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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled “Agreement Between Canada and the Cook Islands for the Exchange of Information on Tax Matters”, done at Wellington on June 15, 2015, and “Amendment of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism”, done at Geneva on January 27, 2017.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

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[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in relation to the committee's study of the main estimates for fiscal year 2017-18.

* * *

IMPORTATION OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS ACT

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-351, an act to amend the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act and the Excise Act, 2001 (importation).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce my first private member's bill.

If passed, this bill would amend the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act limiting its reach to only liquors being imported into Canada and not those sold between provinces. This legislation would allow producers to sell their products directly to consumers

anywhere in Canada without the permission of a provincial liquor board. However, the provinces would still have control over who can produce alcohol or sell alcohol products on the shelves of provincially approved retailers within their borders. This legislation would also make it legal for a person to transport alcohol from one province to another for personal use.

Craft brewers, distillers, and winemakers were excluded from the Canada free trade agreement. I am honoured today to stand in support of these Canadian businesses, these Canadian entrepreneurs, who are using fine Canadian products and creating Canadian jobs. Free trade in Canada is our constitutional right. It is time to free the beer.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP) moved:

That the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, presented on Wednesday, June 15, 2016, be concurred in.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I had not appreciated that it has been almost a year since this report was tabled in the House. This was a unanimous report of the all-party Standing Committee on the Status of Women. It reported to this Parliament that after successive Auditor General reports that had denigrated both Liberal and Conservative governments' abilities to implement gender-based analysis as had been a commitment 20 years ago to the United Nations, progress had stalled.

The committee came together and made constructive recommendations to the government. First and most, it followed from how we interpreted the Auditor General's disappointment that until there is legislation requiring the government to actually run all of its policy and budget decisions through a gender test, the Auditor General will not have the teeth to say that the government failed to uphold its own law. A commitment to the United Nations is not the same as legislation.

Of the most striking consensus recommendations of the all-party committee, one is that the federal government introduce legislation by June 2017 setting out the obligations of federal departments and agencies with regard to implementation of gender-based analysis.

Recommendation 17 went into more detail:

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Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is applied to all proposals before they arrive at Cabinet for decision-making;

GBA+ is a mandatory portion of Privy Council Office, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and Department of Finance submissions for all departments and agencies;

The Privy Council Office and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat are mandated to return policies and programs that do not demonstrate the application of GBA+.

The third striking recommendation is that the Government of Canada create the office of the commissioner for gender equality based on the model of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

There are many other recommendations in the report, but those are the three most meaty ones.

We did have a response from the minister some months later saying that it was good work, that the government is doing lots behind the scenes and that it will get back to us in 2018 about whether or not it will bring in legislation. It is certainly a great disappointment that there was not even a commitment about when legislation would be tabled. The committee was convinced by the arguments that with the current government's backlog of legislation and all the work that needs to be done to repair some of the damage done during the Conservatives' tenure in power, plus the unprecedented spending announced by the Liberal government, all of the policies, laws, and budgets should go through a gender test to make sure that women and men are benefiting equally and at least that there are not unintended consequences.

The New Democrats submitted a minority report saying that we agree with the spirit of the entire committee recommendation, but we think that the need is greater and the speed should be faster. We asked that the legislation be tabled in December 2016. That deadline has passed, and the government has already told us that the June 2017 deadline for legislation will not be met and in fact this may not be legislated at all.

The government has just tabled a budget that it described as a gender budget, but because we do not have legislation in place, we do not have the transparency to know how the government made its measures, what the criteria were, and whether the policy was actually upheld. These all happen at the cabinet level, and cabinet confidence means we do not get to peak in. Although it was much lauded as a gender budget, it was more a list of the various discriminations against women in Canada, which we are certainly well aware of, in particular, the gender pay gap. Many of us are wearing red today to recognize that this is the day in Ontario that women get out of the red. Women are working for free up to this point in the year.

● (1010)

This is pay equity day in Ontario. I recognize all of the labour and social justice activists who are pushing the cause forward. The government still has not committed to pay equity legislation. That is a 40-year-old commitment. The first Trudeau prime minister made that commitment, and it still has not been implemented.

The budget did not fund child care this year. It did not fund the operation of domestic violence shelters, something that women's groups call for again and again. All of these pieces point out to us repeatedly that gender-based analysis legislation would give the transparency and accountability this country needs if it is to fulfill its human rights commitment that genders be equal.

The well-documented history in the committee's report is that multiple studies have identified the need for action and the failure to implement. In 2009, a departmental action plan was established on gender analysis in response to the Auditor General's report. No real action was taken on that. In 2012, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts tabled a report saying that gender-based analysis should be a priority. Again, there is still no legislation. In 2015, the Minister of Status of Women's mandate letter said that this was a priority, and I applaud that.

In 2016, the Auditor General's report concluded that selected departments were not always performing gender-based analyses to inform government decision-making and the departments that had implemented the GBA framework were not always conducting complete or high-quality analyses. The committee concluded in this area, "despite the long history of work on the topic of GBA and GBA+ as outlined above, a great number of recommendations from the aforementioned reports have not been implemented, and as a result the federal government's 1995 commitment has still not been fully realized."

On March 31, the minister tabled an interim report on the implementation of gender-based analysis, which again is happening at the cabinet level, so we are not able to see how that is working.

Just this morning, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women debated a motion that I brought forward on behalf of New Democrats that the minister come before the committee and discuss her March 31 interim report, so that she can answer questions and explain more completely the government's commitments and progress on implementing GBA in the absence of legislation.

I am very sad to say that the Liberal members of the committee voted that motion down. I would have thought that if the government had a good news story to tell about gender-based analysis and why it could do this without legislation, it would be willing to bring the minister forward to have that discussion. We were not able to get consensus, I am very sad to say. That is a mistake on the government's part. If it has good news, it should want to shine a light on it.

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I will wrap up by saying that since 1995, Canada has been committing to put its budget and legislative decisions through a gender lens to make sure that men and women benefit equally, to make sure programs and policies are designed in a way that men and women have an equal opportunity to benefit and that we do not have unanticipated consequences. For example, megaproject development can have impacts related to work camps that are predominantly male. Women may lose good jobs in that region. There may be unanticipated consequences around gender violence. This has been well amplified by organizations such as KAIROS and Amnesty International on projects happening in our own country.

The government, with its commitments on indigenous rights, sustainable development, and environmental protection, should want the transparency that gender-based analysis legislation would bring. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women unanimously recommended that this be legislated and that there be a gender commissioner to oversee the implementation. We are disappointed that a year later, these key recommendations have not been acted upon.

● (1015)

I continue to commend the committee's 2016 report to the government. If the Liberals really did want to walk the talk, if they really wanted to put their words into action, they would cede to the committee and would want to return to the committee to discuss how to make a gender lens apply to everything this Parliament does.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize that at least when the members across the way chose to do a concurrence in committee report, they picked an issue that is such an important one for our Prime Minister and, in fact, our government.

When it comes to the issue of gender equality and moving towards that, there are numerous examples. I hope to be able to provide some comment on some of those examples, if I am afforded the opportunity to speak.

I would like to question the member on one example she made reference to. For the first time in the history of Canada, we actually had a gender-based analysis done on the introduction of budget 2017-18.

My colleague is right to clap, because that is a significant achievement. Liberals have been in government now for less than two years, and we have moved forward on a number of fronts and advanced some very important issues, especially dealing with gender equality.

I wonder if the member across the way would at the very least acknowledge that for the very first time this is a significant achievement, looking at the different government departments, the different cabinet ministers, and a Prime Minister who is truly committed to having a gender-based analysis when it comes to dealing with Canada's multi-billion dollar budget.

Could the member provide her thoughts, given that this is in fact the first time? This is the budget we have been talking about for the last little while.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question that the member opposite asks, but in the absence of any transparency or any legislation, on this side of the House we have no idea. Women in Canada have no idea.

The pre-budget media got top-of-the-fold headlines that this was going to be a gender budget, but when we actually open it up, we see it gives a whole long list of all the economic injustices against women in the country. It is well known that there is a sustained and widening gender gap, that women do not have access to high-paying jobs, that they are not on corporate boards, and that they are not even on the crown corporation boards that the House and the government oversee. We are still one of the few G7 countries that does not have a universal child care program, and elderly women continue to retire in poverty.

Instead, the budget had some programs, it is true, but a number of them, as detailed at great length, do not provide access for women who actually need the help. Now women can get 18 months of parental leave, and that is nice, but they still only receive the same amount of money to spread over a longer period of time.

This is why I brought a motion to the status of women committee this morning that the finance minister come to this committee and describe the benefits of the budget for women. The Liberal members of the committee voted it down.

We thought that, if the minister had a good news story to tell, he would have wanted to come to the committee and explain why, in the absence of gender-based analysis legislation, his version of a gender lens on decisions—inside cabinet, not transparent—was working. The Liberal committee members refused to have him appear, and so we remain in the dark.

● (1020)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that is very important to Conservatives is the issue of criminal law reforms around violence against women. It is something we were able to move forward in a non-partisan way to get our leader's bill to committee to be studied. It deals with the education of judges around this area. However, there are many other issues; for example, relatively low conviction rates for people who are charged with sexual assault.

I wonder if the member has thoughts about reforms that this House should be looking at to ensure that, when gender-based violence happens, there is actually a greater likelihood that it is going to lead to a conviction.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, the question is timely because this morning at committee we are studying Bill C-337, which is to require sexual assault training and gender sensitivity training for judges, following on the just terrible headlines. The few women who report sexual assault, the few women who get police to agree that their assault was real and that there should be criminal charges, then have these terrible headlines about judges who show disrespect, who do not understand the law. We are very afraid that this is going to have an inhibiting effect on women's willingness to report. It is so important that this is an all-party commitment that we get judicial training right.

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The evidence we heard at committee this morning is that the judicial training is really great right now and that it is going to be a lot better in the next few months, which is awkward, honestly, because if it were really being done well, we would not have these calamitous headlines about how some victims and survivors of sexual assault have been treated.

However, it does remind me of the testimony we heard at the same committee around gender-based analysis, which is the focus of this report, that although successive Auditor General reports had given both Liberal and Conservative governments a fail on implementing gender-based analysis, the current government now had taken internal measures and things were going a lot better inside some of the government departments.

I will say again that, until this is legislated, we will not have the transparency we need to know how the government is making its decisions in relation to its gender commitments.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, any conversation about gender equality must also be a conversation about pay equity. The so-called feminist government has postponed pay equity for at least a year, if it ever happens at all.

For example, if a woman earns 70% of what her husband earns, she is the one who stays home with the kids because she earns less than her husband. That means she ends up working fewer years.

She will collect a smaller pension because she will have spent less time in the labour market and earned less money. As everyone knows, women live longer than men and are poorer in retirement.

Does my colleague think the government could help women by making pay equity a reality much faster?

• (1025)

[English]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, I was so proud as a brand new MP last February to have the House endorse the New Democrat opposition day motion that this government implement the recommendations of the 2004 Liberal task force on pay equity, and then last year to have the all-party committee recommend to the House that pay equity be legislated. Those were very powerful moves and very powerful commitments by this place.

Three weeks ago we were at the United Nations for its annual convention on the status of women, and almost every issue about women's economic place in the world was connected to pay equity. Every country talked about it. The coffee sleeves in the United Nations cafeteria all had #payequity on them. I felt among friends. However, it is discouraging to come back to this place. Although the all-party committee recommended that June 2017 be the date that legislation be brought to the House, the government is now saying late 2018.

Labour organizations and women's justice organizations that have been pushing this for a long time say it would make a huge difference to federally regulated employees, and the government says it is going to wait until 2018. There is no rationale, no justification. We need to make this change now so that women can start to benefit from it. We cannot wait until the eve of the next

federal election. If the government really believed its words on gender equality and on feminism, then it would act and legislate. It would drop the talking points and it would bring legislation to the House to make a real difference in the lives of women.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and address the House on what I believe are some very important issues.

Maybe I can first provide a bit of a commentary as to why I think we are where we are this morning. Although I would never want to give the impression of downplaying the importance of the report we are dealing with this morning, I think it is important to recognize that, through our rules and our processes, there are a number of reports that could ultimately be raised, and there are other mechanisms that could be used to raise what members across the way—in fact, all members, but specifically opposition members—can do through things such as opposition days, and so forth. I would really encourage them to look at using an issue such as this to ensure that there are possibly even votes at the end, where there is more direction coming from the opposition party to look at ways it could use those opposition days. I suspect it could in fact be a fairly effective way of getting some things done.

I do not say that lightly but rather in the sense that it was not that long ago that we had the issue of pay equity raised by members of the New Democratic caucus across the way. I happen to have that particular opposition day motion where the NDP called upon the House.

I would like to recite the motion itself. It states:

That the House (a) recognize that the government must take action to close the unacceptable gap in pay between men and women which contributes to income inequality and discriminates against women; (b) recognize pay equity as a right; (c) call on the government to implement the recommendations of the 2004 Pay Equity Task Force Report and restore the right to pay equity in the public service which was eliminated by the previous Conservative government in 2009;

I want to emphasize (d):

...appoint a special committee with the mandate to conduct hearings on the matter of pay equity and to propose a plan to adopt a proactive federal pay equity regime, both legislative and otherwise, and (i) that this committee consist of 10 members which shall include six members from the Liberal Party...provided that the Chair is from the government party, (ii) that in addition to the Chair, there be one Vice-Chair from each of the recognized opposition parties, (iii) that the committee have all...

It is a small font, Mr. Speaker.

...accompanied by the necessary staff, subject to the usual authorization from the House, (iv) that the members to serve on the said committee be appointed by the Whip of each party depositing with the Acting Clerk of the House a list of his or her party's members of the committee no later than February 17, 2016, (v) that the quorum of the committee be as provided for in Standing Order 118, provided that at least one member of each recognized party be present, (vi) that membership substitutions be permitted from time to time, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2), (vii) that the committee report to the House no later than June 10, 2016.

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This is an issue where the Liberal Party, the government of the day, has been very supportive: the issue of pay equity. It should come as no surprise to members across the way. In fact, for many years it has been talked about and debated. Some governments have been more effective at ensuring that there is some, let us say, forward movement. Has it gone fast enough? I would argue that, no, it has not. Over the last 10 or 15 years, it would have been nice to see more significant gains on this particular front. Unfortunately, that has not been the case.

Let us recognize that we now have a Prime Minister who has done so much more in terms of recognizing the importance of not only the issue of pay equity but also the gender equality issue.

• (1030)

As a feminist, the Prime Minister is constantly up on his feet, whether it is inside or outside this House, in Ottawa or in other regions of the country. In fact, he has been a guest speaker on many occasions outside of Canada on this very important issue.

We have a Prime Minister who is committed to improving conditions on a wide spectrum of issues. I would like to comment on some of those issues.

Let me go back to the motion I just finished reading. This government, in listening to what was being proposed by the NDP at the time, agreed with the motion, and we actually voted in favour of the motion. It was interesting that one of the comments during that debate was a recognition that in 1981, Canada actually ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, which recognizes women's right to equal remuneration and equal treatment in respect of work of equal value.

It has been quite a while since then, but it is important that we recognize that these groundbreaking pay equity commitments were made by Pierre Elliot Trudeau. As has been pointed out, sometimes progress on the file has not been done as quickly as we would like. I can assure the House that from this Prime Minister's perspective, it could not go fast enough. However, we have seen, I would suggest, in a relatively short period of time, less than two years, significant gains.

What gains are we talking about? One of the very first actions this Prime Minister took was recognizing that we needed to have a cabinet with equal membership of men and women. We were the first government in the history of Canada to have a gender-balanced cabinet, something we are very proud of. It makes a significant statement, not only to Canadians but beyond our borders. I can recall, from a personal perspective, that my daughter Cindy and my wife felt so good about that simple statement the Prime Minister made that it was important to look at the year we were living in and that it was about time we addressed this issue more seriously.

When we sit around the cabinet table in a Liberal government, we are looking at a cabinet that is made up of an equal number of men and women. I was somewhat disappointed at the time that some members of the opposition said that some were junior and some were more senior, and all this kind of stuff. All cabinet ministers, every one who sits around that cabinet table, are, in fact, equal ministers.

In terms of legislation we brought forward to ensure that the principle of equality in cabinet was actually put into the law,

members of the opposition saw fit to oppose that. I would suggest that the opposition parties, collectively at times, need to get a better understanding of the impact some of their actions have.

We did not stop there. The Prime Minister did not just say that we will have a gender-neutral cabinet. I want to go to this particular budget, the budget we are debating today, a budget that continues along the same lines as our first budget.

Before I comment on the first budget, I cannot help but make reference to the Minister of Finance and the cabinet's decision to have a gender-based analysis of the budget. Again, it is the first time in the history of this country that we have had such a thing done in a national budget. This is a significant achievement, and it was implemented by this government in its second budget. That was not an easy task to accomplish, but it was because of the commitment of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Status of Women that it was done.

Why is that important? The many different departments within the federal government literally spend billions of tax dollars every year. Those dollars have an impact, and in many ways, they impact genders differently. We need to look at how that money is being spent, the areas in which it is prioritized, and the impact it is having on our population.

This gender-based analysis is long overdue. I would like to think that the members opposite, as opposed to saying they want more transparency on the issue of the gender-based analysis, would recognize that this as a significant step forward. Instead of acknowledging the accomplishment, they are looking at ways to find some problems with that announcement.

Canadians are pleased that our government is determined to deal with formulating a budget that will ensure that there is a better sense of gender understanding. Our government will have a more positive impact on the issue of gender equality than Stephen Harper's government or any other government before us, because we have a Prime Minister who has made a commitment, and a Minister of Status of Women who has taken a proactive approach, to ensuring, as much as possible, that this lens is applied in every way.

We have done so much more, and I want to provide some comments on those things.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Oh, please, more, more.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: The Conservatives are begging for more so I will not disappoint them. I will give them more, Mr. Speaker.

