment. The vast majority of these 10,000 equipment contracts are completed successfully without issue. However, more remains to be done, primarily with contracts of significant magnitude.

In the past six months, the procurement process has been a preoccupation of the ministers of National Defence, Public Services and Procurement, and Innovation, Science and Economic Development. I am sure we can expect additional improvements as their

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work continues. The government has also taken steps already to address some of the most challenging procurement files.

First, we will ensure the Royal Canadian Air Force obtains a replacement for the CF-18 fighter fleet.

Second, we are moving forward with new ships for the navy. With the longest coastline of any nation on earth, Canada has much to gain by ensuring that its navy can protect Canadian waters. As many members know, more than 90% of the world's trade is carried by sea, so this is critical to our economic interests as well. Ships are already being built, with more to come this year and next. Arctic offshore patrol ships are currently being built at the Halifax dockyard with the first scheduled delivery to the Royal Canadian Navy planned for 2018.

Third, through various initiatives, National Defence staff is reducing the number of steps in the procurement process, while also ensuring that the process is more open and transparent to both industry and all Canadians.

Fourth, we are committed to providing the Canadian Armed Forces with consistent and predictable funding. We are maintaining current spending levels as well as planned increases, including the increase of the National Defence escalator from 2% to 3% beginning in 2017. This escalator will provide an additional \$11.8 billion in funding over 10 years.

[*Translation*]

As I said earlier, most National Defence contracts are completed successfully without issue. Many of them involve the routine procurement of supplies, such as replacement parts, combat clothing, and ammunition.

Some contracts are for parts and maintenance, while others are more vital. Funding for those key contracts is essential if we want the Canadian Armed Forces to be able to fulfill their mission. Take for example, the modernization of the Halifax-class frigates. These ships are the backbone of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Under the current modernization program, sensors, weapons, and other systems are being upgraded so that they will continue to be effective against modern threats. Nine frigates have already been modernized and three others will follow. In this year's main estimates, the department is asking for some \$180 million for this work, which is essential to keep our navy strong.

• (2105)

[*English*]

The main estimates also contain funding for the modernization of the CP-140 Auroras, the maritime patrol aircraft which are even now being used to provide critical intelligence and reconnaissance as part of Operation Impact. The CP-140s have conducted nearly 500 missions in Iraq, helping our members on the ground and our coalition partners. This year, almost \$150 million will be spent as part of the ongoing modernization of the Aurora fleet. These upgrades will extend the life of the fleet to 2030, and improve an already impressive aircraft.

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Information and intelligence are key to modern military operations, and supporting DND's main estimates will allow this long-range patrol aircraft fleet to maintain its world-class capabilities.

The last example I will mention is the modernization of the fleet of light armoured vehicles, or LAVs. These vehicles are true workhorses for the Canadian army, and have been deployed domestically and on international operations. A total of \$150 million has been requested in the main estimates for this project, which is improving the LAV fleet's mobility, protection and other capabilities.

One of the ways in which the government will improve the procurement process is through the defence policy review. As announced by the Minister of National Defence, this review will take a broad, comprehensive view of the Canadian Forces. It will outline the expected role of the institution and what we want to accomplish both at home and abroad.

This has important implications for the procurement process, and from that we can determine the capabilities our military will need and how they will be employed. The policy review will give our military planners a guide that they can use to determine what capabilities they will need. We are looking forward to these results.

I know that everyone in this chamber supports our men and women in uniform. The Canadian Armed Forces is a source of national pride for Canadians from every walk of life, and I was proud to serve as an officer among their ranks. We all support our military because we know they will be there for us when we need them, and so we need to do our part as well.

By ensuring stable funding for the Canadian Armed Forces and improving defence procurement, we will ensure our military has the equipment it needs to do its important work while also valuing a national industrial base that will help to create jobs and investments and innovation and leading-edge technology, because whether they are defending our values and interests abroad or protecting the lives of our citizens at home, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces are the force of last resort. They cannot fail, and so, neither can we.

Could the minister provide an update on the steps he has taken to make the procurement process more effective, and to ensure that our brave men and women in uniform get the equipment they need?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated earlier, we are taking steps to make the process more efficient. I am working very closely with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to have joint briefings with our staff. We are working to reduce a lot of the steps in the process. Our goal as we move forward is to reduce some decision processes by at least 50%.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, as one of a number of former air force officers in this chamber, I know and we know that the Royal Canadian Air Force flies a large inventory of aircraft ranging from huge transport aircraft to helicopters, to fighters, to patrol aircraft, and more. They are used to carry out multiple roles at home and abroad, in peace and in conflict. The aircraft used by our airmen and airwomen are essential to providing the Canadian Armed Forces with relevant, responsive, and effective air power to meet the defence challenges of today and into the future.

Could the minister inform the committee on the progress that has been made to provide the Royal Canadian Air Force with new and modernized aircraft?

• (2110)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I will talk about one of the fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft which is continuing in this procurement. The government has indicated the capabilities that were required and industry has responded with its proposed solutions. We are now currently reviewing those proposals received from industry in a manner that is fair for all stakeholders. The bid evaluation, which includes aircraft testing, is expected to take about six months and a contract is anticipated to be awarded in late 2016 or early 2017.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, the Royal Canadian Air Force's fleet of CP-140 Aurora long-range patrol aircraft, have performed domestic and international operations across a wide variety of disciplines and have been around for quite a while fulfilling this important role. This role includes, of course, domestic surveillance of the Canadian Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic oceans and search and rescue missions. The Aurora also provides support to other government agencies in combatting illegal immigration, fishing, and drug trafficking, as well as assisting with disaster relief. It truly is an incredible airframe.

This government has stated that it is committed to renewing Canada's focus on surveillance and control of Canadian territory and approaches, in particular in our Arctic regions. As such, could the minister give the committee an update on the status of this incremental modernization project to modernize the CP-140 Aurora long-range patrol aircraft?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, 14 of the original 18 Auroras are being modernized and life extended until a new fleet is procured in the 2030 time frame. To date, we have modernized 10 of the aircraft, seven of which have been life extended.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, on another front, our government has made a commitment to invest in the navy and to ensure that our Canadian navy is able to truly operate as a blue water maritime force. Could the minister please give us an update on the modernization and life extension of the Halifax class frigates?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, the Halifax frigates are being modernized. There is one that is remaining. This is also actually a really good news story that the program did extremely well, that now the New Zealand navy has looked to us, where we will be modernizing, I believe, two frigates which will be starting hopefully within this year.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, this government is also committed to ensuring that the Canadian Armed Forces have the equipment they need, in particular, strengthening the navy while meeting the commitments that were made as part of the national shipbuilding strategy. In addition to the Halifax class frigates, could the minister provide the committee with an update on the exciting milestones coming up in the new auxiliary oiler and replenishment capability?

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Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as you know, this is one capability that we have received in the navy. As the joint supply ships go online to be built, we are right now working with an interim measure of what we call smart scheduling utilizing interim ships from different nations. We have also invested in building our own interim capabilities with Davie shipyards, which will help fill some of that gap until the joint supply ships are completed.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chair, rural Ontario suffers from a critical shortage of qualified medical personnel, particularly mental health workers. This provincial shortage is severely impacting Canadian Forces bases located away from major urban centres. We have seen that the practice of loading soldiers who are patients onto buses or separating families is exacerbating the health care crisis.

How does reduced staffing at joint personnel support units fit into the minister's long-term strategy to care for ill and injured soldiers?

• (2115)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, in fact, we are actually trying to modernize the JPSU to make it far more responsive, looking at a stand-alone unit to support our members but also within the chain of command, because the chain of command knows the members best. It allows us to prevent some of the issues that arise, but we are making sure that the JPSU has the right resources to provide the right support for our members.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, it has been reported that the integrated personnel support unit in Garrison Petawawa has lost yet another mental health care provider. Now it is down to one from the six it had been built up to. The failure to implement the treatment plans for soldiers with operational stress injuries has been cited as one of the reasons mental health care professionals call it quits in the Canadian Armed Forces.

How does the minister plan to ensure that soldiers get the treatment they need instead of being left to no longer meet the universality of service, which eventually forces them out of the military, requiring them to medically release?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are, in fact, actually trying to hire more mental health workers. We want to make sure we have enough mental health workers in the critical areas, and we will diligently work toward that.

When it comes to universality of service, we also want to make sure that as members transition, they have all the necessary support mechanisms so they can transition into civilian life with the right type of training and support.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, integrated personnel support units are being cannibalized with half the staffing from Garrison Petawawa being transferred to the completely hollowed-out unit in Trenton.

What plan does the minister have to put the best people for the job into place at the IPSUs so our military personnel can obtain the attention they need?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I cannot stress enough how seriously we take this issue. In terms of the actual point that the member raised, I am happy to look at it, but I am not aware of those numbers.

Currently, we have 400 full-time mental health workers and we are hiring more. We want to make sure that all of the bases and areas where our soldiers are located are staffed appropriately to provide the services they need.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, treatment for operational stress injuries, OSIs, for our serving military is not the only medical care Canadian Armed Forces troops have great difficulty in accessing. Reportedly, soldiers are being told there is no one available to treat them, even during business hours, at certain base hospitals for physical injuries, as well as OSIs. They are only permitted to go to a civilian hospital in grave circumstances.

