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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, November 23, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 23, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small business is the lifeblood of communities across Canada, and all Canadians benefit when we promote local businesses.

Small Business BC, which is supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada, is seeking nominations this month for the Small Business BC Awards, and I encourage all British Columbians to nominate an entrepreneur in their community by November 30.

In my community of Vancouver Quadra, the West Broadway Business Improvement Association has a “Stars on Broadway” initiative, which is shining a light on merchants who have been in business for more than 20 years. We have more than 70 of these unsung pillars of the community between Collingwood and Larch Street alone, from Ace Cycles, established in 1946, to the Toybox in 1972, Kidsbooks in 1983, and Nat’s pizza in 1992, plus so many more.

From their stores to their stories, small businesses matter. I invite all members of this House to check out and thank the small businesses in their communities.

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ELECTRICITY

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are already demanding that families in my riding of Milton, Ontario, and all across Canada, pay a new carbon tax that will drive up the cost of

everything and force businesses to lay off workers; but wait, there is more.

To appease special interest friends, they are now overriding the provinces and dictating how they generate electricity and in the process are driving up hydro bills. Even Kathleen Wynne has admitted that she was wrong to force Ontario families to suffer in this way.

When will the Prime Minister have to apologize for the suffering his hydro price hike will cause?

[Translation]

This has nothing to do with the environment. It has to do with a Liberal government arrogantly thinking it can force people to change their lifestyles just to fall in line with Liberal ideology.

[English]

Some provinces need coal-fired electricity, especially in the winter months. Forcing provinces to replace this capacity, without any real plan to do so, will cost billions of dollars and jobs across Canada.

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[Translation]

DANIELLE WOLFE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to an individual who made a tremendous contribution to the development of Châteauguay—Lacolle. Danielle Wolfe died of cancer on October 25 at the age of 57.

Originally from Saint-Rémi, Danielle was well known in the community for her remarkable social involvement. She spent the past 10 years valiantly heading up a local volunteer centre, the Centre d'action bénévole du Grand Châteauguay.

A trained social worker, she was involved in numerous causes, including women's shelters and women's centres. Fighting for women's rights was her life's work, her hobby, and her passion. Danielle was awarded the National Assembly medal for her many hours of volunteer work. Although she left us too soon, Danielle leaves behind an admirable legacy.

*Statements by Members***JONQUIÈRE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 2016 will have been yet another fantastic year for Patro de Jonquière, an organization that reaches out to over 15,000 youth every year thanks to the energy and dedication of its entire team. What a great success story.

The organization is able to have this huge impact on the community thanks to the efforts of 200 volunteers and dozens of young people who work as assistants and facilitators every year. As it is constantly evolving, Patro now needs a new gymnasium in order to continue offering quality services to youth in the entire Jonquière region.

With the help of its inspiring team and the community, we sincerely hope to see Patro inaugurate a new gymnasium in time for its 70th anniversary.

I am proud to support Patro de Jonquière and wish them many years of success.

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[English]

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month I went to the 40th anniversary of the Goulds Volunteers fire department at St. Kevin's Parish Hall, along with the hon. John Crosbie and his wife, Jane.

It was a marvellous evening during which Mr. Crosbie took a moment to give his thoughts on the then impending U.S. election in the tactful, diplomatic language for which he is known in this House.

As I was leaving, one of the firemen pulled me aside and said, "I have heard you give statements in the House of Commons. I think you should give one to honour all the volunteer firemen in Canada and all the families who wait for them at home." I told him I would.

I thank all our volunteer firemen and their families for their time, their courage, and their heart. Keep safe, and thanks for keeping us safe.

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● (1410)

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to give a shout-out to all the amazing small businesses in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. Every day they work hard and greatly contribute to our communities.

Two young hockey-player entrepreneurs, Matt Laberge and Dan Black, created Clap Balm, a hand deodorizer that gets the smell of hockey gloves off players' hands. They saw a hole in the market for a necessary product and took a shot at it, with great success. This is just one example of the ingenuity and initiative I see all the time in our small towns and rural areas.

My colleagues and I continue to encourage the government to stop raising taxes on small businesses. Rather, assist these people who provide so much in our rural communities.

BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of an upcoming ballot. This is not a matter for the Minister of Democratic Institutions. I am speaking about the Baseball Hall of Fame ballot. Though it may seem unusual to speak about baseball in this frigid week in Ottawa, a player is on the ballot in his final year of eligibility and is worthy of our support: Tim Raines.

Raines was one of the finest baseball players of the 1980s. He was the National League batting champion in 1986. For five years he was measured as the most valuable player in the National League and had an impressive on-base percentage, on par with Tony Gwynn, who is a hall of famer. Raines was one of the greatest leadoff hitters of all time and is fifth in stolen bases. Why is he not in the hall of fame already? The only knock against Raines is that he played his best years for the Montreal Expos.

As an ESPN columnist pointed out, when one googles the phrase "Tim Raines shouldn't be in the hall of fame", it produces zero results.

I call upon the voters, the members of the Baseball Writers' Association, to right this wrong and vote Tim Raines into the hall of fame.

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MISSISSAUGA—STREETSVILLE YOUTH COUNCIL

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I hosted the first Mississauga—Streetsville youth council meeting. Youth from all across my riding met with me to bring their concerns to my attention and to suggest how our government can improve and what we need to focus on.

I was especially pleased about the mature manner in which they discussed mental health and how comfortable they were sharing their pressures with me.

Speaking with my young constituents was informative. The ideas of young Canadians are crucial, as they will inherit the decisions we make today. I would like to thank Dev'Roux, Stephanie, Julien, Aiyhab, Shre, Hammad, Shayan, Mohammad, Arielle, Fatima, Gunjan, Melissa, William, Jassimar, Gurkaran, Saad, Joyce, Zain, and Saara.

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HOLODOMOR

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are 1.3 million Canadians of Ukrainian descent, and I am honoured to be one of them. I encourage everyone to stand with Ukrainians to remember another horrific genocide of the last century, known as Holodomor.

Statements by Members

On November 26, we remember millions of Ukrainian men, women, and children who were killed by starvation from 1932-1933. This atrocity was perpetrated by the brutal Stalin regime. Stalin had all the food in eastern Ukraine confiscated. Ten million died by starvation.

We are blessed to live in Canada, a country that values human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. It is our responsibility to remember what happened during Holodomor and to recommit ourselves to defending human rights and the dignity of every person. We stand with Ukrainians by sharing in their grief and sharing their hope.

Vechnaya Pamyat.

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• (1415)

INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Mr. Ahmed Hussien (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the UN General Assembly has proclaimed 2015 to 2024 the international Decade for People of African Descent.

[*Translation*]

Themes for this decade are recognition, justice, and development. Each theme sets out a list of goals that all countries should try to meet. We can achieve these goals by bringing back Canada's action plan against racism to address the problem of systemic racism directed at African Canadians.

[*English*]

The African Canadian community is the third-largest visible minority. Many disproportionately live in poverty and are over-represented in correctional institutions. We must take action together. This decade provides us that opportunity.

I urge our government to exercise its leadership to ensure that the objectives of the decade are achieved. We must stay true to our core Canadian values and continue to remove barriers to full opportunity and equality for all Canadians.

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DENNIS TEOBKHORST

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sorrow and gratitude that I rise today to honour the life of one of my constituents, Lieutenant Dennis TeBoekhorst, who passed away while fishing, which was one of his great passions.

We often hear about great people in this House, and he was one of the best. Lieutenant TeBoekhorst dedicated his life to protecting others by serving as a firefighter with the Maple Ridge Fire Department.

In 2010, his daughter was in kidney failure, and without hesitation he donated one of his kidneys to young Grace. Just hours after his death, he demonstrated his selflessness yet again when he saved the lives of 10 people by donating his remaining kidney along with his liver, lungs, eyes, and other tissues. Even in death, Lieutenant Dennis TeBoekhorst is a true hero.

I offer my sincerest condolences to his wife Melissa, and his two beloved children Grace and Calym. I want them to know that our community and indeed the nation are behind them.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVENTION TEAM

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the domestic violence intervention team known as DVIT has worked to bring a unique approach to tackling domestic violence in the city of Brooks and the county of Newell. The Cantara Safe House, Victims Services, and the local RCMP detachment agreed that it was time to stop working in silos, so they formed a partnership, which became DVIT. This partnership provides an immediate response to domestic violence incidents and works with victims to create individualized service plans that assist all affected to obtain services available in their community.

We offer our gratitude for the incredible work of Shauna Bell of Cantara Safe House, Sergeant McNulty of the Brooks RCMP, and the many others who have helped make this incredible team become a reality. The unique program has received awards at the provincial level. This is helping drop the number of domestic violence calls, and making our community safer for families and children.

I would like to thank the whole domestic violence intervention team.

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COMMON GROUND II

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the riding I represent is proudly home to 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown, where this week over 1,000 members of the Canadian Army will conclude the pivotal combat training exercise Common Ground II.

[*Translation*]

The base housing the Combat Training Centre employs 5,500 soldiers and 1,100 civilians. CFB Gagetown is the third largest employer in New Brunswick, injecting more than \$600 million annually into the province's economy.

[*English*]

In many respects, the base is integral to prosperity in our region, from the jobs it creates and the economic impact it has on local business to the tremendous community involvement of veterans groups, and the women and men who serve in uniform, whom we respect, support, and recognize for their contributions to peace and security in Canada and around the world.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, November 25 is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and marks the beginning of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

Oral Questions

[English]

In their lifetime, 25% of women will be affected by gender-based violence.

• (1420)

[Translation]

This is simply unacceptable. Twenty years after committing at the United Nations to promote the protection of women and girls, Canada still does not have a national action plan. Without this national plan of action, rates of violence against women have remained largely unchanged.

Now is the time for MPs to work together to create an expanded strategy to end violence against women. It is time for a well-funded network of women's domestic violence shelters that includes shelters for indigenous women. It is time for action on a national plan that includes addressing issues in the justice, law enforcement, and education systems. It is time for action because #ActionsMatter.

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[English]

RESIDENTS OF CARIBOO—PRINCE GEORGE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am so proud today to rise to recognize two exceptional constituents who are visiting Ottawa this week, Dr. Nadine Caron and her daughter Aliyah. Dr. Nadine Caron is Canada's first female first nations surgeon in Canada, and the first one to attend medical school in this country. Since graduating, she has worked tirelessly as a surgeon, a doctor, a mentor, and an advocate.

I had the opportunity to have dinner with Dr. Caron and Aliyah this week, and to hear about the incredible work she is doing in the health sciences field. While maintaining an office and a practice in Prince George, Dr. Caron also teaches at the University of Northern British Columbia, the University of British Columbia, and Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Caron is spearheading a northern biobank, with the goal of building greater knowledge of and bringing better health care to rural, indigenous, and marginalized populations.

Aliyah is bilingual *en français*, and in grade 5. She is someone who I think one day could be sitting in the Prime Minister's seat.

I would like to say to Dr. Caron and Aliyah that it truly was a pleasure to spend time with them this week. I would like to thank Dr. Caron for all that she does, for inspiring all of us, and for giving back to our community.

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DECORATIONS FOR BRAVERY

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month, I was honoured to have attended the Governor General's presentation of Decorations for Bravery. A constituent of mine, Daniel Patrick Greene, of Uxbridge, Ontario, was being honoured for his courageous actions on January 30, 2015.

Daniel was in Trent Lakes that day, when he witnessed a man's ATV go through the ice on Buckhorn Lake. Knowing he had to act quickly, Daniel grabbed a broom and rushed to assist the victim, who was holding on to his overturned ATV. The threat of nearby open

water loomed large. After several attempts, Daniel managed to pull the victim to safety and stayed with him on the solid ice until help arrived.

It was a pleasure to meet Mr. Greene and his wife at the ceremony and to hear more about the events of that day. He is a true hero and serves as an example of how selflessness and bravery can change, or even save, a life.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has had a serious lapse in judgment.

He is hosting Liberal Party fundraisers with Chinese billionaires. These are the Chinese 1%. These are also people who are in the upper echelons of the Communist Party. They do not have Canada's national interest at heart. In fact, they have been linked to engaging in corporate espionage and hacking our own government servers.

Why is the Prime Minister willing to sell out our national interest for a donation to the Liberal Party?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that, at all times, our party follows the fundraising rules applicable.

She also knows that only Canadians can contribute to Canadian political fundraising efforts. She also knows that the name of every individual who attends these very routine fundraisers is disclosed publicly, as the law requires.

The Liberal Party has had a considerable record of following the fundraising rules, something that her party cannot say.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in response to my question about hosting this cash for access fundraiser with Chinese billionaires, the Prime Minister said himself, "That is why we have committed to engaging positively with the world to draw in investment."

He admitted that he is discussing government business at a fundraiser, which clearly violates his own ethical guidelines. We have said it before, these fundraisers do not pass the smell test.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing, and stop these cash for access programs?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows that when ministers, members of Parliament, and the Prime Minister attend partisan fundraisers, it is done to raise money for election campaign preparedness. Every single party in this House does exactly the same thing.

When we go to those fundraisers, we talk to Canadians about a whole range of issues, as we do in thousands and thousands of open public events across the country, something her government never did.

* * *

• (1425)

JUSTICE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked about a case where a 50-year-old man sexually assaulted a 15-year-old girl, and the judge refused to give a one-year sentence to the perpetrator. Apparently one year was too much.

However, the Prime Minister's response was staggering. He defended the judge and said that they "make responsible, reasonable decisions about the cases before them."

He could have stood up for the victim, but instead he stood up for the judge. Does the Prime Minister understand that comments like that make it harder for women to come forward when they are sexually assaulted?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to answer this question again.

Child sexual assault is incredibly serious, and our government will take every step that we can in order to protect children, in part doing a broad review of the criminal justice system to ensure that we look at it broadly, including sentencing reform, including mandatory minimum penalties, to ensure that we provide the necessary discretion to judges to ensure that we have foremost in our minds public safety, as well as ensuring that we are compliant with the Constitution of the country.

[Translation]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, an Ontario judge set aside a one-year mandatory prison sentence for a 50-year-old man who sexually assaulted a 15-year-old girl. The judge said that a one-year sentence was too harsh.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister, who considers himself a feminist, defended the judge.

Given that this Prime Minister wants to eliminate some mandatory prison sentences, will he also eliminate mandatory sentences for cases of sexual assault of minors?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are conducting a broad review of the criminal justice system, including sentencing reform, including a comprehensive review of the mandatory minimum penalties that are contained within the Criminal Code, with an eye to ensuring that we provide the necessary discretion to our judiciary across the country; ensure that we uphold public safety; ensure that we provide efficiencies, effectiveness, and fairness in the criminal justice system; and fundamentally ensure that we are in compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Constitution.

Oral Questions

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly a month since this House unanimously passed a motion to bring Yazidi women and girls to Canada.

We thought we won a victory for women who have been persecuted and enslaved by ISIS terrorists, but now government officials have admitted they are only targeting 50 women and girls to bring to Canada for safe asylum. These women deserve more than a token effort. Their lives are on the line.

Will the Prime Minister honour the spirit of this motion and do more for these girls?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that number has nothing to do with our plans. Most important are events in the region, and our government has committed \$1.6 billion to humanitarian capacity-building and military efforts in the region. But we will certainly honour our commitment, and my department is working very hard to devise a plan to bring in those who have suffered from the atrocities of Daesh, both Yazidis and others, into this country within the time period prescribed by Parliament.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, cash for access fundraising leads to conflicts of interest. Every government must do everything it can to avoid conflicts of interest, and that is even more important with the current government, whether it be the selling off of public infrastructure to private interests or the single sourcing of fighter jets to Boeing.

What will the federal government do to ensure that it is not making decisions based on who gave money to the Liberal Party?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite knows very well that the complete disclosure of all of the donations that are received by every political party, and stringent limits with respect to the maximum personal donations that can be made, ensure that there is no conflict of interest.

On this side of the House, we follow all of the fundraising rules and the Chief Electoral Officer himself has said that Canada's political financing laws are the most advanced, constraining, and transparent in the world. We agree with the Chief Electoral Officer, and we are happy to follow those rules.

• (1430)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is really too bad that the Prime Minister will not answer these questions himself.

But the member of Parliament refers to all parties, but only one party is the government and can make that sort of decision.

[Translation]

We are talking about a \$1-million donation to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation after a dinner that was attended by the Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

Why are the Liberals not following their own rules?

I hope they will not answer once again: “We have the strictest rules in the country.”

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it will be much better than that. The member knows very well that the Pierre Elliott Trudeau foundation is an independent charitable organization with no political affiliation.

I see my colleagues—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing the answer and I need to hear it.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, our colleagues seem to find it funny that the foundation is independent.

Perhaps they should ask former MP Chuck Strahl or former NDP member Megan Leslie about it, since they both sit on the board of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is incredible. They just do not get it.

[*English*]

Speaking of broken promises, the government seems to be preparing to table the approval of Kinder Morgan. The Prime Minister was crystal clear during the campaign that if the Liberals formed government the review would have to be “redone”.

Our question is simple. What does the government have to say to British Columbians who voted Liberal and now feel completely betrayed because the government is about to approve Kinder Morgan?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we announced in January a new set of interim principles that would govern those projects that were currently under review. As part of those principles there was extensive consultation. In fact, there was a ministerial panel that worked up and down the coast. As a matter of fact, on the website there were more than 35,000 people who expressed themselves. That seems to me to be a much better process than the one we inherited from the previous government.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Their principles are interim, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to put an end to Stephen Harper's approach to energy project development, but now that he is in office, the Prime Minister is not only taking Stephen Harper's approach, he is also using exactly the same process for approving pipeline projects.

My question is for the Minister of Environment.

Does she seriously think that our ecosystems will be better protected if the exact same approval is given by the Liberals instead of the Conservatives? Is that what she thinks?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our approach is based on science and facts. We are listening to Canadians, and we are working hard to restore their confidence in our environmental processes.

That is how we do things, and that is how we will make our decisions.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, important files are piling up on the Prime Minister's desk. That is regrettable but not surprising.

Apparently the Prime Minister is in no rush to deal with the most urgent issues for the good of all Canadians.

Will all Canadians have to donate \$1 million to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation to get the Prime Minister to listen to them?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed. The truth will kind of set us free.

I must say that the opposition members do seem to be confused about how donations to charities actually work.

If they need a lesson on how independent charities and donations work, perhaps they should ask the member for Chilliwack—Hope to call his father. His father is a former Conservative MP who actually sits on the board of directors, so it might be worth making that telephone call.

It should be clear that the Prime Minister has absolutely no involvement in this charity.

● (1435)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are still looking for the \$40 million. Maybe we will look in other places.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, the Prime Minister talked about meetings to promote investment in Canada and economic development.

By making people pay for access to him, he often spends more time involved in Liberal Party fundraising than he does improving the lives of Canadians.

If people have to give money to the Liberal Party to get the Prime Minister's attention, can he explain the difference between affairs of state and the affairs of the Liberal Party of Canada?

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear that we have in Canada some of the strictest rules in the country. There are many ways in which other jurisdictions raise money. Let us be very clear that there have been no laws broken, and if there have been no laws broken, there is no conflict of interest.

No matter how often the Conservatives and the NDP repeat it, the bottom line is there is no conflict of interest. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if that were the case, why did they vote against letting the Conflict of Interest Commissioner take a look at this in the first place?

The Prime Minister continues to stand in this place and defend his unethical and shady behaviour.

The Prime Minister's open and accountable government document spells out in his words, his rules, his promise, yet the Prime Minister himself hosted a cash for access event with Chinese billionaires. Two of those billionaires then made a \$1 million donation to the Trudeau Foundation a week later.

We are not talking about fundraising laws. Why did the Prime Minister break his word, break his rules, and break his promise?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the fact that they are Canadians we are really talking about, Canadian donors.

The reality is that we have some of the strictest political financing regulations in the country and they are always being followed.

We find it peculiar that the opposition members are trying to politicize the particular issue, since they should very well know that the process for approval of this was in 2012 under the previous government. It was approved by the then minister of finance, Joe Oliver.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the government members do not understand the question being asked.

This is not about following the rules. The Liberals have an ethical problem following their own rules that the Prime Minister has set out for himself. He set the bar here for his government's ethical behaviour. We are not talking about the election financing laws. We are talking about the bar that was set here.

He has failed miserably to come close to even meeting that standard. This is about his rules, about his word, about his promise to the House and to Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister put a stop to these shady shenanigans?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member recognized that we are indeed following the rules and the laws of this land. That is something we are doing. When one is following the laws, there cannot be a conflict of interest. The Conservatives know that, because we are following

the same rules the Conservatives had in place when they were in government.

We have a Prime Minister who is accessible to all Canadians, as is this cabinet, as are the members of the Liberal caucus, and there is no cost for that. We are in fact following the rules.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us cut to the chase here. The Liberals' own open and accountable government guidelines are a charade. They have become a joke. The Prime Minister never intended to follow them and, frankly, his ministers might as well just rip them up.

That said, I have one question. Is there anyone on that side of the House who has a problem with the Prime Minister selling access and influence to billionaire communist donors for the favours they want?

• (1440)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, talk about pumping up their rhetoric.

We are all Canadians. The member should know that it is Canadians who donate to political parties, at least that is a part of the law. The law is important to recognize here, because, in fact, the Liberal Party has been following the law. This is why there is no conflict of interest.

At the end of the day, we have a government that is open to all Canadians, and that has been demonstrated in a very historic fashion. Never before have I witnessed, in my 25 years, a government that has been so aggressively progressive in reaching out, connecting with Canadians, and delivering on the policies that are important to Canadians.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely ridiculous. The Prime Minister's own guidelines say "there should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access...because they have made financial contributions". Well, so much for that.

The Prime Minister cannot keep himself from giving—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. opposition House leader knows that we do not use props in here, and tearing up papers is certainly using a prop.

I ask the hon. opposition House leader to finish her question.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I would gladly tape this back up, and maybe the Prime Minister will follow his own ethical guidelines.