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In some of the comments across the way, reference was made to child care and how important it is. I sat in opposition for over four years. I can remember that when we were talking about the importance of child care, New Democrats and Conservatives agreed that child care is good. It was the NDP a little bit more than the Conservatives. At that time, I could not help but reflect on the 2004-05 budget of Paul Martin. He did an exceptional job of working with the provinces. He actually achieved an agreement with the provinces on a child care program that would have seen the injection of millions of dollars and the creation of thousands of day care spots. I want to remind members, particularly my New Democratic colleagues across the way, that the New Democrats voted with the Conservatives to kill that plan. That is the reality. There was a national consensus, but that was defeated because of an agreement between New Democrats and the Conservatives to kill that child care plan.

A number of years have gone by, and we see once again an historic commitment to a multiple-year budget that deals with child care. It will create thousands of additional day care spots in every region of this country.

● (1040)

Having said that, we have the NDP asking what we are doing this year for child care. It is important to recognize that when in government, it is very beneficial to have a multi-year budget on certain items, and child care is one of those items. Our government has made a commitment to child care. Is there room to improve? The Prime Minister himself would say that there is always room to be better and to look at ways to improve the situation. However, at the end of the day, what we are seeing here is yet another budget item that provides opportunity for potential growth, going forward, on what is an important issue.

I made reference to the fact that I would like to comment on the first budget. There are the benefits in terms of the Canada child benefit program and its impact. I would like to think that if we applied a gender analysis to our first budget, we would have seen some amazing things occurring, in particular with the Canada child benefit program. The hundreds of millions of dollars, going into the billions of dollars, being provided for the Canada child benefit is literally lifting tens of thousands of children out of poverty. It is also helping many of those individuals who are finding it challenging to meet the needs of the home and perhaps have to limit their work opportunities because they have to be at home. This provides that extra bit more. It is a good step in the right direction.

It is not just children we were looking at. Imagine seniors under the guaranteed income supplement. Again, a majority of those seniors who are receiving the GIS and the substantial increase, just over \$900 a year, are female. For a senior on a fixed income, with an income of only \$10,000 or \$11,000 a year, that is a fairly significant increase. A gender analysis done on that particular program would have been given a two thumbs up, because we lifted thousands of seniors out of poverty. That is something I am very proud of. It was something our government implemented in its first budget.

There are so many things we have been able to accomplish in a relatively short period of time. Over the many decades of progress on a series of files, I know there are expectations. Many would like to

see issues resolved virtually overnight, but when problems occur over a series of years and decades, it is often not possible to resolve them overnight. However, I can say with absolute confidence that we have a government, a Prime Minister, a cabinet, and, in fact, a caucus that are committed to making a difference and making the lives of all Canadians better. We understand the importance of Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be part of it.

We know that the Conservative Party lost touch with what real Canadians were thinking. That is why Canadians wanted real change, and that is what they got. It is clearly demonstrated not only in this budget but in our first budget. I would suggest that the positive change we have witnessed, in particular on issues such as gender equality, will continue to progress in a forward motion, because this is a government that is committed to Canada.

● (1045)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our member for an exuberant speech.

I want to address some of the issues.

They talk about a gender-based budget and how fabulous it is. However, the transit tax credit was cut from the most vulnerable; the TFSA was cut; we will not see the child care for years to come, because it is a back-ended budget; and there is no income splitting that would allow parents to stay home and not need day care.

Talk about being out of touch. I hear that the reason that the tax credit was taken away is that low-income families making \$12,000 per year could not use the credit and that it is only for the rich, that the TFSA it is only for the rich, that income splitting is only for the rich.

In my riding and ridings right across this country, seniors, the disabled, youth, the most vulnerable people, all those who have been using passes will no longer be able to do so, so when I hear that this is a wonderful gender-based budget that will especially help all of these women, I think that the government really needs to take another look at it and figure out who is in touch and who is out of touch.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that when the Conservative government introduced that particular tax credit, it argued that it would increase ridership and would reduce emissions. In reality, neither was accomplished.

The member makes reference to the tax credit and the compiling of receipts. I represent Winnipeg North. If we take a look at the bus meters, we will find that there are loonies being put into those meters. People do not say, "Here is a loonie; now give me the receipt", and then they compile the receipts.

The issue is that we have a government that understands and appreciates the importance of public transit. That is why we have invested billions of dollars going forward to expand our public transit system. That will have a real impact. We will see more buses on our roads. We will see expanded subway systems. That is what is going to increase ridership. That is what is going to decrease emissions. This is a government that believes in public transportation.

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With respect to the tax credit, I do not know if in fact the same arguments that they used—I should not say I do not know. I am fairly confident that the arguments the Conservatives used in bringing it in just never came to fruition. It just did not happen.

It only makes sense that if we look at the numbers and we want to base our decisions on facts and we believe in public transit, then we should actually invest money up front to construct and buy the buses where we can, but it also has to be done over a period of time. We cannot just say that we are going to give a few hundred million this year and we will wait and see for next year. We have made a commitment that goes across a number of years because we have confidence in our ability to be able to expand our public transportation system.

● (1050)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us come back to the report that we are debating, which is the consensus report of the New Democrats, the Conservatives, and the Liberal majority on the committee, saying that by June 2017, the government would have tabled legislation in the House to implement gender-based analysis, a commitment that the previous Liberal government made 20 years ago. It was 20 years ago.

I am going to go to the budget in my question. Does the member not concede that his Liberal government had 14 years in which to implement a fully funded, universal child care system and that it was only at a time that the government was falling into deep corruption scandals that the government was brought down? Yes, in the final weeks the government made a commitment to child care, but it was certainly not the issue on which the government fell. They had 14 years to do it, and we are afraid that they are not going to do it again now.

There was zero money last year and zero money this year for new child care spaces, whereas when New Democrats were campaigning to form government, we said we would spend \$1.2 billion in this year to create new child care spaces. The member's arguments do not hold water.

If the member's government is so committed to gender equality, why will it not introduce this June, as the committee report recommended, legislation to enact gender-based analysis so that it is transparent and available to all, not just a cabinet secret? Will the government accede to the committee's unanimous recommendation that a gender equality commissioner be established?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate why the member across the way said what she did in regard to the child care program. I would like to remind the member that Paul Martin was prime minister for two years in which there had been negotiations. After doing his homework, he made a major announcement that would have seen tens of thousands of child care spots created in every region of our country. He built on that consensus and made the announcement, only to have the NDP work with the Conservative Party to defeat the Paul Martin government.

Maybe the Conservatives would want to applaud that, but I suspect New Democrats would feel somewhat shameful about that fact.

Day care was not the only issue. Having said that, if we advance forward a number of years with the child care file, as I have indicated in my comments, once again we are investing more money into child care, and that is after expanding the Canada child benefit program.

In the report I believe there were 21 recommendations. I commend the membership of the committee for coming up with those 21 recommendations. I know the Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, a very dear friend of mine, takes this report very seriously, and I suspect members would find that the Minister of Status of Women has had the opportunity to go over the report. In fact, the Prime Minister has indicated that we value the type of work that is done at our standing committees. This is but one report before the House that, through time, we will take a look at. Where we can accept and move forward on recommendations, I suspect that we will, knowing the Prime Minister's commitment to gender equality.

● (1055)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go a little different direction. The member across has been very proud of his feminist PM and suggests that the impact of our actions has not been positive. I would like to suggest that his feminist PM has lost touch with what is important to women overall and has become quite selective in that feminism.

The Status of Women report gave no recognition in regard to violence against pregnant women, a time when we are most vulnerable. Nothing was mentioned in that report in regard to women in this state.

As well, the Minister of Status of Women at committee avoided the question when asked whether or not violence against baby girls through selective abortion was an attack on women as well.

I would like to have the member's comments on that, since there is this concern about feminism and I am concerned about women in all aspects of their lives.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether the issue the member across the way raised was actually incorporated in any of the 21 recommendations. I suspect that it might not be directly brought up in them.

The member needs to recognize all parties actually participated and built the consensus in that report. The member might have some valid points; I do not know the exact details of what she is referring to. Having said that, I suspect the member would have had the opportunity talk with her caucus colleagues so that the issue could have been raised while they having that discussion.

I do not support the member's comments in terms of the Prime Minister. When it comes to this Prime Minister and his attitude and general directions on the issue of gender equality, I believe, as my mother would say, that the proof is in the pudding.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion, which would concur in the unanimously written report on the gender-based analysis done by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. There are many great recommendations in this report. It was well thought out. A lot of witnesses appeared before the committee. It was quite a refreshing read.

Routine Proceedings

I will be splitting my time with the member for Yellowhead. Mr. Speaker.

I was going to speak at length about this report and its importance, but I want to respond to my colleague from Winnipeg North. He introduced the relevancy of the Prime Minister's brand of feminism in response to this motion. I think the thesis of his speech was because the Prime Minister was a feminist. Since the member introduced that as relevant to this discussion, I would like to refute some of these points.

First, the parliamentary secretary used as evidence of the Prime Minister's feminism the fifty-fifty gender-balanced cabinet. For those listening, with respect to cabinet responsibilities, in order to bring what is called a "memorandum to cabinet" to cabinet, a member needs to be a full cabinet minister. This means a cabinet minister has the right to bring a recommendation to cabinet.

The Prime Minister, when he appointed his fifty-fifty "gender-parity" cabinet, called a bunch of women cabinet ministers, but they did not have the right to bring memorandums to cabinet without a more senior minister's approval. In many cases, who was the more senior minister? A man. Is that true gender parity? I am not so sure. Has that situation been rectified? I do not think so.

Therefore, the feminist Prime Minister, with his gender-parity cabinet, gave these women cabinet positions in name only. He gave them less pay, lower office budgets, and less responsibility. That does not sound like gender parity to me. Nor did he put gender parity on cabinet committees with respect to their chairmanships. Most of the power lies in the cabinet.

That aside, I woke up on the morning of announcement of the cabinet appointments in 2015. Even though I do not agree with the political philosophy or ideology of some of the Prime Minister's cabinet, some of the women he has appointed to cabinet have really impressive CVs. Whether we agree with them or not, we have to agree that the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health, as two examples, are accomplished women who have worked hard and have sacrificed a lot to get to where they are in their career. They are smart women.

I do not know how I would have felt if the day before cabinet was appointed, the Prime Minister had said that he was appointing a gender-parity cabinet. I would have felt like he was saying that I was only there because I was a woman, forget about my CV. If he really wanted to make these women truly equal, he could have just let it happen. He did not have to make it about himself. That is not true feminism. For the Prime Minister to take credit for this the day before, as opposed to letting these women stand on the merit of their own CV, is the worst of tokenism.

This is the sort of stuff that degrades women and makes them not want to do this sort of stuff. We work hard for where we are. I have worked hard to get here. I have sacrificed a lot. I really hate it when the Prime Minister's brand of armchair feminism is used as a defence for not getting anything done.

My colleague from the NDP who has raised this motion has a point. The Liberals have done nothing. They have not taken actions on the recommendations of this report. Instead, the parliamentary

secretary says that it is because the Prime Minister is a feminist. Let us talk more about his feminism.

The Prime Minister had the opportunity to be a feminist when it counted. He could have, on the first instance of a motion in the House of Commons, declared the Yazidi genocide a genocide. Tens of thousands of women are being held as sexual slaves in Iraq, and for months on end, he could have said that he was a feminist, that he would help those women, and take a stand for them. However, he voted against that motion. It took months of dragging him, kicking and screaming, to the point when finally, after international pressure, after a sex slave survivor stood in the balcony and said, "You are going to do something for women finally", did something. If he were a real feminist, he could have done that. Did he do it? No.

• (1100)

Then I look at things like his trip to New York last week. He was supposedly talking to women about the problems they faced as small business owners. I would argue that the Prime Minister is neither a woman nor a small business owner. Surely a woman in his cabinet could have had that conversation for him, but, no. Again, he made it all about himself and the photo op. I believe there was an article written in the *National Post* about this very thing, saying that it got it, that he was a "feminist" and asked why he did not now start getting the real work done for women.

When there are people on the left or the right decrying the fact that the Prime Minister's catch phrase "feminism" is not getting things done, maybe government members should stop standing in the House of Commons and using it as a defence over and over again. It is starting to get a little vomit worthy, to be honest.

The other thing I find ridiculous is this. If the Prime Minister were truly a feminist, why would he not stand and speak against things like female genital mutilation or early and forced marriage? Here is the other thing. In the last Parliament, I stood in the House of Commons and talked about matrimonial property rights, something Canada should have done decades ago. What did the feminist Prime Minister do? The feminist Prime Minister voted against giving first nations women matrimonial property rights. Is that a feminist? No, it is not.

Where the rubber hits the road with feminism does not matter what one's political ideology is. We will all have different opinions, political philosophy, or political ideas on how to get to gender parity, or how to tackle the issue of pay equity, or how to deal with the issue of child care. We all have different approaches on how to do that, but I would argue this. The least effective way to get there is to stand and say, "I am a feminist, take my picture. Isn't that fantastic?" No, that does not get things done. What gets things done is implementing the recommendations in the report today.

Routine Proceedings

My colleague asked the parliamentary secretary a question about why the government's "feminist" budget had back-ended all the funding for "child care" after it cancelled the child tax credit. Canadian women know where things are at. We know what it takes to make ends meet. We know the sacrifices it takes to get ahead in our careers, or balance child care with paying the bills. In my province, women know what it is like to carry the burden of their spouses who are out of work while being out of work themselves and trying to put their kids in hockey. These are the real issues that matter to women, not the photo opportunity, disingenuous "I am a feminist" thing that happens over and over again.

I have heard the argument that if the Prime Minister is a feminist, why are we sending billions of dollars of military equipment to countries that do not allow women to drive. Where is the criticism of their regime? Where is the criticism of the practices of state governments that do not allow women to worship freely, to speak freely, or to vote? Every time the opportunity arises for the Prime Minister to do something that actually matters for women, what happens? Someone stands and says he is a feminist.

I watch him day after day in this place and make a woman answer questions for his ethics scandals. Is that feminist? I do not know, but I know this. I know the retort that this is not getting done because the Prime Minister is a feminist is not cutting it anymore.

• (1105)

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that members of the government were not eager to ask my colleague a question. It is no surprise after that total evisceration of the dissonance between their rhetoric and their actions.

The member is quite right to point out, in particular, the relativistic attitude of the government on foreign affairs issues. Its unwillingness to confront international human rights issues is really at odds with its stated feminism. If we believe in women's rights, we have to believe in those rights not just in Canada but everywhere in the world, in Saudi Arabia and other countries where there are serious issues with respect to women's rights. We have to stand up for women who are victims of Daesh, as well as of the policies of the Assad regime.

I wonder if the member could develop a little further how important it is, that if we believe in women's rights, that we stand up internationally and talk not just about Canadian values, not just Canadian values, with respect to respecting women's rights.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I wish I had four hours to talk about this. This is really about checking our privilege as Canadians.

Women in most places around the world are forced into early marriage. They do not have access to education. They experience malnourishment during pregnancy. They have to undergo things like female genital mutilation or face ostracization by their communities. There is early and forced marriage. They are subject to subjugation under religious practices at the behest of state-run governments that are managed by codification of archaic religious practices. Around the world, women are not equal. Even in Canada, women are not truly equal yet.

On my colleague's point, if the Prime Minister were actually a feminist, why did he vote against the Yazidi genocide motion? Why did it take him months to recognize that Canada, if we were truly welcoming refugees, should be prioritizing women who survived sexual slavery.

I met Nadia Murad. I have met survivors of this slavery, and these are women who we should be helping most. Why? Because she had the courage, after that happened to her, to stand and say, "I am a feminist, and I will stop what is happening to my people and the women around me". The Prime Minister had the opportunity to stand and help her, and we had to drag him kicking and screaming into that.

It is not just about abroad. As I said earlier, it is about right here at home. In the last Parliament, our feminist Prime Minister stood and voted against matrimonial property rights for first nations women. If we cannot talk about the rights of women internationally with respect to their equality and the Prime Minister will not do it, what is his brand of feminism? Nothing.

• (1110)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from my point of view, budget day, March 22 of this year, was a very good day for women and for gender equality. We heard that from women's organizations, from feminists across the country. The first every gender statement allied with the budget, with \$11 billion for housing, homelessness, shelters. The previous Conservative government did very little to nothing. We budgeted \$7 billion for child care. The previous government was sending cheques to millionaires. We budgeted \$101 million for gender-based violence. Again, we saw nothing in the budget of the previous government.

During the Conservative government, pretty much no gender-based analysis was done. It is a part of every MC and every cabinet submission. The Auditor General roundly criticized the previous government for not doing gender-based analysis in a consistent way.

Why did the Auditor General eviscerate the previous government for its lack of gender-based analysis on MCs and cabinet proposals?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, on the off-chance my colleague opposite makes it to cabinet at some point in time, he will find out that memorandums to cabinet have had gender-based analysis for some time, and that some time was before the current government.

As a woman who was in cabinet, some of the most vociferous advocates for women's rights were women in our cabinet. The women in the Conservative Party have worked so hard to understand how Parliament works, understand how to use the lens of a woman to evaluate policy, but also do it in a way that benefits all Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

I hate this assumption that somehow as a woman I need a special part in the budget. All issues are women's issues, and the government has done absolutely nothing for women, other than for the Prime Minister to stand, take a bunch of pictures and say, "Hey, it is ladies' night. Who is your hero? I'm a feminist."

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to follow a little different format here. First of all, I am going to say that I have never stood up and bragged that I was a feminist. However, throughout my working career, most of my working career, I have always believed in working with women and treating them equally, with equal respect to the men I work with.

Most of the people in this House know my background is in the RCMP. I spent 35 years there. The RCMP was one of the first government agencies, going back to 1974, that decided to allow women to join the force and become regular members on the street. That decision was by Commissioner Nadon. In March 1975, they hit the streets, working with us men.

I want to go back in the history of the RCMP. This is all talking about women and gender equality. It is very important to realize that this is nothing new. It is just that we are starting to respect it a lot more now than we did in the past. It is unfortunate that we did not do it in the past.