How is the minister going to ensure that medical personnel are available for our troops in garrison when the medical skills are needed?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I have travelled to many of the bases and the welfare of our soldiers is the question that I raise directly. These concerns have not been raised to me. I am happy to look into these concerns.

We have a good system. The men and women, especially the chain of command, who serve alongside the people who care for our men and women take this extremely seriously. If any issues come up, they will come through the chain of command, and we will address them very quickly.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, how does the minister propose to make the transition for a soldier from active duty to veteran seamless when there are medical issues involved?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: One of the challenges, Mr. Chair, for the transition—and this is a very lengthy topic to discuss—is when someone has been injured in the military, that person becomes a veteran. The person then has to talk to another doctor in Veterans Affairs. We are looking for a manner in which we can make this transition seamless, where if someone has seen a military doctor, that person should not have to convince another doctor after the fact.

We are working on this mechanism to make it smoother, but the transition is much more wider than just looking at the injury. We want to make sure members have the right training, the right education opportunities, and preferred job placement into the public service. We want to make every aspect of the resources available to members as they transition.

• (2120)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, the main estimates for defence services and contributions to government are shown as \$58.7 million lower than last year, yet the recent Fort McMurray wildfire is projected to cost in the billions. Together with citizens throughout Canada, we thank the heroic efforts of the 427 Griffon and 450 Chinook squadrons.

From which defence category will the minister be taking funds to cover any shortfall?

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Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to disasters like this, our first responsibility is to always make sure that we respond. We have done that. We are not at the stage of talking about how much money it will cost. At that time, my deputy minister will take a look at where it needs to come from. If we need to do cost capturing, we can take a look at that. However, having said this, our first responsibility will always be to respond. The Canadian Armed Forces is well suited for it. If we need additional funds, we will request it.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, is the minister saying that the funds will come from somewhere other than from another category within Defence?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are not at that stage of discussions. Right now, I think the Chinook helicopter might still be there, so we have not come to that stage. I want to make sure that we have enough resources for Fort McMurray. If there is any potential follow-up resources that are required, when we get to that stage, we will look at the costing of it and have a discussion on that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, Bangladesh, at 9,432 uniformed personnel, followed by Ethiopia, India, Pakistan and Rwanda, contribute the highest number of any nation to UN peacekeeping operations. The announcement by the Prime Minister that Canada should replace Bangladesh as the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping missions sets the goal of committing over 9,400 Department of National Defence Canadian Armed Forces personnel. Where in the estimates is this cost accounted for?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the metric for involvement with the United Nations is not about the number of troops. We will actually be elevating the conversation much higher than just the number of people that we send. We want to look at how we can do new capacity-building, preventing conflict from going to the tipping point, whether we can do capacity-building and policing early. It is not just looking at it from a military perspective. We need to look at where there is lack of governance as well. We need to understand conflict better. Therefore, the metric of how we participate with the UN, or any other multilateral organization, will be much more than just the number of people we provide. It is how we provide it, how we integrate some of our assets, and how we integrate with some of the other organizations that are already involved.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, the drop in Canadian peacekeepers happened during the Chrétien decade of darkness years of military cutbacks, starting in 1994 during the UN mission to Rwanda. Canada's UN troop contributions dropped from 2,585 in January 1995, to 254 by December of 1997.

Exchanging places with countries such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, and Rwanda represents a need to aggressively recruit new personnel. Where is this additional cost in the estimates, or will the minister be seeking new appropriations from Parliament once his department presents the options for the so-called renewal of Canada's commitment to UN peacekeeping operations?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I would like to talk about what we will be doing now in terms of our involvement in the world. We have announced and have started to implement our renewed mission in Iraq and Syria. We have troops right now doing training, as part of operation reassurance in Poland and other parts of Europe. We have a company in Ukraine right now. When it comes to any new type of

mission, we will do it with a thorough analysis like we did with Iraq and Syria. When we come to any decisions, there will be a cost to it, just like the cost for Operation Impact, which was \$306 million, and which we had to come to cabinet for approval and debate in the House. Therefore, for any new initiative, we will do a thorough analysis, and if additional resources are required, it will be a government decision.

● (2125)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, the minister was quick to criticize our Conservative government by saying that anti-armour defences were not provided when they should have been, in addition to air cover. How, then, can the minister justify pulling air defences so we can call in a mission redirect if necessary, when the anti-armour capability he had identified as being necessary is not in place now that we are putting even more boots on the ground in Iraq?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, some anti-armour capability is going in. I am not going to discuss exactly which one and give this information to ISIL. We are addressing that immediately. We are looking at even newer systems as well.

I would note that our members are well protected. We work in a coalition environment. They have all of the assets necessary. We have mitigated a lot of the safety concerns. The other aspect is that our members are extremely well trained as well, and they have proven this on a number of occasions, which we have talked about in the past.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, the wait times for retiring armed forces members are horrendous. The men and women who have proudly served this country have to wait anywhere from between four weeks to thirty-six weeks before they receive a cheque. I would have to agree with the minister, in his own words, that it is unacceptable.

My question is simple. It has been over a month since the minister said that he would fix the problem. Has anything changed?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, this is a problem. We have put more resources on to this issue. A member should not have to wait that long. We are working on this backlog. The chief of the defence staff did brief me on the numbers, but unfortunately I have forgotten the actual percentage that it has been reduced.

Having said that, any priority case that does come up, we action immediately. I have given one example, which was when a member was retiring and wanted to go to school. We were able to make sure that he received his pension cheque and sorted that out within 18 hours.

We are trying to manage this as quickly as possible, and, more importantly, trying to reduce the burden of these files as they come to management level so our members are not waiting for long periods of time.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, the minister's colleague from Vancouver Quadra said on May 16, 2014:

Business of Supply

Although there are other jobs in the Canadian Armed Forces that [injured Canadian Armed Forces members] could certainly do, because of the universality of service provisions in the Canadian Armed Forces, unless these members are fully capable of being deployed and doing the most difficult work possible, they are not eligible to stay in the Canadian Armed Forces. That would do far more to satisfy the concerns of these injured members or people with medical conditions than to force them to leave the Canadian Armed Forces and transition into meaningful civilian life.

Last week, it was reported that the chief of the defence staff has said that it is unlikely we will change the universality of service policy. Under our government, National Defence set up a working group to examine universality of services provisions and approve the roles for members who may have to be discharged due to injury.

What progress has been made by that working group?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, in terms of universality of service, there is obviously a set requirement that our members need to be fully operational. However, when there is an injury or any type of circumstance where a member cannot fulfill those duties, there is a process that is taken. There is an opportunity where we look at how we can employ the member, in other trades potentially. They do go through a process. If they cannot go through that, then they go through a two-year to three-year transition period where they can get all the necessary training and the resources so they can transition into civilian life.

• (2130)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we have spent a great deal of time tonight discussing the important issue of the main estimates for the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence.

I would like to contribute to this debate by saying a few words on what our men and women in uniform do on behalf of Canadians here at home. While the Canadian Armed Forces play an important role on the international stage, their primary responsibility is always to defend Canada and Canadians. They are not alone in this, of course. They work with the security partners at the federal level, as well as the provinces, territories, and municipalities, as they did during the Vancouver Olympics in 2010.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces are embedded in the provincial response centres across the country, helping to improve coordination. However, the military's role is unique. They must respond when no one else can and have skills and tools that no one else can bring to the table. We are seeing this now. This chamber has been united in its response to the tragic efforts in Fort McMurray. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and their families. I think all hon. members join with me in my admiration and respect for the firefighters and other first responders. These dedicated men and women are leading the fight to contain the fires, protect critical infrastructure, and save lives.

However, when the Province of Alberta called for additional support, the Canadian Armed Forces was ready, as it always is, to provide assistance. To date, they have provided five helicopters and a transport plane, which have been used to evacuate people, deliver essential aid, and move firefighters and their equipment. In fact, this is the first time that a Chinook helicopter was deployed on a domestic operation since becoming fully operational in 2015.

This kind of help, in the form of personnel and specialized equipment, is something the Canadian Armed Forces is able to

provide, and they have done so on many occasions in recent memory. To name a few, in 2010, more than 1,000 personnel helped residents of Newfoundland deal with the storm damage of Hurricane Igor. In 2011, more than 1,800 personnel helped Manitobans deal with flooding, in a region to which they were deployed again in 2014. There were more than 840 soldiers who helped deal with floods near Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. Approximately 2,300 troops, including some local reservists, provided support during the floods in southern Alberta in 2013. Last year, more than 850 military members helped the people of Saskatchewan deal with the wildfires that were eerily similar to those now in Alberta. Time and again, our men and women in uniform have been deployed to help preserve the lives and property of their fellow citizens

It is important for us to remember that every tool at the disposal of the Canadian Armed Forces, from the helicopters which can lift people stranded by fire to safety, or transport aircraft that can move supplies to remote areas, or satellites that can map the effects of a flood in near real time, or regular or reserve force members who step forward to protect their communities, is one that can provide assistance to Canadians in real time and in their time of need.