If the Prime Minister cannot keep himself from selling influence to billionaire Chinese communists, how can Canadians trust any of his ethical standards?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member obviously is on a fishing trip. What she is trying to do is to stitch together a whole series of things which, when taken together, have absolutely no basis in reality.

Oral Questions

One thing I can tell her is that instead of ripping up an artificial piece of paper, one thing we did not do is leave fundraising events in leg irons in a sheriff's van, or be like Peter Penashue and resign in disgrace for not following the fundraising rules.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. It definitely is Wednesday. Members are excited.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when he is not busy calling his detractors stupid, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister sometimes makes sense.

On Twitter, he conceded that there are times when it costs more to do things faster. Eureka! Well done. That is exactly what we have been speaking out against. We want the government to invest in infrastructure as promised. We do not want the privatization of revenue in the form of tolls and user fees.

Will the Liberals scrap their infrastructure privatization bank, or will they keep listening to their friends and Bay Street and Wall Street interests?

[*English*]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put forward an agenda to invest more than \$180 billion in public infrastructure from coast to coast to coast. Only 8% of that infrastructure will be delivered through the bank.

The role of the bank is to build more infrastructure for Canadian communities, not less infrastructure. The vast majority of the communities, municipalities, and provinces are supportive of that plan, and we are proud to deliver it in partnership with them.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister asked what the NDP would do to invest in infrastructure. I am happy to tell him.

We would invest public dollars for public infrastructure. This is what the Liberals promised during the campaign, but now they are moving full speed ahead with privatization. We have seen how privatization and P3s cost taxpayers millions, yet the Liberal infrastructure bank is a P3 system on steroids.

Why are the Liberals so intent on a system that will cost more, while imposing tolls and user fees on Canadians?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite and her party support public dollars for public infrastructure, they will support our budget. That is exactly what we are doing.

We are investing \$180 billion of public money into public infrastructure to help communities build public transit, more affordable housing, recreational and cultural facilities, as well as to

invest into green infrastructure to reduce the impact of greenhouse gas emissions, and to make our communities more resilient and sustainable.

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● (1445)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' decision to sole-source the Super Hornet is very dangerous, and is another broken promise. It is dangerous for taxpayers since there was no price announced yesterday. It is dangerous for Canadian jobs since all F-18s are made in Missouri, and it is dangerous to our air force which will now be flying obsolete fighter jets.

Do the Liberals even have a clue how much a Super Hornet is going to cost Canadian taxpayers, and how many jobs are going to be lost in Canada's aerospace industry?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I am very pleased about is our announcement yesterday for an open and transparent competition that will ensure that our men and women in uniform get the equipment they need to do the jobs expected of them.

We are going to make sure that we have a robust, transparent competition that will ensure that Canadians will get jobs from coast to coast to coast, as a result of our determination to do what is right for the men and women in our military.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals announced that they would be taking billions of dollars from Canadians to cover the Prime Minister's backside. The decision to purchase an interim aircraft makes no sense.

According to the commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, the current fleet of CF-18s will be operational until 2025, which means there is time to move forward with a competitive process now. The government is still going to purchase the F-18 Super Hornet as an interim aircraft at a cost of \$335 million each, the price Kuwait just paid, to fill a gap that does not exist.

How much is this useless acquisition going to cost Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous government decided to risk manage the capability gap. Our government is not willing to take this risk.

We are going to be investing in the Canadian Armed Forces. That is why we are going to have an interim fleet of new aircraft to fill this gap, making sure we can meet all our obligations to NORAD, NATO, and any unforeseen situations.

If anybody thinks we are not going to have any unforeseen situations, then think about 9/11, when we had to put every single fighter up in the air.

Oral Questions

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are buying a bunch of flying white elephants.

The Prime Minister is risking Canadian jobs, taxpayers' money, and the well-being of our pilots.

The former head of procurement for National Defence, Alan Williams, said that we do not tell a company we intend on buying its product, and then try to negotiate a price. That is like me walking into a car dealership, telling the salesman that I will buy a car in the showroom, and then try to sit down to negotiate a price.

Everybody knows that is ridiculous. The Liberals have bungled this file completely.

Will the Prime Minister reverse this irresponsible decision and immediately launch a fair competition?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is an obligation of government to make sure that the men and women have the equipment they need to do the job expected of them.

That is exactly what we are doing, because of the capability gap the former government did not take care of. We are taking care of that, so we can make sure they are not in harm's way, and that we can fulfill our obligations.

In the meantime, we are having an open and transparent competition, just like we committed to do. We are taking care of our men and women in uniform.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am afraid I have to remind the hon. members for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and Abbotsford that once the question is asked, we need to hear the answer and so, they should not be talking.

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our participation in the joint strike fighter program over the past few years has injected more than \$1 billion into the Canadian economy and created and maintained thousands of jobs across the country.

Yesterday the Premier of Manitoba, Mr. Pallister, expressed his concerns about the plan to purchase the Super Hornet, and with good reason, since those aircraft will be built almost entirely in the U.S.

Is that what leadership means to this government, creating jobs outside the country?

Can the Minister of Public Services say otherwise? Has she forgotten her mandate?

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our number one priority is to create good, quality jobs in Canada, and through this initiative, we are going to use the industrial technological benefit initiative to maximize opportunities for Canadian businesses.

This will, of course, help Manitoba, Quebec, Ontario, Atlantic Canada, and British Columbia. From coast to coast to coast, we will

see a very strong and vibrant aerospace and defence sector that contributes over 235,000 jobs and \$31 billion of economic activity.

That is what we are proud of. We are going to continue to invest in that sector and create good, quality jobs.

* * *

● (1450)

PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 10 times I stood in the House last week and asked if the government would fix its flawed CPP legislation, Bill C-26. Ten times I received non-answers.

Today, I will be introducing my amendment at committee to fix this Liberal flaw that would have serious consequences on the well-being of Canadian women and people living with disabilities.

I have a very simple question for the minister. Will he fix the flaw in the bill by supporting my amendment, yes or no?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that we were very pleased to enhance the Canada pension plan. We know that improves outcomes for Canadians, all Canadians in future, around Canada pension plan opportunities.

We also recognize that it is particularly good for women, who have less participation in workforce pension plans, and who live longer, so we are indeed sure this is a positive thing for women.

We will continue to advocate for provisions that will make sense for all Canadians, including women, and it is something I will bring up at the meeting with the premiers.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, is he kidding? How can a feminist government be proud of a bill that penalizes women?

Yesterday, Alberta MLA Sandra Jansen rose in the legislature to read out some of the hateful and misogynistic comments she had received after joining the NDP. We need to ask ourselves why women in politics are targeted with sexually violent language when men are not.

Will the government stand with Sandra Jansen, denounce sexist language in our politics, and work with us to remove misogyny from this House?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the member's disgust at the misogyny that women in politics, in fact in public spheres, receive every single day in the cyber-world, but in the real world as well.

We are working so hard to make sure that we have a comprehensive federal strategy that will address the violence that women are receiving, whether it is in the cyber-world, the real world, or in their personal lives.

I am very proud of this work, and I look forward to working with the member opposite to make sure that we achieve our goal.

*Oral Questions***JUSTICE**

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has instructed the justice minister to gut the laws that punish criminals and protect victims of crime. These are the laws that the previous Conservative government supported.

First, the victims surcharge got chopped, and now mandatory jail times are under threat. Why is it that the Liberals have a problem with a 50-year-old man molesting a 15-year-old girl not being subject to mandatory imprisonment?

What is their problem with that? Let us hear it.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to this again. To repeat, without question, child sexual assault is absolutely unacceptable.

The Prime Minister has instructed me to do a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system, including sentencing reform. That includes a comprehensive review of mandatory minimum penalties. It is evident, over the last number of years, that mandatory minimum penalties are being challenged by the courts. The necessary discretion for judges needs to be in place.

We are going to move forward with this comprehensive review, and fundamentally ensure that the protection of the rights of Canadians are imbued in the sentencing reforms that we undertake.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former mayor, I know that virtually all of my colleagues, including my successor in Hamilton, were enthusiastic about our platform to support local communities by investing in infrastructure projects. These projects will not only strengthen our local economies, but would also improve the quality of life for Canadians.

With many of my colleagues meeting today with representatives and stakeholders, could the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities tell the House how our government is supporting our municipalities?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former city councillor and now minister, I welcome the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to the Hill.

Our government is delivering on our \$180 billion, 12-year infrastructure plan in partnership with our municipalities, provinces, and territories. We will continue to listen to and work with rural and urban municipalities, and the FCM to ensure that our plan benefits all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

• (1455)

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister, a self-described feminist, defended the disturbing decision of an Ontario judge to throw out a

mandatory sentence for sexual interference involving a 15-year-old girl.

Does the Minister of Justice support the position of the Prime Minister, or is she finally prepared to stand up for victims, and assure Canadians that the government will not roll back mandatory sentences for child sexual predators, yes or no?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am committed to standing up and following-through with the mandate that the Prime Minister gave me to do a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system, including sentencing reform. That includes looking at mandatory minimum penalties to ensure the laws we have in place are meeting their objectives.

This is what I am going to undertake. Certainly, with respect to child sexual assault, that is wrong. We are going to ensure that we work with the judiciary, and work with all the actors in the criminal justice system to ensure we are achieving the ends of the legislation we have in place.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are taking \$15 billion away from communities to set up their new bank.

We repeatedly warned that small and rural communities would be left out of the funding opportunities. Instead of listening, the Liberals called Canadians stupid and irresponsible for raising concerns.

Yesterday, the finance minister was forced to admit that small communities will in fact be left out.

When will the Liberals stop betraying rural communities, and start working to get infrastructure built in every part of the country?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that infrastructure is the foundation for building strong and sustainable communities, including rural communities.

Let me tell the House what we are doing. There are water and wastewater upgrades for Red Deer, Alberta; upgrades to the town of Lanigan water in Saskatchewan; wastewater treatment upgrades for Selkirk and Gimli in Manitoba; water and wastewater upgrades to Royal Oak, Bay, Ontario; and there is more I could say.

I encourage members to actually visit the Infrastructure Canada website to see how many projects we are funding.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that all the projects he just listed are not part of the infrastructure bank, since it has not yet been created.

The government is creating a new infrastructure bank for that party's cronies. It is taking back \$15 billion that had been allocated to the regions, and reallocating it through that bank.

Oral Questions

Yesterday the Minister of Finance said himself that small municipalities are unlikely to benefit from this infrastructure bank.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities explain to Canadians, and to the mayors in the House today, why he has been denying this fact for at least a month now?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know which part of the plan the member does not understand.

We are investing \$180 billion. We have approved more than 980 projects with a combined investment of \$12 billion. Out of that, hundreds of projects are for rural communities, helping with water and wastewater infrastructure, roadway infrastructure, and all kinds of infrastructure that our rural communities need.

We are proud to develop a plan that is going to work for all communities, large cities, mid-size cities, and rural and northern communities.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the hon. member for Québec, it will cost no less than \$400 million to repaint the Quebec Bridge, which is covered in rust.

During the election campaign, the Liberals promised to take action if a solution was not found by June 30, 2016. Five months later, there is still no agreement in sight with CN.

Is the Quebec Bridge an indication of the kinds of projects that might be funded by an infrastructure bank, where citizens, and not CN, will foot the bill through user fees?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my colleague is giving me the opportunity to talk about how much the situation in the Quebec City region has changed compared to what we saw over the past 10 years. People are talking to one another, they are working together, and sharing information that is essential for collaboration and important to everyone. People are being respectful of and listening to one another.

We are working for the middle class. We are working toward a forward-looking economy and sustainable development, which is fundamental to the development of the Quebec City region. This is very good news for the Quebec City region. I am very pleased to be part of it.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we keep seeing how the government puts a priority on its Bay Street friends instead of on everyday Canadians. We have a minister who will not stand up to the billionaire to whom the Liberals sold the Port of Churchill, and a Prime Minister who is busy

going to cash for access fundraisers, yet has not visited Churchill or the Arctic since the election.

Manitoba municipalities are calling for federal action to reopen the port in 2017. When will the Liberals stop catering to their billionaire friends and stand up for Canada by saving the Port of Churchill?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I like the fact that the member opposite is asking this question. When this issue came to fruition, I reached out to her and her office and she was very reluctant to get involved. Therefore, we took leadership.

I had the opportunity to work with my colleagues from Manitoba who showed leadership on this file. That is why we invested \$4.6 million in Churchill. That is why I personally went to Churchill and met with the northern delegation. We are committed to finding a solution there. We are committed to creating jobs. That funding will help with Arctic research. That funding will help with tourism. That funding will help the community. That is leadership.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is embarrassing.

One hundred thousand energy workers have lost their jobs since the government took office, and the Liberals are making things worse. The energy east pipeline is stalled as National Energy Board hearings are on an indefinite hold. The northern gateway pipeline is in limbo as the Liberals have refused to respond to a recent court ruling. The Kinder Morgan pipeline decision has been delayed by six months due to additional Liberal red tape.

Middle-class energy workers are hurting in our country. When will the minister start doing his job, stand up for energy workers, and make sure these job-creating energy projects get built?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have shown certainty where before there was only uncertainty. We have a very specific set of timelines that are predictable. They are predictable to proponents. They are predictable for those who want to offer their opinion on all of these projects.

The member has mentioned four or five projects. What they share is that there is predictability, there is a timeline, and there is a process, none of which was the case when we took power.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing predictable is that Liberals will never stand up for Canadian energy workers. These pipeline projects are waiting for a green light. If built, they will create tens of thousands of well-paying jobs for Canadians from coast to coast.

Oral Questions

While middle-class energy workers are hurting, the Liberal government has done nothing to help them. When will the minister start to do his job, stand up for Canadian energy workers, and help get these projects built?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the member one of his favourite questions. How many kilometres of pipeline did his government build to export markets? The answer is zero. The reason the answer is zero is because the people of Canada lost credibility in the process.

In order to rebuild that credibility, we have established a set of rules that will govern those projects currently under review that will lead to long-term reform of the National Energy Board, which is in Canada's interests.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 31 aboriginal communities are partners, equity owners, in the northern gateway project. As they wrote in statement last September, "Collectively, our communities stand to benefit from more than \$2 billion directly from this Project." That is going to be \$2 billion for jobs, for businesses, for educational opportunities, and for long-term benefit.

Will the minister follow the court order and immediately start consultations with the indigenous communities?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if those members really want to refer to what the Federal Court of Appeal said in the northern gateway case, it said that the Harper government had insufficiently consulted indigenous peoples. That was the reason. It was not because of the proponent, not because of the regulator but because of her government. Canadians deserve a better process, and that is what we are giving them.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada was given a mandate to ensure the government maintained the greatest possible respect for the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in all of its legislation.

Could my hon. colleague inform the House what concrete steps the government is taking to demonstrate its commitment to the charter on behalf of all Canadians, including the LGBTQ2 community that has long advocated for equality of rights when it comes to sexual orientation?

• (1505)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the pride of all Canadians, and our government is committed to ensuring our legislation is constitutional and ensures the highest standards that Canadians expect.

As with all legislation that I have introduced as minister, I was very pleased last week to introduce a charter statement on Bill C-32, an act related to the repeal of section 159 of the Criminal Code, and in tabling a charter statement, ensuring that we invite the public and parliamentarians into the thinking and the review I have undertaken to ensure our legislation is constitutional.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has announced a coal plan that will drive up electricity costs across Canada.

We have seen the story before. In Ontario, Gerald Butts orchestrated the infamous green energy plan, where electricity rates skyrocketed to the highest in North America. The policy was such a disaster that Premier Wynne had to publicly apologize. Now Mr. Butts has convinced the Prime Minister to adopt the same crazy plan.

Why are the Liberals so intent on driving seniors out of their homes and businesses out of our country, and why will the Prime Minister not stop this insanity before he also has to apologize?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extraordinarily proud of the action taken by our government to phase out coal-fired power by 2030. This is a very important measure. It will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it will improve the health of Canadians. It will improve the health of elderly people and young kids who have asthma. It will stop premature deaths.

We will be working with all of the provinces and territories to ensure we have a win-win solution for ratepayers, workers, and for the economy.

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[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised that they would be transparent and work on behalf of all Canadians.

However, with regard to the Saint-Cuthbert, Terrebonne and Mascouche aerodromes, the Minister of Transport is satisfied with completely subjective and bungled consultations that benefit only the developers, not Canadians. The government is not doing its due diligence.

Can the minister set the record straight on the Saint-Cuthbert aerodrome?

Will he listen to the people of Saint-Cuthbert and put a stop to the aerodrome project?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the federal government's responsibility to review airport construction applications. We are doing just that, with the public interest and security in mind.

As for Mascouche and Saint-Cuthbert, I issued a ministerial order to force the developers in each case to hold consultations. It is an important process that I insisted on before making a decision. No decision has yet been made regarding Saint-Cuthbert.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as all members in the House are painfully aware, there is an opioid overdose crisis going on in B.C. and across Canada. Could the minister update the House on what she is doing to work with our partners in health from across Canada?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Surrey Centre well knows, we are facing a growing and serious public health crisis in our country as it relates to opioids.

We are determined to make sure that we proceed actively on a drug policy that is collaborative, comprehensive, compassionate, and evidence-based. It is for this reason that last week I co-hosted a conference and summit in Ottawa, where we brought together people with lived experiences, their families, health care professionals, and every level of government. We had educators and regulators there, and we all worked together on a plan to address this crisis.

We will work in partnership to find immediate solutions to address the problem—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lakeland.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the minister says closing the Vegreville immigration centre is to “ensure tax dollars are spent on quality services”, he insults my constituents. In fact, officials have praised Vegreville staff, saying that it is a model, and an innovative office doing exemplary work and exceeding targets. Claiming the closure is to improve efficiencies is a slap in the face to the hard-working staff there.

When will the minister stop attacking my constituents and reverse this edict?

• (1510)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have certainly reached out to the mayor of Vegreville, through my staff. I have offered to have a meeting with the member opposite. However, the fact remains that this is a decision, driven by the need to produce lower processing times, better service and a growing immigration service.

There will be a net addition of jobs in Alberta. All those currently working in Vegreville will be able to work in Alberta in the future.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to read to you from a document, which states:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must avoid conflict of interest, the appearance of conflict of interest and situations that have the potential to involve conflicts of interest.... There should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals—

The Speaker: Order. This sounds like debate. I encourage the member to get to his point of order very quickly.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, in his answer today, the Minister of Fisheries actually referred to this document as artificial. It is the “Open and Accountable Government” document.

I would like to seek unanimous consent to table this document in the House.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: It appears that there is not unanimous consent.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

SENIORS

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition concerning seniors in Canada. We will soon see a dramatic demographic shift in Canadians over the age of 65. Currently one in six Canadians is a senior. In 14 years, that will shift to one in four. Canada needs to prepare for this dramatically changing demographic and the unique needs of seniors. That is why the petitioners are calling on Parliament to appoint a minister for seniors and to develop a national strategy for seniors.

TAXATION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by campers who stayed at the Cedar Shade Campground in Alfred, Ontario, a small paradise located in the riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. The petitioners call on the government to ensure that campgrounds with fewer than five full-time employees year round will continue to be recognized and taxed as small businesses.

ALGOMA CENTRAL RAILWAY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to table a petition. The petitioners are from Sprague, Blind River, Elliot Lake, Echo Bay, Prince Township, Goulais, Labrador City, and Sault Ste. Marie.

The issue is that the passenger train is no longer running, and it is causing substantial hardship for residents and businesses. There has not been proper consultation with first nations.

S. O. 52

The Algoma passenger train has been the only safe, affordable, all-season access to the Algoma wilderness rail corridor for more than 100 years. There is a significant economic impact there, and the petitioners are asking the Minister of Transport to put the Algoma passenger train back in service to ensure the mission of Transport Canada to “serve the public interest through the promotion of a safe and secure, efficient and environmentally responsible transportation system in Canada”.

•(1515)

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from my neighbouring riding of Peterborough. The petitioners are concerned about the accessibility and impact of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and its impact on public health, especially the well-being of women and girls. As such, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons to adopt Motion No. 47.

[Translation]

POVERTY

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a scathing report was published this past week in Quebec. According to that report, 50% of children aged six and under have experienced various types of violence. One of the reasons for this could be the fact that too many of the families in question have to spend over 30% of their income on housing. That is why we need to take immediate action.

I am very proud to table, again today, petitions from Canadians who support Bill C-245. By voting in favour of this bill on November 30, we can immediately begin working on a poverty reduction strategy. With 1.3 million Canadian children living in poverty, we must act now.

[English]

FISHERIES

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as support for my private member's bill continues to grow right across the country, today I am pleased to table a petition from the prairie provinces calling for the adoption of my bill, Bill C-228. The petitioners are asking the government to show leadership and embrace the innovation and technology that will help save wild salmon and make Canada a world leader in sustainable aquaculture.

VETERANS

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table a petition on veterans. Those who signed the petition are calling on the government to honour the social, legal, and financial covenants with our veterans that we hold dear.

The petitioners are asking the government to immediately halt the proceedings against the veterans group Equitas. They also ask that the government hold to the commitments made in the last election and go back to the negotiating table and restore their pension plans.

LABOUR RELATIONS

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table a petition, signed by RCMP

members and their families, calling on the government to fix Bill C-7 and remove the exclusion of bargaining items they fought very hard in court to get the right to bargain for.

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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 that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

EMPLOYMENT IN ALBERTA'S ENERGY SECTOR

The Speaker: Order, please. The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wrote to you to press for an emergency debate on the jobs crisis in Alberta's energy sector, pursuant to Standing Order 52.

Albertans are facing the worst economic headwinds in several generations. Over 122,000 energy workers have lost their jobs since the oil crash, and Alberta's unemployment rate now sits at 8.5%. Calgary's unemployment rate is 10.2%, and climbing unabated. In Edmonton, excluding the public sector, it is over 10%.

The vacancy rate for commercial lease space is climbing to record highs of 30%, and this year, over 11,000 businesses have failed or moved in Calgary. This small business extinction is unlike anything we have seen in 40 years.