I want to talk a little about the past. In the organization that I was proud to serve for 35 years, we have had women going back to the 1800s. Many of them worked as matrons for us in the detachments across the country, guarding men, guarding women. Many of them worked as clerks. Even in about 1920, we started hiring them as lab technicians, to work in our labs and help solve cases. They worked as clerks in many of the bigger detachments. Women played a very important role. They definitely were not paid the same as regular police officers, and that may be unfortunate.

One of the things that a lot of people do not realize is that in Canada, as Canada grew, there were many RCMP detachments across this country. Many of them were one-man, maybe two-man detachments. There might be one member there, and he had his wife. A lot of people did not realize that a lot of the wives of RCMP officers, when their husbands were away on patrol, whether it was on a horse, by dog team, or whatever means, lots of times they played an equal role to their husband in handling minor investigations in the community while their husbands were out. They did counselling and took complaints.

I can recall a number of years ago when we had a murder in a community I was in. The culprit would not talk to any of the police, because his lawyer told him not to. However, he knew he was wrong in what he had done, so he gave a statement to my wife, who gave it to me, and I gave it to the crown counsel. The case was resolved.

Women have always played a very important role. I believe they are equal to men.

Let us move to 1974. I think I had about six years' service then, when Commissioner Nadon announced that the RCMP would be taking women into the force. Many of us felt this was a man's occupation. I remember hearing talk for about a year, between 1974 and 1975, that women could not do the job, could not break up a fight, could not go out on patrol by themselves, and that this was a

man's world and only men could do the work. Well, 1975 arrived, and women started coming out in the field. I think I can only say, in a few words, "Wow, were we wrong."

Women, when they joined the force—30 of them graduated in 1975, the first troop—were spread out across Canada. Like any organization, when they were new to us, I think we made mistakes, because we did not treat them equally. They were new; they were unique. We used a lot of them for propaganda, for promotional things, for parades and stuff like that. We gave them a special status.

It really bothered the first few troops of women. They wanted to do the job, equal to what we, the guys in the field, were doing.

•(1115)

They soon made it very apparent that they were equal to us and did not think they needed to be treated any differently. We have seen that change over the years; their uniforms have become the same as those of the men and we got away from all the specialties that were in there.

We have made mistakes in learning how to work with women. However, I learned one thing very early, and I am going back to the mid-70s and a little later. The first two women I worked with were Doris and Ann, and I learned to respect the ability of a woman to handle the same role as a man in the job of being a police officer. In fact, it did not take me very long to learn that they could probably do a better job in a lot of cases than I could.

I always loved having a female member with me on domestic cases, and also cases dealing with children. However, there was one thing that really surprised me when I was policing in a community that was probably one of the roughest communities in British Columbia. We had seven reserves surrounding the community. It was a violent community. There were lots of fights, lots of stabbings, and that stuff. We had two women posted to our detachment. We worried about them, but we did not have to. They were able to integrate just as well as we were. In fact, when we went to a bar disturbance, I could guarantee that if two male members walked into the bar disturbance, the scrap would probably continue, but if I walked in with a female member, it usually stopped. One can be in a rough and tumble logging community, but people still respect women.

I remember one incident where one of our female members walked into the bar by herself. We always told her not to do it, but I guess we were busy. There was quite a ruckus going on. She tried to arrest a guy who resisted her, and I still remember people telling me that half the bar got up, helped her take that person and put him in the back of the police car. He got a little roughed up on the way, but that is irrelevant. If it had been me, I would have had to scrap him all the way in.

Women have always played a very important role. People who have not had the opportunity to work side by side with a woman in an equal environment will learn that they can do a similar job. Therefore, they should get similar pay and be treated equally.

I support the motion. Recommendation 14 says:

That the Government of Canada, following consultation with federal departments and agencies, as well as civil society, introduce legislation by June 2017....

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This has to happen. It has been happening for many years in many government agencies. As I said, in March of 1975, the RCMP started working with women. It is very important, but we must look at it across Canada, and treat women with equal respect and provide equal pay for equal work.

• (1120)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the tenor of the speech of the member across the way. In a very real way, he brings up some examples.

When we look at the way women in many different environments have had to struggle to try to achieve what quite often men take for granted, we see it can be a great challenge. This is one of the reasons why I believe what we will find is that many feminists, in particular women, will say that one of the greatest allies is in fact men who recognize the importance of being a feminist.

One does not have to be female to be a strong feminist. Being a male and being a feminist is a positive thing. As leaders from within our community, as members of Parliament, would the member not agree that all 338 members of the House of Commons have an important role in terms of being feminist all of the time?

I made reference to some of the barriers in the past that have to be overcome and why it is so important that we have a gender analysis done whenever possible. I wonder if the member would provide his thoughts on the important advocacy role that all members of the House, of both genders, have to play to ensure that the right thing is done.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, I believe, and I have always believed, that when we are working with members of the opposite sex we must treat them with respect and due diligence. We are all equal in this House, men and women. We have to send that message out across this country. I do not like using buzzwords. Call me a feminist if you want; I probably am when one looks at the whole picture, but I believe we need to respect each other, and we need to show that in leadership across the country.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant comments.

Does he also think that greater efforts must be made to encourage women and ensure that they are welcome in industries that traditionally employ more men? Conversely, men could also be encouraged to go into occupations that typically employ more women at this time.

What does he think of such efforts and of the federal government's role in efforts to encourage more gender-diverse work environments?

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a very important role that the government needs to play to encourage people, whether male or female, to enter into any career they choose.

I am a commercial pilot, as well as an RCMP officer. I have worked with both female and male commercial pilots. Each have their qualities. I have seen some very good female pilots and I have

seen some very good male pilots, as well as some bad and bad. Therefore, with respect to occupations, we should encourage young people to look at all walks of life, look at all careers, and challenge themselves into picking a role or a job for which they feel they would best be suited.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention, and my other colleague for something he said on which I think we really need to focus. I am not a quota. I am not the feminist buzzword. I do not like labels. I do not like putting people into class systems.

This is about gender diversity, whether that is men going into fields where there are typically women or vice versa. I think it is important that we look at it as gender diversity as opposed to labelling women and putting us into a quota, which in my estimation is offensive to the nth degree, and calling everybody a feminist. We need to really move off that and really work together, both genders, on gender diversity. I would like my colleague's comments on what he thinks about that.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, very much like my colleague, I do not like using a whole bunch of buzzwords. I believe that all men should treat women with due respect, and that all women should treat men with due respect. We are equal. When we are doing the same job and working in the same environment, we should all have the same equal respect for each other. We do not need to brag about this or brag about that. They are the same as we are and we are the same as they are when we are working in the same environment. Let us respect each other the same way.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to participate in this debate, following two of my colleagues who I thought gave excellent speeches, and to talk about the issue of gender-based analysis, to talk about issues of gender in our politics. In my remarks today, I am going to talk about them in a number of different areas.

What I want to say right off the top is one of the things that troubles me a bit is this presumption about women's issues and men's issues. In my constituency the issues that women write to me about are often the same issues that men write to me about. It is not the kinds of stereotypical issues. A lot of people in my riding and across Alberta are very concerned about the state of the economy and are very concerned about what is happening in the energy sector. I get a lot of correspondence, yes, from women who are concerned about the energy sector. They are concerned about the fact that they may be losing jobs in the energy sector, that members of their family, male or female, may be losing jobs in the energy sector, and the lack of response from the government to those issues.

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We know there are certain kinds of occupations where women are overrepresented. There are certain kinds of occupations where men are overrepresented. We see that on both sides of the ledger. At the same time, we also see that the interest in the broad spectrum of issues, in this particular example, energy and the economy, is really part of what I hear, and I think what other members of Parliament hear, from women as well as from men. We need to think about that in the context of the full spectrum of issues.

A lot of women contact my office about issues around national security, support for the military, and our response to terrorism. These are issues that deal with Canadian security, the security of Canadian society. Sometimes people are motivated in terms of support for the military by the fact that members of their family, or sometimes themselves, are in the military. Sometimes it is a broader concern with policy issues.

We cannot really be too narrow about talking about women's issues versus men's issues. I think that is some of what this committee report actually speaks to in terms of saying we need to look at the impact of a range of different policy areas, the particular impact of them on women, and we need to be listening to the perspectives that women as well as men bring across the spectrum of issues.

We also need to recognize that sometimes there is a failure to recognize this in certain quarters. We need to recognize that women have the full range of possible opinions on different issues as well, even on contentious social questions, such as abortion or anything else. Women have different perspectives on these issues. They do not all have the same opinion on these kinds of questions. Sometimes the discourse does not reflect that reality, that there is intellectual diversity among women just as there is intellectual diversity among men.

We could say that about women, that women are interested in the full range of issues. The same, by the way, is true of men. Men are also very concerned about child care, about support for families, about safe communities. That should be obvious to all members, but sometimes it is not reflected in the way we talk about things. There has been a lot of discussion recently about how we make the House of Commons more family friendly. Sometimes those issues are discussed as if they were only of concern to women, but they are of course a concern for men as well. How people integrate work with family life is something that men and women both have to pay attention to.

I think that is some important context as we proceed with these discussions.

I do want to pick up on some of the themes in terms of specific issues that have been raised by colleagues throughout this debate. There are, in particular, three key policy areas that we can discuss with respect to the particular impact on women and reflect a discussion that has happened at the status of women committee and that is happening in Canadian society more broadly.

Obviously, when we talk about women's issues, one of the first things that people bring up is the question of child care, as it has come to be called, the way in which people who have children either

look after those children themselves or engage somebody else in their life to look after those children at certain times of the day.

Oftentimes when we talk about child care, our friends on the left, in the government and in the NDP, want to paper over some of these distinctions between the way in which people look for child care options. The only solution they want to talk about is government-funded and often government-administered child care programs. The parliamentary secretary who spoke recently was very proud of the amount of money that the government proposed to put into state-run day care programs.

● (1130)

We in the Conservative Party took a very different approach. It was actually a very popular approach. Some of the polling results I saw showed that it was the most popular policy we had implemented, and we implemented a lot of popular policies, but this one was the most popular. We said we were not going to decide how parents should raise their children. We were not going to say that there was a one-size-fits-all approach with respect to child care. We said we would give more support directly to parents so they could decide how they wanted to use their own money. Families in my constituency told me they liked our emphasis on choice and flexibility, that they wanted to be able to use their own money to raise their children in the way they saw fit.

There is a whole spectrum of models with respect to how people raise their children. In some families, one parent stays at home. In some families, both parents may stay at home but at different times with some sharing of the responsibilities. Some families may have someone come into their home to look after a child. It might be a family member, a neighbour, or someone they hire to do that work. Some families use external child care services, and that too may take different forms. It may be a private home or it may be a centralized child care centre in the form that the government wants to support exclusively.

Another proposal that the Conservatives as a government explored was that we could help employers facilitate the creation of infrastructure for child care within their workplace. Parents could bring their children with them to work and have them looked after on sight or close by so they could easily access their children on breaks and at other times, particularly if there was a pressing urgent need. Parents would have that flexibility but it would be in the context of their place of work.

I could go on listing different kinds of child care arrangements.

We see more and more that people are combining arrangements. One parent might work full time or a bit less while another member of the family works part time. They adjust their hours so that there is always one parent with the children. Their children might be in a particular program a couple of days a week and the parents would adjust their time accordingly. This is the kind of normal flexibility we often see in families today.

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The previous Conservative government took the approach that it was not up to the state to make a value judgment about what was the better way children should be raised. We applaud parents who make any choice that they believe to be in the best interests of their children. We applaud their good intentions in doing so. We believe they, and not the state, are best positioned to make decisions with respect to child care.

The approach that we emphasized was flexibility. The Liberal government lauds its approach, which is completely different. One might say it is less feminist. It seeks to take more money from people in the form of taxes and thus limit their choices. Putting money into one specific option may work for some families in some situations in some places but likely will not work for other families in other situations or other places.

There is more we could do to support families through different kinds of flexible arrangements. We could do more with respect to maternity and parental leave. We could increase the flexibility of that. There was a time when people had to work at a place outside of their home, for example, in an office or a plant or whatever. There was a time when there was no working from home. People either went to work outside their home or they stayed at home.

● (1135)

Nowadays that reality is very different. There are a lot more people working from home, perhaps with flexible hours. A lot more people, because of the Internet, can be involved in direct sales. Many new parents in my social network do not want to be stuck in that binary between going to work or staying at home. They may want to develop some combination thereof. Parents might think about starting a business that they can manage from home, such as working in direct sales or some other avenue that allows them to do that work while also being at home with their children. That is a flexibility that is facilitated by technology.

As legislators we need to recognize that reality on the ground in terms of what people want to do and we need to see what we can do to be supportive of that reality. That means trying to make the programs for maternity and parental leave more flexible and reasonably financially advantageous so someone can say, "I want to stay at home with my new child for a certain period of time, but I also want to take a couple of files home from work." People may want to maintain a more flexible relationship with their employer while taking a longer period of time at home, perhaps to facilitate an easier transition back to work, but also to maintain some degree of engagement outside of the home environment.

That is a choice that many people might want to make, but not everyone would want that. Others might prefer to make the choice of staying at work or being at home full time. Recognizing that more and more it is possible for people to combine being at home and working, we need to also recognize that the way in which we provide maternity and parental leave has not actually kept up with that. I know there was a pilot project in place which provided some of that support, but we need to make those types of programs permanent. We need to increase the ability of people to keep doing some work on the side while on parental leave.

I will just share an anecdote on that. This is a pretty clear case of someone I know whose child was being watched by a friend during

the day. That person was being paid, but then that person had another child and could not continue to provide that child care service to someone else. Theoretically they could, but it was not financially advantageous for them to do so because as soon as the person providing the child care had another child, they could claim certain benefits, but they could not claim those benefits if they were earning unemployment income. It did not make any sense that one family lost child care and the other family lost an opportunity to earn some income because of the perverse incentives in the benefits structure. These are things we need to look at and explore in terms of enhancing flexibility of child care.

That is a very different mentality that we bring to the discussion than the government and the NDP do, because they see child care as a one-size-fits-all approach, that we need to fund these kinds of centres that are often government administered. From my perspective, that is quite at odds with what families are looking for. Some families are looking for that option, but other families are looking for different options. We need to have flexibility.

The government also took away choice from families by doing away with income splitting for young families. It left income splitting in place for seniors, but not for young families. Income splitting recognizes the reality that different families make different kinds of choices, but it ensures that all families with the same family income pay the same amount of tax. Under the new system the Liberals have brought in, there can be different families who, because of their child care choices and the kinds of work and family balance they choose to have, might have to pay a higher rate of tax than a different family who makes a different set of choices but has the same income. As I said, state institutions should be neutral with respect to these kinds of choices and should give families the greatest possible flexibility.

● (1140)

Having spoken about these issues around child care, I would like to now proceed to talk a bit about changes with respect to criminal justice. I had the opportunity of sitting at a number of meetings of the status of women committee in its study of violence against women. Before being elected, I was on the board of an organization in my constituency that provided counselling services as well as public education in an effort to combat bullying, more generally, but in particular, violence against women and sexual violence.

Routine Proceedings

There are a number of worthwhile initiatives members in this House have championed that I think we need to work to move forward on. One of them, from our leader, is on providing better education to judges in terms of sexual violence, but there is more we need to do as well. My colleague from Peace River—Westlock put forward a motion to have the health committee study the impact of violent sexual images and how they might contribute to people having attitudes that then lead them to be perpetrators of violence against women. My colleague was quite right to raise this issue, and I look forward to the results of that health committee study. This is something we heard at the status of women committee as well from some of the witnesses who were also concerned about the relationship between people viewing certain kinds of violent images and perhaps acting those out. These issues have been taken up by different members of the House and need further discussion and further action.

We also, though, need to look at ways of addressing the reality of how many crimes related to sexual assault go unreported and how rarely those that are reported actually lead to convictions. We need to look at why this is the case. We need to explore reforms to our criminal justice system that will encourage people who are victims to come forward and increase the likelihood that if they have something terrible happen to them, and they have the willingness to go forward and make that accusation, it will actually lead to a conviction. We need to explore reforms to our system that will increase the likelihood of that, and of course, always, in all cases of crime, but in particular here, we need to champion the rights of victims, the protection victims have, and the ability of victims to have a meaningful role in the criminal justice process.

I want to touch finally on the issue of international affairs, because a commitment to women's rights as objectively reflecting something about who we are as human beings should not be limited to just our borders. It should be a commitment that extends to the actions within our control as a country all over the world. This means speaking out clearly about human rights. This means encouraging all of our ambassadors and other public servants to speak out clearly about human rights issues. That can mean some challenging situations, because it can require us to actually confront our allies on issues of gender-based violence and women's rights that may be an issue in their countries. It means confronting countries with whom we do not have good relationships but also confronting our friends, because that is what friends do in international politics, as well as in any other situation. They challenge each another to do better when it comes to issues of human rights.

We need to have a government that is going to speak clearly internationally on these issues, that is going to be confronting these abuses, and that recognizes, in the case of terrible abuses, like those perpetrated by Daesh, the need to defeat Daesh and ensure that its approach to women's rights, as well as to human rights more broadly, is one we confront effectively and with the full measure of force.

In the previous government, these were issues we raised. Sometimes they were not issues our allies wanted us to raise, but we raised them anyway. On issues of criminal justice reform and international affairs as well as on child care, I am proud of the approach we took, and I think these are issues that require further discussion.

I will just say briefly that it is unfortunate that mostly what we hear from the government is an emphasis on the cabinet it appointed. Regardless of that decision, what I hear on the ground is not that we need more of this or less of this in cabinet. What I hear from people on the ground is a concern about policy outcomes that affect their lives. My colleagues have done a good job of pointing out the smoke-and-mirrors show associated with the supposedly gender-based cabinet, where some of the female ministers cannot even bring memorandums to cabinet. They were initially paid less and are at a lower rank in terms of the way the cabinet system works. There is a dissonance in terms of the words and the reality.

● (1145)

More fundamentally, what women and men I talk to are concerned about are actual policy outcomes. They are concerned about choice and flexibility when it comes to the arrangements parents use with their children, about criminal justice reform, and about a strong commitment to international human rights.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a rather simple question for my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan who, as always, delivered an excellent speech in the House of Commons. My question has to do with what he said.