As the effects of climate change make extreme weather events more likely, we can expect more requests of this type in the near future.

However, these sorts of natural disasters are not all that our men and women in uniform do to keep their fellow citizens safe. The work that they do as part of the national search and rescue program is just as impressive, and they do it every day.

As my honourable colleagues know, many agencies at the federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal levels share responsibility for search and rescue. As well as the many volunteer organizations made up of ordinary citizens who will drop whatever they are doing to help their fellow citizens in need, the Canadian Armed Forces primarily provide air and maritime assets to this program, as well as coordinating search and rescue efforts through three national centres.

• (2135)

All three branches of military are involved in this effort. The Royal Canadian Navy keeps ships on the east and west coasts at all times, ready for search-and-rescue missions. The Canadian Rangers regularly conduct and assist ground search and rescue in sparsely settled regions of the country. The Royal Canadian Air Force maintains fleets of Cormorant and Griffon helicopters, as well as Buffalo and Hercules airplanes.

These efforts are all impressive, but special mention goes to the Canadian Air Force's specially trained search and rescue technicians. These brave men and women, only 140 in number, respond to more than a 1,000 taskings each and every year. They have saved thousands of lives, sometimes at the risk of their own. They do this because it is their duty, and to be true to the inspirational words of their motto, "That others may live".

Business of Supply

National Defence has requested approximately \$75 million in this year's main estimates to support search and rescue operations in coordination, and I think this chamber will agree, it is money well spent.

The last item I will touch on briefly is the military's role defending and guaranteeing Canadian sovereignty. Both in coordination with NORAD and on its own, the Canadian Armed Forces secure all maritime and air approaches to our country. This includes in the Arctic, which is becoming increasingly accessible due to the effects of climate change.

Sovereignty activities include: fighter deployments in response to potential threats and challenges to our sovereignty; air and maritime patrols with Royal Canadian Navy ships and Royal Canadian Air Force aircraft; sovereignty and surveillance patrols by the approximately 5,000 Canadian Rangers and periodic deployment of land forces to foster connections with northern communities; joint and inter-governmental operations in the Arctic that demonstrate our ability to respond to natural disasters and three annual operations involving the regular force, reservists, and other federal and territorial agencies; and finally, wide-area surveillance of Arctic regions using the North Warning System and Canada's RADARSAT-2 satellite.

Our government has committed to continuing investments that will strengthen the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to project sovereignty into the Arctic. The most notable of these is the procurement of Arctic/offshore patrol ships. These ice-capable ships, the first of which are being built as we speak, will conduct sovereignty and surveillance operations in Canada's coastal regions.

As the effects of climate change make Arctic passageways more accessible, the dangers of smuggling, trafficking and pollution will also increase. This makes it even more essential for the Canadian Armed Forces to be able to operate there, to monitor activity and, if necessary, to defend our shores from any threat that may appear.

While the international operations of our military may attract the most attention, we must not forget that the Canadian Armed Forces plays an ongoing and essential role in protecting Canadians at home. The government has committed to preserving current defence spending levels as well as planned increases, to ensure our men and women in uniform have the resources they need to carry out these important missions.

I am certain that all hon. members will continue to ensure that our Canadian Armed Forces can continue to defend our fellow citizens from both natural disasters and more sinister threats.

My first question for the Minister of National Defence is this. We are fully aware, as I indicated, of the role that our Canadian Armed Forces is playing and the work they are contributing in Fort McMurray in this time of need. Could the minister provide some more input and expand on the role that the Canadian Armed Forces is playing in Fort McMurray as we speak?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I actually recently visited the operation centre. I was thoroughly impressed with the response. A lot of the contributions we have made have already been outlined. I would like to highlight the relationship that the joint task force west,

the commander and some their staff actually had with the province. The relationship resulted in great coordination and effort.

The only direction I gave to Chief of the Defence Staff, when the request came to me from the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, was to ensure that all assets were available for this operation. Then the chain of command did its wonderful work.

● (2140)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, we know that in order to do this work, our Canadian Armed Forces will have to be compatible and work with our other departments throughout our government. Could the minister expand a little on how that works, and how the departments work together in time of need, as we see in this particular natural disaster?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the department works quite seamlessly with the various agencies. We have members who are actually posted within the provincial emergency units. Each province has that, but we also work within the various departments ensuring we have the right level of response.

It depends on the level of emergency. We may put more resources to it. However, this is something that just does not happen over night. It is planned, trained on, and then we execute. Fortunately, it has turned out very well, but we need to be always vigilant on how we move forward.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, could the minister also expand on the training that is involved with our Canadian Armed Forces in preparing to assist with natural disasters or emergencies at home?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, there is a considerable amount of training that happens, and I will give an example from B.C. There is an exercise that the province has taken on for emergency preparedness in Port Alberni, in which we will be taking part. We also work very closely with some of the heavier search and rescue teams where they have trained some of our members on light urban search and rescue. Many different aspects of training happen.

We also take proactive measures in ensuring that some of our members are trained up, for example, with the threat of forest fires this season. We are ensuring that some of our immediate response units are already trained up. I believe they get stage 3 training early on so if they are ever needed, rather than waiting to get the training, they can respond immediately to these threats.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, following up on that, could the minister describe how the defence of Canada will play into the defence policy review?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the defence of Canada, our number one priority is the security of Canadians.

We do now a number of things now, for example, our Canadian Joint Operations Command, our binational relationship with NORAD, and also our Special Operations Command.

Business of Supply

As we launch our defence review, we will be looking at ensuring we have the right command structure and the right capabilities that meet the needs of the current threats, but more important, the threats of the future as well.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, I would like to change gears to our reservists. We rely on many reservists during a time of need at home.

I am from a riding that has if not the oldest then one of the oldest reserve units, which is the PWOR, the Princess of Wales' Own Regiment. Its members have approached me with many different concerns about how reservists are going to be playing into the defence policy review that we are undertaking right now.

I know the minister has already spoken about reservists in answering other questions, but would he like to expand on his thoughts about how we are going to see reservists in the review policy that we are undertaking right now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, it is one of the questions we have had, especially as we have our consultations across Canada. This is a discussion that we do bring up and there are various experts members who provide their advice.

I also want to point out, which is very important, that the reserve units and leaderships themselves have an opportunity to present their facts through the chain of command. All Canadians, even as reservists as they are a citizen as well, can participate in other ways with the defence review and make their feelings known.

The reserves play a critical role currently, and we need to look at modernizing the process.

• (2145)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will be taking my time today to ask questions of the minister after a very brief statement.

I want to thank the men and women in uniform who serve our country every day, the civilians who support their work, and the families that sacrifice so much to support their loved ones so they can serve us. It is a special honour for me to be here today, as I represent CFB Comox. It is a great honour to work for the people in our riding who serve our country.

I would like to ask the minister this. In 2015, on how many occasions were the Buffalo CC-115 airplanes unavailable for search and rescue?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, that is a very specific question, and I do not have the answer off hand. I am happy to get the answer for the member. In fact, I can give the member a much wider perspective on the search and rescue aspect of all our aircraft.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, could the minister tell the House how many critical failures have the Buffalo aircraft experienced in the past year?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am happy to answer a lot of these questions, but I cannot answer the member's questions because these are extremely detailed questions that require some more research. If the member has these types of questions as part of this, I am happy to discuss generally a lot of the work that they do. If the member has any concerns about not having these questions

answered, she can rest assured that my office is always open for questions like this and even broader ones.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, that is surprising, considering the assistant deputy minister, Patrick Finn, said, "...we don't fly aircraft that are unsafe".

The contract for the new fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft is ongoing since 2002. Are you on target for signing the contract by the end of this year? Why has it taken so long?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker: I want to remind the hon. members to talk through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, there was a difficulty when it came to our fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft. I was advised that in the past it was challenged because of the procurement, but it is now back on track and we are getting to a phase where the process is moving along. We are committed to replacing these aircraft as quickly as possible.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, what key capabilities does the RCAF require from its new fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to search and rescue, it is not just about the aircraft. There is a far greater system in place. I am happy to answer in detail about these things, if we want to talk entirely about search and rescue.

It is aircraft, it is some of our helicopters, and it is our personnel. Our search and personnel, especially our search and rescue technicians, are an extremely important part of that. Pilots are one part of the equation. Our search and rescue technicians are like the special forces of search and rescue. They are training for adverse weather and in many different areas.

When we look at our capability to respond, if that is what the member is asking, Canadians can be extremely proud of the response. As part of the defence review, we will be looking at ensuring it has all the capabilities as we look to its potential increase of search and rescue to the north as well.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, what were the performance-based recommendations after the National Research Council review?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I do not have the detailed answer. It seems like the member came with a list of questions, trying to ask certain things that I cannot answer. However, as the member knows, and the member who is sitting next to her knows also, my office is always open. If these questions are urgent to you, I could have answered these questions in much more detail at any time. I will take down your list of questions and answer them in detail.

• (2150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind the hon. members to speak through the Chair, not directly across the floor.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the minister this. What were the limits imposed by the department after the National Research Council review?

Business of Supply

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I do not have the answer at this time. As I stated, I am happy to get the answers.