A generation of young Albertans have no jobs waiting for them upon graduation. One in nine Calgaryans are now using food banks. Food bank use is up 60% across Alberta. Divorce rates are at record highs, substance abuse of fentanyl is rampant, and domestic abuse is on the rise. Our communities are suffering. Families are struggling, and a generation of young people have no career prospects.

The impact of the Alberta recession goes far beyond its provincial borders. Pipeline manufacturers, skilled workers in Atlantic Canada, and the financial services sector in Toronto are deeply invested in the mining and energy industries.

I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to past emergency debates granted on softwood lumber job losses, on November 1, 2001, on page 6807 of the House of Commons Debates; on the fisheries industry job losses, on April 28, 2003, on page 5456 of the House of Commons Debates; and finally, on livestock industry job losses, on February 13, 2008, on page 3012 of the House of Commons Debates.

Mr. Speaker, I humbly ask you, on behalf of Alberta families, to give us a chance to be heard here on the impact of the disastrous job losses in the energy sector and the knock-on effects all across Canada.

• (1520)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this question and for an excellent intervention. While I do not find that it meets the very strict requirements of the Standing Order, I am aware that his party has an opposition day coming up. He is obviously very persuasive. Perhaps he will be able to persuade the party to choose that topic for the opposition day.

Now I have a point of order. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to contribute arguments as to why my private member's bill, Bill C-243, would not infringe upon the financial initiative of the crown and therefore would not require a royal recommendation.

I appreciate the time of this House to present these arguments. As you know, Mr. Speaker, this is the only opportunity I have to do it, and I have to do it orally to get it on the record, so I apologize in advance for the time it will take to do that.

I want to begin by outlining exactly what my bill would do.

The first part would provide for the development of a national maternity assistance program, and the second part would amend section 22 of the Employment Insurance Act to expand the window of time in which existing maternity benefits could be taken if a woman worked in a hazardous job that posed a risk to her maternal health. Specifically, it would allow women to begin taking their 15 weeks of maternity benefits 15 weeks prior to the due date, rather than just eight weeks prior, as the current rules allow.

The argument I am putting forward today will focus on addressing the amendments to the Employment Insurance Act under part 2 of the bill. I will show that Bill C-243 would not increase or change the total benefits an individual is entitled to and therefore would not constitute a new and distinct expenditure.

Points of Order

My argument has two parts, and I will be citing both academic literature, in particular by Lukyniuk and Keyes in the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, as well as relevant parliamentary precedent.

First, I will briefly show that Bill C-243 would not increase or change the total benefits an individual is entitled to and therefore would not constitute a new and distinct expenditure.

Second, I will show that these changes would not substantively alter the objects or purposes of maternity benefits. In other words, I will be arguing that it would not create or envision a new function.

The first thing to note is that there is a general authorization for EI expenditures that is sufficiently broad to encompass the provisions of the bill. To illustrate this, consider the comment on royal recommendations from Keyes, 1999, on page 19:

...an amending bill that merely re-enacts or consolidates existing expenditure provisions does not require the recommendation.

The provisions contained in Bill C-243 would simply reallocate or shift existing maternity benefits, which are already authorized under the Employment Insurance Act. As such, the changes would fall within the purview of a royal recommendation, which provides for the general authorization of EI expenditures.

Allow me to further explain, with reference to specific examples, why this modest shifting of benefits would not introduce new and distinct expenditures. There are four elements that must be considered to substantiate this claim.

The first obvious point is that the bill would not increase the amount of benefits paid to an individual. Since the amount an individual is entitled to per week would not change, there is no concern that it would affect estimates or payments from the consolidated revenue fund.

This differentiates Bill C-243 from other private members' bills that were deemed to require a royal recommendation, such as past bills C-278 and C-279.

Second, Bill C-243 would not increase the benefit period or the number of weeks an individual is entitled to claim. Eligible recipients would still only be entitled to 15 weeks of maternity benefits. The only difference would relate to the window of time in which these benefits could be taken. I want to be very clear that this would be the only change.

In this way, Bill C-243 could be differentiated from several other bills, such as Bill C-278, which sought to increase EI sickness benefits from 15 to 50 weeks.

Third, Bill C-243 would not change the eligibility requirements such that more individuals would become eligible for EI.

Whereas bills C-279, C-265, and C-280 would have changed the qualification requirements, and thus expanded how many people could access benefits, Bill C-243 would not do this.

For example, in the case of Bill C-279, the Speaker explained that:

...more individuals would be eligible to receive EI benefits and those currently eligible would receive increased benefits.

Points of Order

Fourth, since Bill C-243 would simply shift existing entitlements, the only costs associated with this legislation would be administrative, and it has been well established in previous rulings that these administrative costs would not require spending for a new function. Instead, they would be operational costs that are part of the department's ongoing mandate. As such, they have constantly been ruled as not requiring a new royal recommendation.

• (1525)

To summarize my argument that spending under this bill is not new and distinct, I want to quote Keyes, 1997, who argued on page 20 that royal recommendation is not for “Provisions authorizing charges that are already or were previously authorized by Parliament, for example, a bill consolidating or revising existing legislation or authorizing spending for a particular group of people already covered under general legislation”.

In fact, that is exactly what this bill does. It authorizes spending for a particular group of people, women working in hazardous jobs, who are already covered under general legislation, in this case, the Employment Insurance Act. While Bill C-243 does shift the window of time for when an individual can receive maternity benefits, it must be understood that these are benefits that many women are already entitled to. They are not new and distinct.

I will now concentrate on the second reason why my bill might require royal recommendation, which is whether or not it fundamentally changes the objects or purposes of the spending. In other words, does the bill envision a new function for maternity benefits? The central question on which you will have to rule, Mr. Speaker, is whether EI maternity benefits are currently intended to protect the health of the mother and her unborn child. If this function exists under the current spending regime, my bill would not require royal recommendation, as it simply shifts existing benefits in a manner consistent with the existing purpose.

I will present several arguments to show that maternal health is one of the functions, if not the primary function, of maternity benefits. I will begin by noting that while we are tasked with determining the purpose of EI maternity benefits, the actual enabling legislation, the Employment Insurance Act, says nothing explicitly on this issue. As such, to make this determination we will be required to make reasonable inferences based on other factors, including the eligibility criteria, their practical usage, and indeed a common sense understanding.

Let us consider the purpose and eligibility criteria of maternity benefits, according to the departmental website. It states, “A maximum of 15 weeks of EI maternity benefits is available. The 15 weeks can start as early as eight weeks before the expected date of birth, and can end as late as 17 weeks after the actual date of birth.”

My central argument is that protecting maternal health is a function of maternity benefits under the existing legislation and usage. That is why my bill, which touches directly on this function through existing entitlements, cannot be considered to be creating a new function. The function already exists.

The fact that applicants are already permitted to take benefits during their pregnancy, up to eight weeks prior to their due date, is

strong evidence that maternal health and maintaining a safe pregnancy are existing purposes of maternity benefits. The legislation may not explicitly recognize this, or any purposes of maternity benefits, but I believe the interpretation and the spirit of the law confirm this understanding.

Legal analysis of the existing provisions is valuable, but should be complemented by a practical understanding of the benefits. In other words, it is not just my opinion that maternity benefits can be interpreted as having a maternal health function, but this is exactly how the benefits are being used.

Melodie Ballard, a constituent from my riding, is one of the many Canadians who chose to access their maternity benefits early because their job posed a risk to their health and that of their unborn child. This is not only allowed under the current rules, but in fact, it is one of the main reasons why benefits can be taken eight weeks before the birth. All Bill C-243 does is emphasize one of the existing purposes and practical usages of maternity benefits. That is it.

To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that this is the only function of maternity benefits, or the only reason that the legislation permits pre-confinement access. Indeed, maternity benefits can be taken after the birth, and in that sense they are also intended to provide a recovery period for the mother after childbirth. The key point is that maternity benefits should not be so narrowly interpreted as to exclude the function of maternal health, given the structure of the benefits and how they are practically used.

I will now present statements as to why my argument that employment insurance, and in particular maternity benefits, do serve the purpose of supporting a healthy pregnancy. To begin, consider this statement from the director general of EI who, when she appeared before the human resources committee on May 8, 2014 said, “Maternity benefits provide income support for a 15-week period surrounding childbirth to allow recovery from physical or emotional effects of the pregnancy and childbirth.”

It is clear from this statement that maternity benefits are used to support maternal health during pregnancy. Perhaps more specifically, Mr. Speaker, you will have to answer whether maternity benefits serve the purpose of protecting the mother when her job poses a risk to her health, or to that of her unborn child.

• (1530)

In other words, do EI maternity benefits serve a similar purpose to the preventative withdrawal program that exists in Quebec? This is a topic that has actually been discussed during debates in this House, in particular on past private members' bills, Bill C-380 and Bill C-307.

Points of Order

I would refer to a contribution from the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame on May 3, 2012, “provinces outside of Quebec have been relying for numerous years on the Employment Insurance Act for compensation for pregnant and nursing women in the circumstances of a preventive withdrawal from work.”

That sort of statement makes my argument quite succinctly and coherently.

A similar explanation for how employment insurance benefits are used for the purpose of protecting the mother and unborn child were put forward in this House on October 17, 2005, by the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour and Housing at the time, “women under federal jurisdiction, if they must take leave, have access to employment insurance”.

The understanding that maternity benefits are an income support during a period of preventative withdrawal was corroborated by multiple members during debate proceedings on both Bill C-307 and Bill C-380.

In addition to members of Parliament, this understanding of EI has been affirmed by departmental officials as well. When asked during the HUMA committee on October 22, 2003, about whether Canada had a system of preventative withdrawal, the Director of Labour Standards and Workplace Equity responded:

Where the job has been determined to be dangerous, the employer has an obligation to attempt to reassign her to work that is not unsafe for either the unborn child or the nursing child. If it's not possible or not reasonably practicable for the employer to reassign that individual, then she is entitled to leave without pay. What would happen under those circumstances is that she would take advantage of the employment insurance program...

It is clear that the employment insurance system, in particular the eight weeks of pre-birth maternity benefits, are an integral part to supporting women who choose to leave their job due to hazardous conditions.

Even though some statements do not mention maternity benefits explicitly, it is clear that this is the main form of EI that would apply in these cases.

The final point I will make is to clarify that this bill does not affect any other type of EI benefits, in particular parental or sickness benefits. Parental benefits would still only be able to be taken after confinement, which is in keeping with their purpose.

One might also think that protection of the expectant mother better falls under the category of sickness benefits. In fact, this is a very common misconception of sickness benefits. The reality is that sickness benefits can only be accessed if the individual is sick, not if there is a risk to their maternal health. Unlike maternity benefits, they cannot be taken for the purpose of protecting the health of the mother and the unborn child from the risks of a hazardous work environment.

Let me be clear, eight of the 15 weeks of maternity benefits can and are frequently being used for that purpose. As this function and purpose is well-established, my bill cannot be said to be creating a new function.

To conclude, the intent of my bill is simply to emphasize an existing function of maternity benefits, maternal health, for those who need it most, women working in hazardous jobs.

There is a royal recommendation that exists for spending on maternity benefits. There is no doubt that this bill would affect the manner in which that spending is done.

The central question is, does my bill shift spending in a manner that departs from the original purpose of maternity benefits? Put another way, does protection of the women's maternal health fall outside of the purpose of maternity benefits? I submit to you that it does not.

In closing, I will draw your attention to Keyes 1997 who argued on page 20 that royal recommendation is not required for cases where the bill authorizes spending for similar functions where “Provisions imposing additional functions on publicly funded bodies if the functions are of the same nature as their existing functions or are conferred for similar purposes.”

● (1535)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order as the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I spoke in support of my colleague's Bill C-243 at second reading, where I stated that this bill is an important first step in addressing the needs of pregnant women who work in potentially hazardous environments.

I believe this bill should move forward to the committee stage. Frankly, I was surprised to see the sponsor's own party and Prime Minister opposing this bill. They say they need to consult more before they can support the initiative. That sounds ridiculous.

Feminist agendas include expectant women. By allowing women working in dangerous jobs to begin using their maternity benefits earlier and by implementing a national maternity assistance program strategy, this bill will provide women with greater flexibility in the decision-making, and hopefully lead to implementation of a pan-Canadian strategy.

It is also important to note that employers carry the obligation of accommodation if that reflects the needs of the women who are expecting in their workplace.

I also spoke about my own experience with a high-risk pregnancy while working on an auto assembly line, and the challenges—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is addressing the pros and cons of the bill, but this of course is not debate. We are examining here the question of whether there ought to be a royal recommendation. I would ask the member to address herself to that issue.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, speaking to my own experience in this particular situation in the workplace, I support the comments made by the hon. colleague and echo his position that the bill should not require a royal recommendation. Women already have the ability to begin using their maternity leave benefits while pregnant. This bill would allow them to begin using these benefits even earlier. Therefore, I do not see how this would create any new function.

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While the bill may not be the ideal solution for women and their families, they need the flexibility to make the best choices for their health and well-being. They already have some flexibility, so again I do not see how granting them more flexibility would change the purpose of the maternity leave benefits.

I thank my hon. colleague for rightfully pointing out that the question before you, Mr. Speaker, is whether Bill C-243 would change the purpose of or create a new function for maternity benefits. Clearly the function already exists.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Essex for her intervention, and I will return to the House in due course with a ruling.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA-EUROPEAN UNION COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed from November 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union and its Member States and to provide for certain other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the context surrounding the debate on the bill to implement the free trade agreement with Europe is unique. People everywhere are starting to be skeptical about free trade agreements, when they are not downright angry about them. We saw it last summer with the Brexit vote, and we saw it more recently still with the U.S. election.

Working-class America, rust belt America, the America hit hard by outsourcing, that is the America that expressed its anger by voting for Donald Trump. It is easy to condemn populism. It is easy to be condescending and say that the people do not understand, but those who claim to represent the people are failing in their duty if they refuse to listen to those people.

There is a reason why people react with skepticism when they are told how great more open markets are. They are expressing their dashed hopes. For 30 years now, governments have been swearing that deregulation internally and liberalization externally will result in everlasting prosperity. We know that was no more true then than it is now.

Making our workers compete with men and women who are being exploited in developing countries puts downward pressure on wages here in Canada. Manufacturing a product in violation of international agreements on labour rights and environmental protections is a form of unfair competition.

This is all to say nothing of tax havens. By allowing multinationals to avoid paying their taxes, the government is placing the burden on the rest of the population. That is also part of the dark side of globalization.

Although elite businesspeople and the politicians who serve them have been insisting for 30 years now that the opposite is true, this

kind of liberalization is harmful. It increases inequality. It rewards countries with no environmental laws, and it makes it harder for states to act for the common good.

Given the neo-liberals' failed promises, reality is imposing itself, and it is not always pretty. That is what happened in the U.S. That is what happens when you refuse to face reality, out of ideology, and when you do not keep your promises.

The government keeps saying that it understands people's concerns, but it does nothing to address the problems. In 1988, it said it understood those who were concerned about the free trade agreement with the U.S. The implementation bill even included the provision of an adjustment fund. As we know, that fund never came to fruition. The government did not contribute a single penny to it.

The same thing happened in 2002, when China joined the World Trade Organization, the WTO. The government said that it understood the concerns and that it would help the sectors that might be threatened by the Chinese competition. Again, nothing was done.

At the time, Montreal was the North American capital of fashion. Textiles and clothing accounted for more than 40,000 jobs in the Montreal area. Three years after China joined the WTO, all 40,000 jobs were lost. These were not high-tech jobs, but they were often the first jobs of newcomers, their gateway to economic integration. That all collapsed overnight. With Ottawa cutting access to employment insurance, many of these newcomers fell into a trap of misery and despair.

Today, Ottawa strikes again. Today, it is our cheese and dairy producers who are footing the bill for this agreement. The compensation that was announced is woefully inadequate.

Every trade agreement should have a compensation fund and, above all, an adjustment fund for sectors affected by these agreements. The government is required not only to announce it, but also to fund it.

Therefore, yes, skepticism is understandable, and I, too, am skeptical. However, I do not want to throw out the baby with the bath water. Jacques Parizeau understood this very well when he wrote that we should not descend into "a sort of general condemnation of free trade."

Quebec is the high-tech heart of Canada and it accounts for almost half of Canada's technology exports. Developing a leading-edge product is a long and expensive process. In order to make a profit, you have to be able to sell it abroad because our small domestic market is not enough. We must have access to global markets to remain a developed nation, period. Quebec is a trading nation. We export 56% of what we produce.

In spite of the devastating consequences of previous agreements, I cannot systematically condemn all free trade agreements. Quebec needs good free trade agreements. This leads us to today's debate on the agreement with Europe.

As this trade partner consists of many countries with standards that are similar to ours, the fears are less pronounced. Europe will not put downward pressure on our wages, as its wages are often higher than ours. We are not talking about China.

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● (1540)

Europe will not exert downward pressure on our regulations because its own are often stronger than ours. Europe is not the United States. Europe is not a threat to our culture or our public services. Europe is facing the same challenges as we are. Let us be serious. We are talking about Europe here.

CETA is a broad agreement with a very wide scope. Obviously, it contains some measures that we are less pleased about. For example, I do not like the chapter on investment protection. Although the mechanism it sets out is much better than the one provided in chapter 11 of NAFTA or those in other international agreements that Canada has already signed, we did not need it.

Our Civil Code protects property rights. We have clear rules governing expropriations. Our courts are independent. It is the same in Europe. However, despite these irritants, we support the principle of the bill at this stage.

Europe and Quebec have a lot of commonalities. Today, even before the agreement is concluded, 40% of the trade between Canada and Europe is done with Quebec. It is the same thing when it comes to investments. A total of 40% of European investments in Canada are made in my province of Quebec.

The Quebec model is not all that popular among business people in the United States and English Canada. There is a reason why we attract less than 15% of American investment in Canada. Our society is somewhat unusual on this side of the Atlantic.

The opposite is true in the European business community. They are not afraid of high unionization. Germany is much more unionized than we are, and it is doing very well. For them, unionization ensures a peaceful society and civilized labour relations. Similar thinking governs state intervention in the economy. They tend to see state participation in business as a guarantee of financial security. Yes, Quebec and Europe have what it takes to get along. Quebec is a bridge between America and Europe, and the role suits us. The conditions are right for us to play this role.

The agreement Europe was negotiating with the United States is probably doomed. There is every reason to believe it will be scrapped once Donald Trump takes office in January.

That makes it more interesting for European companies to set up shop here as an entry point into the American market. We are ideally suited to serve as the bridgehead for European companies in North America. This is an unprecedented opportunity for our people, as long as it is done properly.

I would like to close with a nod to René Lévesque. In his farewell speech upon leaving politics, he urged us to take a good look at Quebec on a map and to observe how it resembles an open hand, the palm resting firmly on the United States and the fingers open to the Atlantic, stretching toward Europe.

Perhaps that way lies our cultural, social, economic, and geographic future as a nation. That is why, at this stage and despite its flaws, we will support the principle of the bill before us today.

● (1545)

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He is right in saying that Quebec and Europe already have strong ties. This is worth pointing out. Just think of our ties to our French cousins, for instance.

That being said, another important aspect of the agreement affects Quebec in particular. Of course I am referring to its impact on our dairy farmers.

In the previous Parliament, my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé moved a motion that passed unanimously. The motion was to the effect that if Canada accepted this agreement, dairy farmers would have to be financially compensated. The Conservative government promised \$4.3 billion in compensation. Now, that amount has been reduced to \$300 million. As my colleague's party put it so well, that is nothing but peanuts for the industry.

I am wondering whether they plan to support the bill at second reading. How can they reconcile that support with the considerable harm this is going to cause our farmers in our regions?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for this very important speech.

Clearly, it is Quebec's cheese and dairy farmers who are being sacrificed in this agreement. We were given assurances that they would not be forgotten. The announcements that were made in the past few weeks do not really cover the consequences for these producers.

Let us not forget that the fine cheese makers, who work specifically in Quebec, will be in competition with highly subsidized European producers. They are therefore not on a level playing field.

Over the past few decades, cheese makers have developed a top-notch industry that we can be proud of. It is in jeopardy because of unfair rules. Measures need to be taken. I am sure that my NDP colleagues and I will continue to pressure the government to improve the compensation.

Let us not forget that in Quebec, the Union des producteurs agricoles is in favour of the agreement. We agree with the Union des producteurs on the need to ensure adequate compensation for our cheese and dairy farmers. We are certainly not going to give up the fight.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his excellent speech and true understanding of what Quebecers think of this trade agreement.

I would remind members that all political parties in the National Assembly, whether it is the CAQ, the Parti Québécois, or the Quebec Liberal Party, support the agreement. Consequently, as Quebec MPs, we must be the spokespersons for the National Assembly.

In his speech, the member referred to chapter 11 of NAFTA. Could he expand on the questions he has about this chapter?

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• (1550)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments and his question.

We are getting into fairly technical details. The sections dealing with investor rights are usually one of the problems with international agreements.

For example, chapter 11 of NAFTA indicates that if a multinational operates in a country and that country adopts new rules that could reduce future profits, the multinational could sue the government and be fully compensated for all profits, even those not realized but forecast. That is the case for NAFTA and for almost every other international agreement that Canada has signed to date.

That is not the issue with the Canada-Europe agreement. Compensation would be provided on the basis of fair market value, which is already recognized by the Civil Code and related rules in effect in Quebec.

I mentioned in my speech that since we already have these mechanisms in place, as do European countries, we do not need this type of provision. Nevertheless, the provision that was negotiated and announced will have much less of an impact than what is in NAFTA, for example.

I hope my explanation has not been too boring and was sufficiently clear for my colleague.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have said this before in other speeches and others have said it during debate on this bill, but it bears repeating. Canada was built on trade. In fact, one in five jobs in Canada today depends directly on exports.

Trade between the colonies of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia provided the impetus for Confederation, and debates among the Fathers of Confederation demonstrate that an internal free trade zone in British North America rivalled mutual defence as their top priority.