[*English*]

The state has to be neutral with regard to early childhood education programs. Study after study has demonstrated that the best result for children, of course, is to be raised in stable families and to have a loving environment. However, the second-best result, and by far, is to have early childhood education programs that are publicly run. Study after study has shown that in Canada.

I have a question for the hon. member. Why should the state be neutral when, clearly, the best option, outside of the family, would be a government-provided, government-trained early childhood education program? We have opportunities for families to raise their kids at home by having the Canada child benefit, which, once again, the member voted against. This provides an important opportunity for Canadian families to have money in their pockets to provide them with a range of different services.

Aside from that, initiatives in budget 2017 would allow for the opportunity to create these childhood education spots. Why would the hon. member, who is a very intelligent man, want to stand against that?

● (1150)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. First of all, the Liberals' child benefit removes the universality dimension. It is basically a redistribution or a repackaging of the universal child care benefit, which the Conservative government put in place. It was our party that championed a direct-support-to-families approach. At the time, it was that member's party that ran against it.

I would very strongly dispute the member's claim that all the research says that kids do better when they are in government-run facilities. I am happy to read whatever the member would like to present in terms of actual evidence on that point. He can certainly send it over to me. I would appreciate it. Most of the evidence I have read has suggested a very different conclusion.

Routine Proceedings

Maybe this just comes down to a different philosophical view of what the role of the state is. Conservatives believe that the role of the state is to empower families to make choices that reflect their values. They believe that parents have a prior right to the education of their children and to be primarily engaged in shaping child care options that reflect their values and priorities.

It is part of nature that parents have this primary attachment and primary love for their own children. It is not right or just for the state to come in, except in very extreme circumstances, to try to tell parents how they should raise their children because the state thinks their children are going to conform to its way of thinking or perhaps reflect its notions of the good life. That is at odds with fundamental justice. That is what we believe on this side of the House.

This is a debate we have had in successive elections, but I think all the data suggests that Canadians are on the Conservatives' side with respect to that. We are proud to champion an approach that emphasizes the prior and primary role of parents.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this debate actually gives us an opportunity to discuss in a reasonable way, and in low decibels, what we want for our children. I really think this is a good opportunity, so I am going to be very personal in sharing that it is important that we, as members of Parliament, recognize that one size does not fit all. Canadian parents will make different decisions for their kids.

This is going to sound odd, perhaps, but I was blessed that I did not qualify for child care or maternity leave. At the time my daughter was born, I was employed on a part-time contract with an environmental organization, and my work there was essential for the organization and also for my own state of well-being. Because I was working for a relatively small charity, I was able to organize workplace child care. The benefits for me personally were enormous. I was with my daughter every single day for the first three years of her life. I was able to arrange for her to get the benefits, and there is no question that there are benefits for children in early childhood education. She gathered with other children from the time she was about two years old in little play groups and things, and early childhood education was available.

I suggest to my friend that there is too much emphasis on the dogma around state-run child care. The state needs to provide, and we need, as a critical issue, more child care spaces available for Canadian parents. Both parents are, increasingly, in the workforce. I would ask all members to consider whether we can do more to organize child care, however conceived, so that it is in the workplace so that one or the other parent, throughout the day, can be there for their child.

• (1155)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, although I do not agree with my friend from the Green Party on everything, she makes a very good point about the benefits of having workplace child care available. Again, different families make different choices, but the option of going to work and knowing that one's child is getting care within the same building, perhaps, or very close by, a lot of parents would find very attractive.

What is unfortunate about budget 2017 is that it would eliminate a tax credit for employers who invest in the infrastructure necessary to

put in workplace child care. Workplace child care was emphasized by the previous government. It said it would provide a tax credit to employers who wanted to facilitate the development of workplace child care on site. We were not going to micromanage it, but we were going to give a tax credit to employers who wanted to provide it as a benefit. I think many employers would want to provide it, perhaps as a recruitment or retention tool but also to reflect the interests and desires of their employees.

This was in place, and the Liberal government, much on talk when it comes to women's issues and feminism, cancelled this tax credit in budget 2017, further reducing and limiting choices not just between staying at home versus child care but between different child care options people might want to pursue.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the experience of being in opposition in Queen's Park in the province of Ontario when Bob Rae was the New Democratic premier. He passed a bill called the quota bill. For anyone who wanted to work for the civil service, priority was given to people of colour, women, aboriginals, and a couple of other categories. When the Conservatives got into office, the bill was quickly repealed, because it was discriminatory.

The Prime Minister, since he came into office, has taken great pride in the number of women in his cabinet and in the equality of those women. The question, of course, is whether they are there because they are women or because of their experience and qualifications for cabinet, which is most important in the running of this country.

Could the member comment on whether it is discriminatory and whether the best people are in cabinet?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I think the best people would be in cabinet if we had the Conservatives in government.

In terms of the question, I think there is plenty of incompetence to go around in this cabinet, regardless of gender. There are some very capable people with strong backgrounds on both sides, men and women.

I will just say this about the cabinet. There was a much-promised commitment to a gender-balanced cabinet, but it was not a gender-balanced cabinet, even if we include the junior ministers, because the Prime Minister is part of cabinet as well. This was missed by someone along the way.

As well, as colleagues have pointed out, some of those ministers—and it is actually only women ministers who are in this junior position—are not able to bring memoranda to cabinet and initially were paid less, until the government brought forward legislation to increase their pay without in any way fundamentally changing their role.

Routine Proceedings

If the Liberals had wanted a gender-balanced cabinet, they could have appointed one, but they did not. They just wanted to say they had appointed one. I think my colleague pointed out that when we put so much emphasis on the symbol as opposed to the policy implications for Canadians, sometimes the symbol does not match the reality at all. I think Canadians are looking for real action on some of the important policy issues that I brought up, not this aggressive emphasis on the symbolic as opposed to the substantive.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my excellent colleague from Vancouver East.

The equality of men and women is a fundamental Canadian principle. Over a decade ago now, I worked on pay equity in Quebec. Quebec has pay equity legislation. I was fighting for gender equality over 10 years ago, and now, unfortunately, I have to do the same thing here at the federal level, because it has not been achieved. The federal government has a long way to go in this area.

The NDP has always fought against discrimination against women in all its forms. Examples of things the NDP has fought for include equal opportunity, income security, equal pay for work of equal value, full political participation, reproductive and sexual health rights, supports for caregivers, and many more.

Unfortunately, despite the ongoing battle, discrimination against women continues to exist in Canada. I want to give a little bit of historic context. Twenty-two years ago, in 1995, Canada signed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which committed the Canadian government to conducting gender-based analysis. I made reference to this type of analysis, known as GBA, earlier. Unfortunately, successive governments have not lived up to that commitment.

Furthermore, as the Auditor General has pointed out in two separate audits, GBA is still only being deployed on a piecemeal and sporadic basis in Canada. Out of 110 government departments and agencies, only 27% actually have a process in place to conduct GBA. In those departments that are doing GBA, the analysis remains incomplete or is lacking in quality in too many cases.

Many witnesses appeared before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and the NDP agrees with much of their testimony. Let me give a few examples. One witness said, "Women's equality is harmed when the government does not take into account the impact on women when creating laws, policies or programs." It was also said that "one of the principal barriers to implementing GBA across the federal government is the absence of mandatory requirements." Here is another comment: "There is an urgent need to provide the necessary resources to support Status of Women Canada in fully implementing GBA in all departments." That just makes sense.

The NDP agrees with all of that and with the committee's recommendations regarding the absolute need for comprehensive legislation to mandate GBA across the federal government and the need to give adequate resources to Status of Women Canada.

I would like to come back to the reports of the two auditors general. In 2009, the Auditor General of Canada criticized the government's implementation of GBA and called for clear expecta-

tions and guidelines for departments to conduct GBA. That was in 2009.

In 2015, the Auditor General again reviewed GBA and found the same lack of government leadership and the same inadequate implementation of GBA. In other words, we were no further ahead.

Nancy Cheng from the Office of the Auditor General said in committee, and I quote:

In our 2015 audit, we observed that gender-based analysis was still not fully deployed across the federal government, although 20 years had passed since the government had committed to applying this type of analysis to its policy decisions. In other words, gender considerations, including obstacles to the full participation of diverse groups of women and men, are not always considered in government decisions. This finding is similar to what we found in our 2009 audit.

After 20 years of international and domestic commitments, only 30 out of 110 government departments and agencies are formally engaged in GBA. The Auditor General's 2015 audit also found that within four departments that implemented the GBA framework, analyses are not always complete or of acceptable quality. This observation was made in almost half of all cases of GBA, which is further proof of the government's failure to properly implement GBA.

• (1200)

Several witnesses gave us a list of failures, as did the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. One of these failures is the absence of government directives, policies, and leadership. There were also the tight deadlines for developing policies and programs; the lack of understanding of the relevance of GBA, which serves as the basis for action; ineffective training or a lack of training altogether; a shortage of data or an inability to find relevant, reliable, and complete data that is disaggregated by gender and other identity factors; a lack of capacity to undertake the analysis; and no external reporting by departments.

This is a consistent failure to take women's equality seriously in government.

I will now ask a few questions. Had GBA been properly implemented would we still be lacking a national child care strategy? Would we have specific economic stimulus targeted to women? Would we have a national action plan to end violence against women? The questions have been asked.

For years, government departments and agencies such as Finance Canada, the Treasury Board Secretariat, and Canada have failed to turn down proposals that do not meet GBA requirements. Something is missing.

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Cabinet has directed the central agencies to require GBA for all submissions to cabinet, and we applaud that decision. We also urge the government to bring in legislation to make it binding on all future cabinets. Action is needed. We need to pass legislation to strengthen the challenge function. We need a law. We need action, and not just rhetoric. The government must put its words into action. It must implement urgent legislative changes to ensure that each and every government policy, program, and law promotes the equality of Canadian women.

We are pleased that the committee report recommends that the government introduce comprehensive legislation to make GBA mandatory for all government departments and agencies. However, that does not adequately reflect the urgency of the situation.

Cindy Hanson, associate professor in adult education at the University of Regina and president elect of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, reminded us that, back in 2005, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women indicated that legislation and accountability mechanisms were urgently required. We are hearing the same thing 12 years later. Where is the urgency?

Olena Hankivsky, a professor at the School of Public Policy, Simon Fraser University, said that we do not need more studies. What we need is real action, and we need it now.

Canadian women have waited 20 years and should not be forced to wait any longer. The New Democratic Party therefore recommends that the government uphold its commitment to gender equality and introduce legislation by June 2017, which is soon.

The government could follow the example set by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the only department that has been successful in implementing GBA. It is required by legislation to conduct GBA and report its results to Parliament every year. The effects were immediate and long-lasting. Fraser Valentine, director general of Strategic Policy and Planning, told us that the legislative requirement to produce annual reports influenced the department's culture and that the department had to build the necessary capacity immediately to meet that requirement. This had a knock-on effect throughout the department.

I would like to mention one final point raised by witnesses and the NDP. If we want to achieve equality, there has to be oversight. That is Status of Women Canada's role, but it has limited resources.

• (1205)

The government must ensure that Status of Women Canada has the human and financial resources it needs to do the job properly, and the NDP is ready to work with the government to make that happen.

• (1210)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her remarks.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, I am very pleased to say that our 2017 budget contains the first-ever statement on gender-based analysis. Perhaps the member would care to comment on that statement?

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier, a statement is all well and good, but we need something concrete. We need legislation. The Liberals can talk until they are blue in the face, but talk amounts to nothing if there is no action.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the question of women's rights and women's equality, my colleague talked about a whole range of different issues. However, tied into that is the housing issue. There is a crisis with respect to homelessness. I note that in budget 2017-18, for this year there is a big fat zero with respect to that.

Would the member have some comments around women and the issue of homelessness, or precarious housing conditions? That, too, is tied into the whole issue of women's equality, especially their access to equal pay.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question because not only is the population getting poorer, but women are getting poorer.

The face of homelessness is changing. It used to be mainly men, but now we are seeing more women, even though in their case it is more a matter of hidden homelessness. We also know that senior women are becoming poorer because their salaries were not as high as those of men.

Today, it is women who take leave because their salary is usually lower than that of their male spouse. The same goes for their pension fund, if they even have one. Women are getting poorer and are having a hard time finding housing that they can afford.

If we improved equity, namely pay equity, women could find decent housing, have a decent life, and avoid ending up in the street.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we discussed, this budget eliminates an important tax credit to help employers build infrastructure for child care in their workplace. The government is removing an important tax credit tool, not a government control tool, for employers to help facilitate the creation of more child care options. I do not know if we have heard it yet, but I would be curious to know what the NDP's perspective is on that decision of the government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to that specifically, but here is what I can say.

It is nice to give money to parents to help them cover the cost of child care, but what the Liberal government gave families last year barely covers the costs. If a family has three or four children, the cheque covers only a fraction of the child care costs.

Also, if there are no child care spaces or a program to create them, then there is no use giving parents money to cover child care costs.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to enter into this important debate.

What are we talking about? We are talking about women and equality among women, and we are talking about, in my view, feminism.

We have heard this over and over again from the Prime Minister. He declares himself as a feminist. When we make that declaration, what exactly does that mean? It is really important for us, and for the Prime Minister as well, to understand what those words mean.

Yes, he has taken some actions with respect to showcasing his cabinet and ensuring that women are 50% of the cabinet. That is an important move. However, coming out of that, what other actions must the government take to ensure that all women, not just women in this chamber or, more specific, women within the cabinet, but all women in every walk of life, have the opportunities offered to men. What action must we take to ensure there is equality for all women and opportunities to succeed.

Let me touch on a few of these things.

We know that poverty is a major challenge in our country. We know that one in 10 people in Canada live in poverty; that is people who live below the low-income cut-off level. Put in context for women, 1.5 million women in Canada live on a low income. What will the government do to address that very specific issue of poverty for Canadians in general and more specifically for women.

I have looked at the policies that the government has put in place and I am dismayed. Something that is very basic, something we should expect, not for 2015 but at all times, is that the women should be recognized and their pay ought to equal that of their male counterparts. However, that is not the case. As it stands right now, I believe women make 74¢ on the dollar that our male counterparts make for equal work of equal value. What is wrong with this picture? If the Prime Minister is a feminist, as he wants to proclaim himself to be, what will he do on that score?

A committee studied this issue and it made a recommendation, a bipartisan recommendation, that action should be taken with respect to that, and that action should take place not years down the road, but here and now. What does the government do? It defers action until 2018. It will take a look at legislation and maybe that will take place in 2019 or maybe after, whenever, whatever.

That is what is happening. Is that a true feminist agenda, that in 2017 we do not take action to ensure that all women, no matter if they are in this chamber or outside of the chamber, are valued in the same way for work of equal value and therefore work for equal pay to their male counterparts? I am so astounded that the government has chosen that path and that course.

Issues of equal value and equal pay have lifetime implications. It is not just the now in the moment. If we are working, that moment counts. However, it is cumulative for the rest of the life of that woman. That is what is at stake here.

●(1215)

Earlier my colleague talked about the issue of women retiring. The implication is that their access to a pension is reduced, if they even have access to a pension. As we now know, more and more people are working in precarious jobs and even if they do have access to a pension, it will be reduced. Why? Because women do not get work of equal value for equal pay.

Let us look at financial security for women. The real issue also impacting women is that a significant number of women are working and making minimum wage. That too is a major issue. Why? Because more and more women are working part time, or are on contract, and are not getting the security they need for full-time employment. The Minister of Finance says that precarious work is now a fact of life. The government accepts that as though it does not have some role to play to ensure people have access to well-paying jobs and to ensure we as a society do something about that.

Looking at some of the statistics, it is shocking to me. Some 37% of first nations women living off-reserve are living in poverty. If we look at on-reserve, that number is even more astounding. Some 50% of status first nations children live in poverty, which by extension means women are also living in poverty. Some 23% of Métis and Inuit women live in poverty. Twenty-eight per cent of visible minorities live in poverty. Thirty-three per cent of women with disabilities live in poverty. For immigrant women, people like my mom, 20% are living in poverty.

We see these statistics. What are we doing about it? As legislators, as parliamentarians, we have some ability and opportunity to make a change that will impact the lives of people for the better, yet we see very little action from the government side.

Related to income security is the issue around homelessness. I touched on that a bit earlier. Let us just put this in context. One of the statistics provided puts homeless Canadians at 235,000. There was just a homelessness count done in my community. It is up 30% in metro Vancouver. Some 3,600 people in the region are without a home. That includes about 1,000 who are in shelters, sleeping on doorways, in alleys, parks, or couch surfing. That is not an insignificant number. That number has gone up 30%. Women are among them.

I have done the homelessness count before, back in the day I was an activist in the community. We are seeing women on park benches, and women, including senior women, on the streets on their own.

What do we see in this year's budget to address homelessness? Zero. It is as though somehow we can wait and push that down the road. I wonder, if it were people here and their families were homeless, would they say that they did not need urgent action and that we could wait another year or two for the government to take action? I would argue they would not.

●(1220)

For the Prime Minister who says he is a feminist, let me say this to him. Do something about it. Match words with real action, so that the people out in the community, all women, from all walks of life, can benefit and be lifted up in society to take their place. That is what a feminist would do.

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague gave a very passionate speech about the need to do more for women, and I could not agree more.

I wonder if the member could talk about the fact that in the budget there is \$11.2 billion for housing and \$7 billion for child care. In fact, this particular budget is a perfect example of how GBA-plus works. First of all, it pointed out the limitations and barriers that our committee studied, which is that there is not enough disaggregated data. It shows that when we do put a gender lens on it, the number of times the word “women” appeared in the budget was almost once per page, 270 times in a 278-page budget.

When we look at the budget, we will see women specifically mentioned not just in areas that are particularly pertinent to women but also in things like trade and taxation policies.

I would say that this is actually a perfect case study of a success story. Would the member not agree?

• (1225)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, let me just say this. Having the word “women” appear on every page of the budget means absolutely zero when it does not actually come with real action.

The member talked about housing and homelessness, and the investment in it. Does the member realize that in the government budget on the homelessness line item for this fiscal year, it is actually zero? I wonder if the member recognized this as well on the issue around child care. In this year's budget, there are zero dollars attached to it.