On the National Research Council review, I am trying to see if it is even within our mandate. If it is, I am happy to answer these questions in detail, and any other questions that she might have that require a level of detail that is beyond the committee at this time.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for working with me. These are the important issues for the people I represent.

The next question I have for the minister is on the delivery of the aircraft, which has been delayed since 2007. When does the minister expect all 15 to be fully operational in the RCAF squadrons? Is he thinking 2019, or 2020, or perhaps 2025?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am assuming the member is talking about the Auroras. We are expecting them in 2019.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, could the minister tell me what the current shortage of pilots and trained crew is?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I do not keep track of the number of pilots. We have a recruiting system that looks at all aspects of pilots, infantry, armoured, and all the different trades.

Perhaps the member did not get my memo where I opened up my office for these types of questions. Other members of the member's party have already taken advantage of this. I am happy to answer those questions. However, when it comes to the number of pilots, there is a system in place that all services have that feeds into the recruiting system making sure that we have the right number of pilots, doctors, and all trades. It is constantly reviewed, on a regular basis.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, I know the army reserves are down 20% in recruitment numbers, when will the retention strategy for the army reserves be implemented?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the retention strategy, retention is an ongoing thing. It is not about a certain strategy that is implemented by the wider government. This is something that is done regularly within every single unit. The chain of command looks at it across the board, whether it is from the regular force or the reserves. All commanding officers, at all levels, should be looking at retention. This is something we push down because it is far better for us to retain our members than to constantly recruit.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, how will recruiting and retention training be more engaging?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, if the member wants to get into the details of it, I will give her my example of when I was a commanding officer. When it comes to retention, what we require is challenging training. We need a chain of command that is engaged.

Reserves are not like the regular force. People have civilian work and civilian lives. They could be students. It is more than just serving one's country. It is about giving them something that is different. One thing I found, and I worked in the recruiting system considerably, is that we need to make sure they have challenging, relevant training that they look forward to doing and that has meaning, and make sure they have the right equipment. Currently, in the reserves, as well as when I was a commanding officer, we had all the necessary tools.

This is also a leadership function in making sure we, from the top, from the Minister of National Defence, through the chain of command, ensure that all the chain of command, right down to the commanding officer level, and even to the sub-units, have the ability to plan exercises that are challenging and that would recruit and retain some of these members.

• (2155)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, when will our reservists be fully ready to be deployed?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when we have certain deployments they will be ready. All reserves are not usually deployed. It depends on what operations. Reserves are not designed to be put on deployments. If an operation comes up, a request is made through the various chains of command. It also depends on which region of the nation is responsible for those deployments and a call-out is done through the various commands. Then pre-deployment training is selected. Certain members are DAG green. After that, they go through their training, and then they are selected and go on deployments.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, in terms of training, is it expected or normal for reservists to use pickup trucks to simulate light armoured vehicles?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the reserves or any military personnel do not use civilian vehicles. They can only authorize and use military vehicles, and the type of vehicle they use is of an individual unit's choice, whether it is a G wagon or a command post that is used.

Many different vehicles can be used. It all depends on the circumstances and it all depends on the trade, whether armoured, reconnaissance, or artillery, or it depends on the type of exercise that is being conducted. Potentially, they might be doing a scenario that requires a civilian vehicle, and then they would request that to be utilized in the exercise. It all depends really on the situation and the training exercises.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, I think what I am hearing is that they will now have training at the same level as the regular force so that they are better prepared to support deployments.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the reserves, we have to be mindful that reserves are part time. They should not be expected to train at the level of the regular force, because the regular force is full time; that is their job.

In the reserves, it is about maintaining a level of capability so that when they are called upon, they can be selected DAG green. DAG is departure assistance group, green, and then they go through a series of pre-deployment training, and the length of time depends on deployment. Then they are able to make it up to the level of the regular forces before they go on operation. That is what the reserves are there to do.

When they are class B, it is different because they are working full time, but then they are expected to be at a higher capability as their regular force partners are.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, since the AG report, which specific types of equipment do the reservists now have access to in order to be self-sufficient?

Business of Supply

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, it all depends on what type of unit we are talking about, whether they are armoured, artillery, infantry, comms, and then we get the naval reserves as well.

We go through a series of procurement plans that support the reserves. In particular, I can talk to you directly about the G wagon, which provides the capability for armoured reconnaissance units in the reserves, but we are in the process of replacing that in the future.

We look at many different capabilities, but we have to ensure they have not only have the capability for today. As part of the defence review, we need to make sure that our reserves can be modernized for future threats as well.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, will reservists receive resilience training before and after deployment, and will they have access to mental health programs after deployment as well?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when reservists go on operations, they become class E. It is the equivalent of being part of the regular force, and they get all the services and benefits of all members on deployment. It is included as part of the pre-deployment training, and when the individual returns they get the post-deployment benefits as well, from decompression to leave and all the required medical needs as well.

If a member of the reserves is injured and the injuries last, they remain on contract so that they can stay and get paid. They pretty much stay on contract until they are well enough to go back to civilian life.

• (2200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you for giving me this opportunity to debate the main estimates of the Department of National Defence for 2016-17.

It is of the utmost importance that Canada focus on maximizing human resource development in the military. Education and training are inexhaustible resources that enable the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces to develop superior skill sets.

Be it for college or university education, or even advanced master's or doctoral studies, members of Canada's military all have access to academic training. We have highly skilled, top-tier teachers. Our facilities and infrastructure support this work.

Our military personnel have many professional development options. During their years of service, they take part in many training sessions to enhance their technical skills. Personal development workshops equip them with the right tools to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces have highly skilled, well-prepared professionals who can overcome the challenges they face. They have to be able to adapt physically and intellectually, and all the training they receive during their years of service supports them in achieving their objectives.

From the moment they join the army to their final year of service, all members of the Canadian Armed Forces take part in ongoing training and continuing professional development. Depending on needs, they may also pursue academic studies to help them play an active role in our constantly changing world.

Training is a recurring theme in the life of a Canadian Armed Forces member. It is clear that this ongoing training enables Canadian military personnel to fulfill their operational roles. Training helps place our armed forces among the most educated and skilled in the world.

To promote the value of continuous skill development and to oversee all aspects of academic, linguistic, professional, and technical training, we have the Canadian Defence Academy. Its mandate is to champion lifelong learning and to promote the professional development of members of the Canadian Armed Forces. The Canadian Defence Academy is an education group composed of the Royal Military College of Canada, the Royal Military College Saint-Jean, and the Canadian Forces College.

The mission of the Royal Military College of Canada is to produce officers with the mental, physical, and linguistic capabilities and the ethical foundation required to lead with distinction in the Canadian Armed Forces. To accomplish this mission, it delivers undergraduate academic programs, together with a range of complementary programs in both official languages.

Founded in 1874 for the purpose of providing a complete education to all branches of the military, RMC provides undergraduate and post-graduate programs and professional development education to meet the needs of other members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence. Training at RMC focuses on fundamental educational notions that allow soldiers to hone their skills so that they can become respected leaders in Canada.

This education group also includes the Royal Military College Saint-Jean. For the moment, that institution is focusing on offering programs that allow students to obtain a college diploma. Students can enrol and take post-secondary courses in social sciences and natural sciences. This academic institution, which is extremely important to the riding of Saint-Jean, was founded in 1952. Over the years, the college has undergone major changes in direction. By adapting to the needs of the Canadian Armed Forces, it has always managed to offer quality military training activities. Although a break between 1995 and 2008 left its mark on the institution's academic mandate, RMC Saint-Jean has constantly reinvented itself.

The year 2008 marked a new beginning for this educational institution, which remains a true national symbol. Royal Military College Saint-Jean is located on the site of Fort Saint-Jean, a heritage site that has borne witness to the vast military history of the French and British regimes as well as that of Canada.

• (2205)

Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, which is celebrating its 350th anniversary as a garrison town this year, is proud to be able to count on this prestigious establishment that educates the members of the Canadian Armed Forces in order to instil in them the competencies required to maintain excellence in the profession of arms.

Business of Supply

The time has come to restore the college to its former glory so that it can actively participate in maintaining our troops' expertise and supporting the Canadian government in redefining its military mission.

Canada's return to its fundamental principles fits in quite well with the university status that the Royal Military College Saint-Jean wants to acquire. The humanities and social sciences program will help train leaders with the abilities to engage in conflict resolution.

Recent Canadian military interventions in the world have demonstrated the importance of having sound university training in anthropology, social sciences, foreign languages and cultures, ethics, and philosophy. Those studies would not conflict with the direction of the Royal Military College in Kingston. What is more, choosing that direction for its programs would lay the foundation for future development at RMC Saint-Jean, since these modular programs meet the growing needs of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The university culture is still present in Fort Saint-Jean. The professors continue to do research and regularly share with other Canadian and international university institutions. This is a way of connecting the forces involved in order to give Canada a second institution that will help maintain a representative francophone presence in the Canadian Armed Forces and the defence staff, thereby contributing to maintaining our identity in Canada.