Canada's history as a trading nation does not stop within our own borders. Following divisive debates about free trade over a century ago, recent decades have seen a concerted push to broaden our horizons and establish free trade agreements with other countries. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Canada, the United States, and later Mexico formed a lucrative free trade zone, which tripled trilateral trade, tripled investment in Canada by Mexican and American companies, and contributed more than 4.5 million Canadian jobs over the years.

The debate over free trade has at times been fierce, and trade has been a significant ballot question over many federal elections. The 1911 election was a virtual single-issue election over reciprocity with the United States. More recently, but still some time ago, many will recall the bitter election campaign over free trade with the United States in 1988. Brian Mulroney was the prime minister of the day, and he had successfully negotiated a monumental free trade agreement with the United States.

During that campaign, outrageous claims were made by opponents of free trade. They argued that Canada's social safety

net would not survive free trade with the United States. They claimed that public health care would disappear. They claimed that trade would threaten Canada's culture, and that even our sovereignty was at stake. It was all complete nonsense.

I was a 17-year-old high school student during that election, and even then I could see through the rhetoric and recognized the fearmongering for what it was. Although I was not old enough to vote in that election, I was old enough to take a stand and choose a side in a debate that would profoundly affect the future of my country.

I took my first concrete step into political activism; I joined the Conservative Party. I could not understand those who thought it was in the interest of a trade dependent country like Canada to make imported goods more expensive and to make our exports less competitive. Instead, I knew that the free trade debate was about freedom. Under the visionary leadership of Brian Mulroney, the original free trade agreement was expanded to include Mexico, and became the agreement we now know as NAFTA.

Opposition to free trade began to wane. Eventually the Chrétien government grasped what was at stake and ratified NAFTA. Successive governments launched a flurry of free trade negotiations with many other countries. Ultimately, the previous government concluded an agreement with the European Union representing 28 member states, which we are discussing today, as well as concluding negotiations on the trans-Pacific partnership representing 12 countries.

Now it falls to the current government to carry on where the previous government left off, to conclude the agreements it started, to bring into force the ones it concluded, and to launch new ones to continue growing Canada's economy through access to markets for our goods and services. I am pleased that Liberals and Conservatives can debate how to achieve free trade rather than whether there ought to be free trade.

We have before us today a bill to ratify the Canada-European Union comprehensive economic and trade agreement, commonly called CETA. The history of this agreement highlights one of the best points of Canada's political order and electoral system, which is the possibility of the smooth transitions between governing parties without interruption to important national projects which are clearly in Canada's best interests.

The process began with Canadian and European counterparts looking into the merits of a closer trade union in 2007. By August 2014, trade officials succeeded in working out the full text of an agreement, a fact which the previous government rightly celebrated as an important milestone.

However, the treaty still needed to go through extensive legal review for compatibility with numerous different legal systems and to be translated into many languages. By October 2016, it was ready to sign. As my colleague, the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, pointed out, this was a very difficult process, translating and getting this agreement into a form compatible with and understood in all of the languages and legal systems of the European Union.

As of today, the vast majority of the agreement is ready to implement, and the few outstanding issues that remain can be ironed out and implemented in short order.

• (1555)

Colleagues on both sides of the House have spoken already about the merits which CETA will bring to Canada, such as the prospect of creating 80,000 new jobs, adding \$12 billion to our GDP, and boosting bilateral trade by 20%.

I will not belabour these points further, since they have already received much attention by those better versed in the details. Instead, I would like to address concerns that have been raised, although many of these concerns are the same tired, old, unfounded, knee-jerk clichés that have circulated in some circles since the FTA with the United States was negotiated 30 years ago.

Opponents of free trade claim, for example, that trade agreements allow business elites to engage in a race to the bottom in terms of workers' wages, labour standards, and environmental regulation. Although I do not accept that premise, I will point out the following to those who do.

The European Union represents Canada's peer countries. The European Union is not bursting with sweat shops with barely paid workers. It has strong labour laws and comparable costs and standards of living. The European Union does not play dirty through currency manipulation. It can be expected to bargain honestly and in good faith. The European Union enforces human rights and environmental standards comparable to our own. In short, CETA is a good deal with a good trading partner, which will produce good outcomes for Canadians and Europeans alike.

To those who rightly value Canadian sovereignty and examine all agreements for possible infringements, allow me to point out that CETA does not interfere with Canada's right to regulate our own affairs, such as on the economy and environment. The agreement does not touch public services like education and health care, which will remain under exclusive Canadian control. Additionally, the agreement does not interfere with financial measures like debt restructuring.

As a brief aside, I should mention that at the rate the government is piling on debt and threatening social structural deficits not seen in the country since the time of Trudeau senior, that latter point about financial measures may be more important than one would hope.

However, moving from a discussion of concerns about CETA back to one on the benefits it will bring to Canada, ratification of this bill comes at a critical moment in Canada's relations with our largest trading partner, the United States.

As I had mentioned earlier, NAFTA has spurred much economic growth and generated much prosperity in Canada over the last few

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decades. However, the incoming American president has expressed concerns with NAFTA and may want to renegotiate parts of it. Since over 70% of Canada's exports currently go to the United States, the current government must make maintaining or increasing the benefits of NAFTA a top priority in the coming years. It must also continue the previous government's drive to diversify Canada's export markets through new agreements like CETA and also the trans-Pacific partnership.

I hope the Prime Minister will not make any more blunders like the one he has already made by making an unsolicited offer to renegotiate NAFTA. As a trained boxer, the Prime Minister ought to know better than to lead with his chin.

Other steps which the government must take to facilitate trade include approving construction of oil and gas pipelines to get our exports to market and building transportation infrastructure into the north to make it more accessible.

There is also much to be done on internal free trade. I was disappointed when the government voted down my colleague's motion to free the beer and seek legal clarity from the Supreme Court as to the constitutional limits on implements to internal trade, but that will be another day.

The Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement is a good deal for Canada. I look forward to jobs created for my constituents by gaining access to new markets. I also look forward to better choice for consumers in my riding as well.

I pay tribute to Canada's expert, professional negotiators and their years of hard work. I acknowledge the tireless efforts of the members for Abbotsford and Battlefords—Lloydminster when they were in government, and the visionary leadership of former prime minister Stephen Harper. I also thank the current Minister of International Trade and the current Prime Minister for their willingness to finish the job and for their acknowledgement of the role members from both parties have played in getting us to where we are today.

After years of rising expectations, a bill to implement this historic agreement is finally before the House, and I for one plan to vote for it.

• (1600)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's speech today on this historic deal.

I agree that trade with Europe is too important to get wrong. Many things have changed throughout this agreement, things that have happened in this very year that have changed the context of this agreement.

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One of those things is Brexit; 42% of Canadian exports to the EU are to the U.K. Canadian concessions in CETA were based on the premise that the U.K. would be part of CETA. After Brexit, the Liberal government has failed to re-evaluate the net benefit of a CETA without the U.K.

If the U.K. triggers its exit from the EU, and also leaves CETA, is the member comfortable with the concessions Canada has made in CETA, given that the U.K. represents nearly half of Canada's export market to the EU?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, it almost sounds like a bit of a sign of some hesitant support from members of that party, that they might actually be on board with a trade agreement, which is refreshing.

Going to the question about the fact of the Brexit vote and the effect on this agreement, I do not see any reason to take our foot off the gas in getting this agreement approved. I see every incentive and every reason why the government must engage with the United Kingdom, no matter what it does, so we may not also lose an opportunity for free trade with the United Kingdom, whether it leaves the European Union or not.

It is unfortunate that this has happened in the midst of the CETA process, but I do not see any reason for the government not to continue to press forward and approve CETA, and be engaged with the United Kingdom so we do not lose opportunities in the event that it leaves the European Union.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about the importance of promoting free trade with partners like Europe that have similar laws on human rights, environmental regulation, and more specifically labour rights. I would like to draw his attention to the matter of environmental regulation and the investor-state provisions.

Let us look at a specific example of the use of chapter 11 of NAFTA. In 2011, Quebec refused to issue a fracking permit to Lone Pine Resources, a Calgary-based company with subsidiaries in the United States. That company took advantage of the loophole to take the Government of Canada to court and seek \$230 million in restitution.

Under the investor-state provisions, a European company could do the same, so although I believe that the European countries are acting in good faith when it comes to their relationship with Canada, unfortunately, I do not have the same trust in their corporations.

Is my colleague not worried about this type of provision and that fact that it puts the federal government and other levels of government in Canada at risk?

• (1605)

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I am not entirely familiar with the details of the case that the member makes specific reference to under NAFTA.

However, in the broadest terms, we cannot lose the opportunity to ratify this agreement. If we want to seek out reasons why we should not do an agreement, because in an agreement of this size there is a

portion of it that is unacceptable, we could talk ourselves out of just any agreement.

We need to seize the opportunity we have before us, take advantage of the work that has happened, and get this agreement approved.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-30, an act to implement the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada, the European Union, and its member states.

A trade agreement of this nature is long overdue and has long been fought for.

Before I speak to the merits of this agreement, I want to join my colleagues in thanking the members for Abbotsford and Battlefords—Lloydminster for their long years of work to negotiate this agreement, as well as all of the members of the previous and current governments who had a hand in establishing, negotiating, and concluding this agreement.

I also want to thank the Right Honourable Stephen Harper for his leadership on this and many other trade files. Under his leadership, we signed more trade agreements than any other Canadian government.

Members could probably take it as a given, by virtue of my membership in this party, that I am a strong proponent of free trade. With the recent waves of protectionist sentiment sweeping the globe, it is important to once again reiterate the benefits of freer trade, and why a country like Canada must continue to reach new markets for our products, investment, and labour.

I want to talk about four points today: the objective benefits of free trade; the benefits of free trade to Canada, and the specific components of CETA that benefit Canada; the specific benefits of CETA to my home province of Alberta; and the benefits of CETA for accessing EU government procurement business.

Trade is good for Canada. We have an enormous amount of products, resources, and skills that require access to other markets in order to reach a meaningful potential. The EU represents roughly 500 million people and almost \$20 trillion in economic activity. The EU's annual imports alone are worth more than our entire GDP. These are customers and businesses that Canada needs to access in order to maximize our economic growth.

We strongly support international trade initiatives which strengthen the bonds with friendly countries, increase economic productivity, and drive prosperity and job creation. When we complete trade deals, Canadian job prospects increase substantially as we access larger markets. Prices for goods decrease as we eliminate tariffs on goods entering our country. The benefits to Canadian consumers, Canadian workers, and Canadian businesses are enormous, and CETA helps us realize these benefits on a bigger, global scale.

Specifically, CETA is projected to lead to a \$12 billion annual increase to Canada's economy, which is equivalent to adding \$1,000 dollars to the average family income every year, or almost 80,000 new jobs. Nearly 100% of all EU tariffs on non-agricultural products will be duty-free, and nearly 94% of EU tariffs on agricultural products will be duty-free. This is an offer we cannot refuse.

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More importantly, for my constituents in Edmonton West, and those of my colleagues across Alberta, CETA will increase Alberta's economic potential to a substantial extent. The European Union is already Alberta's fourth-largest export destination, and is our third-largest trading partner. For the past five years, on average Alberta has had exports of \$1.4 billion to the European Union, driven by the agricultural, metals and minerals, and advanced manufacturing sectors.

Once in force, CETA will eliminate tariffs on almost all of Alberta's exports, and provide access to new market opportunities in the EU. CETA includes provisions that ease regulatory barriers, reinforce intellectual property rights, and ensure more transparent rules for market access. CETA will provide Alberta exporters with a competitive advantage over exporters from other countries that do not have a free trade agreement with the EU.

On the day CETA's provisions enter into force, 98% of EU tariffs on Canadian goods will be duty-free, including those on key Alberta exports, such as metals and mineral products, manufactured goods, and chemicals and plastics. For agricultural and agri-food products, almost 94% of EU tariffs on Canadian goods will be duty-free, which rises up to 95% once all phase-outs are complete, seven years after CETA enters into force. This duty-free access will give Canadian agricultural goods, such as beef, pork, and bison, preferential access to the EU market.

I do not think I need to tell the House how important beef is to the Alberta economy, but I do want to mention some specific potential benefits to industries affected by the tariff reductions listed in CETA.

According to the CBC, with CETA, Canada is poised to supply about 1% of the European Union's beef needs under the new pact, which could mean almost \$600 million in revenue.

• (1610)

In addition to beef and agriculture products, CETA would also provide for increases in eligible trade for products with high sugar content. I want to talk about a small business in Edmonton that started in a basement in Sherwood Park. It is a much-renowned startup company called Jacek Chocolate Couture. It has expanded from Sherwood Park to downtown Edmonton and now to Canmore, Alberta. The company sells its famous chocolates across our entire country, and now could reach a massive new customer base, growing its revenues and creating new jobs.

We know how things are tough in Alberta right now. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that we approve this trade agreement which would have demonstrable benefits to Alberta's industries. This agreement would create jobs by opening the European Union's market to more Alberta goods and would lower prices for importing EU products. Lower prices and more customers for business are exactly what Alberta needs right now.

Specific to oil and gas, CETA would increase market access for Alberta products. This comes at an ideal time, as supplier diversification is one of EU's top energy priorities. Currently, Russia holds over 30% of the EU's oil and gas market share, placing it first. Canada comes in 26th, with just 1%.

It is well known that Russian President Putin uses his country's oil and gas reserves as a weapon and, given that Russia supplies almost

a third of the European Union's oil and gas, his position is strong. The EU needs to diversify and wants to diversify, and Alberta has plenty to offer. As CETA would eliminate tariffs on oil and gas products, Canada and Alberta are well poised to fill this gap and become a crucial energy ally. This is an opportunity that we should not and, frankly, cannot pass up.

The elimination of tariffs and barriers would also have advantages to procurement opportunities. Under CETA, Canadian firms could bid on contracts to supply their goods and services to the three main EU-level institutions: the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Council. Canadian firms would also be able to bid on EU member-state government contracts and those of thousands of regional and local government entities.

The EU procurement market is worth \$3.3 trillion annually, and holds significant potential for Canadian suppliers. This kind of preferential market access would benefit Alberta-based multinational firms such as PCL and Stantec, who both have their headquarters in Edmonton. Indeed, by virtue of the fact that Alberta has long been the entrepreneurial province, there are hundreds if not thousands of businesses in Edmonton, Calgary, and throughout Alberta that would benefit from access to this \$3.3 trillion procurement market.

Trade is good. Trade lowers prices and enables competitive and valued Canadian businesses to expand, hire new employees, and prosper in a globalized world. Free trade would allow billions of dollars in Canadian exports to reach new markets, and ensure that European goods flow in at competitive prices for Canadian consumers. Free trade would help Alberta's businesses grow and prosper at a time when Alberta needs it most.

I am proud to support this agreement that would help Alberta's small and large businesses, Albertan consumers, Canadian industry, and Canadian producers, and that would also deepen the long-standing ties between Canada and Europe.

• (1615)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to point out something. The previous Conservative government promised a compensation package that would be attached to the losses that dairy would incur in CETA and across TPP. The previous Conservative government negotiated that CETA would see an expropriation of up to 2% of Canadian milk production, and farmers say this would cost them \$116 million a year in perpetual lost revenues.

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Yet, the Liberals are only providing this compensation package, worth \$250 million, over five years. Does the member agree with the NDP that this math simply does not add up to the losses that dairy farms and supply-managed sectors would see in our country?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question and bears looking into. This plan would provide compensation to farmers. It may not be at the level previously done by the Conservative Party, but this plan would also open up a vast new market for our farmers, our beef producers, for Alberta and Quebec farmers.

In the long-term, it will be a benefit to all Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I particularly appreciate that the member referenced Jacek Chocolate Couture, which is a phenomenal business in my constituency. I had an opportunity to go on a tour there recently.

I do want to ask the member an important question about NAFTA. We have had the current government, right out of the gate with the new president-elect, basically not show confidence in the importance of this trade deal; basically throw it under the bus and say, “Sure we would be happy to negotiate it”.

We should all appreciate the benefits that come from NAFTA, a trade deal that has been in place for a very long time. The protectionist talk that we are hearing from the United States is not about trading more. It is about tightening that deal, not expanding it.

Could the member comment on the importance of international trade, and why we actually need to have a government that understands the benefits that come with NAFTA, and these other trade deals, and that is actually going to stand up and defend them?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, it is very important, now more than ever, with what is happening in the U.S., and also in various countries around the world as they start talking about throwing up protective walls. We know that it is going to do the exact opposite. We saw during the Great Depression that protectionist barriers made the economy across the entire world worse.

It is very important that we continue the great work of Prime Minister Harper and the previous government in expanding our trade markets across the world, not only to find new markets but also to counter the effects of protectionism that we see growing down in the United States and in other countries.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member in his speech talked about an offer we cannot refuse. The last time I heard that line, things did not go so well in that particular situation.

[*Translation*]

All kidding aside, I would like to ask my colleague a question about the cost of prescription drugs. That issue is often forgotten in this debate. We have been talking a lot about the investor-state dispute settlement clauses and the impact on the dairy industry, particularly in my province of Quebec, and with good reason. However, the cost of medication is going to increase by approximately \$850 million, which will affect not only the provinces, which administer the health care system, but also the people who have to pay for those medications.

Although we recognize the importance of free trade with Europe, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the impact this will actually have on the cost of living of people who need medication, particularly seniors.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question, and again, like the previous questions from my colleagues in the NDP, it probably bears a bit more thought and more investigation.

On the pharmaceutical front, we must consider that the pharmaceutical industry in Canada is worth over 27,000 jobs and involves over \$1 billion in R and D. This is only going to increase as we have much greater access to the European market. I will comment that it is about \$800 million in new drugs and only a small percentage of that is in generic drugs.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand today to support the CETA agreement.

I would like to talk about a couple of things, basically that this comprehensive trade agreement opens up opportunities to many investors on both sides of the agreement, Canadian investors and European investors. I will move on from there to talk about some of the things that an agreement like this inspires and that, hopefully, can move this country toward, including by dealing with the trade barriers that exist within our own border.

The Canada-European Union comprehensive economic and trade agreement, CETA, will create jobs, strengthen economic relations, and boost Canada's trade with the second-largest market on the globe.

As I think back to the time I have been in Parliament and part of the previous two governments, I recall the words of Prime Minister Harper on many occasions when he spoke about getting the business fundamentals correct. What CETA and the 40-plus other trade agreements the Harper government put together did was to focus on business fundamentals.

What are the business fundamentals in this country? They include things like keeping taxes low. In fact, compared to the United States, the total business tax load in this country is 46% lower. That was something we worked on during more than 10 years of government. We made that particular goal of setting and making sure the fundamental of keeping taxes low for business was right.

Why is that important in the context of a free trade agreement? It is important because we have to look good to investors from Europe. Europeans can now come here with this free trade agreement, know that goods can flow back and forth freely between our countries and consider making investments here, such as the one that we have in my community of Brantford, which is the Ferrero Company, a family company that came to this country nine years ago. The family came to North America. They decided where they would have their North American operation, and thankfully they landed in Brantford, Ontario, for all of their North American product lines. People will know Rocher, Tic Tac, and many of the products the company makes, with close to 1.5 million square feet of production.

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I bring up that example because when companies like Ferrero, an Italian family company, make a decision, they make it based on research into what type of business environment they would be going into, what type of country, and how they will be treated as investors.

Among its other benefits that CETA provides in its market access provisions is enhanced investor protection. CETA will provide Canadian and EU investors with greater certainty, transparency, and protection for their investments, easing investment restrictions. The net benefit review threshold under the Investment Canada Act will be raised from the current \$60 million Canadian to \$1.5 billion, following CETA's entry into force.

The advantage over other countries is very significant, especially in the Americas. None of the other top destinations for EU investment in the Americas—the U.S., Mexico, and Brazil—have investment treaties in place with the 28 EU member states, because only CETA provides that. CETA is an agreement, as I said from the outset, and many people have talked today about the scope of CETA, the potential 80,000 jobs, the potential \$1,000 per family benefit it would bring if we extend the benefits across our population. It brings us into a privileged environment in the world in terms of being free traders, allowing us to say to the globe that we can negotiate a deal like this when other countries are not about to do so.

• (1620)

I would like to transition into talking about what we face in this country today, namely the enormous trade barriers within our own borders, the provincial trade barriers today facing certain industries. Obviously, the debate we had earlier in this Parliament that my colleague entitled “free the beer” was an aspect of that. I am going to describe it from the point of view of my background, from having been in the construction industry in Ontario and trying to do business in other provinces.

First of all, what we need in this country more than anything else is a keen focus by the current government and the provincial governments on removing those trade barriers. I was very disappointed that the government chose not to vote for the free the beer initiative of my friend. That would have been a beginning, sending a signal to other industries to do that.

In the construction industry, particularly with tradespeople, this is significant, especially when there are downturns in certain parts of the country while other areas of the country are prospering. A person can have credentials as an electrician, plumber, carpenter, or whatever, and may be a licensed carpenter within Ontario's borders, but as soon as that person wants to practise that trade in other parts of the country, those credentials are not accepted as proper. One has to go through a retraining and certification process all over again in certain jurisdictions.

More so, when electrical companies or plumbing companies expand to a certain size and want to expand across the country, when they look at projects in other provinces, they are restricted from bidding on those jobs. They are told that they are restricted, because they are Ontario-based companies. This happens right here in the Ottawa area with our neighbouring province, Quebec, all the time.

However, it depends on the province. The Quebec contractors can come over to Ottawa and do work here, but Ottawa contractors cannot go to Quebec and do work there. These are the types of provincial barriers that I am talking about, which we need to focus keenly on reducing in this country.

I recall the 1988 debates around the NAFTA agreement. The NAFTA agreement in 1988, for all kinds of reasons, was opposed by different political parties, including the opposition and the typical groups right across this country. They thought we were going to lose our national identity from all of it, that we were going to lose our autonomy, and that our water was going to be taken away from us. All of these exaggerations were disproven.

The visionary part of a free trade agreement goes right to the top, reflecting who the prime minister of the day is. I can recall in those days looking to Prime Minister Mulroney and thinking that his was leadership that could hold the ground. He had the backbone to stand up to the type of opposition at that time, fight an election over it, and bring that free trade agreement, NAFTA, into existence.