The money is coming at some point in time; it is written all over the budget. How much longer, really, do women have to wait? Should women who are homeless today get comfort knowing the money is coming, while they are sitting outside in the snow or the pouring rain? Is it actually somehow okay? Is that okay for the member?

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I could not agree with my colleague more on many fronts. It is becoming very clear that the Prime Minister using the word that he is a feminist is merely a branding exercise.

When we look at the budget and hear that this is a feminist budget, I have a question for my colleague. When it comes to child care, billions of dollars were announced in this budget. None of these dollars will be forthcoming this year; 70% of the new money will not be spent until after 2022. There is no new funding in 2017-18 for early learning, child care, homelessness, home care, housing, research, northern housing, or indigenous housing programs.

What impacts does my colleague think this feminist budget will actually have for women?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point. There is a whole lot of talk, a whole lot of hot air, frankly, and a whole lot of inaction. Talk is cheap.

When we are talking about women, and that we want to ensure women have the support they need so that they can succeed, child care space is simply not available. In this budget, there are exactly zero dollars for this fiscal year invested in making those child care spaces available.

I have already spoken on the issue around homelessness. Somehow, for the government, it is okay to wait for some point in time. By the way, I might as well mention this. It was the Liberal government in 1993 that actually cancelled the national affordable housing program. As a result of that, this country lost more than half a million units of affordable housing that would otherwise have been built had that program not been cancelled. How is that for feminism? How is that supporting our community? In 2017, it is still not going to happen.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think we have had a lot of very important discussion this morning on a report that the status of women committee put forward. For some of the people who might be watching this on television or otherwise, I think it is important to understand what the “plus” in the GBA-plus name would do. It would really highlight that gender-based analysis goes beyond gender and includes the examination of other intersecting identity factors, such as age, education, language, geography, and culture. It would not only apply to women's issues and advocacy. It would be an analytical tool designed to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and identify potential impacts, taking into account diversity.

Really this is essentially good public policy. We have recommendations that have been moved forward to the government for response, and I think we have heard some speeches that articulate quite well the importance of the report and its recommendations.

Having said that, I think it is important that I now move, seconded by the member for South Surrey—White Rock:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1230)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 255*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif

Albas

Routine Proceedings

Albrecht	Allison	El-Khoury	Ellis
Arnold	Aubin	Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Barlow	Benson	Eyolfson	Fergus
Bergen	Berthold	Fillmore	Finnigan
Bezan	Blaikie	Fisher	Fonseca
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block	Fragiskatos	Fraser (Central Nova)
Boucher	Boutin-Sweet	Fry	Fuhr
Brousseau	Brown	Garneau	Gerretsen
Calkins	Cannings	Gill	Goldsmith-Jones
Caron	Carrie	Graham	Grewal
Chong	Clarke	Hajdu	Hardie
Clement	Cooper	Harvey	Holland
Cullen	Davies	Housefather	Hussen
Deltell	Diotte	Hutchings	Iacono
Doherty	Donnelly	Joly	Jones
Dreeshen	Dubé	Jordan	Jowhari
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseauil	Kang	Khalid
Eglinski	Falk	Khera	Lametti
Fast	Gallant	Lamoureux	Lapointe
Garrison	Généreux	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Genuis	Gladu	Lebouthillier	Lemieux
Godin	Hardcastle	Leslie	Lightbound
Harder	Hoback	Lockhart	Long
Hughes	Jeneroux	Longfield	Ludwig
Johns	Jolibois	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Kelly	Kent	Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Kitchen	Kmiec	May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Kwan	Lake	McCrimmon	McDonald
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière	McGuinty	McKay
Lebel	Leitch	McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Liepert	Lobb	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Lukiwski	MacGregor	Mendicino	Mihychuk
MacKenzie	Maguire	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Malcolmson	Masse (Windsor West)	Monsef	
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman	Morneau	Morrissey
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Motz	Murray	Nassif
Nantel	Nater	Nault	O'Connell
Paul-Hus	Poilievre	Oliphant	Oliver
Quach	Ramsey	O'Regan	Ouellette
Rankin	Reid	Paupé	Peschisolido
Rempel	Richards	Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Ritz	Saganash	Picard	Plamondon
Sansoucy	Saroya	Poissant	Qualtrough
Schmale	Shields	Ratansi	Rioux
Shipley	Sopuck	Rodriguez	Romanado
Sorenson	Stanton	Rota	Rudd
Stetski	Stewart	Ruimy	Rusnak
Stubbs	Sweet	Sahota	Saini
Tilson	Trost	Sajjan	Samson
Trudel	Van Kesteren	Sangha	Sarai
Van Loan	Vecchio	Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Viersen	Wagantall	Schulte	Serré
Warawa	Warkentin	Sgro	Shanahan
Watts	Waugh	Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Webber	Weir	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Wong	Yurdiga	Simms	Sohi
Zimmer — 115		Sorbara	Spengemann
		Ste-Marie	Tabbara
		Tan	Tassi
		Thériault	Tootoo
		Trudeau	Vandenbeld
		Vaughan	Virani
		Whalen	Wilson-Raybould
		Wrzesnewskyj	Young
		Zahid — 171	

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Beech
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi

PAIRED

Members

Foote

Moore — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.*[English]*

The time provided for the proceedings on the motion to concur in the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women having expired, it is my duty to put forthwith the question on the motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the recorded division be deferred until tomorrow, which, pursuant to the order adopted on Monday, April 3, 2017, would have the effect of deferring the vote anew until Monday, May 1, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, April 3, 2017, the division stands deferred until Monday, May 1, 2017, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

* * *

INSTRUCTION TO COMMITTEE ON BILL C-243

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC) moved:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities that, during its consideration of Bill C-243, An Act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act (maternity benefits), the Committee be granted the power to travel throughout Canada to hear testimony from interested parties and that the necessary staff do accompany the Committee, provided that the travel does not exceed five sitting days.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sarnia—Lambton, a very hard-working member of the House. I appreciate her participation.

It is really important that we give Canadians an opportunity to be consulted. Since the Liberal government was elected, we have seen a lot of smoke and mirrors and heard a lot of announcements about consultation and a lot of plans and strategies have been laid out, but people are not listened to. We see that in the House and we also see it in our country.

Bill C-243 deals with maternal health. It also talks about listening to Canadian women who have chosen to have a baby and the challenges that they face. We have had two meetings so far, and the witnesses we heard from gave us a lot of important new information. We heard about the challenges that women face while pregnant. We also heard once from departmental officials, which is quite normal, and then in two following meetings we heard from other witnesses.

It is important that we expand that meeting to include travel. The motion that we are debating now is important.

What we heard from the officials was that the maternal health programs are not working. Women find themselves in need of that support, but they cannot apply for maternal health benefits until the actual delivery of their baby. Women told us that if they could fill out

the forms ahead of time, it would greatly help them, but the government has said they have to wait, and this causes a delay.

The Liberal government, which is famous for delay, is okay with that, but Canadians are not happy. They want women and families to be protected, and if women qualify for these benefits, they should be able to get them without any delay, so it has been suggested that they be able to apply for those benefits before they deliver their baby.

The benefits would not take effect until the child was delivered. This would not cost the government anything. The government would face no additional costs. However, the benefits would be provided in a timely fashion to the mothers.

Many of the women that we heard from were new mothers who had gone through their first pregnancy, but we also heard from mothers who had gone through many pregnancies. One mother we heard from had gone through five pregnancies.

Women do not qualify for these maternity benefits unless they have been working. My wife and I have five children, and I asked the mom with five children if each of her pregnancies had been the same. She said no. We know all pregnancies can be different. The challenges and the expenses associated with a pregnancy can be different, so we need to be flexible with respect to the help we can provide.

We heard from many moms that finances are a barrier to many women considering having children. We heard from the trades, the welding trade in particular, that more women are needed in these trades, but because of the financial barriers, they are not considering that trade. Women in the welding trade told us that the first trimester is when the unborn child is at the highest risk, and in some cases, the women may not even be aware that they are pregnant.

We need to make sure that women are protected and that their unborn children are protected, and that will only happen if we give Canadian women the opportunity to testify at committee.

● (1315)

We also heard from the experts that if we do not make the workplace safe for women, and if we do not adapt and listen to them, then women will not be able to be engaged in these other vocations, which they are very capable of doing. We need to listen to Canadian women. This will only happen if we give Canadian women an opportunity to speak.

Routine Proceedings

We also heard about some of the challenges Canadian women face especially in the last three months of a pregnancy. We heard that they have to buy a new car seat. We have five children and 10 grandchildren. When we had our children many years ago, there were not the associated costs that there are today. When we brought our first child home from the hospital, the hospital gave us a nice little cardboard box with decorations on it. That is not the case anymore. People have to buy a brand new car set, not a used one, because without knowing the history of the car seat, it may not be safe. Everybody has to buy a car seat. There are different types of car seats, and in very short order one goes from the snap-in, carriage-type of car seat to a rear-facing car seat. It is not just one car seat that is needed, because in very short order another type of car seat will be needed, as well as a stroller, a crib, and all the supplies. We heard from some Canadian women that maybe the child benefit should start in that last trimester.

We heard of women who needed physiotherapy in that last trimester because they were very uncomfortable. If they did not have insurance to cover the costs of that, it was a very expensive experience. There are women who have multiple children. One witness had five children and was unable to get full benefit of the maternity benefits.

If we are to truly help Canadian women who have decided to have a baby, we need to give them the opportunity to speak. The only way that can happen is by having them engage with the human resources committee, HUMA. Strangely, it was the self-proclaimed family-friendly cabinet that voted against Bill C-243. Fortunately, the bill is at HUMA and is proceeding because the majority of members in this Parliament supported Bill C-243. A number of the Liberal caucus members felt that it was a good bill and disagreed with the Prime Minister and thought that it should go to committee. It is at committee and is proceeding, which is what Canadian women want, and it will proceed for a very short period of time. Women should not be denied the opportunity to be involved with what the Liberals call conversation or dialogue, which will only happen if we make it available to them. We know the cabinet does not support it and does not want it to happen. However, I believe that a majority of the Liberal caucus members will support this, and will support giving Canadian women the opportunity to speak and educate us, because most of us do not know what it is like to be pregnant and to have a child. I was just an observer and supporter of my wife through those pregnancies. We need to listen and to be involved. We need to engage.

I think it is a good motion. It promotes true dialogue and true listening, which will only happen if we give Canadian women this opportunity by travelling to different cities. Often the west coast is ignored. I am from British Columbia. I encourage us to travel, to travel to Vancouver and its outlying areas, and from coast to coast in Canada. We need to listen to Canadian women. If we listen and understand how we can help them, it will help Canadian women who are giving birth to have those opportunities and not have the financial barriers they have now. By listening to them, we can make it possible for them to have a wonderful pregnancy, and a wonderful time raising their children. In that first year after delivery, it is so important that the child experience the nurturing that can only come from having a parent there.

I hope the House will support this motion. I think it is a reasonable motion.

● (1320)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, further to my colleague's comments, I would add that as a mother of four children, I used Quebec's preventive withdrawal program, known as the safe maternity program, which was established in 1981. This program was discussed at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

In Quebec, employers contribute 0.2% of their payroll, which provides women with a preventive withdrawal benefit equal to 90% of their pay when there is a risk.

I am not sure that we need to travel. This program has proven to be effective in Quebec, and in the 1980s the Supreme Court ruled that preventive withdrawal pertains to working conditions and not pregnancy. It does not extend maternity leave. The problem is not the pregnancy, but the work environment with its working conditions, and that is a provincial jurisdiction.

I am tempted to ask my colleague a question. First, it is important to deal with federal jurisdiction in this area. Only women subject to the Canada Labour Code are under federal jurisdiction. For all other female workers, preventive withdrawal is a provincial jurisdiction, and the role of the federal government is to support all provinces in developing a program similar to the Quebec program.

● (1325)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, my NDP colleague has worked very hard with us in the HUMA committee and I want to thank her for her good work. I also want to thank her for being a mom. Mother's Day is not that far away. If we did not have moms, we would not be here. We need moms and we need to protect moms.

The member has brought up a very important point. It is not just welding. That is what Bill C-243 is focusing on: women who are in high-risk vocations like welding and the contaminants in the air involved with welding. We heard testimony that any strenuous job could jeopardize a pregnancy.

The Liberal way is to create optics of a narrow list of people who would qualify for this extra protection, but the committee heard that it is not just welding, that it can be any job where there is strenuous activity involved. We need to protect moms no matter what they are doing. If a woman is pregnant, she is at risk. We need to protect and help her.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has been around for a number of years now. I am sure he is aware that there are often debates within a standing committee. A planning session takes place when a committee is determining what it is it would like to look at, and the committee even entertains the possibility of going beyond the city of Ottawa in order to hear from Canadians.

I wonder if he could share with the House to what degree that discussion took place. Was there a discussion at the committee suggesting what the member across the way is now asking the House to do?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, that is a very relevant question. I have been here since 2004. I have been honoured to be elected five times to represent my community. I have never seen such a top-down approach right from the Prime Minister's Office involved with our committees and directing a desired outcome. We have a scripted response from a number of the Liberal members in the committee. They are told what to say: "Here are your questions. Here are your statements. Here are the desired outcomes." They have meetings ahead of time.

Unfortunately, committees under the Liberal government are not permitted to do their work. It is disappointing and it needs to change. There are still two and a half years in this Parliament. There is hope that the Prime Minister will stop his manipulative and dictatorial approach at committees. Committees need to be allowed to do their good work.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and speak to my hon. colleague's motion. I am a little disappointed that I was not able to speak to what I was originally here to speak to, which was the motion regarding gender-based analysis, because I brought the report that our committee had done on it and I was prepared to talk about how the government has not followed up on any of those recommendations, but I will have to let that go, and instead focus on another very important issue.

In my role as chair of the status of women committee, as I sit and listen to the testimony, we are currently studying the economic status of women in Canada. Part of that discussion is as to how we take advantage of the 50% of the workforce that is really underutilized. How do we get more women on boards? How do we get more women into science, technology, my favourite which is engineering, and mathematics? As we look at this issue, we are hearing testimony about things that are barriers for women, things that are contributing to the systemic discrimination that exists against women in industries of all kinds, and things that need to be fixed in order to facilitate women being more free to take advantage of these jobs.

One of the topics we have heard about is maternity leave, and the whole issue of if women are in a situation where they are in an industry where there are hazards or it is the kind of work that would impact them in their pregnancy, that we have the flexibility to address that. Also there should be the ability to allow flexibility in who takes the leave and how long the leave is.

We have heard testimony from other countries where they have done a good job in sensitizing the other parent to take leave with a "use it or lose it" kind of philosophy. We have seen where that has

been effective in other countries in increasing the ability of women to have a greater percentage of participation in the workforce. We look at the kinds of bills such as Bill C-243 that are brought forward. This was a great idea. It was really not costing any more. It was just providing that extra flexibility to start the leave earlier, if needed. Certainly we saw it was well received by most people in the House, maybe not by the cabinet, but all those folks who are trying to do the right thing for Canada were right behind the bill.

We think about the barriers that exist for women with respect to maternity leave. I know for myself, I was working as an engineer with global responsibilities when I was having my children. Members can appreciate that I was flying all over the world at all hours of the day and night and being exposed to dengue fever, malaria, and I could go on about the hazards that I endured personally. Then there is trying to actually take time off. What is the company supposed to do with an individual's job? Legally a company has to leave an individual's job or an equivalent there, but as an individual rises to positions on boards and positions that are very responsible, that is a very difficult thing to do logistically. When we think about producing more flexibility in maternity leave, that would give women who are in high-power positions the ability potentially to have their spouses take that leave.

Another thing that is very concerning which we heard in testimony at our committee was regarding who can actually take advantage of maternity leave. If a woman does not qualify for EI in the first place, she may not be able to receive the benefit that she really wants to get. We did hear that a disturbingly high percentage of women who, because of the nature of the precarious work they are in, or because they are not able to get enough hours to have the minimum qualification, face a lot of barriers that have an impact on them.

Then there are the attitudes in the workplace. I remember when I was the engineering manager at Suncor and had quite a large staff, one of the staff announced to all of her fellow engineers that she was planning to have six children. There should not be anything wrong with somebody wanting to have six children, but the attitude that caused over time eventually forced the company to get rid of the woman, because it was known that she would keep taking maternity leave and it would keep being difficult. Those are the kinds of things that can contribute to systemic discrimination against women that we do not want to see at all.

• (1330)

The parental leave provisions that came out in budget 2017 have not really addressed this issue of maternity leave. I think it is worth having the committee look in more detail to see what else can be done, because the parental leave provisions that were put in the budget really stretch out the same amount of money over 18 months, so people would really only get 33% of their salary. No one can realistically afford to live on that. It pretty much takes two parents nowadays to get by.

Certainly, the committee has a job to do in looking into this in depth and hearing from people across Canada talk about what they would like to see in maternity leave, and potentially even consulting with countries that are doing it better than we are.

Routine Proceedings

The government currently consults super broadly when it wants to consult, but the rest of the time it does not. This is an example where it wants to not have this kind of consultation happen. Where was the consultation with credit unions when it introduced all of the latest restrictions there? Where was the consultation with youth when it increased the down payment requirement to 20% to get a first-time mortgage? Where was the consultation with the oil and gas industry when it put its policies in place to basically drive the industry south? The government needs to apply consultation a bit more evenly when it is going to consult, needs to actually consult on everything and then take action on that.

The other thing I want to talk about, which my colleague did not talk about, is that the motion talks about getting permission to travel across Canada. I have a difference of opinion with my colleague when he speaks about going from coast to coast to coast. I always think of things in terms of budget, so I can imagine how much it would cost for the committee to be flying all over the place. I sit on the liaison committee, and I am astounded to see the way the travel budget is administered here in government, as opposed to what happens in private business. The way private businesses develop their travel budget is that either they have a historical perspective of what has been spent or they have plans for the year and know how much travel is estimated to be associated with that. They put together a budget and then stick to the budget.