The college has proven valuable many times by providing a francophone military learning environment and promoting bilingualism and linguistic diversity in the army. Resuming university training will help promote better recruitment of francophones, allophones, and anglophones in Quebec and across Canada to RMC Saint-Jean.

With the increasing demands of peacekeeping operations in francophone African countries and in light of our recent experiences in Haiti, it is clear that bilingualism is an important skill that Canada's army brings to the international stage.

The third component of the Canadian Defence Academy is the Canadian Forces College in Toronto. It prepares senior military and civilian leaders to meet the complex security challenges of the future. The college is known as a world leader in defence and security education, research, and outreach. The college provides joint advanced professional military education for officers of the Canadian Armed Forces and senior government executives in a bilingual environment through programs of study focusing on national security and joint staff operations and command.

Since we are faced with a significant challenge, we must be able to adapt our forces to respond to all types of intervention. However, first, we must ensure that our forces have the resources they need. Recruitment in all forms is therefore an absolute priority. We will have to put special emphasis on our reserve force and support the Canadian cadet program.

Our reservists make a very important and valuable contribution to Canada's security. As a government, we must work to attract, develop, support, and retain a ready, capable, motivated, and relevant reserve as a strategic and operational resource. Reserve members are highly skilled and they have proven to be essential resources in helping the Canadian Armed Forces achieve their objectives.

The reserve units, which are present in more than 100 Canadian communities, work on the front lines, supporting the regular forces. The cadet program continues to evolve and adapt to meet the expectations of our changing society. With its emphasis on leadership, physical fitness, and citizenship, the Canadian cadet program helps young Canadians to become active and engaged members of their communities and prepares them to become the leaders of tomorrow.

This program has some direct benefits for Canadian society. It promotes our society's fundamental values and trains well-rounded, community-minded young people. These young people from all walks of life, dressed in the Canadian uniform, will become responsible, respected citizens, and some will even decide to join the Canadian Armed Forces.

● (2210)

We have to understand that we are asking the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces to take on an extremely difficult task. Our world has changed so radically that the only thing we know for sure is that we have to prepare for every eventuality.

It is very clear to me that quality education and ongoing training are not only essential to enabling them to accomplish that task, but also critical to the Canadian Army's overall operational readiness.

As I am sure the minister knows, Royal Military College Saint-Jean is planning to offer university studies in the humanities. This innovative university program is closely aligned with the Canadian Armed Forces' needs.

Canada's recent military interventions around the world have all demonstrated the importance of solid university training in anthropology, social sciences, foreign languages and cultures, ethics, and philosophy.

RMC Saint-Jean officials have chosen an approach that optimizes the use of existing infrastructure and human resources. This approach will also improve the effectiveness of the regular training for officer cadets and the ongoing training both on site and remotely of non-commissioned officers on active duty. Because of its unique offerings, RMC Saint-Jean will attract more francophones, anglophones, and allophones from Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Minister, what do you see as RMC Saint-Jean's role in light of a new focus for the Canadian Armed Forces' mission and the promotion of the French fact?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind hon. members to address their remarks through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, having two official languages, French being one of them obviously, if we want to attract the best and brightest from the region, we have to take a look at different options. The Royal Military College Saint-Jean is one option. We have reviewed it extensively. There is a lot of work that needs to be done. I am hoping to have the answer very shortly.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, reservists make a significant and crucial contribution to increasing Canada's defence capability. In deployments of the Canadian Armed Forces, approximately 20% of the members are reservists.

Furthermore, with reserve units located in more than 100 Canadian cities, reservists are on the front lines in their communities and have the ability to effectively meet the needs of their fellow Canadians.

[English]

Can the minister tell us how training for army reserve soldiers is integrated into training for the regular force?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, there are many aspects of how the training is integrated. It starts with basic training. The core foundation of reserve training is the level of training that the regular force gets. We train up to a certain level. As I stated earlier in response to previous questions, when it comes to operations, whether domestic or international, reservists are selected through the chain of command and then given theatre-specific training or domestic operations training before they take part in any type of operation. It is a system that has worked well in the past, but we are looking at ways to improve it as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, considering that the Canadian Cadet Corps empowers youth from all backgrounds in a stimulating, friendly, and safe environment; that it gives them a unique opportunity to learn essential skills that will equip them to approach the labour market with optimism; and that, with its intrinsic values, the institution encourages achievement and community involvement that enable all young cadets to become better citizens and, in some cases, to join the army, does the minister plan to encourage the promotion of this movement by supporting recruitment and providing practical ways to help even more young Canadians benefit from the many activities provided by cadet organizations and also encourage people to enlist in the Canadian Armed Forces?

• (2215)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the cadet program, in my opinion, is one of the best leadership programs in the country. It provides leadership regardless of whatever skills the cadets may choose in the future. It is something we in the regular force can actually learn from, because the diversity the cadets have in some of their units is unique. They end up recruiting as representative of the population, and we can learn from some of their methods.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to rise this evening. I would like to start by seeking the

unanimous consent of the members of this committee of the whole to share my time with the member for Yorkton—Melville.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker: Does the member have the unanimous consent of the committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, of course the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada share many ties. I am pleased to speak to this committee of the whole as the official opposition critic for Veterans Affairs. The ties between the two departments stem from the fact that all soldiers will one day become veterans, and any cuts made to the Department of National Defence will have a direct impact on the well-being of our veterans.

I am a member of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. We are currently conducting three studies, specifically one on service delivery, one on mental health, and one on the transition from military to civilian life. My goal is to ask the minister and his officials a few questions and to get some answers in real time to some of the questions pertaining to our studies at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

The three topics I want to address with the minister have to do with the integrated personnel support centres, the veterans family centre pilot project, and finally, the medical diagnostics done by the Canadian Armed Forces medical corps.

The integrated personnel support centres were created to mentor serving members who are released from the Canadian Armed Forces. Soldiers sometimes have to leave the military because of mental or physical injuries that prevent them from meeting the demands of their job and the more general requirements of the department, such as the principle of universality of service.

These integrated personnel support centres have been in operation for a number of years now and so it is necessary to determine whether the mentoring is meeting its objective of preparing members to be released or sometimes helping them to fully reintegrate into their regiment, unit, or occupation.

My questions on this topic are as follows. First, could the minister tell me what is the total budget allocated by the Department of National Defence to all integrated personnel support centres?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the budget is \$17.5 million for JPSU, but I think it deserves a broader answer. I absolutely agree with the member that we should be assessing our delivery constantly to make sure we keep up with the needs. In fact, that is the one thing the chief of the defence staff has done as part of his review. He is making sure that the JPSU stays linked with the chain of command, because it is an integral portion. Members can go back.

Business of Supply

When I was in Val Cartier, there was one member who was injured. He was shot in the leg and he did not want to be released. He was able to recover, do all of the tests, and go back into the unit. I had the honour of actually promoting him. It shows that the system does work, that the chain of command is compassionate and responsive. Regardless, we need to constantly assess to make sure we provide the right delivery for our members.

• (2220)

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell us what the budget is for each of those centres or does the budget vary from one military base to another?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I do not have the exact answer about which budget, but I want to make sure we keep it responsive. Instead of trying to manage which budget, it will allow the chain of command to come up with that function on its own. There are 24 centres, but we need to make sure it is agile. We need to decentralize with that relationship, because at the end of the day, it is JPSU and its staff and the chain of command that know their troops the best. I trust in the chain of command to make sure that the right resources are allocated and that flexibility is better done at the lower levels.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, many veterans have told me on many different occasions about the problems in those centres. For example, there is not enough senior staff to mentor the members at the centres.

Does the department plan to increase the budget for these centres so that they can increase the number of senior staff who are there with the soldiers and officers?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the staff of the JPSU is obviously being assessed, but we can take it much broader than that. It is making sure that we have that transition piece when we are talking about JPSU and the units. We need to do more on the preventative side. If we focus within the units and prevent people getting into the JPSU, that is even better success. However, at the same time, we do need to make sure that they have the right resources, and this will be an ongoing assessment within JPSU. We have identified a few that we are working on and if the needs do change, we will adjust accordingly.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, I understand that we need to focus on prevention, but we also need to act immediately. Some of the members at these centres right now need more mentoring and staff.

How many suicides have occurred in these centres since they opened?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to suicides in 2015, we had 15 regular force members and three reserve force members. However, at the end of the day, one is too many and we need to do our utmost to make sure that our members have the right resources. The JPSU chain of command and the work that we try to do with myself and the Minister of Veterans Affairs is all part of that.

As I said, we owe it to our men and women to make sure they have the right resources for the challenges they face, and one is too many.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Chair, in my maiden speech in December, I shared how proud I was to have met so many veterans while I was on the campaign trail and how proud I was to be serving at the deputy critic for Veterans Affairs and working on the committee where all of us really do want to make a difference for our armed forces and our veterans.

The comments I heard in coffee shops, at the doors from service groups and legions all reflected the same values and the same concerns for people who cared more than any others about our Canadian Armed Forces, and that is our veterans.

What did they say to me? They said that over the last while the issues of the new veterans charter had been improving, but still a great deal more needed to be done to improve the care for our seriously injured soldiers, veterans, and their families.