I can tell members that today I feel the exact same way about Prime Minister Harper, who made free trade agreements a focus of his. CETA is part of the legacy of his leadership. I am proud to be here today to support this important free trade agreement and to have been part of the hard work since 2007 on that by Prime Minister Harper and the leadership of the Conservative Party.

• (1625)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member just mentioned Brian Mulroney fighting an election over NAFTA, but of course it was not NAFTA. It was the free trade agreement. NAFTA was actually brought in by the Liberals. To be sure, it was negotiated by Brian Mulroney and the Conservatives, but it was actually the Liberals who ran on a promise to change it and who gave Canadians the impression they were not very committed to it, then went ahead and brought it in.

I cannot help but notice the similarity of that to the position we are now in. For instance, in the election, the Liberals said they were not really in support of the TPP. Since coming into government, they have launched consultations within the country, but internationally, the Prime Minister has been out promoting the deal. They took CETA and picked up right where the Conservatives left off. They have been moving that project ahead despite the fact they have not presented any real evidence about how it will be good for the country, and they have not done anything to mitigate some of the real costs of the agreement.

I wonder if the member has noticed the same approach to trade by the Liberals, to give Canadians who have legitimate concerns about free trade the impression that they are on board with those concerns when they were in opposition, and then steamroll ahead when they are in government.

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•(1630)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Madam Speaker, this I know, that free trade agreements are good for our country. Let us remove the politics from this. The fact is, the new government should get the credit for coming in and picking up the ball and getting the deal done, just as it has given credit to our government for spending the years from 2007 to 2015 putting all the essential pieces together, so that really all the current government needed to do was to sign it.

My colleague from the NDP can go on into the weeds about the people who are against these things. Free trade has done nothing but bring prosperity to our country, and it will continue to do so. Hats off to everyone who has put this deal together.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to what the member had to say. He spoke about transparency, and I could not agree more that we need transparency on what exactly we are signing on to as parliamentarians. When we talk about pharmaceuticals, 25% of the implementing legislation of the bill is to change the Patent Act in Canada. These will be the biggest changes to our Patent Act in over 20 years. It will result in Canadians paying more for medication for years to come.

We are being asked to approve these major changes, with the majority of the details only coming out later in the form of regulatory packages. The language in the act is a blank cheque regarding pharmaceutical costs for Canadians, and it is incomplete.

Is the member concerned that CETA will lead to increased costs of prescription drugs for Canadians, particularly as Canadians already pay more for prescription drugs than nearly every other OECD country?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Madam Speaker, the quick answer is no, I am not concerned, because I believe the opposite will happen. I sat on the industry committee when we looked at the patent laws of our country compared to other countries we import products from, and at the intellectual property debates we have had in the country. Frankly, we have a big reform to do to make sure our pharmaceutical costs stay competitive with other jurisdictions', as sometimes they are not because of the rules and regulations.

The more we harmonize with developed economies, such as the 28 European countries who are part of this deal, and the United States, our neighbour, and the more we bring those harmonization rules to patenting and intellectual property, the more consumers will benefit at the end of the day. It is a process. It is a transition, but I totally disagree with the premise of that question.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Drummond, Official Languages; the hon. member for Trois-Rivières, Rail Transportation; the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George, International Trade.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and provide a bit of an antidote to the Conservative-Liberal love-in that has been taking place in the House of Commons today over CETA, which we cannot deny has

been pretty cozy. When we have the international trade minister and the international trade critic of the Liberals and Conservatives, respectively, hugging in the House of Commons over a deal, I think it is fair to say if there was anything we could call a love-in within Parliament, that is it. That happened on the day they signed the deal and has continued throughout this debate.

Therefore, I am pleased to rise and provide a different perspective, one that frankly is shared by many Canadians and many people across North America who are fed up. That energy needs to be channelled in the right way, with having this kind of condescending claptrap from parties and politicians who have big business as their allies, and who, every time we criticize the fact that in some cases these deals have meant good jobs leaving the country, tell us that we just do not understand trade or that we are against trade.

The NDP is for trade. We understand well the importance of trade for our local economy and for workers. However, I also think insurance is a good idea. We could pontificate on the history of insurance and that it came to be because some things were not the way they should be and families ended up in dire straits. Therefore, insurance is a great product and we should have insurance. However, we would not take any insurance policy and sign it without reading it, so it is not about whether we are for or against insurance that we decline a particular policy or not, and it is not that the NDP is against trade that we say that there are problems with this deal. On balance, we think the problems are not worth the proposed benefits.

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What we have heard members say is that they are in favour of the possible benefit of the potential market. What we have not seen from the government is a province-by-province analysis of what this will mean for jobs. We have not seen a sector-by-sector analysis to say who the winners and the losers will be. In some cases, we do have a sense of who the losers will be. We know that they are in the agricultural sector. We know that the former government negotiated a settlement with some of those producers to the tune of over \$4 billion. Nothing has changed in the agreement, and presumably nothing has changed in terms of the consequences for those producers, but the current government has arbitrarily lowered that compensation package. However, what we have not heard, and what the Liberals have not said, is why we are hurting those producers and why it is worth spending taxpayer money to compensate those producers, even though they are not doing it to the extent that the Conservatives saw fit, because these people over here will win, and these are the jobs that will be created, and these are the businesses that are just waiting with an export development plan to move their business into Europe and to capture that market, instead of just talking about the paper access that we are buying, and not inexpensively, as we go through some of the other items in this deal.

I was talking to a farmer in Manitoba just last week who was saying that it is true that for certain agriculture products there are quotas on what can be exported from Canada into Europe. It is true that CETA raises those quotas. That is great. It would be even better if those agricultural producers were actually meeting the existing quotas. However, they are not. Therefore, we will sign up for certain investor-state dispute settlement clauses, we will sign up for an agreement that will interfere with the ability of local governments to use buy local provisions in their procurements, and we will sign on to a higher cost for drugs. Why? To expand a quota that is already not being met.

When we talk about trade-offs, it seems to me that the kind of theoretical benefit of an expanded quota that producers are already not meeting is not worth the very concrete costs that are represented in higher drug costs, for example. That is an argument the Liberals should understand as it is comparable to an argument they made about the tax-free savings account when they reduced that threshold. They asked why the threshold should be increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 when most people are not already availing themselves of the \$5,000 limit. It is the very same argument. Therefore, why would we incur higher drug costs, which is a very real cost for Canadians, in exchange for higher quotas on certain agricultural products, when those quotas are already not being met?

I think we need to come down to earth a bit and stop making this a debate about whether we are for or against trade. The member for Calgary Rocky Ridge said in his speech that he wanted to talk about what was in the agreement and whether on balance certain things were better or not. Then he launched into a diatribe against the NDP just for saying that we think there are some problems with the agreement. I did not hear him once mention something that he thought was problematic in the agreement.

• (1635)

I do not know how we could conceptualize a debate on the content of an agreement and the nature of the trade-offs without actually mentioning any of the trade-offs, but just launching into a

platitudinous speech about how wonderful this is without concrete examples.

I already mentioned that part of the problem here, if we want to get real and assess an agreement, is that there is not enough information to do that. We do not actually have anything approaching a comprehensive study by the government, released to Canadians, talking about what the impact on jobs and industry in Canada is going to be.

We do not know what the relative impact, from province to province, is going to be. We do not know how the various sectors are going to be affected. We do not know, frankly, and we could not know, the economic impact of everything that is being given up in this agreement without a blink. This agreement covers everything except for what is carved out.

There are certain carve-outs, for instance, on the buy local provisions. Some provincial governments have advocated to say that this sector should not be touched or that sector should not be touched, when what that gives up is everything we have not already thought of.

If members in this House think that they are so smart, and everyone in provincial legislatures is so smart, as to have thought of every technological and economic development that is going to happen over the lifetime of this agreement, which incidentally is not a temporary agreement, then so be it. I am a little more modest. I think we ought to be more modest.

There are a lot of things that can change. We live in a world that changes very quickly. It is imprudent at best to sign on to agreements that essentially give up everything that we have not already thought of. We do not know what the impact of that is going to be.

No one has said why it is a good idea to sign that kind of an agreement that essentially covers everything we have not already thought of versus an agreement that just covers the things we are talking about, in the sectors that we know about today and some of those particular trade-offs. On the face of it, that seems like a better approach.

We also do not know, recently having had a referendum to leave the European Union, what the impact or consequence of that is going to be. We do know that it is going to take years for European parliaments to ratify this agreement. I simply do not understand why we are in such a rush here in Canada. I have not heard a good answer.

We heard one member say that he does not see a need to put on the brakes on a good deal. How do we know if it is a good deal when we do not even know who is in it yet? Is the member saying it is immaterial to the benefit of the agreement to Canada, whether Britain is covered by the agreement or not? That is a ridiculous thing to try to maintain.

If we do not do that, if we take the sensible approach and say that it actually does matter whether the United Kingdom is covered under CETA or not, and that that has an impact on what the potential benefits are for Canada, then the right thing to do would be to put the brakes on and take a little bit of a wait-and-see approach.

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The agreement is not going anywhere. I think it would be far more prudent to come back to it when we actually have a better sense of what the lay of the land is. It is a time of a lot of change and uncertainty. To me, that says it is the wrong time to jump in with both feet into a major economic treaty.

With this agreement, there is a recurring problem, in my view, with a lot of the trade agreements that we have signed since 1993, which is the investor-state dispute settlement clauses. In my mind, those have very little to do with trade. Foreign investors who have an issue and who do not feel they have been treated fairly can go to Canadian courts and can seek fairness in Canadian courts. They can do that without tying the hands of government in terms of its ability to regulate for the benefit of the environment, for the benefit of workplace health and safety, for health benefits. That is a reasonable approach. There is nothing wrong with that.

The Canadian court system has certain principles of openness and transparency that I think we would all agree are important. No one is advocating we get rid of those principles. When we take that decision-making power out of the hands of the Canadian court system and transfer it to the international trade tribunals, for which we do not have the rules or the guidelines according to which arbitrators are going to be selected, we are doing serious damage to the ability of Canadians to make their own decisions.

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I understand the member still had a lot to say, but he will be able to do it through questions and comments, given that the time has expired for his speech.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It is interesting because he talked about the fact that many members spoke in favour of the agreement saying it was very good news before they ever truly had the chance to look at it in detail.

What is currently going on in committee is a good example. I do not want to get into the ins and outs of parliamentary procedure, but this is an important point. At the Standing Committee on International Trade, a decision was made not to accept written submissions from witnesses who cannot physically appear before the committee, either because they do not have time or the committee does not have time to hear them.

That is the opposite of what is done 99% of the time at other parliamentary committees. This is extremely worrisome given how important it is to hear from all those affected by this agreement. In the spirit of hearing all views, I would like my colleague to tell us what he thinks about this problem and this unprecedented move by the government.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

If we compare the CETA consultation process to the electoral reform consultation process, what emerges is enough to make anyone cynical.

On CETA, the Liberals do not even want to let Canadians send in written submissions. The Liberals do not want to hear what Canadians have to say even though this is a major agreement that will have long-lasting repercussions.

On electoral reform, MPs, ministers, a special committee, and a website were all mustered for consultations. Now they even want to reach out to people by mail.

Apparently, when they do not want to do something, they hold all kinds of consultations, they talk a lot, and they never do anything. In contrast, when they want to do something, they go ahead and do it without holding consultations.

[*English*]

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the matter has gone through the trade commissioners. It has been approved. I support the government's position on CETA. I support the government's position on supply management, which is different from my colleague, of course.

The Belgium issue took us by surprise. It took everybody by surprise. However, the next issue is that it has to go through the European Parliament for a vote, and then it has to go to the individual member states for a vote.

Does the member have any recommendations to the government in case there are more surprises where the vote might be defeated in the European Parliament or in one of the member states? Does the member have any recommendation as to what the government could do to ensure that there would be swift passage through the European Parliament and the 28 individual member states?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, the Belgium issue gave a lot of people a surprise, Liberals and Conservatives especially, because they were not paying attention.

People have been criticizing the investor-state dispute settlement clauses in these types of agreements for a long time, and so it was not a surprise to New Democrats when we found out that people in Europe were looking at those same issues and saying that they had a problem with them. It is not a surprise if we look at the model of the European Union, which is very integrated, but it does not have the same kind of investor-state dispute settlement clauses that are governed by the corporate elite. Therefore, if we have been watching and paying attention to the way these deals have been playing out, it was not a big surprise.

The best way to try and head off further surprises is to take our time, that is not rush it through Parliament here; to start listening instead of dismissing these concerns as being unreasonable; and then to change the agreement to get rid of those problematic provisions. We could then get people onside in Europe.

• (1650)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak to the CETA bill.

Canada is a trading nation. We all know that. One in five jobs is directly related to the export of goods, products and services. I am immensely proud to belong to a political party that has long fought for the elimination of trade barriers, and is focused on the opening of new markets around the world.

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The Conservatives understand that free trade agreements increase economic activity. They drive prosperity, create new jobs, and foster greater co-operation between our democratic allies.

It is important to point out that the party opposite does not always share the same passion and commitment to free trade. It was less than 30 years ago when the Liberal Party decried the historic free trade agreement with the United States. We all remember that the 1988 election was almost fought solely over the issue of this agreement. It took the second election of Brian Mulroney's government, which won a resounding majority, for the Liberals to do an about-face and see the benefits of free trade.

Today, I for one applaud the Liberals for seeing the light and to have supported NAFTA, the Canada–South Korea Free Trade Agreement, the Canadian-Ukrainian free trade agreement, the pan-Canadian free trade agreement, among others.

Now, due to the tireless efforts of previous Conservative ministers, such as the members for Abbotsford, Battlefords—Lloydminster, Durham, York—Simcoe, and I cannot say enough about the leadership of the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, we were able to sign free trade agreements around the world.

To speak briefly on the domestic front, I would like to congratulate Manitoba's new premier, Brian Pallister and his Progressive Conservative government on recently signing on to the new west partnership trading agreement.

It is becoming evident that political parties from across the country are now openly advocating for the removal of trade barriers, either monetary or regulatory. I will relish the day when products from one Canadian province can be sold in another with no strings attached.

Members of the House should applaud my hon. colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola for his private member's bill that allowed Canadian wine to be shipped across the country, and for his recent leadership on freeing the beer. No Canadian should ever go to jail or be charged for carrying a case of beer across a provincial border.

With these thoughts in mind, it is why I am pleased to speak in favour of the Canada-EU comprehensive economic trade agreement. This landmark agreement is our country's biggest bilateral trade initiative since NAFTA. With 28 member states, the EU represents the world's largest single market for an investor and trader, with over 500 million people and an annual economic activity of almost \$20 trillion.

When CETA comes into force, Canada will be one of the few countries in the world to have guaranteed preferential access to the world's two largest economies, both the EU and the United States.

CETA was not accomplished overnight. It literally took years of hard work, as did NAFTA, especially by our world-class trade negotiators who poured their hearts and souls into this endeavour. I applaud their efforts immensely.

It was nice to hear the current Minister of International Trade pay tribute to my colleagues on this side of the House who spearheaded this initiative. However, I would be remiss if I did not say that I was a little discouraged to see her only hours later change her tone during

question period and play down the efforts of previous Conservative ministers.

While it is true that sometimes over-the-top rhetoric is used during fiery debates, I would like the hon. minister to know that Canadians, and in particular the good people of Brandon—Souris, are not too enamoured when the minister pats herself on the back, while forgetting the amazing contributions of others before she assumed her role.

I would also like to commend the members who have sat on the Standing Committee on International Trade. They completed two economic studies on the benefit of CETA. During these comprehensive studies, the committee found that CETA would be of net benefit to Canada, and had the support of a majority of Canadian stakeholders. In fact, in total transparency, all provinces had input and signed on before it was taken internationally.

Furthermore, the joint Canada-EU study concluded that this free trade agreement would bring a 20% boost in bilateral trade and a \$12 billion annual increase in Canada's economy.

What does this agreement mean for hard-working Canadians? It is an economic equivalent of adding \$1,000 to the average Canadian family income or almost 80,000 worth of new jobs to our economy.

• (1655)

I cannot stress enough how important it is for the federal government to implement policies that will lead to private sector growth, as its current path has only resulted in billions of dollars of new debt and the elimination of jobs.

CETA is a beacon of hope for many who have struggled for these past 12 months. It is an example that when government is on the same side as job creators, it can lead to the creation of new, high-paying jobs. We have learned many lessons after the great economic recession of 2008-09.

First and foremost, Canada must expand and diversify the countries to which we export our goods and services. We can no longer rely on selling the vast majority of our goods and services to the United States. To put it succinctly, we cannot have all our eggs in one basket. The importance of diversification is even more important now with the change of leadership in the United States.

While our Prime Minister seems to be willing to open negotiations on NAFTA, it sends shivers down the spines of those whose livelihood is directly tied to exporting into the American market.

As the Liberal government figures out how to work with the new administration, Canadians can rest assured that our Conservative caucus will continue to stand up for our bilateral initiatives that are directly tied to millions of Canadian jobs and, presently, \$2 billion of trade a day across our friendly border.

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We will also press the government to pursue a strong free trade agenda with the new U.S. administration. We expect the Liberals to work with the new U.S. administration to ensure Canadians and Canadian businesses continue to reap the benefits of NAFTA, and to advocate for the ultimate ratification and implementation of the trans-Pacific partnership agreement, which seeks to boost trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

Our Conservative caucus supported the diversification of our trading partners well before the recent American election results. The reasons why I support CETA are many, but in particular, Manitobans stand to benefit significantly from the preferential access we will get through this deal.

On day one of CETA's entry into force, 98% of EU tariff lines on Canadian goods would be duty-free, including those on key Manitoba exports, such as manufactured goods, metals, and mineral products. When this agreement is fully in place, 99% of the EU tariff lines will be eliminated.

In Manitoba, especially in my consistency of Brandon—Souris, farm families are chomping at the bit to have this opportunity to sell their livestock, grain, and oilseeds to EU countries.

Almost 94% of EU tariffs for agrifood products will be duty-free once CETA enters into force. This rises to 95% once all phase-outs are complete, seven years after entry into force. This would mean Westman farmers and beef, pork, and bison producers will have preferential access to the EU market.

It is also good to highlight there are beef producers who are already building their herd, specifically, for the EU market.

To put a face on the importance of this deal, I would like to share the story of the True North Foods, located outside of Carman, Manitoba.

Owner Calvin Vaags has been planning their entry in the EU for months. Just recently, his plant received federal approval and can now ship meat products anywhere across Canada and has been designed to meet all criteria for European, Chinese, and American markets. Operating at full capacity, the plant would process approximately 1,000 head of cattle a week.

Not only will this plant help Manitoba beef producers get into new markets, it also means that it no longer has to haul its cattle to Alberta or Ontario for slaughter. The plant will also provide the capacity to slaughter cattle, bison, elk, sheep, and goats, as well as offer heavy carcass capability, accommodating even the largest bulls.

This story may not sound like a lot in the big scheme of things, but for a constituency such as mine, it will offer Westman cattle producers opportunities that they would never have had previously.

With the very possibility that Americans might try to resurrect country of origin labelling, it is paramount we secure new markets for Canadian beef. Canadian products are considered high quality. When something is stamped "made in Canada", consumers and customers know they are getting superior products and can trust the safety and food security of our food processing facilities.

When it comes to our agricultural sector, it goes without saying that Canadian farmers produce the best agrifood products anywhere in the world.

I know Canadian businesses would thrive in the EU marketplace. I know jobs will be created and incomes would go up due to this trade initiative. I know diversifying Canada's markets is necessary. Most of all, I know that when trade barriers are eliminated, consumers on both sides would have the choice of lower prices.

Free trade is not a theoretical concept. Free trade is a way of doing business that would grow the Canadian economy. Our preferential—

• (1700)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately the time is up for the member's speech, but I am sure he could finish it in a few minutes during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Essex.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard a lot of points in the member's speech, especially around beef. There are still some non-tariff issues that exist in CETA. There still are some concerns by cattlemen on being able to get that product in. It is often non-tariff that actually prevents them from seeing the benefits of that tariff reduction. There are still some issues that need to be fixed around beef and exports, and that comes straight from their presentation to us at the committee level.

My question for the member is something about which he did not speak, and that is the cost of drugs for Canadians. Twenty-five per cent of the agreement speaks to patent changes that will impact every Canadian, all Canadians who are already experiencing the high cost of drugs. I have people in my riding every day in my office. They are struggling to pay the costs of medication. Affordable medication in our country is a serious issue, and I would hope it would be a serious issue for the member as well.

Could the member speak to how it will impact his riding to have seniors and people who will struggle with the cost of medication because of the changes in CETA?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, it is a concern, but as I said in my presentation, every province had opportunities to make those issues known during the negotiations within Canada for CETA. It was done transparently, and every province bought into the process.

I am very aware, having come through the farming community, of the types of generic products that have come forward in the medical field as well. As these become more opportunities for trading, perhaps we will even end up with more pharmaceutical opportunities in the marketplace. It is yet to be determined whether the price of these drugs will go up, as the member has indicated.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Let us look at the Brexit fallout. Some 42% of Canada's exports to the European Union go to the United Kingdom.

I will not get into Great Britain's internal politics because that is all kind of up in the air right now. That is actually a good reason to take a step back and consider the impact of Great Britain's possible exit from the European Union on the deal.

My colleague rightly praised the Canadian negotiators. However, I feel certain that, when the agreement was negotiated, the negotiators took into account Great Britain's considerable share of Canadian exports to the European Union.

What impact does the member see that having on the agreement? Has the government truly taken that impact into account?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, I am not as pessimistic as my colleague is about the opportunities that lie before us. I still believe they will be great. That is like saying we should not continue to negotiate the TPP because the United States says that it may not want to be a part of it.

We have a great opportunity here to continue with the growth. I had an opportunity to be on a trade mission to England with our former trade minister. We looked at the amount of seafood products the British wanted to have from Canada. They wanted more shrimp, lobster, Arctic char, and just about every type of seafood we could offer.