I was astounded to find out that we put together the initial budget, and I guess the budget had never been fully spent in the last 10 or 12 years of Parliament, but all of a sudden, this year, the first year of government, we ended up overspending the budget immediately. The committee just came and said it wanted a supplement of \$800,000 on a \$1.2 million budget. It was incredible. It would never happen in private industry. Certainly, we need to consult, but it needs to be balanced and it needs to be planned. Subsequent to that supplement, it came again and asked for another supplement of \$650,000. It is not as if the well is just continually there and committees can just keep spending the taxpayers' money without having any need to be held fiscally responsible.

Therefore, when it comes to travel, I would like to see the committee consult, but I would like committee members to focus their efforts on areas where there are programs going on or things happening that are good, and on areas where there is particularly nothing or great difficulty with maternity benefits.

I am not sure where this motion will fit into the priorities of the HUMA committee, because I am also sensitive to the fact that it has a lot of things on its roster. There are things that we have also been talking about in our status of women committee that are important for the economic benefit of women. I would not want to see the focus on shelters or on affordable housing, which also are having an impact, dropped off the committee. Therefore, I appreciate the fact that they have narrowed it down to the five days of the committee. That is appropriate. Hopefully, the committee will give it the priority that is needed.

To summarize my points, when it comes to trying to figure out how to get more women into positions of power in the workforce in science, technology, engineering, and math, we have to figure out how to make our policies more flexible. One of those policies is maternity leave. There have been some interesting ideas. Bill C-243

is one of those great ideas that we should go forward with. However, it is worth looking into what else we could do that would help these women.

• (1335)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, also for her work in chairing the status of woman committee.

I noted that in her speech she talked about some testimony at the status of women committee about the need to have additional parental leave for a second parent. This would go to some of the cultural issues of the reasons why men and women do not necessarily take the same levels of parental leave. I wonder if my colleague could explain what her position would be on that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been a tireless advocate for issues affecting women, from pay equity on up, and is a wonderful member of our committee.

When it comes to extending leave, I am all about creating flexible options. I am not necessarily about giving away a zillion dollars to do it, but I think there are ways, such as the way Bill C-243 has sort of said when people can take the leave. I think some of the ideas that we heard on committee were from other countries that have a use it or lose it kind of philosophy. They have seen the uptake, and they have not really seen that both people are off at once. It is more sharing that load and stretching out the duration.

I am a fan of providing as many options as we can. We know that, especially in some types of jobs, union jobs and such, they have a legal contract that they have negotiated, and it is hard to put the flexibility in after the fact. If we could have anything from a legislative point of view that would provide that flexible framework, I think that would be better.

• (1340)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her passionate interest in my bill. I just happened to be sitting in the lobby when I saw that she was debating it, so I thought I had better get in here to see what was going on.

The motion specifically relates to travel in the committee's consideration of the bill. However, the bill is actually to establish a national strategy. I guess my question would be as follows. Is the member's suggestion that, through this motion, the committee actually travel in order to decide whether or not to do the study, or is it actually when it gets to the point of doing the study, which would not be until after the bill is passed by the House and the Senate?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I spent a lot of time in the member's riding, in Kingston, when I was at Queen's.

The need is evident for greater maternity leave flexibility and benefits, and I would spend zero more dollars from the government studying that particular issue. What the strategy should be, and hearing from the various parts of Canada, if there are regional differences, would be the kinds of things I would be curious to hear about.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member across the way could indicate to the House, clearly, whether or not the issue that is before the House, in the member's motion, was ever brought up at the committee.

Often we like to think that committees have all sorts of discretion in terms of being able to talk about things of this nature, the possibility of going outside the city of Ottawa. Could the member just expand in terms of what was actually raised at the committee level in reference to what we are talking about this afternoon?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, while it is my honest desire to review the *Hansard* of every committee here on the Hill, that is not always possible.

I take my colleague's word that he presented this before the committee, had the discussion, did not receive the answer he was looking for, and so is looking to the House to find the support he was seeking.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope it is not misplaced confidence the member has in her colleague. I would like to address this in terms of what some might argue is a bit of a game being played.

It is interesting that, for the first couple of hours, we were debating a very important report. Members across the way who were listening this morning would be aware that we were debating the implementation of gender-based analysis plus in the Government of Canada. It was an interesting debate. I thought members on both sides of the aisle were making strong presentations, albeit sometimes a little misinformed or biased, but we had been debating the issue for about two and a half hours.

The debate was introduced by New Democratic Party members, my friends across the way, and about two and a half hours into it, the Conservatives decided they wanted to adjourn debate on the issue. If the two Conservative members who spoke had wanted to, they could have stood and spoke about the issues they had just finished speaking about. Instead, a Conservative member of Parliament stood in her place, said Conservatives were done debating the issue. They did not care about what other members wanted to do on this issue, there was still more time to debate this issue, but they wanted to adjourn debate, thereby causing the bells to ring.

The bells ringing consumed 30 minutes, plus an additional 10 minutes for the vote. As a direct result of that, we lost 40 minutes that members across the way could have talked about the issues they wanted to talk about. What is really interesting is that it looked as if both the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party wanted to talk about the importance of the report dealing with gender-based analysis.

I had the opportunity to speak on the issue. I was very proud of many of the actions this government has taken with respect to the report. I was surprised that the New Democrats, to help the Conservatives, voted in favour of the adjournment. One has to question why they would do that. Why would they initiate a debate and, after two and a half hours, call for its adjournment in order to

prevent people from talking about very important issues affecting women? That is, in fact, what took place. Now another motion has been brought forward, not by the NDP but by the Conservatives this time. What they are proposing is, once again, yet another important issue, an issue this government takes very seriously.

Before I continue, I want to make it clear that I am splitting my time with my colleague from Spadina—Fort York.

It is interesting that the Conservatives are now trying to change the channel, almost as if they have changed their minds and want to go back, yet we lost a lot of valuable time to debate the issue.

I have some concerns. I posed the question to both Conservative speakers of what degree this has been talked about in the standing committee. In fact, the mover of the motion tried to give a false impression that this government does not support the work of standing committees. How quickly Conservatives forget. I was in opposition for four years and witnessed first-hand the Stephen Harper bubble and how much influence the PMO had on standing committees.

● (1345)

That is one of the reasons why our Prime Minister supports more independence for committees, whether dealing with the participation of parliamentary secretaries at committees, or dealing with the way chairs are elected. Most important, more opposition amendments have likely been supported, or adopted, or taken into consideration in this last 19 months or so than in the previous five years of Stephen Harper.

We have a government today that generally understands. All we need to do is look at what is happening at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The government House leader has said that we want to modernize Parliament. We have introduced a discussion paper. Thus far all we have heard are individuals providing comment in regard to the process.

Then we can witness what we have seen in the last couple of days. If I were on the outside looking in, I would be saying that we do need to modernize Parliament. There is a real need for us to look at the way this place functions. Maybe opposition parties can explain to me why their tactical manoeuvring makes sense. I am not too sure it does. I was in opposition for 20 years and I do not understand the moves they are making.

There are opportunities to get engaged and the opposition is moving forward blindfolded on the issue. We understand and appreciate how critically important maternity benefits and leave are to Canadians. I believe every Liberal member of Parliament dearly cares about this issue and talks about with their constituents. I can assure everyone that the government of the day is seizing the opportunity to look at ways to enhance and make it easier for Canada's middle class. We believe in the middle class of Canada and those who aspire to be a part of it.

Look at the budget decisions to date. When we talk about gender neutrality, look at what the government has done in less than two years with respect to benefits. These things are very real and tangible.

Routine Proceedings

It would appear that the Conservatives are working with the NDP. I would like New Democrats to explain why they voted in favour of adjourning a debate for which they had argued. From the speeches of the Conservative members, I have to wonder why they would move adjournment on it.

As I indicated, many different issues come to the floor of the House. When I think of the role government has to play, one of those roles is ensuring, as much as possible, that we enable those who want to participate in the workforce the opportunity to do so. When we have issues such as pregnancy within a workforce, there is a responsibility for the government to do what it can. There is a high level of sensitivity to this issue. I applaud the member for Kingston and the Islands for bringing forward the bill that is before the committee today, because it is a part of the discussion. I learned from his presentation, whether it was in caucus or here on the floor of the House.

As the Prime Minister has alluded to before, there are always opportunities for us to improve things, to make things better. That is why I would like to think that the committee studying the issue today is in a great position to continue to advance that discussion. We will have to wait and see what takes place.

● (1350)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for those who may be watching this today, let me be perfectly clear as to what this debate is about. The Liberals have put forward a “discussion paper” that would permanently change the rules of Parliament, that would shut down debate permanently on Fridays, that would curtail the opposition's ability to hold the government to account by putting permanent limits on debate, and that would also allow the Prime Minister to answer questions for only 45 minutes per week.

What is wrong with this? What is wrong is that Parliament is not supposed to be a minor inconvenience for the Prime Minister. We are elected to hold the government to account. For the parliamentary secretary, I am sorry, but that is our job and that is what we will do. The member's comments suggest that somehow he is trying to justify the Prime Minister and the House leader's assertion that Parliament should function as if it is convenient for the Prime Minister. No, we are the official opposition and we will hold the government to account.

In what world did the member for Winnipeg North of the last Parliament become the member of Parliament of this Parliament in which he stands against the right of the official opposition to stand here and oppose the government?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, whether I am on the opposition side of the House or on the government side of the House, I am consistent with what I say. I understand the Conservatives at times find that very challenging. I would encourage members to recognize that we take the issue we are talking about right now very seriously. Let us take a look at the budget 2017. It also proposes to allow women to claim EI maternity benefits up to 12 weeks before their due date, if they so choose. That has been expanded from the current standard of eight weeks. The additional flexibility is expected to cost \$43.1 million over five years. That is action and this government is more concerned about getting action and tangible results for all Canadians.

● (1355)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, joining with the member for Winnipeg North, I too am perplexed. What is it that could possibly be going on in the House at this very moment that would cause the NDP and the Conservatives to get together? What is it that caused the business of the House, since the week of the budget, to be so interrupted with all these procedural shenanigans? Could it be the fact that the Liberal government is trying to unilaterally ram through its changes without the consent of the opposition? I do think so.

I cannot believe the disrespect the government is showing such a venerable institution. This is not the Liberals' House. This is the House for all Canadians. May I remind the member that this side of the House, the Conservatives, the Bloc, and the Green, collectively represent 60% of the electorate? Therefore, if the Liberals want real consensus, they will not pass any changes until those changes are done with the consent of all members of the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we are getting a sense as to why we are having this discussion today. I would actually encourage members across the way. The member was right when he said that the House is all about Canadians. We understand that, we appreciate that, and Canadians have an expectation of the Prime Minister and of all members of Parliament to recognize the importance of modernizing our Parliament. I truly believe this is important to all Canadians.

The members opposite have the opportunity to get engaged by looking at what the government House leader has put on the table, which is a part of getting that discussion to take place. Opposition members have a choice as to whether they want to participate. Canadians have spoken on the issue and they want a modernized Parliament.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really disappointed in the questions that were posed by both NDP and Conservative members. The member for Calgary Nose Hill started off her comments by telling us that this debate was about procedure in the House. No. What this debate is about right now is whether a committee should travel and spend money in order to support legislation that I put forward, Bill C-243.

The member from the NDP who spoke last talked about respect. What about the respect that members should be paying to the people who would be affected by this bill? Is this the right way to treat legislation, as a vehicle to deliver another message and another motive that they have? I do not think so. The House should do the proper thing and move on from this discussion so we can have a proper vote on this.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member for Kingston and the Islands is right on the mark.

At the end of the day, a standing committee is looking at the issue. It is up to that committee to do its job, to come back and to have that discussion, ensuring as much as possible that we have recommendations dealing with a wide spectrum of issues related to maternity leave.

Statements by Members

I applaud the member and his actions to date to try to ensure there was a debate on the issue. He has been very successful at doing so. We should focus our attention on the standing committee and allow it to do its job, too.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

KPMG

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, Québec's public finance committee tabled a unanimous report on tax havens. The committee asked the government to stop giving contracts to companies that use or promote tax havens.

Today we learned that PPP Canada is looking to hire a firm to analyze Montreal's réseau électrique métropolitain. Among the companies being considered for the job is seasoned fraudster KPMG, a white-collar thief and friend to small islands where nobody pays tax.

The firm, one of PPP Canada's choice suppliers, is better equipped to advise the government on building trains in Barbados than in Quebec. The federal government needs to stop handing over our tax dollars to white-collar fraudsters. It must reject KPMG's offer and remove the firm from its list of suppliers immediately.

* * *

• (1400)

[*English*]

HARBHAJAN SINGH KHALSA

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week Sikhs around the world celebrate Vaisakhi, the day Guru Gobind Singh created an identity for women and men who would be tasked to uphold equality, justice, and freedom of faith for all. He crowned them with turbans and told them to never bow down and to always look out for those in need.

Growing up, every Sikh has a story: someone who inspired them to this path, someone who taught them about the legacies of their ancestors and the sacrifices they made to maintain their identities. For me, it was Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogiji. He came to Canada in 1968 and opened the gateway to Sikh Dharma in the west. He taught me to see the greatness in all, to uplift everyone who was down, and to live with grace.

Today I am fortunate to have three generations of his family join us as we celebrate this great day: his wife Dr. Inderjit Kaur, his children Kulbir and Kanwaljit, and his grandson Angad. I wish to thank them.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the mayor of the city of Brooks, Barry Morishita, who is on the Hill with us today.

On a serious note, in August 1982, Ronald Smith, a Canadian in Montana, murdered two cousins from the Blackfeet Nation. Thomas

Running Rabbit and Harvey Mad Man were brutally murdered by Smith, executed, in a heinous way. These two innocent young men were not guilty of anything other than offering a ride to Smith. Thankfully, Smith was convicted of the murders in the American system and was sentenced to death. Because of circumstances in Montana, the likelihood that this sentence will ever be carried out is nil.

Ronald Smith belongs behind bars for life. However, the Liberal government is attempting to intervene so that he can be brought back to Canada, where there is a good chance he will be set free.

I have met with the family of Thomas Running Rabbit, and they have been clear. They want Smith to stay where he is for taking away and murdering their beloved family member. The Liberals must respect the will of the Running Rabbit family and leave Ronald Smith where he belongs.

* * *

ART ROSS TROPHY WINNER

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today to bring national attention to Newmarket's newest hero, Connor McDavid. In only his second year in the NHL, he is already the captain of the Edmonton Oilers, and he led the league in scoring with 30 goals and 70 assists. His 100 points this season captured him the Art Ross Trophy. He is, in my opinion, one of the greatest hockey players in the world today.

Connor played minor hockey in both Newmarket and Aurora and with our local AAA team, the York Simcoe Express. He has never forgotten his roots. In fact, last year, he was skating in Newmarket at the training rink while the tykes were practising at the same time. He allowed a group of six-year-olds to watch him practice. The wide-eyed enthusiasm was amazing. My son was one of those boys. He will never forget being that close to greatness.

Connor also supports Newmarket's drive for a community outdoor arena and has been instrumental in the fundraising. Ten young players will win the chance to skate with Connor this year.

On behalf of everyone in Newmarket Aurora, I want to congratulate Connor and his parents, Brian and Kelly—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SHERBROOKE HUSSARS REGIMENT

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, I am honoured today to recognize the immense contribution of the reserve force regiment known today as the Sherbrooke Hussars.

Created in 1870 in Melbourne, Quebec, this regiment was deployed for active service in 1914 and participated in many battles, including such battles as the Somme, Arras, Vimy, Ypres, and Passchendaele.

Statements by Members

The Sherbrooke Hussars regiment made a significant contribution to Canada during the Second World War, particularly during the Normandy invasion, as well as in operations in Hong Kong. That is not to mention the regiment's participation in recent peacekeeping missions.

A regimental ball is planned for May 6 to wrap up the festivities commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Sherbrooke Hussars, and I am sure that everyone from Sherbrooke will join me in acknowledging this important anniversary and once again thanking, for their sacrifices, the many reservists who have helped make the regiment a success over the years.

Let us take advantage of this celebration to remind the government how important it is to protect and restore the William Street armoury, which today is home to these reservists.

* * *

[English]

FIRST WORLD WAR

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week our Prime Minister, members of this House, and other Canadians are recognizing Canada's contribution to World War I. I would like to pay tribute to a family who gave dearly.

The Livingstone family, from my hometown of Boularderie Island, lost three young brothers in World War I. It is said that their father died of a broken heart right after the war because of losing his three boys. Hugh was the first one to lose his life, in the Battle of Ypres; followed by Charles, in the Battle of the Somme; and then David, in the Battle of Cambrai.

On Boularderie Island, 22 young men in total died in World War I, and many others were wounded. There is a monument at Big Bras d'Or's St. James Presbyterian Church cemetery commemorating these brothers and others who fought for their country.

Another herald from my riding was Percival William Anderson, who led the Nova Scotia Highlanders to capture the infamous Hill 145 that determined the victory at Vimy Ridge. He lost his life later in Passchendaele.

These young men came from farming, fishing, lumber, and coal mining families. I ask members in this House to join with me in remembering them and the thousands of others who did not come home from this war that defined our nation.

* * *

● (1405)

ART WRUBLESKI

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, southeast Saskatchewan, Estevan, and the oil fields have lost a giant of a man, Art Wrubleski, who passed away this past week.

Art, known as Mr. Core, started Wrubleski Coring, which later merged to become A & A Coring. He was an incredible man with a heart of gold. He received the oilman Lifetime Achievement Award from the Estevan Oilfield Technical Society in January 2010. As Art's son Wade put it, "Dad was never afraid to take a chance and

was successful because of his desire to succeed and his strong work ethic".

Art was an avid golfer and curler. He always made time to volunteer. He would help run golf tournaments and bonspiels and funded and constructed the first golf shed at the course. I can still picture Art out on the course with his grandson, Brayden, up on the fifth green.

I would like to extend my condolences to his brother Ed and sister Erna; his children, Dale, Randy, Wade, Brenda, and Denise; and his many grandchildren.

He and Alice will live on in our hearts.