Second, with their confidence in seeing our previous Conservative government spend 10 years repairing the damage, increasing the budget for National Defence from \$14.5 billion in 2005-06 to over \$20 billion in 2014-15, investing in tanks, helicopters, planes, extending the life of CF-18s, modernizing, refurbishing and upgrading, starting the national shipbuilding program, and allocating over \$1 billion in infrastructure investment in bases and stations. I am pleased to see that we are continuing these procurement programs, although I am hearing \$3.7 billion will be there if needed,

Over and over again, I heard those same veterans saying that we must never go back to the disrespect and lack of support and appreciation for our Canadian Armed Forces that was the decade of darkness under the previous Liberal government.

Could the Minister of National Defence please explain why the previous Conservative government was able to accomplish so much to restore the confidence of the veterans in my riding, while navigating our country through the worst global recession since the Great Depression and bringing taxes to the lowest level in 50 years, yet the Liberal government, with over a \$7 billion surplus, not only could not find any new money for Armed Forces in the Speech from the Throne, but also found it necessary to cut spending for the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces who put their lives at risk to protect our security, our sovereignty, and our freedoms?

Business of Supply

• (2225)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I want to make it very clear that our government is not making any cuts. We have had a pretty good conversation from a non-partisan perspective, but at the end of the day, our veterans, regardless of party, need to know that Canada has their backs. They do not care which government is in power. We need to keep working to improve. I can assure the member that we are extremely focused on veterans. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about some of the veterans we have lost.

This government has put it as a priority. That is one of the reasons I actually got into politics. We are fully committed to supporting our veterans. It is one of the reasons the Prime Minister made a unique position for the Minister of Veterans Affairs to also be my associate minister to work on this point, ensuring that the transition for our Canadian Armed Forces members is done in a manner that works well for all members as they transition into civilian life.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, I do not think there is any question that we all want the best for our veterans. The question is this. Why is there not any new money, from a government that is going to spend billions, toward the purposes that are so important to us all?

I know that a great deal of time and money is invested in conditioning our soldiers for combat, and I understand why that is necessary and how important it is that they function really well, doing things that, believe me, I am so grateful they are willing to do.

I just wonder if there is any way that we have an ability to also assess the time and, especially, the amount of money from the department that is invested in decompressing them from combat conditioning, because a lot of them whom we are hearing from, before they are being released to VAC services, are facing very difficult and serious mental health issues, as we have talked about already today.

Does the department have a clear commitment of funds and time to say that, no matter what, we are going to make sure these people are healthy before we hand them over to VAC?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, there is \$4.6 billion set aside by the government for veterans in new money.

As I said, we are working in a manner that will ensure the transition is done well. There are a lot of programs. There are a lot of challenges. I know exactly what challenges they are facing. I have seen the impact upon some of our members. We need to ensure that transition goes well. The one big example that comes up is that if people are injured while in the military, why should they have to explain to a Veterans Affairs doctor that they have been injured?

These are the challenges we are working on right now. I just encourage the member not to turn it into a partisan thing, because there are many aspects I can start bringing up.

However, at the end of the day, what we need to be working on is that we all are going to work toward ensuring that our members are going to be looked after and that we give confidence to our veterans, because one thing our veterans do need, in addition to all the services, is to know that Canada has their backs, and Canada means us all.

We are committed to supporting our veterans, because I am also one of them, and there are members from other parties who are also veterans. I have never talked about my injuries. I was actually injured in Afghanistan. I have been through the process myself, so I do know how they feel. However, there are some serious injuries on the mental side of things. It is also unique. We cannot look at it very broadly. We need to be able to cater right down, sometimes, to the individual member. That is what we are trying to do with this transition.

• (2230)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, I do not think coming across strong means I am partisan. I want the same things the minister wants. I just want to make sure we have what we need to actually succeed.

There is something close to my heart, and the minister talked about it already tonight. I am from Saskatchewan, and we have this wonderful thing called CFB Moose Jaw, which is a huge part of our economy and sense of pride. I just want to hear from the minister, again, that this base is not in any way going to be compromised in the future.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I think Moose Jaw is where some of our NATO pilots were also training, and it supports an important function.

At this time, I have no intention of closing any bases. I want to make sure we look at all the infrastructure, especially as we go through the defence review. We need to look at all the access we have, as we move forward, so that we can make sure we can respond to all the challenges our nation has currently, and will have in the future.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Chair, before starting my prepared remarks, I want to make a very quick clarification for the record.

There was discussion earlier, led by my colleague opposite, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, that may have created the perception that we are somehow talking about the closure of bases. I just want to assure everybody here that it was never discussed. The discussion was around the potential relocation of airborne sovereignty assets, alert assets, not the closure the bases, and that is to better meet an asymmetric threat. There was no discussion about base closures.

[*Translation*]

This evening, as we discuss the important work of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, let us remember that at this very moment, more than 1,360 Canadian troops are taking part in 15 operations around the world.

We have witnessed first-hand the support these men and women offer to Canadians, as they did during the recent events in Fort McMurray. We must also remember that our men and women in uniform have had a positive impact on the lives of many people outside Canada and beyond our borders in places like the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean.

Business of Supply

The Canadian Armed Forces are flexible and adaptable. They are able to react quickly and decisively. Thanks to their unique expertise, they can overcome the most complex security problems. They can also collaborate effectively with other departments, non-governmental organizations, allied nations, and coalition partners to do the work they are asked to do.

Our troops have an excellent reputation and are held in high regard both at home and abroad.

[*English*]

This is being demonstrated right now in Iraq. As we all know, ISIL has killed thousands of innocent civilians and has displaced millions more. In fact, ISIL's advance triggered one of the largest refugee crises the world has ever seen. ISIL is undermining the stability of this and surrounding regions, and has posed a broader threat to international security.

That is why since 2014, Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces have assisted Iraqis in their fight against ISIL as part of an international coalition led by the United States. From August to September 2014, the Royal Canadian Air Force delivered more than 1.6 million pounds of military supplies to Iraq. From October 2014 to February 2016, our CF-18s conducted nearly 1,400 sorties and over 250 air strikes. This air operation successfully struck hundreds of ISIL fighting positions, military equipment, and vehicles.

Thanks to coalition efforts, ISIL has suffered significant losses in terms of fighters, assets, and territory. By the beginning of this year, the coalition forces had helped halt ISIL's progress and compromised its ability to fight.

Now the Iraqi military is able to take on a more offensive role in battle. They are reclaiming territory and pushing ISIL fighters back into hiding. While ISIL remains a threat, the international coalition is undermining its momentum.

Against this backdrop, there was a need earlier this year to reassess Canada's contribution to ensure it remained meaningful and continued to respond to the most pressing needs of the coalition effort.

In February, the Prime Minister articulated a redefined and refocused Canadian contribution that reflects a more comprehensive and whole-of-government approach and more particularly, that reflects the changing realities on the ground.

This refocused approach was abundantly debated in the House. During the five-day debate, no less than 98 members of Parliament had an opportunity to voice their opinions. This refocused mission, representing a \$1.6-billion commitment over three years, was designed to maximize Canada's unique capabilities while complementing the efforts of our partners.

The Canadian Armed Forces remain a central pillar of this new approach, with a commitment of approximately 830 military personnel. The military is shifting its focus toward the training mission on the ground by tripling the size of the train, advise, and assist mission in northern Iraq.

The Canadian Armed Forces have already begun deploying the additional troops required for this training mission. We are also

bolstering our intelligence capacity in support of this mission. This intelligence is informing the coalition's operational decision and is improving the coalition's ability to target and defeat ISIL.

In fact, less than two weeks ago, on May 4, the Minister of National Defence met with other defence ministers at a coalition meeting in Germany, and many of them spoke very highly of Canada's intelligence contribution. We also have personnel working in coalition headquarters and with the Iraqi government.

A Canadian general officer has been selected to lead the global coalition's ministerial liaison team which is intended to provide strategic support to the Iraqi ministry of interior and the ministry of defence.

We are expanding our medical presence, to serve Canadian and coalition needs and also to mentor local security forces.

We are supporting capacity-building efforts in both Jordan and Lebanon. We are maintaining the refuelling and surveillance aircraft, and have deployed tactical air support, which began operating in Erbil earlier in May.

• (2235)

[*Translation*]

Canada's new approach has been very well received by our coalition partners, particularly the United States. The President of the United States, Barack Obama, recently said that our training mission and the expansion of our intelligence resources have made us an extremely valuable member of the international coalition against the Islamic State. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry acknowledged that Canada is enormously invested in the fight and is making an important contribution. We can be extremely proud of our soldiers.

As the Minister of National Defence said himself during a debate in the House in February of this year, the Canadian Armed Forces are composed of highly trained and experienced men and women. They train in order to carry out their missions and get things done.

The chief of the defence staff recently visited northern Iraq, where he saw first-hand the real results the Canadian Armed Forces are achieving on the ground.

The new mandate for this mission was not approved early enough to be included in the main estimates that we are examining today. However, the Department of National Defence will seek to obtain up to \$207 million in the supplementary estimates later in the year. I would like to mention, however, that this amount is not at all representative of the contribution of the Canadian Armed Forces to maintaining security in the Middle East.