The Brexit agreement has made a change. Whether England continues to negotiate those concerns within the European Union is something that it, as my colleague indicated, will have to do within its own legislative forum.

However, I believe we will continue to have those opportunities. If we do not, that is why we need to continue to have the diversification of markets I referred to earlier.

• (1705)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, there are a mere handful of protections between average citizens and the predatory nature of global capitalism. The most important of these is a strong sovereign state with the regulatory power to champion the needs of its citizens over those of the non-human entities of global finance and multinational corporations.

In a 2012 dissenting opinion to a CETA-related trade committee report, the Liberals called for further consultation with Canadians on CETA. Now, the trade committee has already passed a motion in camera that will restrict written submissions to only the witnesses selected to appear.

On the other hand, the committee held dozens of meetings on the TPP. It heard from over 400 witnesses and received written submissions from approximately 60,000 Canadians. With 95% of submissions critical of the TPP, it is no wonder that the government does not want to hear from Canadians on CETA.

The sheer determination of the current Liberal government to get CETA ratified despite the genuine concerns and protestations of citizens groups across the European Union and Canada demonstrates to the world what its true priorities are. These priorities are the extension of global corporate rule into every remaining space in the Canadian economy.

For Liberals, it is as if they have had no lessons to learn from Brexit or the Trump phenomenon. Rather, as I suspect, it is as if they wish to get these deals done before we in this country reap the Canadian variants of these whirlwinds.

Let me be clear. The NDP supports deepening the Canada-EU trading relationship to diversify our markets, but there remain significant concerns and unanswered questions about this proposed deal.

As I mentioned before, when the Liberals themselves were in opposition, they agreed with the New Democrats that more consultation and analysis were needed on CETA. However, the minister has ignored calls for the removal of investor-state rules, refused to address the rising costs of prescription drugs, and neglected to consult Canadians.

The underlying point here is that Parliament is essentially being asked to write a blank cheque on this implementation bill, despite the fact that each of the 28 EU member states will have to ratify CETA for all of its provisions to apply, a process that is expected to take between two to five years.

I ask, as others here have, what is the hurry? What is the government trying to ram through here? Why is it not letting parliamentarians undertake due oversight when there is obviously enough time for us to examine the bill?

Indeed, there is plenty of time to engage with other signatory members, the EU countries, who are also alarmed by the investor-state dispute mechanism. New Democrats support trade deals that reduce trade tariffs and boost exports, but we will always remain firm that components like investor-state provisions that threaten our sovereignty have no place in trade deals.

In February of this year, during CETA's legal scrubbing phase, the minister announced changes to the ISDS provisions that are supposed to improve transparency and strengthen measures to combat possible conflicts of interest of arbitrators. However, the new investor court system, the ICS, still allows foreign investors to seek compensation from any level of government over policy decisions they feel impact their profits. Foreign companies will have access to a special court system to challenge Canadian laws without going through the domestic courts.

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This is deeply concerning, as Canada is already one of the most sued countries in the world as a result of the dispute mechanisms we have already agreed to. Canadian companies have won only three of 39 cases against foreign governments, and the Canadian government has lost many NAFTA cases while continuing to be subject to ongoing complaints seeking billions of dollars in damages.

● (1710)

Existing ISDS measures have also contributed to a regulatory chill in which governments fail to take actions in the public interest that they fear may trigger an investor claim. One thing we have learned very quickly from reading trade agreements over the years is that the priorities of global finance and global corporations are always front and centre in these deals and are always binding. It is environmental, labour, and general human rights concerns that are always relegated to side agreements, where they are non-binding and voluntary. It is strange how that happens.

Witness the so-called joint interpretive statement concerning the investor court system I mentioned earlier. This statement was negotiated as a way to placate the concerns of ordinary citizens who worried that these courts cede far too much of their nation's sovereignty to bodies that are not subject to domestic democratic oversight. Was CETA amended so that these concerns could be included? No, it was not, oddly enough. The joint interpretive statement falls outside the text of the treaty, and therefore would not have full legal weight. We can be absolutely sure this is no accident.

Likewise, the chapter in CETA on intellectual property rights goes well beyond Canada's existing obligations. The increased patent protections granted to brand-name pharmaceuticals would have the effect of delaying the arrival of cheaper generics and would increase the cost of prescription drugs to Canadians by between \$850 million and \$2.8 billion per year. This is a cost that I do not think seniors are prepared to take on. Furthermore, I would argue that it would hamper any efforts to bring in a national pharmaceutical strategy, both at the federal level and in what individual provinces are trying to do with their already ballooning health care costs.

In opposition, the Liberals demanded that the Conservatives present a study of the financial impacts on provincial and territorial health care systems and prescription drug costs. In government, the Liberals are telling provinces that they will cut health care transfers while pursuing agreements that risk increasing drug costs for the provinces.

Most distressing for me, as someone from municipal politics, is the minimum local content policies that could be compromised, even outlawed, above a certain threshold, even in municipal and provincial government procurement. I ask members to think about that and about the initiatives they have worked on when representing people at the municipal level of government, as I know many members have done.

As noted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, these provisions would likely threaten very popular buy local food programs at provincial hospitals, school boards, and other public institutions. They would almost certainly outlaw programs such as the Green Energy Act in Ontario, which requires significant local content in solar and wind projects in order for private energy producers to benefit from generous feed-in tariff rates designed to

encourage more renewable power generation. The Canadian Environmental Law Association states the following about CETA:

It will significantly impact environmental protection and sustainable development in Canada. In particular, the inclusion of an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism...will impact the federal and provincial governments' authority to protect the environment, promote resource conservation, or use green procurement as a means of advancing environmental policies and objectives.

Companies will also have an expanded ability to use temporary foreign workers without studying the impacts of that on Canadians. This is a matter of great concern in the Windsor—Tecumseh riding that I represent and the Essex County area at large, where there is a high unemployment rate.

To conclude, the NDP supports trade with Europe. As I have stated previously, we have deep historical and cultural ties with Europe, and within the EU are some of the world's most progressive democracies. However, we are concerned about specific measures in CETA that were negotiated, and it is our job to uphold the interests of Canadians and the global citizens we are. The Liberals have missed key opportunities to fix this agreement, but the deal is not done—

● (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, your time is up for this speech. I am sure you will be able to use some of it for questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I heard two important points there, because they illustrate the Liberal approach. The Liberals had a certain attitude when they were in opposition, but now that they are in power, their attitude is the exact opposite, and one that I have to say is disappointing.

This comes down to two specific points. The first is the higher drug prices that will result from this agreement. During the previous Parliament, those same Liberals asked for studies on the impact this agreement would have on drug prices. Now they seem to have forgotten all about that and want to move quickly without really examining the impact the agreement will have on people and what they will have to pay for their medication.

The second point has to do with compensation for dairy farmers. The Conservatives had promised \$41 billion to compensate the farmers. Now farmers are being offered peanuts, just \$300 million. That is a lot less than what the previous government had promised.

I wonder whether the member could talk about the Liberals' broken promises and how their attitude has changed since they came to power.

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member brought up these two very profound issues that I could speak to at length.

I will start with pharmaceuticals. This is a real challenge for Canadians today. In the House, when we talk about the threat to universal health care and our conviction on this side to defend it, one of the key things the governing party keeps bringing up is that it is going to reduce costs by looking at some ways to come up with a pharmaceutical plan and that it is working on that.

CETA will cripple that initiative. We will not be allowed to do that. Anyone can read this in the document. The myths with regard to this are really frustrating. Every single day in every constituency, members have people who are suffering because of the cost of pharmaceuticals and health care.

Another thing I want to bring up, which we have not talked about at all, is innovation and research in pharmaceuticals. Government-sponsored research and innovation for particular types of cures for certain diseases is also going to be undermined by this deal. Intellectual property will be undermined by this deal.

When it comes to issues like dairy farmers being compensated, I do not understand how we can have the government, on one hand, championing the cause and making these kinds of promises, and then—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have to allow time for more questions. Questions and comments.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am wondering about the part of the member's speech that she did not get to. Is there a point that she wants to make?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, the member was very clever. I am going to remember that in the future.

As a matter of fact, as I was being closed down by Madam Speaker, I was just saying that we urge the Liberals to reconsider. That was pretty much the closing.

Of all the points I was making, and they did culminate with that, that is a very important one. We are rushing this through. There is no need for us to be rushing this through. There is a way we could be doing it. As parliamentarians, we take pride in the place we have here in the House of Commons. We all embrace our due diligence. Whether we agree or not, we all do want to delve in and explore things further.

If there is a way to arrive at consensus, we should find it. I have been inspired by members from every party in the House in doing that and being responsive to real concerns. I thank the member for the opening to talk about how it is not too late for us to make these significant changes and be the vanguard leaders we are expected to be.

• (1720)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today on Bill C-30, the legislation that will bring about the activation of the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada and the European Union.

First and foremost, I want to thank the former minister of agriculture, the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, and the former minister of trade, the member for Abbotsford, for their great hard work in making sure that this deal came to fruition.

I will give kudos to the government for not screwing it up at the end and for getting the CETA deal finally before us. However, I can tell members that every clause we are looking at, the way the bill is structured, and the way CETA has been negotiated and signed is because of the hard work of the previous Conservative government.

I will just say that it is indeed a momentous occasion. We are agreeing to this great agreement that will bring 28 other countries into free trade with Canada and give Canadian agricultural producers, manufacturers, and service companies access to 500 million consumers in the European Union in those 28 member states.

I can tell members that in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, this is very important. We have a huge agriculture base, with grains, oilseeds, pulse crops, cattle, and hogs, which will all benefit from the preferential access we are going to garner in having free markets in Europe. We are talking about 94% of EU tariff lines against agricultural products being eliminated.

However, there are still some challenges, for our beef products in particular. As a rancher myself and a former member of the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, we have dealt extensively with all the phytosanitary and non-phytosanitary standards and actions the European Union has taken against Canadian beef over the past 30 years.

This agreement gives us a resolution mechanism for removing those artificial trade barriers, ensuring that we get back to science-based decisions rather than political decisions, which we all too often see in certain countries that like to put up barriers to trade while they try to protect certain segments of their industry. Over the next seven years, Canadian agricultural food, products, grains, and oilseeds that meet those standards will be able to access that marketplace, which is very important.

It is also important in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, because we produce steel. We have Gerdau in Selkirk, which is a very strong company. It produces steel that it sells around the world, especially its elevator rail steel. This, again, is now going to go to a zero-line tariff over the next seven years as this agreement comes into force. Some commodities are going to see line items move even more quickly than that.

Of course, in Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman we produce the best whisky in the world at the Crown Royal Diageo plant. The world champion whisky right now is Northern Harvest whiskey. It beat out all the other whiskies from Scotland, Ireland, the United States, and other places.

An hon. member: Let us drink to that.

Mr. James Bezan: Let us drink to that is right, Madam Speaker.

This is a product that is world renowned that can now move into the European market a lot more easily because of CETA.

Private Members' Business

The final major beneficiary of access to the European market is the freshwater fish we catch in my riding. A lot of people are surprised about that. Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is an agriculture-based riding north of the city of Winnipeg, with about 2,700 ranches and more than 3,000 commercial grain and oilseed farms.

•(1725)

I also have over a thousand commercial fishers and their families who will benefit from this deal, especially now that the Province of Manitoba has moved to release the shackles of the draconian Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, a federal crown corporation that has really kept them below world prices of fish, especially for great things like our walleye, our whitefish, and others. This gives us an opportunity to move this high-quality product into Europe at zero-rate tariffs. This is a product that is in great demand around the world. Of course we are going to go where it is easiest to get the most money and where it is easiest to go into the marketplace. Thanks to the work of the previous Conservative government, we are able to do that with CETA.

We have to continue to be vigilant. Canada should still pursue an aggressive trade agenda. Despite the rhetoric we are hearing from the NDP, there are huge opportunities here for us as we see a change in the administration in the United States, through the election of Donald Trump as the president-elect. We know that he wants to renegotiate trade deals. He has been somewhat noncommittal to multilateral trade deals like TPP, so let us capitalize on getting preferential market access for Canadian farmers, manufacturers, and businesses so that we can put those trade dollars into our own pockets.

We are looking at a market that is worth over \$20 trillion in Europe. With this agreement, based upon some very good research, let us say a 20% boost in our trade with the EU, that would amount to over \$12 billion for our GDP. It would create 80,000 new jobs. It would increase household incomes. This is something everyone should be celebrating, not fighting.

The same is true with the TPP. Even though Donald Trump has already said he is not going to sign the TPP, there are many countries that sit at that table that want to move forward. I know the Liberal government would rather do business with Communist China, but I would encourage the Liberals to go forward with our partners with the TPP and actually take the opportunity, given to us by Donald Trump himself, to sign that deal and have preferential access into that large market and give us a competitive advantage over the Americans.

For far too long, the U.S. has enjoyed most favoured nation tariff rates in almost all countries, putting our beef and pork producers, our grain and oilseed producers at huge disadvantages because we have to pay higher tariff rates going into those markets than what the Americans pay. That is why we need these free trade agreements: CETA, TPP, and NAFTA. The European free trade alliance agreement, that we signed a number of years ago; Israel; Chile; and Morocco are all key countries that provide us with more opportunities for those in our ridings. It does not matter if they are a steelworker, an auto worker, a grain farmer, or someone working in an abattoir packing beef, these are jobs that depend upon our trade. If we are not trading, we are flooding our own market. If we are

flooding our own market, we are depressing prices, and if we are depressing prices, then we will see guys exiting the industry because they are going broke. If they exit the industry, then those jobs disappear.

We have to take the big-picture approach here to ensure that everyone who is involved in the production of our foodstuffs, the service industry, and those supplying transportation to move our various products across the country into export position also have the ability to participate. Our truckers, our rail companies, along with all our shipping industries, depend upon trade.

As I wrap up, I just want to again congratulate all those on our side of the floor who have negotiated CETA. We are finally seeing it. After seven dutiful years of research, study, and negotiation, we have come up with the best possible deal that Canada could ever have that benefits all Canadians.

•(1730)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman will have five minutes remaining in his time for questions and comments when the House next returns to business on this question.

[*Translation*]

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

FRAMEWORK ON PALLIATIVE CARE IN CANADA ACT

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC) moved that Bill C-277, an act providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to stand before the House to bring a private member's bill that would benefit not only my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, but all Canadians.

All of us will eventually come to the end of our lives. We all want to ensure that we live as well as we can for as long as we can. That is why Canadians need proper palliative and end-of-life care. Bill C-277 would provide a framework for palliative care in Canada.

Last parliamentary session, the Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care studied the matter and came forward with recommendations. This bill is the result of those recommendations.

The committee published an excellent report outlining the current Canadian situation with respect to palliative care. The preamble for my bill is directly pulled from its report. This committee did a complete assessment of current palliative care options in Canada and identified specific areas and needs to be addressed. The report outlined the importance of strong and consistent palliative care options in Canada as well as the necessity of a framework under which to conduct these efforts.

Private Members' Business

This bill is also timely since, as a result of the Carter decision on assisted dying, the external committee report also recommended that palliative care be available to all Canadians.

The final report of the external committee on options for a legislative response to *Carter v. Canada* emphasized the importance of palliative care in the context of medically assisted dying. It stated that a request for medically assisted death could not be truly voluntary if the option of proper palliative care was not available to alleviate a person's suffering.

As we all can attest, each of the parties in the House has shown itself to be in favour of implementing a palliative care program in Canada, but very little has been formally announced. We can all agree on the importance of palliative care as well as the importance of making these measures accessible, in a consistent fashion, to all Canadians who need them.

Bill C-277 would define the services to be covered. It would establish standard training requirements for the various levels of service providers. It would come with a plan to achieve consistent access to palliative care for all Canadians. It would define the mechanism by which this is best achieved, with the measurements and data needed to track success.

Canada has an ever-growing number of individuals of all ages experiencing chronic and terminal conditions. Good palliative care covers a wide range of services, such as acute care, hospice care, home care, crisis care, and spiritual and psychological counselling.

A palliative philosophy of care is needed to address a whole variety of needs through an adapted and patient-centred process. The creation and implementation of a palliative care framework would give Canadians access to consistent, high-quality palliative care through hospitals, home care, long-term care facilities, as well as through residential hospices.

When we look at the current palliative care system, we can recognize the work that needs to be done. Current programs are evolving provincially and many are fragmented with little consistency and communication between the parts. A palliative care framework will bring these fragmented parts together in an effort to create a more cohesive, patient-based program, with a common definition of services covered, training standards, and a plan to ensure equal access for all.

There is a need for governance of the consistent implementation and monitoring of palliative and home care. This would require clear and open communication between federal and provincial governments as well as medical practitioners, institutions, and patients.

I would like to acknowledge the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians, Pallium Canada, ARPA, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, and many of their member hospices, like Bruyère Continuing Care, St. Joseph's Hospice, and West Island Palliative Care Residence, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, the Kidney Foundation, the ALS Society, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, and the more than 50 organization members of the Quality End-of-Life Care Coalition of Canada for their ongoing promotion and support of this bill.

It is through organizations and groups like these that we can integrate palliative care into the current health care system and make a true difference in the lives of Canadians.

Support from across Canada is also evident in the 83 petitions on palliative care that have been presented to the House in this session alone. Thousands of letters have been received by members of Parliament on all sides of the House.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

The current palliative care options in Canada are simply inadequate and do not meet the needs of Canadians.

In 2011, it is estimated that only 16% to 30% of those in need were receiving proper palliative and end-of-life care. Our current health care system favours short-term acute care, which it does extremely well. However, it lacks the capacity and the funding to properly, and consistently, provide quality long-term palliative and end-of-life care. The cost of acute care is four times that of hospice palliative care, so there is an opportunity to provide more of this kind of care for less money.

Regional accessibility is also an important issue. Currently, palliative care options are available in most heavily populated regions. However, the availability of palliative care in remote or less populated areas is often very limited or non-existent. There is a pressing need for a plan to address how to provide services to these areas. The region where you live should have no impact on whether palliative care is or is not available to you.

[*English*]

Palliative care would also offer an enhanced quality of life for those who, for various reasons, do not choose medically assisted dying. Data in countries that offer assisted dying shows that where good palliative care is available, 95% of people choose to live as well as they can for as long as they can. Palliative care will provide an option that would be preferable to many medical practitioners, nurse practitioners, and health care institutions that for religious and conscience reasons would prefer to help their patients live well.

With those 65 and older making up approximately 15% of the Canadian population, the geriatric and palliative care needs of Canadians will only increase. Palliative care can be cost efficiently delivered within the home or in community-based systems, such as hospices, nursing homes, and long-term care homes.

Funding palliative care in homes and in stand-alone facilities will alleviate pressure on hospitals and free up many much-needed hospital beds.

Private Members' Business

[*Translation*]

The proper training of medical practitioners and nurse practitioners is an important step in creating a comprehensive and well-equipped palliative care structure. On average, medical and nursing students spend as little as 20 hours of their four years of study learning about palliative and end-of-life care. In 2011, there were fewer than 200 geriatricians in Canada. Today, the estimated need is upwards of 600.

This bill will also have a positive impact on the lives of caregivers. In 2011, there were an estimated 4 million to 5 million family caregivers in Canada, who contribute \$25 billion to the Canadian economy. These same caregivers often have a heavier financial burden and have to miss one or more months of work because of their duties. Family caregivers provide 80% of all home care in Canada, and 77% of these caregivers are women.

This might seem like a lot of statistics, but these numbers are not to be taken lightly. Caregivers experience financial, social, and physical burdens that can have lasting effects on their lives. I quote the Canadian Cancer Society when I say that “Canadian caregivers are the invisible backbone of the health care system, providing \$25 billion in unpaid care”.

● (1740)

[*English*]

This added support will encourage palliative care in the home, which has been demonstrated to be beneficial for everyone involved. Allowing patients to stay in their homes for as long as possible is a wise and compassionate choice that should be offered to every Canadian.

As we can imagine, long-term data on the subject is hard to come by. What data we do have shows that Canada has a lot of work to do in the field of palliative care. Dr. Fred McGinn, of the Hospice Society of Halifax, calculated that in 2011 there were over 200 residential hospices in the United Kingdom and over 1,300 residential hospices in the United States. However, there were only 30 free-standing residential hospices in Canada.

Canada needs to develop its capacity for residential and hospice palliative care. In terms of actual spending, it costs between \$600 and \$800 a day to have a palliative care bed in a hospital. Comparatively, it costs only \$55 a day to have palliative care beds at home. In-between these, it costs \$200 to \$300 a day to have a palliative care bed in hospice. In extreme cases, it could cost upward of \$1,200 a day for beds in acute care in hospital while a patient is awaiting other accommodations, so it would be much more cost-effective to fund quality at-home and in-hospice palliative care beds over beds in hospitals.

Our lack of data and research on palliative care is why I believe it is essential we include further research and data collection in the bill. Many other UN countries have or have had laws in place with regard to palliative care.

A report from the United Nations and World Wide Palliative Care Alliance suggests that the cost of care at end of life, measures between 25% and 30% of all medical expenditures. Shockingly in Canada, 50% of palliative care funding currently has to come from

charitable donations. This report determined that overall, the utilization of hospital based and in-home based hospice and palliative care services significantly reduced the cost of care, while providing equal if not better quality care for patients.

[*Translation*]

In this House, the government has stated it would allocate \$3 billion to home care and to palliative care over the next four years.

This bill to create an overarching framework guaranteeing quality palliative care would provide an ideal complimentary legislation to Bill C-14 in the sense that it will take into account the concerns expressed by health professionals all while creating a quality palliative care strategy. Having end-of-life options gives patients a real choice in an already difficult situation.

Establishing a clear and comprehensive palliative care framework will allow patients to make well-informed decisions about how they spend their remaining time with family and friends.