* * *

BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 9, we marked the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, a battle that saw our branches of military fight together for the first time.

[Translation]

On this anniversary, we take time to honour Canada's heroes who fought to protect the French territory and who suffered unimaginable hardships, both during and after the war.

Today is a day of commemoration for the families of thousands of soldiers who were killed or wounded at Vimy, and it is also a time to honour all Canadian soldiers, past and present, and their families.

[English]

Today I rise in this House to express my sincere gratitude to my community's very own Maxine Bredt, who proudly served as a nurse during the Second World War and who graciously represented Vaudreuil—Soulanges' proud military heritage in Vimy, France, this past weekend.

I rise to also honour those who fought in the Battle of Vimy Ridge and to thank our local Legion in Hudson, branch 115, for its tireless work serving veterans for over 70 years.

[Translation]

Lest we forget.

* * *

[English]

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of meeting with firefighters from my hometown of Ajax today as firefighters met with parliamentarians from all parts of the country. The work they do protecting us, whether we are in Ajax or Fort McMurray or any part of this country, is deeply valued. We have some of the best trained, most dedicated firefighters in the world. We were incredibly proud to have them and talk to them today.

Statements by Members

That is why, in the 2015 election, we promised to create a one-time payment for the surviving family of a fallen first responder, including firefighters. I am proud to say that after extensive consultations, in the 2017 budget we are making good on that promise and setting aside \$20 million per year to create a tax-free benefit to support the families of public safety officers who have fallen in the line of duty.

It is an incredibly proud moment for us to see that happen today.

* * *

STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the great 18th century parliamentarian and outspoken advocate of representative government, Edmund Burke, warned the House of Commons about being bullied by cabinet over 250 years ago, when he warned that to:

...exchange independence for protection...will court a subservient existence through the favour of those of those Ministers...or those Secret Advisers—

Burke must have been talking about Gerald Butts.

—who ought themselves to stand in awe of the Commons of this realm.

I urge my colleagues across the way, especially those on the backbenches, to learn from Burke, to learn from the founders of Confederation from all parties, and to learn from recent prime ministers, such as Jean Chrétien and Stephen Harper, and give this House the respect it deserves and maintain our parliamentary privileges.

Do not let the Prime Minister, his cabinet, and his unelected advisers change the Standing Orders without the unanimous consent of all parties.

* * *

● (1410)

SIKHS IN FIRST WORLD WAR

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Vaisakhi marks the Sikh new year and commemorates the formation of the Khalsa panth of warriors.

Seeing as we just commemorated the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge, I would like to highlight the little known fact that Sikh Canadians served with the Canadian Army in the First World War and recognize Sunta Gouger Singh, Quebec Regiment, killed October 1915; Hari Singh, Reserve Battalion, Royal Canadian Dragoons; Harnom Singh, 143rd Railway Construction Battalion; John Singh, 108th Overseas Battalion; Lashman Singh, 75th battalion, killed October 1918; Ram Singh; Sewa Singh, 1st Canadian Reserves Battalion; Waryam Singh, 38th Battalion, Eastern Ontario Regiment; John Baboo, wounded at Vimy Ridge; and Buckam Singh, 20th Canadian Infantry, wounded twice.

[Member spoke in Punjabi as follows:]

Vaisakhi di-un Vadhiun.

[English]

Lest we forget.

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the 25th anniversary of Quebec Aboriginal Tourism, the first aboriginal tourism organization in Canada.

The aboriginal tourism industry is an important one, and it sets Canada apart as a unique tourist destination, while respecting and reinforcing the vital traditions and cultures of aboriginal communities.

That is why our government invested \$8.6 million over four years to develop this tourism industry and to implement the Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada's five-year plan on aboriginal tourism.

I want to thank Steeve Wadohandik Gros-Louis, president of Quebec Aboriginal Tourism, as well as all stakeholders in the aboriginal tourism industry who make Canada a unique and exceptional destination.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with a nod to Paul Simon:

Don't shake your head the budget's author said to me
A cluster budget's easy if you take it logically
Taxing Uber, transit, beer, while spending uncontrollably
There must be fifty ways to shaft Canadians.

He said it's really not his style to mope and brood
Sure billions gone, no jobs, no growth, can't be misconstrued
Re-announcing, pre-announcing, smoke and mirrors are his tool
Must be fifty ways to shaft Canadians.

He don't have the knack, Jack
He needs a new plan, Stan
Innovation's a ploy, Roy
Small biz just not key.
Job creation's a bust, Gus
Infrastructure not so much as such
F'get debt to GDP, Lee
PM thinks cash is free.

He says he didn't think his budget would cause so much pain
But doesn't know what he might do to make us smile again,
Canadians ask, then, would he please again explain
'Bout the fifty ways he shafted Canadians.

He "don't" have the knack.

* * *

[Translation]

NUTRITION INTERNATIONAL

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the 25th anniversary of Micronutrient Initiative, an organization respected around the world for its efforts to eliminate malnutrition.

Oral Questions

The organization has changed its name this year to Nutrition International to better reflect its expanded role as a development partner and advocate for nutrition.

[English]

I am also pleased to congratulate a constituent of mine, Kathy Zador, who was recently awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers for founding FibroMoves, a warm-water pool rehabilitation program intended to help fibromyalgia sufferers, and for teaching the program voluntarily for the past 10 years.

Please join me in congratulating Nutrition International and Kathy for their successes and in wishing them many more in the future.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 1.6 million Canadians report an unmet need for mental health care, and 7.5 million Canadians live with a mental health illness.

For more than a century, Riverview Hospital provided mental health services in B.C. The provincial government intends to put market housing on these lands. However, the residents of Port Moody—Coquitlam have a different plan. They would like to see a national centre for mental health excellence focused on seniors' issues, like dementia and Alzheimer's; youth issues, like stress, anxiety, and addiction; services for first nations, like addiction and suicide prevention; and services to help our veterans and first responders with issues like operational stress injuries.

Their vision includes drop-in centres for addiction treatment, a medical services research park, and a world-class arboretum. One thing it does not include is market housing.

I am proud to support this vision. I call on the federal government to work with the Coalition for a Healthy Riverview to help create this national centre for mental health excellence before the B.C. Liberals put market housing on these lands, ignoring the wishes of our community.

* * *

• (1415)

EGYPT

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the most persecuted and victimized and attacked religious group in the world today is Christians.

Over the weekend, dozens of Christians were brutally murdered while attending Palm Sunday ceremonies in Egypt. This is not an isolated or rare incident. Just last December, 25 Christians were killed after a church was bombed in Cairo.

Christians throughout the Middle East have been targets of deadly violence for years, with the most vicious attacks reserved for Christmas and Easter.

Christians living in the Middle East and throughout Africa are targeted by radical Islamic terrorists because they have decided to worship Jesus Christ and not follow Islam.

Unfortunately, persecuted Christians do not have any champions in the west. We do not often hear of Hollywood stars talking about Christians being massacred while they are accepting their awards. In fact, many of the elite readily join in the mockery and the disdain shown to Christians.

These are very sad realities, but they must be faced and they must be called out.

In this Holy Week, I pray that the world, particularly leaders here in the west, pay attention to the plight of persecuted Christians and do all we can to stand with them.

* * *

[Translation]

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND POLITICS

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I have the privilege of welcoming to Ottawa a group of 50 students from my riding of Shefford.

These young people are students from École secondaire du Verbe divin, the same high school I attended and where I forged very fond memories. Although we often hear how uninterested young people are in politics, I am particularly pleased that these senior secondary school students are taking a politics and governance course.

Their visit to this place is the culmination of their study of the Parliament of Canada's legislative process. I am delighted to give them a certificate recognizing their efforts and their interest in our democratic process.

I would like to congratulate these students for their great work, as well as Ms. Cherrier and the teaching staff for their initiative.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in January the Prime Minister claimed that he had no choice but to take a private helicopter to the Aga Khan's island. He said that there were no other options. It turns out that this was not true. His staff, in fact, arrived at the island by commercial plane, and that bill was picked up by taxpayers too.

It is bad enough that the Prime Minister chose to vacation at one of the most expensive destinations in the world when taxpayers have to pay, but why did the Prime Minister tell Canadians a private helicopter was his only option when he knew it was against the law and against his own ethical guidelines, and now we find out that it was not even true?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times in this House, this was a personal family vacation. I am of course happy to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she may have.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer to our question. This is not a conversation between the Prime Minister and the Ethics Commissioner. In fact, he told all Canadians publicly that he had no other option.

The question is very simple. Why did the Prime Minister say he had no other option, when in fact he did? His staff took the other option, which was a commercial flight. He knew that taking this private helicopter was against the law and that it was against his own ethical guidelines. Now we find out it was not even true.

Why did the Prime Minister tell Canadians this if it was not true?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this was a personal family vacation, and I am happy to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner on any questions she may have.

Furthermore, on prime ministerial travel, as is always the case, the RCMP makes determinations around the safest way for the Prime Minister to travel.

• (1420)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one has begrudged the Prime Minister a vacation.

First of all, when he chose to vacation at one of the most expensive places in the world, knowing full well taxpayers have to pay for wherever he goes, for security, that was a choice he made. Second of all, he has told all Canadians that he thought there was no other option.

Now he is saying the RCMP told him he had to take a private helicopter. Is the Prime Minister saying today, then, that the RCMP told him to break the law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner on the details of my personal family vacation.

As I have said, the RCMP makes determinations around the safest way for the Prime Minister to travel.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, immediately after taking office, the Prime Minister loosened sanctions on Iran and began normalizing relations with Russia. He even had a name for this policy. He called it “responsible conviction.”

We have another name. We call it “dangerously naive.” Everyone knows that if it were not for Russia and Iran, Bashar al-Assad would no longer be in power.

Now that the Prime Minister is committed to a regime change in Syria, will he first commit to restoring sanctions against Iran and

support our Conservative legislation to toughen sanctions against Russia?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada works with the international community to apply sanctions on a broad range of nations and ensures that we are holding governments and leaders to account on a broad range of issues.

We have chosen a way of engaging responsibly with even those people with whom we disagree, because we do believe that having diplomatic relations, having good conversations with difficult partners, is an important role that Canada can and must play on the world stage.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is on the record now as saying that he is committed to a regime change in Syria. This is a regime that is propped up by Russia and Iran. Now he is saying that we can continue to have conversations with these regimes, which are also supporters of violations of human rights and genocide.

What is the Prime Minister's plan? Is he going to continue to have this policy of responsible conviction, which loosens sanctions on Iran and normalizes relations with Russia, when they clearly support Bashar al-Assad? What is his plan?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Brussels last week talking with the international community about the path forward for Syria and is right now in Italy with G7 foreign ministers to discuss how we move forward on holding the Assad regime to account, and indeed those countries that have been supporting the Assad regime.

It is important that the international community speak with one clear, strong voice, and that is exactly what we are working hard to ensure.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister once famously said, “I'm not middle class. I don't pretend I am”, so I guess vacationing on a billionaire's private island was just him proving his point.

However, he is not just entitled to his entitlement; oh no, he is also entitled to not follow the rules that govern all of us, because he believes he is above the rules. He told Canadians, “Travel back-and-forth from Nassau...happens on the Aga Khan's private helicopter” and that “only happens through private means.”

Today we learned that the Prime Minister's excuse is categorically false. Does he wish to change his story, or does he wish to continue to mislead Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in the House, this was a personal family vacation, and I am more than happy to engage with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner on exactly these issues and on any issues that she may raise.

On the issue of travel, the RCMP makes determinations around the safest way for the Prime Minister to travel.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have nothing against the Prime Minister taking vacation. However, he promised to be transparent, not only with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner but also with all Canadians.

We expect the Prime Minister to answer questions here in the House. He said in public that “travel back and forth from Nassau to the island happens on the Aga Khan’s private helicopter”. He told Canadians that travel to and from the island “only happens through private means.”

I have a question for the Prime Minister. Why did he mislead Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer any questions the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner might have about my family’s personal vacation. As I have often said, the RCMP determines the safest way for the Prime Minister to travel.

* * *

• (1425)

JUSTICE

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Quebec National Assembly considered holding an emergency debate on court delays in the province, which allowed a man accused of slitting his wife’s throat to go free.

When we asked the minister about this yesterday, she said that she was proud of the process that her government had instituted. It is obvious why Minister Vallée said yesterday in Quebec City that this federal justice minister is out of touch with Quebec’s reality.

What is the minister proud of?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we set up a new open and transparent appointment process, which ensures that appointments reflect the diversity and best qualities of all Canadians.

With regard to the Federal Court and the judicial vacancies in Quebec, I can say that there are 163 federal judges in office in Quebec. We are working to fill the last six judicial vacancies.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I see the Prime Minister is still failing to take responsibility for this.

While violent offenders are let back on the streets, the Prime Minister is perfectly happy to give criminal records to young and racialized Canadians for pot possession. The Liberals are now hiding how many have been charged since they took power.

With legalization at least 15 months away, could the Prime Minister please explain why he will not in the meantime put an end to these types of charges, especially when he himself has admitted to the crime?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to answer the hon. member’s question.

We are legalizing and controlling the sale of marijuana with two goals in mind. The first is protecting our young people from the easy access they have to marijuana right now. It is easier for a teenager to buy a joint than a bottle of beer, and that is not right. Second, we want to remove from criminal organizations and street gangs the billions of dollars in profits that they make.

Until the House chooses to legalize and control marijuana, the law remains the law.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we agree that the law is the law. The Prime Minister should make sure that when it comes time to enforce the law, criminals stay in jail and have their day in court without delay.

The Government of Quebec is asking the feds to speed things up. This situation is causing problems in Quebec’s courts. Quebec’s justice minister says there are 14 vacancies, but the Liberals say there are six. They should agree on the number, appoint some judges, and stop hiding behind a process that slows things down instead of solving the problem.

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that this is an important issue. That is why we are taking concrete action to address this issue. I am pleased to have appointed 47 superior court justices and 22 deputy judges across the country. There are six vacancies remaining in the province of Quebec.

Further to that, I am working with my counterparts in the provinces and territories to address the issue of delays, which, according to the Supreme Court of Canada, requires a culture shift. That is why we are working toward having a meeting among all provinces and territories and the federal government to ensure we move forward with substantive solutions to resolve delays.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not seem to be taking this problem seriously.

Yesterday, she said that there is no one simple solution and that appointing six judges in Quebec is not going to solve the delay problems. Those were her words. I would like to know what her solution is. How is she planning to address the problems that Quebec’s justice minister and the Government of Quebec are talking about? This has been going on too long. We will take the time to analyze their process, but it does not fix a thing. As nice as it would be to have a woman in a given region, we have to work with the people we have. We do not care if the government appoints male or female judges; we just want the government to appoint judges.

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we are moving forward with appointing judges to the superior courts across the country. I am very pleased to have appointed 47 judges across the country, including 22 deputy judges. Further, I am proud of the fact that budget 2017 opened up space for 28 new judicial appointments, which we will continue to fill.

Oral Questions

In terms of the no one solution, as the Supreme Court of Canada has talked about, court delays require a culture shift, a move from complacency. It is going to require not only the federal government but the provinces and territories to come up with substantive solutions to resolve the delays.

* * *

• (1430)

ETHICS

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the Prime Minister is not being honest with Canadians about his trip to billionaire island. He claimed that taking a private helicopter was the only way he could get to the private island, but one of his staff made the same trip on a commercially chartered seaplane. He has given taxpayers a bill for \$134,000 for his so-called private family personal vacation, and a whole lot of excuses. It is a pattern. How can Canadians believe anything the Prime Minister says?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been the case of previous prime ministers, the Prime Minister must always be in the position to carry out official government duties.

As has been the case with previous prime ministers, the Prime Minister always is in contact with his office and is routinely provided with the resources during all travels, domestically and internationally and whether on personal or government business. As has also been stated, the RCMP determines the safest route for the Prime Minister to travel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me try this again.

After countless broken election promises, this government continues to stretch the truth or talk out of both sides of its mouth on a daily basis.

Here is further proof that the Prime Minister is not telling the truth: in his defence, regarding his personal vacation, he said that the private helicopter was the only way to get to the Aga Khan's island.

How will the Liberal Prime Minister spin this, now that we have proof that other modes of transportation do exist? When will he begin to talk straight? How are honest Canadians supposed to trust this Prime Minister?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no matter where the Prime Minister travels, he must always be able to carry out his official duties. Like his predecessors, the Prime Minister is always in contact with his office and routinely receives technical support during his travels domestically and internationally and whether on personal or government business. The RCMP determines the safest route for the Prime Minister to travel.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us review the facts. First the Prime Minister violated the rules by

getting on the Aga Khan's helicopter, then he misled Canadians by saying "that was my only option", but today, he is blaming the RCMP for that one. Then he failed to disclose the full amount of the \$134,000 that his little Xmas getaway cost taxpayers. What arrogance.

Will the Prime Minister come clean and admit that he willingly and knowingly broke the rules?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been said time and time again, regardless of whether on personal or business travel, the Prime Minister must travel in government aircraft. The RCMP determines the securest way for the Prime Minister to travel, and I have to say this government is committed to working hard for Canadians, and that is where our focus is.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I realize members feel strongly about topics in question period, but I urge the hon. members for St. Albert—Edmonton and Banff—Airdrie to contain themselves.

The hon. opposition House leader has the floor.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this trip has once again exposed the Prime Minister's bad judgment, his disrespect for the Canadian taxpayer, and his lack of integrity. A prime minister should have good judgment. A prime minister should respect the Canadian taxpayer, and a prime minister should have integrity. This one cannot even keep his Aga Khan holiday story straight.

What is the next shoe that is going to drop? What is the next thing that Canadians are going to find out that the Prime Minister has been misleading them on?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, regardless of where the Prime Minister is, he must always be in the position to carry out his official duties.

This Prime Minister made a campaign commitment to Canadians to lower taxes on middle-class Canadians by increasing taxes on the wealthiest one per cent of Canadians. That is exactly what we did. This government committed to help families with children who need the Canada child benefit the most. That is exactly what we did by delivering on the Canada child benefit. This government will continue to respond to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing.