We see that history is repeating itself when we look at other international military operations. Overall, the Canadian Armed Forces are fulfilling their international obligations thanks to the strategic use of their limited resources and the most effective use of their unique expertise.

In Operation Reassurance, the Canadian Armed Forces provide vital support for NATO assurance measures and our allies in Europe, whether on the ground, at sea or in the air.

As part of Operation Unifier, more than 200 Canadian instructors are providing much-needed assistance to Ukrainian forces.

Business of Supply

During Operation Provision, the Canadian Armed Forces played an instrumental role in helping Lebanese and Jordanian refugees enter Canada and also helped with the processing and preliminary examination of applicants abroad.

The Canadian Armed Forces are also taking part in five UN missions, namely in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, the Golan Heights, Haiti, and Cyprus. They also contribute to a peace support operation in the Sinai Peninsula, in Egypt, with the multinational force and observers. In many of these missions, Canadian troops hold important key positions and show extraordinary leadership and professionalism.

Again, the operating expenses in this budget provide only an overview of the tremendous contribution of the Canadian Armed Forces to maintaining stability and security in the world.

[English]

A former UN under-secretary-general for peacekeeping once aptly reflected that one could not stand as an island of stability in an ocean of turmoil. We are truly blessed to live in Canada. We are far removed from much of the turmoil and violence that plagues so many parts of the world.

However, we cannot become complacent in our isolation. Despite appearances, we are not an island. We are intricately connected to a global network of forces, some positive and some negative. We are also a nation that embraces humanitarian values and prides itself in being a positive force on the world stage. Therefore, we must think about how we can continue to be responsible and engaged international citizens.

Going forward, the government is undertaking a comprehensive defence policy review. This process will take a fresh look at the current strategic environment, consider the defence needs of Canada and Canadians, and set the future direction for the Canadian Armed Forces.

While the policy review is still in progress, with Canadians submitting their views from across the country, I expect that international partnerships and operations will remain an enduring thread of Canadian defence. This year's activities prove that Canada's military women and men stand ready to continue this proud legacy of international engagement.

• (2240)

The Chair: The hon. member still has five minutes remaining. I do not know whether he wishes to pose questions.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, my first question is about international engagement and, in fact, the United Nations, which many of us hold dear in the House and across the country. Canada has a proud history of engagement with the United Nations. This is about sophistication, building relationships, conflicts that are changing rapidly, interoperability and governance, which are concepts that are new to the nature of conflict.

Could the Minister of National Defence update the House on his mandate letter priority to renew Canada's commitment to the United Nations' peace operations, including helping the United Nations respond more quickly to emerging and escalating conflicts? Are the

Canadian Armed Forces members ready and prepared to undertake peace operations under the United Nations?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I have been working very closely with the Minister of Foreign Affairs on this topic as we look at the greatest threats around the world. We have started the conversations at NATO as well on how we look at engaging in different parts of the world. The United Nations has many missions. How do we start integrating on the level of support?

We need to look at a much wider perspective than just from the military. We need to look at the vacuum that a lack of governance creates for radical groups. We also need to look at early capacity-building that can hopefully prevent conflict. We want to ensure that with anything that we do, we understand the conflict of the regions, not just one country but the wider region, and that we look at the problem from not just a military perspective, but from a whole-of-government perspective. I am happy to state even the coalition to counter ISIL, which we are part of, started to look at the whole problem of Daesh from a much wider perspective as well.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, if I could ask a quick follow-up question on the reply from the hon. minister?

As coalitions change, as coalitions broaden and new members are introduced with very different military cultures, political backgrounds, and conflicts that these members of their armed forces have gone through, could the minister comment briefly on the extent to which the Canadian Forces are equipped, in light of their experiences, cultural sensitivities, and sophistication, to take leading roles in these broader coalitions that may include members who have not been part of these coalitions in past conflicts?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, there is a very unique perspective that the Canadian Armed Forces can bring from our various experiences from the early days, from Bosnia to most recently in Afghanistan, and now in Iraq. However, we also have an additional uniqueness that Canada brings to the table, which is our diversity and understanding of different cultures, which provides a very unique capability for the military. It is something that other nations just do not have.

Therefore, there are many aspects that the Canadian Armed Forces can contribute from our experience and from the uniqueness we have. I also want to point out that our troops from Quebec having that language skill and being able to build that rapport in the francophone area is another aspect of a skill that can be brought to the table.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, I was very privileged and proud to serve in Iraq under the flag of the United Nations as a civilian officer. While I disagreed strongly with the 2003 intervention, nothing gave me more pride than our decision not to intervene in 2003. I am now very proud of the role the Canadian Armed Forces is playing in Iraq, especially in the fight against the scourge of ISIS, or Daesh.

Could the minister take a moment to review the different missions that are going on around the world at the moment, including Iraq, in which Canadian Armed Forces personnel are engaged?

Business of Supply

• (2245)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as members know, our current commitments in Iraq and Syria are the ones getting notable attention. However, we do have members also as part of Operation Reassurance. In Europe, we have a company in Poland that does training and capacity-building all across Europe. We have a frigate as well as part of the operations. We also have troops right now in Ukraine. We got to visit them and the wonderful work that they are doing. We conduct operations of counter-narcotics with tremendous success in the Caribbean, which is Operation Caribbe. There are a number of other operations I can list off that may not have a large number of troops but have a significant amount of impact. Our operation and the support we provide in the Sinai is one example of this, where we have another Canadian general being charged with that very important mission.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is my privilege to rise today with questions for the minister. I would like to begin by thanking the minister for his service. Certainly I respect the career he had in the Canadian Armed Forces. That experience is formative for someone serving in the capacity of Minister of National Defence. I want to thank him and recognize that at the outset.

I want to present a brief speech first before I get into my questions.

Many members of the Canadian Armed Forces, while very happy and proud of the minister's service, are indeed very worried about the future of the Canadian Armed Forces. They are worried about the capability, operations and equipment, and they have good reason to be. The parallels between the last majority Liberal government seen in this place and the current one are stark and startling.

In 1993, the election was dominated by the delay and eventual cancellation of the maritime helicopter replacement, which the minister is still talking about replacing because, quite frankly, of the misguided move in that election by former prime minister Chrétien in cancelling the Sea King helicopter. The year after the Liberals were elected, in 1994, they had a defence white paper to basically set up the future cuts to the military. I will quote the lines from that 1994 white paper. It ends by saying:

Indeed whatever the future brings, the new defence policy will enable Canada to respond and adjust as necessary to deal with the range of challenges to our security that could arise, now and into the next century.

We fast forward to the present government. The F-35 became the large procurement project that was used as a political football in a campaign. Then, a year after the current government assumed office, we will have a defence review, again setting up the circumstances for future cuts. In the launch of that review, the minister said:

The strategic security environment in which the Canadian Armed Forces operates has changed significantly.

That sounds very familiar. He continued:

I look forward to hearing from Canadians from coast to coast, as they help inform the...modern defence policy that will support the [Canadian Armed Forces] to effectively respond to a full spectrum of challenges—now and into the future.

It is the same language.

Of course, the road map to cuts is already there for the minister, because the chief government whip outlined in his transformation report, before he joined this Parliament, a guide to cuts to the

Canadian Armed Forces. It is basically a 50% cut to class B reserves and cost-cutting measures.

With this comparison in mind, how can the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces trust that we do not see the beginning of another decade of darkness?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, first, I too want to thank the member for his service, and in particular the empathy that he brought to the file when he was minister of veterans affairs. It was greatly appreciated by veterans.

I can assure the member that our government is committed to supporting our troops and ensuring that they have full capability, and it is working diligently.

Talking about previous governments, we are facing capability gaps. We should have had a fighter replacement by now, rather than trying to extend our CF-18s. When it comes to a transformation report, there were a lot of cuts that were done in the past.

However, instead of my getting into the laundry list on that, I want to give confidence to Canadians and to the opposition that our government is fully committed to supporting our men and women, ensuring that the money that has been reprofiled for the future is strictly reserved for the Canadian Armed Forces so it has all the capabilities that it needs for future threats.

• (2250)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, the minister mentioned the fighter replacement project. I would ask the minister if he knows which government started the process for the F-18 replacement.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, that was under the previous government. However, instead of talking about starting it, we should talk about finishing it. At the end of the day, it is our responsibility to have a replacement for the F-18, and we are committed to doing that.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, respectfully, I will correct the minister. It was the Chrétien government that brought the joint strike fighter participation, along with countries like Australia and other allies, into what became the F-35 acquisition project.

Would it be fair to say that when procurement processes are changed midstream, it essentially delays receiving that equipment for a generation?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, yes, I stand corrected on the particular government. However, I can assure the member that right now we need to replace the current CF-18s, and we need to do it quickly to make sure the men and women in the air force have the aircraft they need to carry out all their missions.

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Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, given their track record, as a former Sea King guy myself, we are flying these into their fifth decade of service. Would it not be best to choose a fighter not just for today but one that would allow for a broad range of capabilities 30 years from now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, not only should we be picking an aircraft that is going to take us into the future, but we need to be investing potentially into our industry, looking at one to two steps beyond, into future capabilities.