[*English*]

I believe that my riding of Sarnia—Lambton is an excellent example of palliative care done right. One in five residents of Sarnia is 65 or over, and this number is on the rise. Sarnia is considered to be ahead of many communities with its 10-bed hospice and eight to 10-bed hospital palliative care unit. We have more than five palliative care specialists in our area, and as a community, Sarnia—Lambton has many institutions and groups that support and deliver palliative care, such as St. Joseph's Hospice, the Bluewater Health Palliative Care Unit, and the Erie St. Clair Community Care Access Centre and the VON.

Unfortunately, resources such as these are not abundant everywhere. This has been attributed to a lack of medical training and personnel in this field and a lack of funding. A very small number of Canadians in need of palliative care are able to receive it. With less than 30% of Canadians having access to quality palliative care, concrete changes need to be made.

As a large portion of our population approaches retirement, the issue will just continue to grow. I am looking to create a framework to implement consistent and quality palliative care across Canada. No Canadian should be denied these essential end of life programs and services because of their region or their finances. Every Canadian deserves the right to be able to end their life in peace and comfort knowing that they had the final choice. The bill will result in Canadians having that real choice.

I would once again like to thank the numerous groups, organizations and hospices for their support. After all, 95% of people who have good palliative choose to live as well as they can for as long as they can. I believe every Canadian should be given that option, so let us join together with one voice to call for quality palliative care as a right of all Canadians by supporting Bill C-277.

Private Members' Business

• (1745)

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in the House to say that I will be supporting this bill. I am very happy to because of my own personal experience watching my mother struggle at the end of her life 15 years ago. Even in a city the size of London, we did not have enough beds 15 years ago, and I would not want anyone to go through that.

I have a question about whether the member has considered aligning the bill with some of the best practices of the provinces that are well ahead of the federal government on this.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, now is the time to start to leverage the best practices the provinces are starting to implement. Some are further ahead than others. Organizations like Pallium Canada, the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians, and the Canadian Nurses Association have best practices and are able to help leverage them. Now is the time to get the framework and define the services we would have and the standard training requirements and make sure that we roll this out in the most efficient way possible.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Sarnia—Lambton makes a great contribution to this House of Commons. Certainly the New Democrats will be supportive of this bill as well.

That being said, I recall that just a few years ago in this House, the Conservative government cut the national Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care. I am hoping that this signifies a change in direction for the Conservative Party.

Can the member acknowledge that this is a change in direction for the Conservative Party and that all Conservative members will be supporting her bill?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, I am bringing a fresh perspective to this place. All of the members of the Conservative Party will be supporting this bill, because we recognize that all Canadians need this.

When we studied Bill C-14 this year, we heard all of the witnesses and the people who were providing input say that we need to have good palliative care if we are going to have a true choice. To find out that 70% of Canadians have no access to any kind of palliative care was astounding to me. Therefore, I am happy to say that we will support this, and that is a change.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also want to add my congratulations to my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for the incredible amount of work she has done in bringing us to this point today. She mentioned in her speech a number of national organizations that are supporting her bill.

In my own area, I have the privilege of having a number of hospices that provide excellent palliative care. We have Innisfree House and Lisaard House and the HopeSpring Cancer Support Centre. I am wondering if my colleague would expand a bit on her knowledge of the palliative care agency in her area, Bluewater Health, which provides excellent palliative care. I have had the privilege of visiting it, but I would like to hear a bit more about the kind of service it provides.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member, because he was one of the members of the parliamentary committee that first brought this forward. I appreciate all the work that committee did.

Definitely in my riding we have a very integrated approach. There is St. Joseph's Hospice, and there are palliative care beds in the hospital. There is also community care and the VON home care types of services. They are all working in partnership under five palliative care specialists, who are incredibly rare in Canada. For a community as small as Sarnia to have this kind of expertise and for them to be working that way together is a real model we want to leverage.

As I was putting the bill together, I talked to different hospices, excellent hospices, in other places in the country. Those best practice models are what we need to learn from and implement as we go ahead. There is an opportunity for the government, with a lot of flexibility, to determine how we will apply the solutions that are needed, how we will bring the infrastructure, and what the timing of all of those things will be.

I look forward to working with all my colleagues on all sides of the House to get a better solution for Canadians.

• (1750)

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to discuss Bill C-277, an act providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada. With the introduction of this bill, the member for Sarnia—Lambton has taken a significant step forward in our national dialogue on palliative and end of life care, and I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. I appreciate the opportunity to provide some reflections on this extremely important initiative.

Palliative care is an issue that is gaining increasing attention across our country. This was further magnified by discussions on end-of-life care options that occurred earlier this year when medical assistance in dying became a legal option. Views on this matter differ, but we can all agree that patients should have access to a full range of care options to treat pain and other symptoms at the end of their life.

Palliative care is an approach to health care that focuses on the needs of patients who live with life-threatening conditions as well as on their families. Research shows that it can have a significant impact on improving quality of life for patients, while reducing the stress and burden on their families. As demographics in Canada shift, the need for end-of-life care is increasing. Canadians have been loud and clear in calling for access to high-quality care for those who are approaching the end of their life.

Before being elected as a member of Parliament, I had the privilege of being an oncology nurse at St. Joseph's Health Centre. I have actively provided palliative care to many patients and I have seen first-hand the impact that good-quality palliative care has on patients at the end of their lives and their families.

Private Members' Business

While palliative care has been improving in Canada, we know there is still much work to be done. Some studies have reported that as few as 16% to 30% of dying Canadians have access to palliative care, depending on where they live in the country.

More recently, a study by Health Quality Ontario found that 40% of Ontarians who died in 2014-15 had not received a palliative care service. Access often depends on physician referrals, the availability of services, and the awareness of care options among patients and their families. The Ontario study found that most patients did not start receiving palliative care until the last months of their lives. This is a concern because early access can be critical, if not the most important, for maintaining the best possible quality of life for a patient. The study also found that fewer than half of the patients who received palliative care received it at home. Most of us want to stay in our homes and communities for as long as possible. When asked, the majority of Canadians said that they would prefer to spend their last days at home. In spite of this, close to two-thirds of deaths in our country are still happening in hospitals.

The Canadian Cancer Society issued a report this year called "Right to Care: Palliative care for all Canadians". It highlighted a number of gaps, and barriers to palliative care in Canada, such as a lack of standards, limited data, insufficient training for providers, and inadequate support for caregivers.

This study and others like it show that now is the time to work together on addressing these gaps. As was said many times during the debate on Bill C-14, improving palliative care is a priority for our government. In fact, the preamble of this bill clearly signals our intent to support improvements to a range of end of life care services in Canada.

Canadians need real options that respect their plans and preferences for care in what is often a very difficult stage of life. It is obvious that Canadians are looking to their governments to make this happen. Stakeholders, including the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, the Quality End of Life Care Coalition of Canada, the Canadian Nurses Association, and the Canadian Cancer Society, have all called for national leadership in the area of palliative care, and we have been listening.

Our government believes that Bill C-277 would provide us with a timely opportunity to take a leadership role on this issue. We support the creation of a framework for palliative care.

• (1755)

I would like to recognize the efforts of the member for Sarnia—Lambton in putting forward such a thoughtful proposal for what this framework could look like. However, in considering this bill, I would urge each member to also consider the need to respect jurisdictional roles and responsibilities in this area. As we know, health is a shared responsibility in our country, with most of the responsibility for delivering care falling under the purview of the provinces and territories. Most provincial and territorial governments already have some form of a palliative care strategy, plan, or framework, or have policies or programs in place to support palliative care. Several provinces recently dedicated funding to improve palliative care services in their respective jurisdictions.

The bill needs to be better aligned with the scope of federal roles and responsibilities in relation to palliative care, and we will be introducing amendments to that effect. The government is well positioned to complement, bolster, and spread the important work under way across the country by provincial and territorial governments, as well as stakeholders across the health care sector.

I believe that amendments could be made that would achieve this objective while respecting the spirit of the bill. As we all know, the government provides provincial and territorial governments with long-term funding for health care. Our government made a platform commitment to provide \$3 billion to provinces and territories to deliver more and better home care services for Canadians, including those who need palliative care. This commitment is being pursued in the context of the health accord. Negotiations with provinces and territories are ongoing, and I am optimistic that, in the future, there may be synergies with a proposed framework.

The division of responsibilities for health between the government and provinces and territories presents us with both challenges and opportunities. If we move forward with implementing this bill, it will be important to talk to provincial and territorial governments and key stakeholders on the appropriate scope of a palliative care framework.

It will also be important for us to learn from the significant body of work on palliative care that has been published in recent years. This includes reports from Parliament, provincial and territorial advisory bodies, and stakeholders, such as the Canadian Medical Association.

One key example is the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association's 2015 report, "The Way Forward," which seeks to integrate a palliative approach to care throughout the health care system.

I would like to close by thanking the House for the opportunity to reflect on the importance of this bill, and to offer some considerations as we move forward, reviewing it in greater detail. I believe that a framework for palliative care is the right approach for Canada. I look forward to further discussion on what that framework should look like, so that we can all have better access to palliative care for all Canadians. Once again, I thank the member for bringing this extremely important piece of legislation to this House.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking about Bill C-277, an act for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada. I will be supporting this bill at second reading.

The New Democrats have a dedicated history of supporting and advocating for a pan-Canadian palliative care strategy to deliver end-of-life services for Canadians. Now, more than ever, our advocacy is needed. As Canada's aging population puts unique stresses on our medical system, it is increasingly important that we have a coherent strategy for palliative and end-of-life care across Canada. This is an issue that touches every Canadian and leaves an impact on every single family.

Private Members' Business

When we have good options for palliative care, we can ease the many burdens of families so they are able to make these difficult transitions. When services are fragmented, too many people fall through the cracks right when they need the support the most.

Only 16% to 30% of Canadians today who require formalized end-of-life care have access to it. This is an extremely concerning figure. It means that the majority of Canadians who have spent their lives working hard, contributing to our economy, raising families, building communities, and working towards creating a Canada that we can all be proud of will not have the end-of-life care they deserve. Even fewer Canadians receive grief and bereavement services.

The time to act on this issue is long overdue. It is said that the mortality rate will increase by 33% by 2020, making the need for palliative care an urgent one, even more so within the context of the legalization of physician-assisted dying. The provision of high-quality palliative care services is all the more important, as it provides meaningful options for end-of-life decisions.

Currently, nearly 25% of the total cost of palliative care is borne by families, and significant disparities remain across Canada with respect to access to end-of-life care, quality of care, and those out-of-pocket expenses. At least 50% of hospice palliative care services are funded by charitable donations, which continues to restrict the size, scope, and access Canadians have to palliative programs.

Very few Canadian provinces have designated hospice palliative care as a core service under their provincial health plans, and in the remaining provinces, hospice palliative care may be included in provincial home care budgets or other health service budgets, leaving the funding vulnerable to redistribution and cuts. We must have a national strategy that can protect the palliative care of Canadians who have access to it, expand access to care for Canadians who do not have it, and improve the quality and affordability of care for all.

On average, it is estimated that Canadians spend 54 hours per week caring for a dying loved one at home. For most people, this is simply not feasible. Most people in my community need to work to support themselves and their families. Currently, family caregivers provide more than 80% of care to their loved ones, which takes an economic toll on them personally.

If the government provided support to an end-of-life strategy and replaced these family caregivers with specific palliative care professionals trained to provide the proper type of care for those who are at the end of their lives, it would take a huge financial strain off of our more expensive acute and emergency care facilities.

A national strategy for palliative care would also have positive effects on families across Canada beyond the financial costs. End-of-life care is a difficult and emotional time for families. Studies overwhelmingly suggest that women are more often affected as they tend to be the primary caregivers within families. The mental and physical strain of acting as a caregiver is linked to societal expectation of women to provide a greater degree of care at the end of life for family members.

I, like many others in the House, have a personal experience with this exact scenario. My 94-year-old grandmother, the matriarch of our family, Mary Murphy, passed away on October 22 this year. She

was fortunate to have been in long-term care, but could not be placed in hospice care due to a lack of space.

My grandmother was blessed to have five angels, daughters who were selfless caregivers to help her through her end-of-life journey; and my mother, Linda, and her four sisters, Nancy, Janet, Kathy, and Debbie. Our family is eternally grateful to them for putting their lives on hold to ensure that my grandmother's dignity and comfort in her last days was a top priority. However, I cannot help but think of what hospice care options could have been provided to my family during this difficult time.

● (1800)

By supporting this legislation at second reading, we can promote a fuller discussion about the familial and gendered ramifications for a palliative care strategy.

The NDP has repeatedly called for the betterment of end-of-life care. On October 31, 2013, the member of Parliament for Timmins—James Bay, introduced Motion No. 456, which called for the establishment of a palliative and end-of-life care strategy. His motion called for the federal government to work in conjunction with the provinces and territories on a flexible and integrated model of palliative care. The motion passed with nearly unanimous support the following year, on May 28, 2014.

It is frustrating to once again have to advocate for something we all know Canadians would greatly benefit from. The government has made no substantial progress on this file, and this bill seems to essentially replicate the initiatives taken by the NDP nearly three years ago. It was the New Democrats who called for the dignity of Canadians at the end of their lives. The initiative for a pan-Canadian palliative strategy is an NDP one, not only due to the replication of Motion No. 456, but also due to the continued advocacy the New Democrats have given this issue.

Sadly, as we may recall, the Conservatives cut the national secretariat on palliative end-of-life care in 2006. For nearly 10 years, no action to implement a new strategy was taken. Although we continue to talk about moving forward for families and those needing a comprehensive national strategy for end-of-life care, Canadian families need action on this issue. I was pleased to hear the member indicate that the Conservatives will support this initiative.

I was proud of the work of my NDP colleague, the member for Victoria, during the meetings held by the special joint committee regarding the Carter decision by the Supreme Court of Canada. The member for Victoria fought hard to bring forward palliative care provisions to create a properly funded pan-Canadian strategy of palliative and end-of-life care, and to re-establish Health Canada's secretariat on palliative care.

The Standing Committee on Justice unanimously passed NDP amendments on palliative care, which were added to the preamble of the bill. While I was happy to know that our amendments were included, ultimately I was disappointed, as the preamble did not hold as much legal weight as the actual text of the legislation.

Private Members' Business

I would also like to remind this place that although we fought to incorporate palliative care into the Liberal majority joint committee report on physician-assisted dying, I was surprised to find this year's federal budget contained zero federal funds earmarked for palliative care. The budget this spring and the update this fall simply failed to deliver on these concrete recommendations.

Although my NDP colleagues have done so much work to bring forward a national strategy for palliative and end-of-life care, both in previous and within this current Parliament, neither the former Conservative government nor the current Liberal government has helped those Canadians needing this essential care provision.

I believe it is common for us all to think we have more time. Especially when I was younger, I could not imagine planning into next month, let alone planning for my senior years, or thinking about my own end-of-life care. However, as I get a little older and I see family members and loved ones around me age, I hope I also get a little wiser. Part of that growing wisdom is acknowledging that as a community and as a nation, we need a vision and a plan.

People in Essex have told me that they believe in comprehensive health care systems, which include home care, long-term care and palliative care. In this vision and plan, it is vital that the government take into account Canada's vast diversity. Across the country, from urban to rural, Canadians have different needs, influences, and preferences to take into consideration when designing and implementing an end-of-life care plan. It must also respect the cultural, spiritual, and familial needs of all Canadians, including Canada's first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

This is bigger than any of us individually. It is bigger than any of our individual parties. It is a moment when we have to try to work together to have that vision. I would like to think that we can stand together in the House, and do just that. Our worth as a society is measured by the support we give to those members who are most vulnerable. Let us provide them with more than just words and hyperbole. Let us work together to put forward a comprehensive pan-Canadian palliative and end-of-life care strategy that works for everyone.

• (1805)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today and speak in favour of Bill C-277, An Act providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada.

Over the past 10 years I have served in this place, palliative care has been one of the issues that I have spent a lot of time on, and so I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton, for introducing this bill and taking up this great cause at this crucial time in Canadian history.

This legislation is essential for two fundamental reasons. First, it addresses a major gap in our Canadian health care system. The vast majority of Canadians do not have access to an essential health care service, palliative care. Second, in a post-Carter decision Canada, we need to understand the realities and questions Canadians now face when nearing the end of their lives.

My roles and experiences as co-founder of the parliamentary committee on palliative and compassionate care, as a member of the

joint committee on assisted suicide and euthanasia, and as an advocate for suicide prevention throughout the last decade, inside the chamber and outside, have all ultimately shaped how I approach this subject, my deep conviction that we need to do better, and that we need to see this legislation passed and implemented as soon as possible.

I would also like to add that as a Christian, the value of life from conception until natural death, and the recognition that life is a sacred gift from God also shape how I approach the topic of sustaining comfortable living for those suffering in their last days.

I would like to begin with a quote from Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche Canada, as recorded in the final report of the parliamentary committee on palliative and compassionate care entitled, "Not to be Forgotten":

Each of us is fragile, with deep needs for both love and a sense of belonging. We begin and end our lives vulnerable and dependent, requiring others to care for us... In our states of dependence, our need cries out for attention and care. If this need is well received, it calls forth the powers of love in others, and creates unity around us, the gifts of the vulnerable to our world. If our cry and our need are unmet, we remain alone and in anguish.... The danger in our culture of productivity and achievement is that we easily dismiss and ignore as unproductive the gifts and the beauty of our most vulnerable members, and we do so at our own peril, dehumanizing ourselves.

The question that we all need to ask ourselves is this: Will we now withhold from our society the love, the care, the attention for our most vulnerable, and in the process dehumanize not only those who need our care, but also ourselves, we, who should be providing that care?

As our committee report, "Not to be Forgotten", states:

Adequate palliative and end-of-life care becomes more essential as the numbers of Canadians requiring these services grows. Canada is not providing adequate palliative and end-of-life care for all who need it.

In Canada, only 16% to 30% of those who need it, receive palliative care. If that is a failing grade in any ordinary exam, how much more so is it in the context of our dying fellow citizens, friends, and relatives? This is not merely a failing grade, this is a disastrous failing grade. Our report went on to say:

Despite efforts made by palliative care providers, Canadians have a long way to go to meet our goal of quality end-of-life care. Canadians in all parts of our country should be able to get effective palliation of their pain and symptoms, and have their psycho-social and spiritual needs addressed.

So the question is this. What quality of life do we want to provide for Canadians? The provision of proper palliative care is absolutely essential if we are truly serious about maximizing the quality of life of all Canadians, who find themselves in need of these additional supports at a time when they are most vulnerable.

As our report states:

We recommend that the federal government in collaboration with the provinces and territories implement a right to home care, long term care and palliative care, for all residents of Canada, equal to the current rights in the Canada Health Act, to those services defined as "insured health services", including hospital services, physician services and surgical dental services.

Bill C-277 follows up that same expectation in stating:

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The Minister of Health must, in consultation with the representatives of the provincial and territorial governments responsible for health, as well as with palliative care providers, develop and implement a framework designed to give Canadians access to palliative care—provided through hospitals, home care, long-term care facilities and residential hospices—that, among other things,

(f) evaluates the advisability of amending the *Canada Health Act* to include palliative care services provided through home care, long term care facilities and residential hospices.

● (1810)

In a post-Carter Canada, we need to realize that the environment in which people approach the end of life has changed drastically. According to researchers Tang and Crane, “The risk of suicide doubles for people with chronic pain”.

Now that people have access to medically-assisted suicide, I would argue that there is a high probability that this number may drastically increase as the Canadian population ages and experiences higher rates of chronic pain as outlined above. However, we know that good palliative care can eliminate 99% of all pain.

The heart of the issue, outlined well by the expert panel appointed by our previous Conservative government, is that a request for physician-assisted suicide cannot truly be voluntary if the option of proper palliative care is not readily available to alleviate a person's suffering. While palliative care is not exclusively for the terminally ill, terminally ill Canadians must be given the choice to live as well as they can for as long as they can.

The government has failed to address this gap in our medical system, either through Bill C-14 or budget 2016. Current provincial and territorial approaches to the delivery of palliative care are fragmented. Federal leadership is needed to ensure that all Canadians have access to the same services and quality of care.

There are almost always problems in gaining access to palliative, and a good part of the reason is the lack of medical practitioners who feel qualified to provide state-of-the-art palliative care. There are not enough opportunities to access proper training. Recently, a large medical school in Ontario had 169 applicants for elective time, specifically devoted to study palliative care, yet there was only room for 35 of those applicants to be placed in the program. This problem needs to be corrected.

Again, from the report *Not to be Forgotten*:

Dr. Valerie Schulz of the Schulich School of Medicine in London Ontario has developed a simple and effective way to get medical students interested in palliative care. Each year 12 students from the undergraduate program become hospice volunteers. Undergoing 30 hours of training, each being mentored by an experienced hospice volunteer; they visit clients in their homes. The experience is priceless for the future doctors, as it gives them a chance to meet and converse with people outside the clinical environment, and without the need to bring a clinical perspective to the relationship. They relate to the hospice clients as persons, learning how they feel and react to the prospect of dying. Friendships are formed, and lessons learned, which will be of lifelong value to the future doctors in terms of person centred care. The clients also are transformed, touched that a future doctor would care enough to spend time with them in a companion role. This program is worth emulation, and broader application.

If larger numbers of medical and other health care students across Canada were able to experience one-on-one relationships as hospice volunteers, the positive effects on our medical culture would be immense. However, we need our medical schools to increase available training options for those students who want access to the specialized training.

Bill C-277 is a step in the right direction in protecting vulnerable Canadians. It builds on the non-partisan unanimously supported work of previous parliamentarians, and I hope all parties will be supporting this historic legislation.

Finally, let me quote from an anonymous author as it relates to palliative care, “To cure sometimes, to relieve often, and to comfort always. This is our work”.

● (1815)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this bill and to compliment the member across the way, who I know is a recipient of one of those parliamentarian awards.

This is indeed a very encouraging private member's bill. Just listening to the debate for the last 45 minutes, we get the sense of some momentum that could see the bill go to committee. I would like to see it go to committee. There seem to be some thoughts that maybe we could make some amendments to improve it. As members, we understand the need for furthering the cause of palliative care.