I am happy to discuss many other aspects of the various programs, but we need to look even further in making sure of there is adaptability in some of our procurement.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, if I could summarize what the minister is saying, it is that we are not sure of the operation in, say, 2030, so we need a versatile, interoperable aircraft that is potentially a dominant aircraft 20 years from now. Does that not sound like the F-35s, as opposed to an updated version of a 1970s or 1980s fighter?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, we are committed to replacing the CF-18s. In terms of the F-35, I encourage the member to read a lot of the independent reports that are coming out, from the U.S. government as well, with some of the challenges. These are some of the things we are taking into consideration.

However, at the end of the day, we need to make sure we fill this capability gap, and we will get a fighter that is going to meet the needs and is going to extend much into the future.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, as a maritime helicopter guy, I should stop all this focus on a fighter and move on.

The minister, in his estimates and the budget, has outlined capital cuts to the Canadian Armed Forces of \$3.7 billion, an estimate reduction of \$300 million, and specific cuts to combat and support operations of \$59 million. That is the information we are looking at today. Why has the minister made such significant cuts before the defence review has started?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our government has not made cuts. As I stated, the money is re-profiled for the future. In fact, we have actually increased our budget. We kept the planned increases of 2%, which is \$361 million that goes to operations and allows our men and women to operate. In addition, we are putting in another \$200 million for infrastructure. Plus, the Operation Impact mission is \$360 million. We are investing into the operations of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, it is important to focus here. I am not talking just capital costs and procurement. There is a specific \$59-million cut to combat and support operations. That is an operational cut. Therefore, could the minister confirm that is indeed a reduction, or a cut?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, with the exact question and the number, I cannot have an answer for the member. However, there are significant differences as the budget does change. I can assure the member that the direction I have given the department is that there will be no cuts. We have kept the planned increases for the military, and we are making sure our men and women have the money to conduct operations.

● (2255)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I refer the minister to page 170 of the estimates for that specific cut.

However, I refer back to his statement on the defence review. He is looking to conduct the defence review to help inform the development of a modern defence policy, but it is clear he is already making cuts and procurement re-profiling before this defence review. Does this mean there are more cuts or reductions coming after the review?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are not making any cuts to procurement. In fact, the procurement schedule that we have inherited from the previous government, which we are moving along with. What we did was ensure we protected the money for these procurements. However, we are working diligently trying to move projects faster. If we are successful we will be able to re-profile that money back for procurement.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, the minister did indeed inherit some stuff from the previous government, and that was actually what he was showcasing in terms of the good news here tonight. In response to questions from the parliamentary secretary for public works, he outlined improvements to the CP-140, Halifax-class modernization, and even the temporary tanker replacement with the Davie shipyard.

Could the minister confirm to the House that those new projects, that good news, are actually programs he inherited from the previous government?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, aside from the frigate modernization, I do not consider the interim AOR as a good news story. We have a capability gap, where we are renting resupply from other nations right now. That is a capability gap. Nonetheless, we are committed to the national shipbuilding strategy and we are moving forward with that, the interim AOR, and the joint supply ships.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, going back to my concern about the minister's cuts operationally and procurement-wise before his defence review, it concerned me that tonight, in responding to my colleague from Edmonton West about re-profiling money, he said, "We will re-profile the money back if and when it is needed".

Is the minister confirming to the House that there is a very good chance that, as a result of this review, none of that almost \$4 billion will come back into the fiscal framework?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, what I was expressing, in terms of the procurement schedule, is that if we have an opportunity for certain procurement projects to move faster and we are able to purchase sooner, we will re-profile the money back so we can have the capability sooner. That is a good news story. We should be focused on that, rather than waiting until later years from what I inherited in terms of the procurement schedule.

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I want to make sure that we have capabilities as quickly as possible, and we are working diligently to make that happen.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, the one difference and, in fact, the reason I am so worried about another era of darkness for the military is that minister Collenette in the Chrétien government at least waited until the white paper was completed before the rounds of cuts. We already have significant cuts and delays to procurement before the defence review itself.

If the defence review process recommends a streamlining or a transformation in the full-time employees, or FTEs, within the Department of National Defence, will the minister cut personnel levels within the Canadian Armed Forces, much like the Liberals did in the mid-1990s?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated before, I have no intention of cutting the personnel levels. We are conducting that defence review, and in terms of the schedule of procurement, this is a schedule that I inherited. In terms of re-profiling the money, all I have done is taken the schedule that existed within the department and I am making sure that this money is protected for the years that we need to spend it. If I can move those projects in a much quicker fashion, then we will request to re-profile it back so we can have the purchase of the project and bring in the capability even sooner.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, on the fixed-wing SAR process, the minister provided a two-year time frame for completion or at least announcement of that aircraft. I am wondering why that project was specifically chosen to be immune from the delays or the re-profiling of monies, particularly when we have a variety of SAR assets already covering that capability. Why were certain programs taken out of the procurement freeze? What was his rationale for that one not to be frozen?

• (2300)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the fixed-wing SAR program already had considerable delays in the past. Search and rescue is a critical component of the Canadian Armed Forces that provides that service, and we need to make sure our troops have the right aircraft for it.

As I said, it already had considerable delays, and there was no procurement freeze put on this. Canadians do not care what aircraft the Coast Guard or the military provides. We provide an essential service and we need to make sure our men and women have the capability for this.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I am going to end much how I began and compare it to the decade of darkness under the Chrétien Liberals, when they cancelled the Sea King as part of the election campaign. The irony is that the minister will now be landing simulators and receiving the Cyclone. A generation later, over 25 years, we are finally receiving replacement aircraft because of the political decision in 1993.

Can the minister confirm to the fighter community and to the Royal Canadian Air Force that we are not going to see the same political games, where we will have a next-generation fighter not online until 20 or 30 years from now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, I have inherited some of the capability gaps. In terms of the CF-18, it is on a separate track from the defence review, and we are making sure we move on

this as quickly as possible. My department is working very closely with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to rectify this, and I hope to be able to move this process along efficiently and quickly, so that we have aircraft that can suit the needs of our men and women in the air force.

The Chair: Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, I will let him know there are only four minutes remaining in the time for this evening's committee of the whole.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will try to figure out how to edit along the way. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in these proceedings tonight. I will use my formerly 10 minutes, my current four minutes, to make a couple of minutes of comments and a couple of minutes of questions.

Each line item in the main estimates represents an important activity for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, but as we review these individual expenditures, we should also step back and consider the broader strategic vision for defence.

The Canada first defence strategy is now eight years old. The changes we have seen since then and the inherently fluid nature of the security environment demand that we refresh our strategic vision for the defence of Canada and Canadian interests.

When we look at the security scene today, we face a diverse array of threats and challenges: instability, extremism in the Middle East, tensions between a resurgent Russia and the NATO alliance, rising powers in the Asia-Pacific region, and certainly a heightened interest in Canada's Arctic.

The recent devastating fires in Fort McMurray show that we have more severe, natural and man-made disasters. All of these dynamics, and I have only named a few, demand a review of Canada's defence perspective and priorities. Admittedly, these complex security challenges, both at home and abroad, necessitate an ever more comprehensive approach engaging an ever-wider community of actors. The fact remains that the Canadian Armed Forces are key among them. We need to ensure that our military continues to be ready and equipped for the job at hand. We need to ensure that it is an agile, multi-purpose, combat capable force.

Mr. Chair, I will jump right into questions. The world has changed in many ways since the government last articulated a defence policy that laid out a plan for the Canadian Armed Forces. This is an exciting time, and I think that all members of this House are excited to see the results. Could the minister please inform the committee when the defence policy review process will be complete and where they are in the process at the moment?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his presentation.

The defence review will be completed by the end of this year. We have started our consultations with experts and members of Parliament have done their own. We are seeing a significant amount of interest on our website as well. We want to make sure that our defence review is broad and thorough and that Canadians from across the nation have an opportunity to have a say, and in particular, our international partners as well.

I have already started my engagement with my international partners personally with my counterparts and also with my officials as well.

• (2305)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, if the folks across the way want to see cuts, I will show them my speech later.

As part of the development of a defence policy for Canada, the government has stated that it will be a consultative process.

Could the minister please inform the committee very quickly on how the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces will engage stakeholders from across Canada?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we have six stakeholder meetings with experts from across Canada. MPs are also holding their own. We have added a few additional ones, especially with the first nations community where we have a nation-to-nation consultation.

We will also be looking at it along gender lines as well. We are broadening the scope as we realized there were a few gaps. This

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needs to be broad. Canadians need to have a say because at the end of the day, we do need to decide what type of Canadian Armed Force are needed for the future.

I want to assure all the members here and Canadians that the defence review is just that, it is to make sure that we have the right type of force with the right type of capability to be able to respond to all the various threats across the world, from full-on high-intensity conflicts, which will always be the staple of training, to where we need the full-on will of government, and wherever there will also be potentially true traditional peacekeeping operations, but we will be involved internationally in making sure that we help our coalition partners provide stability where it is desperately needed in the world.

The Chair: I thank the hon. minister, parliamentary secretary, and members for their participation this evening. I also thank our officials for attending this evening.

It being 11:08 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 11:09 p.m.)

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