This has been an issue for me for many years. In fact, there was a time, when I was the health critic in the province of Manitoba, when I would go into a hospital facility and see patients waiting, because there was not enough palliative care. In some cases, they were sitting in hallways in hospitals, because there was not a facility or room, even for individuals who were in need of palliative care.

I do not know the severity today. I think there is a better appreciation of what palliative care is and how important palliative care is to all Canadians. It bridges all generations. One does not have to be seeing the end of life in a few weeks.

Where does one begin in trying to address this issue?

Many provinces would argue, and rightfully so, that we have to be careful about provincial jurisdiction.

What I respect about our current Minister of Health is her sense of passion that Canada needs to come to the table, in terms of strong national leadership, on a number of social health issues. Palliative care is one of those.

Just last spring we had a very, I would suggest, apolitical, passionate argument about assisted-dying legislation. During that debate, we saw members on all sides of the House moved to tears. Stories were told about why health care is so important.

Canada is at a critical time. We often hear about the financing of health care and that Ottawa needs to play that role. One of the things I respected so much about the Paul Martin government was that it established the health care accord in 2004 that put into place health care funding. It is the reason we had record amounts of financing going into health care in every region of our country. That health care accord expired in 2014.

We now have a Minister of Health who has reached out to the provinces, under the direction of the Prime Minister and the cabinet and I would like to think all members. I know that the Minister of Health is very much in tune with what is being said here today.

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● (1820)

I would like to think that the message we should be sending to the Minister of Health is that Ottawa has to and must play a strong national leadership role in the future of palliative care and in ensuring that there is palliative care in every region of our country and some conformity. I understand and appreciate one of the questions that was posed to the sponsor of the bill, namely, what about the idea of looking for best practices? We need to acknowledge that some provinces are ahead of others on this very important issue.

From a Canadian perspective as someone who loves our country, it should not matter where we live, whether in Newfoundland and Labrador; the province of Quebec or Ontario; or in the city of Winnipeg, my favourite city; or out on the Pacific coast; or in many of our rural communities in every region, including up north, or wherever it might be. Wherever we live, we should have this sense of equality and equity. It should not be the case that if people want good palliative care, they have to live in this or that region of the country. We do not want to see that.

What we want to see and what I choose to believe the Minister of Health is looking for in terms of best practices is what role Ottawa can play in working with the different provinces in trying to make sure that those best practices are being implemented, and how Ottawa can best ensure that is taking place.

We need to ensure there is accountability. We all know that tax dollars are limited, and our taxpayers want us to spend wisely. As a former health care critic, I can say there is a lot of room for improvement of expenditures in health care and in the way in which health care is managed. I say that, knowing full well that in different provinces they approach things in different ways. That is why I argue, when we talk about palliative care, pharmaceuticals or medications, and even when we talk about emergency services, that we at least recognize in part that Ottawa has something to contribute to the debate. It is not just our responsibility to write cheques for billions and billions of dollars. We do that. We pump record amounts of money into our public health care system, and that is something we should do. Health care is part of our Canadian identity. We as Canadians love our health care system, but as Canadians we know there is room for improvement.

When I think of room for improvement, I think of things such as medications, mental health, and what we are debating here today, palliative care. From a personal perspective, I will be very up front in talking about the passing of my father and the fantastic work that our health care professionals, the backbone of our system, put in day in and day out. We cannot give them enough credit, the credit that is owed because of the loving and caring attitudes that so many of our health care professionals have. We owe it to them, we owe it to the patients, and we owe it to the clients and individuals to do the very best job we can as legislators. In other words, we need to get it right.

That is why I am pleased that the member has so openly acknowledged that, yes, this is her bill but that she is open to amendments at committee. I do believe that with amendments we can make this an even better piece of legislation. By doing that, all Canadians will benefit, which is something that all of us want to be

able to achieve, especially on apolitical issues like palliative care, because we all care about palliative care.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before recognizing the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, I must inform her that she will have about two minutes to begin her speech, which she will of course be able to finish when the House next resumes debate on the question.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, given the short amount of time I have, I would like to emphasize how important it is that we respect provincial jurisdiction over health care. I will therefore address my recommendations directly to the health critic in order to hopefully improve certain aspects of the bill.

The second thing I think is especially important in the bill and that she did not mention is the importance of talking about palliative care for first nation and indigenous communities. In the previous Parliament, my colleague from Timmins—James Bay moved an opposition motion, which I seconded. That motion was specifically about ensuring that indigenous communities have access to palliative care. When we talk about the federal and provincial governments coming to the table, for example, it is crucial that first nation representatives also be included, especially since the federal government is directly responsible for those communities, and it has the power to act now.

There is basically nothing going on in the area of palliative care for first nations communities. I visited a hospice in my riding, and the people there told me they were open to the idea of creating a room for first nations individuals, a room that respects their culture and the elements they want to integrate into palliative care.

Unfortunately, the hospice does not have the funding to do so. It welcomes first nations people when the need arises, and the people in charge are willing to move forward with such a project. There are opportunities to approve specific projects for first nations people that would ensure they have access to palliative care that meets their cultural needs surrounding death and grieving.

I believe it is very important to amend the bill to reflect the specific needs of first nations people and better understand the way their culture relates to death. We have to ensure that first nations people get funding for these projects right away so they can get them going, as many first nations communities are in remote and hard-to-reach areas.

I think this is an extremely important point, and I am going to talk to the bill's sponsor about it in view of the committee's work.

● (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue will have eight minutes left for her speech when the House resumes consideration of this motion.

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

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to seek further clarification on the question that I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage on September 26, 2016, regarding Parks Canada. Although the words “official languages” are unfortunately no longer part of her title, I will add them.

In September, the Commissioner of Official Languages published a report regarding his audit of the delivery of bilingual services to Parks Canada visitors. Unfortunately, he revealed that Parks Canada is still struggling to provide equal services in both official languages.

Like the other commissioners, the Commissioner of Official Languages produces reports in which he makes recommendations and then he later checks to see whether those recommendations have been implemented. Of the nine recommendations the commissioner made to help Parks Canada meet the objectives, only two were fully implemented. Four were not implemented at all, and three were implemented in part.

It is important that the government show leadership on this file. At this point in time, we have a Liberal government. The same goes for the Minister of Canadian Heritage—and official languages. She needs to meet with her colleague, the Minister of Environment, who is responsible for Parks Canada, to tell her to take the necessary corrective measures. Unfortunately, she has not done that.

In many ways, when it comes to official languages, the problem comes down to a lack of leadership. How is it that the RCMP still does not have a monitoring mechanism for the delivery of bilingual services on Parliament Hill?

How is it that the response from the Minister of Public Services to the unanimous report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on the Translation Bureau does not follow up on any of its recommendations? I could talk about a number of similar situations where there is a lack of leadership.

To celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary, admission to Canada's parks will be free in order to encourage Canadians to celebrate our environment, our nature, and our wealth. Sadly, we once again have reason to fear that people will not be able to enjoy our parks in both official languages.

What is the Minister of Canadian Heritage and official languages going to do to show more leadership? She should meet with her colleague the Minister of Environment and ask her the following questions. What is happening? Why the lack of active offer? Why is Parks Canada not offering bilingual services at its parks and sites? Why is she not showing leadership in other important files, such as bilingual service delivery at the RCMP? There is still no monitoring mechanism for bilingual service delivery on the Hill. Regarding the Translation Bureau, the government provided a response to a

unanimous report that was an utter disappointment to every member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

● (1835)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Environment and Climate Change stated in the House, we welcome the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages with respect to services provided in both official languages at Parks Canada sites.

Our government is determined to ensure that federal services are provided in accordance with the Official Languages Act. I thank my hon. colleague across the way for raising the fact that access to parks will be free in 2017. We are very pleased to celebrate this occasion with Canadians in our great outdoors.

Like our official languages, Canada's national parks and historic sites belong to all Canadians. Providing bilingual services is essential to the connection Canadians have to our country's natural and cultural heritage. These parks and historic sites must fully respect and reflect our linguistic duality.

[*English*]

Parks Canada is committed to providing bilingual services to the public at all of its designated bilingual offices, national parks, and national historic sites, in keeping with its obligations under the Official Languages Act.

The minister responsible for official languages is working with all of her cabinet colleagues and demonstrating great leadership as we approach official languages from a horizontal leadership, a whole-of-cabinet approach, to our responsibilities in the face of the law of official languages.

When we look at parks, Canada's 150th, and the free access that will be provided to all Canadians, it is important that they have that great experience in either language of their choice.

[*Translation*]

With regard to the level of bilingualism of RCMP officers on Parliament Hill, we clearly stated last May that our government believes in the importance of promoting and encouraging the use of official languages in Canadian society, and especially within federal institutions. We take the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages very seriously, and our government will ensure that the Parliamentary Protective Service and the RCMP promptly implement the report's recommendations.

[*English*]

The RCMP and the Parliamentary Protective Service are required to serve the public in full accordance with the Official Languages Act. Steps have already been taken to address the concerns raised in the official language commissioner's report, and to ensure that members of the public can access services in their first official language.

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[Translation]

I would also remind the hon. member for Drummond that the federal government is currently preparing a multi-year action plan on official languages. As the government, we are waiting for the official report from the Standing Committee on Official Languages on the former government's roadmap, as well as the committee's recommendations for our own action plan.

However, I think it is important to note how productive our horizontal leadership on official languages has been. The bilingualism of Supreme Court justices is an example of the partnership and good work between the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Justice. Then we also have the French training for soldiers at the Royal Military College Saint-Jean, an example of collaboration between the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of National Defence.

There was the review of the regulations of the Official Languages Act, which will ensure the sustainability of minority communities. That was a great partnership between the minister and the President of the Treasury Board. There was the infrastructure funding for post-secondary schools in minority communities, stemming from an effective partnership between the minister and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

In closing, I would say that at the 150th anniversary of Canada, we will have celebrations in both official languages from coast to coast to coast and we are very proud of that.

Mr. François Choquette: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there have been some successes. The parliamentary secretary said that he is really looking forward to the committee's report. I hope that the committee's report on the future action plan will not meet the same fate as the committee's report on the Translation Bureau.

We know what the Liberals did with the committee's report on the Translation Bureau. They took it and threw it as far away as they possibly could. That is not what it means to respect a committee that listened to experts and worked very hard for weeks and months to produce a report that takes into account everything the experts told it. The committee's report was unanimous, which is pretty rare.

This is but one flagrant example among many of times when the minister of heritage and official languages has failed to show leadership.

As for bilingualism of Supreme Court justices, there is no law, there is just a policy. Policies can change at the drop of a hat. That is not good enough. There is a lack of leadership.

• (1840)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I know it is important to note that in our world and in our government, we can always do better. We are here to ensure that Canadians get the best possible service when it comes to the Official Languages Act. It is important to also note that we value the work of the Standing Committee on Official Languages and we look forward to its reports.

Visits to the parks and historic sites managed by Parks Canada are likely to increase considerably next year, when admission to the 214 sites across the country will be free as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations.

Our government will act quickly to ensure that all services and programming are available in French and English at all 214 sites in preparation for the celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of Confederation. That is our duty and our obligation. We are fully committed, and we will comply with the Official Languages Act.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I am again raising the issue of the Belledune project in an adjournment debate, it is because when I posed my question to the Minister of Transport in the House, I received an answer from the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities that was unsatisfactory to say the least. I said to myself that since it was not exactly his area of expertise, I should probably ask the question again. Therefore, I am very pleased to see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport here today.

To truly understand the concerns that gave rise to no less than 23 resolutions by the town councils of Quebec municipalities and calling for an assessment of risks to their inhabitants, I will quickly describe what these municipalities have been exposed to.

I will provide some figures to illustrate the situation. One tank car transports about 720 barrels of oil. The convoy of tankers being considered would carry 80,000 barrels of oil. The Belledune project calls for two convoys a day. All told, 58 million barrels a year would travel through the heart of many Quebec municipalities. What financial compensation or support will there be? Absolutely none. What are the risks? All the risks that we are familiar with.

The Quebec municipalities are therefore calling on the federal government to require railway companies to disclose the nature of the dangerous goods that are being carried across their municipalities, not after the fact in an annual report, but before said merchandise is transported.

Does the minister, or the parliamentary secretary who is with us this evening, not believe that such a large project is worth assessing, and will she require that an assessment be conducted? The municipalities have requested such an assessment and it is absolutely justified.

[English]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport is aware that he has the great responsibility of making sure that we do everything humanly possible to ensure a tragedy like Lac-Mégantic never happens again. This is why he takes the concerns of communities about the transportation of dangerous goods through their neighbourhoods to heart.

The July 2013 accident, which cost the lives of 47 people, has underlined, in the most dramatic way possible, the importance of rail safety in transporting dangerous goods. Transport Canada completed a significant amount of work following the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic. This included new rules pertaining to the safe transportation of dangerous goods by rail, new compensation and liability requirements, new tank car requirements, new classification requirements, and new emergency response assistance plan requirements.

Since the start of the minister's mandate, the regime has been further strengthened, particularly in transporting dangerous goods by rail. For example, in February 2016, he announced the rule respecting key trains and key routes. The rule imposes new speed limits for trains carrying dangerous goods; requires railway companies to conduct increased track inspections; and requires railway companies to assess and address risks, in order to incorporate the safety concerns of municipalities and other levels of local government in their risk assessments.

In addition, the railway safety management system regulations require that companies establish a risk assessment process to identify and address risks on an ongoing basis, in particular when a railway company intends to start transporting dangerous goods or a different type of dangerous goods.

Then, under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, the minister also announced several measures including requiring railways to provide municipalities and first responders with even more information on dangerous goods. This will help improve emergency planning and risk assessments, and help train first responders. Other examples include the phasing out of DOT-111 tank cars that were used to transport flammable liquids including crude oil and ethanol in Canada.

As of November 1, 2016, these least crash-resistant tank cars can no longer be used for crude oil service. This is a crucial step toward strengthening our rail safety system. On October 12, 2016, the minister announced the new rail safety improvement program with over \$55 million in funding. This new program increases overall funding, expands the list of eligible recipients and broadens the scope of projects that could be funded to enhance rail safety.

Finally, the minister was grateful to have Denis Lauzon, the fire chief of Lac-Mégantic, with him as he announced Transportation 2030, a plan that will notably accelerate the review of the Railway Safety Act in order to further improve railway safety across Canada.

Improving rail safety is the Minister of Transport's top priority and these are positive developments in his mandate. However, he realizes, and we realize, this is only the beginning.

• (1845)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is giving us a great list of good intentions, but very little is actually being done to respond to the municipalities' concerns.

This is what I would have liked to hear. It reminds me of Cyrano, who said, "Oh no, young man, that is a bit brief". The parliamentary secretary could have said a number of things. She could have said that the government must take action in order to maintain a good relationship with the municipalities. She could have said that the NDP's bill requiring railway companies that are transporting dangerous goods to obtain a special certificate makes sense. She could have said that, at the request of the NDP, the minister will make all transportation of dangerous goods subject to a mandatory environmental assessment.

It is true that the self-management regime for rail safety, which is another suggestion, requires an independent analysis in order to

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ensure that everyone who lives along the path of these trains is kept safe.

Can the parliamentary secretary give us some concrete examples of policies that will be put in place, not in three or four years, but in the coming weeks and months at the very latest?

[English]

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, following the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, Transport Canada took immediate action to further improve railway safety and the transportation of dangerous goods. The Minister of Transport is committed to taking these actions even further.

For example, the "Rules Respecting Key Trains and Key Routes" came into force this year. These are permanent rules for railway companies that further maintain the safe and secure transportation of dangerous goods by rail. Specifically, they impose speed restrictions for trains carrying dangerous goods, require increased track inspections, and require more robust risk assessments that incorporate input from municipalities and other local governments into their risk assessments. We also established new legislative measures to improve emergency planning and risk assessments and to help train first responders.

These are just a few examples of how this government has invested in rail safety to safeguard Canadians that live along rail corridors. The minister will continue to present initiatives that will strengthen rail safety in Canada.

• (1850)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight to address a failure of the government to bring home a new softwood lumber agreement, and in that vein, a failure to answer a simple question. Since I know we have all worked hard and we would like to get back to work, I will once again ask: Why is the government so against forestry jobs?

The previous Conservative government spent nearly a decade building an envious reputation when it came to international trade, and it took the Liberals just over a year to destroy it.

I have a few names I would like to rattle off, Mr. Speaker, if you will bear with me for a moment. They are: the member for Mississauga—Malton, the member for Kings—Hants, the member for Beauséjour, the member for Regina—Wascana, the member for Cardigan, and finally, the member for Markham—Thornhill. What do all these senior Liberal cabinet ministers have in common? When they were on this side of the House, in the official opposition where I stand right now, they all chose to vote against softwood lumber. How can the hard-working Canadians in the communities that depend on forestry truly believe that the government has their best interests at heart?

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The last softwood lumber dispute cost the Canadian forestry sector \$5.3 billion. It was settled by the previous Conservative government, negotiating an agreement within three months of coming into office in 2006. Our Conservative government put to bed the costly and longest trade disagreement with our major trading partner, because Stephen Harper had a vision for Canada and a plan for the economy. Those Liberal members stood in the way of high quality, well-paying jobs, jobs that my constituents depend on.

It is no wonder we do not have a new deal when the hon. members chose to vote against having billions of dollars in duties returned to this side of the border. It is clear the Liberal government once again stands against the resource industry that fuelled the Canadian economy in its entirety. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister is on record as saying under his tenure the world will come to know Canadians more for its resourcefulness than its resources.

First, it is a carbon tax, then a failure to deliver a deal for our forestry families, and finally now, higher energy bills that give Canadians pause for concern. When will the final nail be put in the coffin? When will it stop?

I urge the Prime Minister to get on the phone with the president-elect and bring home a deal that will not result in mill closures and widespread job losses for hard-working constituents. We know from experience that this will happen. As a matter of fact, I had a mill owner in my office during riding week saying he cannot afford to go through a long and protracted litigation period. We simply cannot afford it.

What is the government doing to protect jobs? It put a measly \$30 million aside for litigation. It just gave \$25 million to a foreign organization that is known to support Hamas, a jihadist terrorist organization. Canadians deserve to know where the Liberal government is in the process. They do not need more platitudes and empty rhetoric from the Minister of Trade about how hard she works. We need answers.

I know my constituents are not better off today than they were a year ago. My only hope is it does not get worse for them. Canadians need to know that this government is not against the hard-working Canadians and the communities that depend not just on our forestry jobs, but our natural resource industries.

[Translation]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member did not really ask a question. He gave a speech, the basic premise of which was false, ridiculous even.

Softwood lumber is a pillar of the Canadian forestry sector and, more broadly, the Canadian economy. Nearly 260,000 people across the country earn their living from Canada's softwood lumber industry. Many of them are in rural areas or communities that depend heavily on the industry.

Canada has diversified its markets over the years, but the United States is still the primary destination for Canadian softwood lumber exports. Our government is acutely aware of how important the softwood lumber industry is to Canadians across the country and of the fact that maintaining stable, predictable access to the U.S. market is essential to ensuring the ongoing success of Canadian companies.

That is why our government made the softwood lumber file a priority upon taking office. In his joint statement with President Obama on June 29, 2016, the Prime Minister detailed the key features of the new agreement. The Minister of International Trade, Ambassador MacNaughton and I have all been deeply engaged in advancing this file, and we have held consultations with stakeholders across Canada.

The Minister of International Trade also worked closely with her American counterpart, Ambassador Michael Froman. Together they issued a statement on October 12, 2016, in which they indicated that, although the moratorium had expired, the two countries would continue negotiations in order to reach a new mutually acceptable agreement.

Officials from Global Affairs Canada have negotiated at a rapid pace with their American counterparts and they continue to do so. They have met 18 times since October 15, 2015, in addition to having held regular informal discussions at a time when the previous government had not even begun any negotiations with the Americans despite the knowledge that the agreement was about to expire.

Our government recognizes the vital importance of the softwood lumber industry to Canadians across the country. We are working tirelessly to protect Canadian jobs. The Government of Canada is looking for a good deal, not just any deal. It will vigorously defend the interests of Canadians when it comes to softwood lumber, including through the courts, if necessary.

The Government of Canada believes that Canada, the United States, and Mexico all benefit from NAFTA because of the open and predictable trade environment that is founded on the rules set out by the agreement 22 years ago. The elimination of tariffs and the rules established under NAFTA allowed for greater efficiency in our supply chains. Many sectors now have integrated supply chains, which extend throughout the three countries and allow them to compete on an international level.

No country is a closer friend, partner, or ally to Canada than the United States. We look forward to working in very close collaboration with the new administration, as well as with the U.S. congress, including on matters of trade and investment.

There is no doubt that we will continue to work on concluding an agreement. That is a priority of the government.

● (1855)

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to know, and those Canadians who are dependent on the forestry industry need to know, that when the government is sitting across the table from our closest friend and ally, it is fighting for Canadians and standing up for Canadian jobs.

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I am not quite sure we have seen it at this point. We have had the hon. member stand in the House and have had our Minister of International Trade stand in the House and say that this new relationship with the outgoing president, the outgoing administration, is unprecedented and will yield the same announcement they referenced in June. The President of the United States and the Prime Minister both said that we would have something in 100 days.

We are heading down a long and protracted period of litigation, which means that probably, likely, if history dictates, we will see mill closures, job losses in my riding, and job losses in rural Canadian communities right across the country.

I implore my hon. colleague to provide an update to Canadians on what the government is doing and whether a deal is imminent.

•(1900)

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, despite all the rhetoric from the hon. member, he knows full well that we are working exceedingly hard on this file. The only reason we have not yet reached an

agreement with our American friends is that we have not reached an agreement that will respect the needs of the Canadian industry from coast to coast to coast. It is that simple.

We are going to ensure a stable, fair, and equitable access to the American market. To do so, we have to reach an agreement that meets the needs of every region of the country, and we intend to do that. We are working very hard at it, with numerous contacts and negotiations all the way through. However, the agreement has to be mutually acceptable. Until we find a mutually acceptable agreement, we will keep all strategic options open in order to reach an agreement.

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

(The House adjourned at 7:01 p.m.)

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