*Oral Questions***HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government claims to be standing up for the human rights of LGBTQ communities around the world, yet it has neither said nor done a single thing about the campaign of mass arrests and incarceration of gay men in Chechnya. When will the government move on from symbols and platitudes and join nations, including the U.K. and even the U.S., in condemning this campaign by the Chechnyan government? Will the government now call for an international investigation into the arrests, torture, and resulting deaths of gay men in Chechnya?

• (1435)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course the government is concerned by any and all allegations of human rights violations in Chechnya, Russia, including to the LGBTQ2 community. Support for LGBTQ2 rights is a priority for our government, which is why the Prime Minister appointed a special adviser for LGBTQ2 issues. Our government strongly stands up for those rights in Canada and around the world. LGBTQ2 rights have no border, and they must be respected and promoted everywhere. The LGBTQ2 community in Russia, including Chechnya, can count on Canada's strong support.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what empty rhetoric.

Since this government is so keen on following the Trump administration, why not do the same in this case by standing up and speaking out? More than 100 gay men have been sent to concentration camps in Chechnya and three of them have died after being tortured.

Canadians want the Liberals to stand up for the LGBTQ community in Canada and abroad.

Again, will the government join its international partners and condemn these egregious human rights violations?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we are very concerned by the allegations of human rights violations in Chechnya, Russia, including the human rights of the LGBTQ2 community. Support for LGBTQ2 rights is a priority for our government, which is why the Prime Minister appointed a special adviser for that community.

Our government promotes these rights in Canada and around the world. LGBTQ2 rights have no borders, and they must be respected here in Canada and in Russia. The LGBTQ2 community in Russia can count on Canada's strong support.

* * *

[*English*]

ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sure pays to be friends with the Prime Minister. We know that SSHRC has funnelled money to the Liberal propaganda unit, Canada 2020. Documents reveal that government officials decided to give Canada 2020 taxpayers' money in the hopes that Canada 2020 would

grant them access to senior cabinet members. The Prime Minister's friends at Canada 2020 twisted themselves and their program into a pretzel to make sure they could get the taxpayers' cash. Why does the science minister's agency feel that it needs to pay Canada 2020 to access its own government?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council has a mandate to promote and share research outcomes with Canadians. As I have said before, SSHRC is an arm's-length organization that is able to issue contracts below a certain dollar amount. This fell below that dollar amount. SSHRC took an independent decision.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): It seems as if the minister is shirking her responsibilities, Mr. Speaker.

Something is clearly wrong. The science minister does not obviously feel comfortable around the cabinet table. She feels the need to use \$20,000 of taxpayer money to have Liberal insiders at Canada 2020 lobby her cabinet colleagues on her behalf. Will the science minister finally be honest with Canadians and admit that this is a blatant misuse of taxpayers' funds, and that it is her way of pandering to the Prime Minister and his Liberal friends at Canada 2020?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given my hon. colleague's newfound interest in science and social sciences, I can tell him that SSHRC supported other science-related conferences, including the Canadian science policy conference, the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Royal Society—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Members on all sides frequently hear things they do not like in question period, usually without reacting. I know we can all do this, so let us all try a little harder.

The hon. Minister of Science has 15 seconds left.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: SSHRC has supported other science-related conferences, Mr. Speaker, such as the Canadian science policy conference, the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars, the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, and the list goes on.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the interest is why we are spending research funding dollars for infomercials to promote the Liberals.

It seems the best way to talk to the Liberal front bench is to cut a cheque to Liberal insiders.

SSHRC gave \$20,000 of research funding money to Canada 2020 for a Liberal innovation infomercial. Why? It is because it thought it was the best way to access Liberal ministers and make its case for more funding.

Why do the government's own agencies need to funnel money to the Prime Minister's childhood friend at Canada 2020 just to get in front of cabinet?

• (1440)

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, given my hon. colleague's new-found interest in science, let me give the House the facts: \$2 billion on research and innovation infrastructure—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I ask members to settle down and listen. I encourage ministers not to say things that create disorder.

The hon. Minister of Science has a few more seconds.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, let me recount our accomplishments in science: \$2 billion in research and innovation infrastructure; \$900 million in the Canada first research excellence fund; \$125 million on artificial intelligence; \$117 million on the new Canada 150 research chairs; \$80 million in the new plant facility—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

[Translation]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that no research was done on Canada 2020. It is basically Liberal advertising that cost Canadian taxpayers \$20,000.

Given that the scientific community has found that more funding is needed for research, how can we be sure that the Liberals are not wasting existing funding on the Prime Minister's friends?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

[English]

Let me go over our investments in science: \$2 billion for research and innovation infrastructure; \$900 million for the Canada first research excellence fund; \$454 million to retool on skills; \$221 million for 10,000 new work-integrated learning spaces for Mitacs; \$125 million for artificial intelligence; \$117 million for the Canada 150 research chairs; \$80 million for a new plant research facility.

* * *

SCIENCE

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the final report on federal support for fundamental science was tabled yesterday. The Naylor report challenges the government to take immediate action to reverse the decline of scientific research in Canada.

Will the government commit to enacting all recommendations in this report, including number 5.5, which calls for hard gender equity targets and gender quotas? Will this report be another Liberal shelf-bender, or will the government take action?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the report will help our government continue to support fundamental science and to build on the investments we have already made: \$2 billion for research and innovation infrastructure; \$900 million for the Canada first research excellence fund; \$900 million for superclusters to bring together research, government, and business;

Oral Questions

\$454 million to retool on skills; \$221 million for 10,000 work-integrated learning spaces for our—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says he is a feminist, yet when it comes to making real change happen for women in Canada, he is all talk.

Canada has the eighth-largest gender pay gap among the 35 OECD countries, yet the government refuses to act, knowing the most effective way to grow the economy is to bring in pay equity legislation now.

Today is Equal Pay Day in Canada, because in 2017 women still have to work 3.5 months longer to earn what men earn in 12 months.

How much longer will the Prime Minister make women wait?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree that equal pay for work of equal value is a fundamental right. That is why we are so proud to be bringing forward proactive pay equity legislation by 2018. We are in the process now of consulting with stakeholders. We want to make sure that we design a process that ensures women get the pay that they deserve and that the process is fair for all.

* * *

• (1445)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every morning Canadians get up and start their daily routines. They take care of their kids, bid good day to their partners, and head to work. Every day there are those who do the same, but their work is our safety. They run into fire, perform CPR on our loved ones, and put their lives on the line for us and our families.

Considering the impact that these community heroes have on our lives, would the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness inform this House how the government is keeping its promise to support them and their families?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was proud to stand with the Prime Minister on Parliament Hill today with Canadian firefighters, to support the women and men who risk their lives to keep us safe and to support their families when tragedy strikes. That is why budget 2017 includes \$20 million per year for the establishment of a new tax-free benefit for the families of public safety officers who fall in the line of duty. Our aim is to have this heroes benefit up and running by the spring of next year. We will continue doing everything we can to support public safety officers. They deserve the respect of all Canadians.

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STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last election the Liberals made only two promises regarding changes to the Standing Orders: to prohibit omnibus bills, and to prohibit parliamentary secretaries from sitting on committees. There was nothing about four-day work weeks. There was nothing about the Prime Minister turning up one day a week. There was certainly nothing about shutting down the opposition in committees.

Will the government therefore stop pretending it has a mandate to carry through election commitments that it never made, remove the gun that it has been holding to the heads of the opposition members in the procedure and House affairs committee, and start a real conversation?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we committed to modernizing Parliament and bringing it into the 21st century. I have been asking for a conversation and a dialogue this whole time. The discussion paper that was released was in addition to the work that the procedure and House affairs committee was already doing.

I know that all members believe that we probably could modernize and work better in this place. I am saying let us have that conversation. Let us share our ideas. Let us have constructive feedback so that we can bring this workplace into the 21st century.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals can continue to use all the buzzwords and spin that they like, but Canadians see through this blatant Liberal power grab. It is their democracy and they will not stand for this. Liberals cannot say they are having a conversation when they are ramming through substantive changes that would remove accountability. Canadians expect the government to be held accountable. They expect legislation to be properly debated. They expect their Prime Minister to show up and answer questions more than once a week. Why do the Liberals think they can make these substantive changes without the unanimous consent of all political parties?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect all members of Parliament to work better in this place. That is exactly why we would like to talk about some of these ideas, so that we can modernize the way this place works.

Last week, we saw the Prime Minister in question period answer all questions, not just in the leaders' round but from members of Parliament on both sides of this House. In addition, we saw that the Prime Minister was in question period on other days. There are no Liberal members suggesting that the Prime Minister attend only once a week.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): That was more Liberal spin and buzzwords, Mr. Speaker.

The opposition members are firmly against this Liberal power grab. The government House leader can try to call that a veto or whatever she likes, but Canadians see through this sham. Changes to the Standing Orders should be done with the unanimous consent of all parties, as was the case in the previous Parliament when the Liberal vice-chair on PROC used the veto on minor changes to the Standing Orders. That is right. None other than the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader understood the need for unanimous consent. Why was unanimous consent good for the Liberals then and not now?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are encouraging all members of Parliament to be the voice that Canadians expect them to be.

In the election campaign, we committed to Canadians that their voices would be heard in this place. That is why we committed to modernizing the way this place works. It is an important conversation to have. It is an important discussion to have. I am saying let us share our ideas. Let us have a constructive conversation, and let us bring this workplace into the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once upon a time there was a Liberal leader who made lovely promises of openness and transparency in order to get elected.

The fairy tale was short-lived because, behind the facade, the Liberals' true nature gave rise to enormous, uncontrollable budget deficits. So much for discussions. The leader, now the Prime Minister, wants to control everything without the unanimous support of members.

Before midnight strikes, will the leader of the government in the House bring this story that she herself has created to a close in order to protect our democracy and our Parliament?

● (1450)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign we promised to modernize Parliament and to turn it into a 21st century workplace.

I encourage all members to take part in the conversation and to express their ideas. It is very important that we have this conversation.

Oral Questions

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after a year of study and consultations by both the trade committee and the government, the Liberals still will not take a stand on the TPP.

Recently the minister met with TPP counterparts in Chile, which shows that the Liberals are actively pursuing this job-killing agreement.

Tens of thousands of Canadians have told the Liberals that they have deep concerns with the TPP. What else will it take for the Liberal government to stop pursuing this bad deal?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows well, because I reported to her when I came back from Chile.

As members know, the Asia-Pacific region is a priority for our government. We owe it to Canadian workers, Canadian families, Canadian exporters to look at expanding markets, because more trade equals more growth, and more growth equals more jobs.

We will continue to have an ambitious trade agenda when it comes to the Asia-Pacific region.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the dean of Dalhousie University's faculty of management made it very clear that, if the Liberals really want to help the dairy industry deal with the breach they created with the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, they must grant tariff quotas to Canadian processors.

Industry stakeholders have been waiting for months for an answer, but the Liberals have left them in limbo. CETA takes effect in less than three months.

Can the Liberals confirm today that they will grant tariff quotas to Canadian processors, yes or no?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As she knows, we are listening to people from the industry. I have met with people in the dairy industry from across the country. We are examining this issue with interest, and we will soon make a decision for Canadian dairy producers.

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals rushed to restore education funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency, despite abundant evidence that UNRWA employees actively support terrorism and incite anti-Semitism.

The minister assured Canadians that \$25 million would teach Palestinian children tolerance and respect, but a detailed news study by UN Watch revealed 60 new examples of hate on UNRWA teacher and staff Facebook pages.

Our Conservative government effectively delivered aid around UNRWA. Why can the Liberals not do so?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we restored funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, we have been monitoring the organization's activities very closely, and we take all allegations very seriously.

Since Canada has been at the table, the organization has been monitored more and more closely. We are conducting background checks on financial services employees, ensuring that executives and teachers are getting training on the importance of web independence, and reviewing the educational materials. I can assure the House that Canadians' money is being put to good use.

[English]

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, UN Watch also revealed that the Liberals have asked UNRWA officials for help, help to find a way to help spin Canadians that more funding to UNRWA is a good idea.

What this report also reveals to us is that this UN organization has almost 100 cases of schoolteachers, principals, as well as UNRWA employees that are actually encouraging jihadi terrorism, anti-Semitism, denying the Holocaust, celebrating Hitler, and actually promoting maps to their students where Israel is not even on the map.

Knowing what we know about this organization, why are the Liberals funding teachers, principals, and UNRWA workers who support anti-Semitism?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I can assure the House that we are closely monitoring the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We are also reviewing the educational materials, and we are satisfied with the progress that is being made.

Even the Israeli ministry of defence made a statement regarding this organization. It said:

● (1455)

[English]

UNRWA is making efforts to create a balanced, positive curriculum with universal values free from violence and incitement after criticism directed at the agency.

That is from the Israeli ministry of defence.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, it is not happening.

Oral Questions

Canada has urged Venezuela's repressive president to release political prisoners. Lilian Tintori, the wife of Leopoldo Lopez, Venezuela's leading political prisoner, has met OAS Secretary General Almagro, President Trump, the UN high commissioner for human rights, the presidents of Mexico and Argentina, even the Pope, but for some reason, Senora Tintori cannot get a meeting with the Prime Minister. Why will the Prime Minister not take a meeting and send a strong message to President Maduro?

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we call on the Government of Venezuela to respect its international commitments to democracy and human rights. Canada co-sponsored an OAS resolution to reiterate just that.

Denying freedom of political participation contradicts Venezuela's international obligations and prevents progress for the country. In concert with our OAS partners, we call on Venezuela to hold elections, restore democratic order, release political prisoners, and work with its national assembly in the best interests of the Venezuelan people.

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HOUSING

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for Canadians living in some of our largest cities, the dream of buying their first home is becoming more difficult, and our existing homeowners want to ensure that their home is protected. Over the past year alone, the average house price in Toronto has grown by more than one-third, with ripple effects across the greater Toronto area.

Could the Minister of Finance please give the House an update on his hopes of getting meetings with our provincial and municipal counterparts?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, it is one of the finance minister's responsibilities to work to ensure a healthy, competitive, and stable housing market. That is why after years of inaction we have taken two actions to actually deal with pockets of risk in Toronto and Vancouver.

We remain concerned with dramatic price increases, the implications for the market, and the implications for household affordability. That is why I have asked Ontario Minister of Finance Charles Sousa and the Toronto mayor to have a meeting, so that we can ensure we have coordinated policy actions to deal with this ongoing challenge.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister stated that transparency is important, but it has now been 16 months since she gutted the First Nations Financial Transparency Act. This morning, we heard testimony from Loretta Burnstick from Alexander First Nation. She told us, "It's virtually impossible as a band member to get full disclosure of our finances. We have no say. We are kept out."

Even Liberal backbenchers agree with the intention of our act, so would the minister stand up and tell first nations people, will it be

months, years, or never that they will get the same access to information that all other Canadians enjoy?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House, and wish her son all the best.

Everyone, including first nations governments, supports transparency and accountability. We have been working with indigenous organizations, the AFN, and AFOA Canada, the aboriginal financial officers association, on ways to enhance mutual accountability.

The government is also reaching out to community members and leadership through comprehensive online engagement, and is planning in-person sessions across the country over the coming months.

We will continue to work in full partnership with first nations to improve mutual accountability—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, almost three years ago, the Mount Polley mine disaster spilled 25 million cubic metres of toxic waste into Quesnel Lake, which provides drinking water for local communities and is home to one of the world's greatest sockeye salmon runs. Both Imperial Metals and the B.C. Liberal government were found negligent, but the corporation faced no fines and the B.C. government refused to take responsibility.

The Prime Minister promised to usher in a new era of protection for Canadian waterways, so where is it? Why is the minister letting both guilty parties off the hook, and when will he enforce the Fisheries Act?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friend knows very well that not only are we committed to enforcing the Fisheries Act, but we are also committed to investing and improving marine safety and our ability to do world-class science to ensure that all the species the member referred to are in fact protected in the most sustainable way.

He knows the Prime Minister announced in the member's province in November a historic investment in ocean protections. This will allow us not only, in the case of an offence under the Fisheries Act, to prosecute those offenders, but also to prevent those incidents from happening.

• (1500)

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last October, the House unanimously agreed to my Motion No. 40, which called on the government, in collaboration with provincial, territorial, municipal, and indigenous organizations, to take meaningful steps to address the issues of abandoned and derelict vessels within six months.

Could the Minister of Transport please provide an update to Canadians on this commitment?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for South Shore—St. Margarets for her tireless advocacy on this file. I share her concerns, as well as those of her constituents and all Canadians.

That is why I was delighted to be with the Prime Minister on November 7 in Vancouver when we announced the historic oceans protection plan, which includes a strategy to address the issue of abandoned and derelict vessels. Even better, in budget 2017, we consolidated the \$1.5 billion that would be required to do the oceans protection plan. These are very meaningful steps in the right direction.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from Bombardier and the Aga Khan to Chinese billionaires, it is clear that the Prime Minister likes padding his friends' pockets.

It turns out that the director of *Canada: The Story of Us* is John English, the elder Trudeau's biographer. The series will also be used in university settings, which will certainly be good for Mr. English's bank account.

Did the Prime Minister use \$675 million in public funds to indirectly line the pockets of another friend of his?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, and I just want to remind her that it is important for CBC/Radio-Canada to operate at arm's length from our government.

Our goal is to ensure that CBC/Radio-Canada is accountable for its own content. Since the member's question has to do with CBC/Radio-Canada programming, I would suggest that she contact the crown corporation directly.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' procrastination has gone on long enough. Since the Jordan decision, requests for a stay in proceedings in Quebec alone have increased by 70% from 574 to 809.

Arguing over the number of positions to fill is not going to solve the problem. If Quebec tells Ottawa that it needs to appoint 14 judges, then Ottawa needs to appoint 14 judges.

Oral Questions

When will the 40 Liberal MPs from Quebec appeal to the Minister of Justice to do her job and appoint judges?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the issue of delays is an important one. That is why we are taking concrete action to address this issue.

I am pleased to have appointed 47 superior court justices, 22 deputy judges, three from the province of Quebec. There are six vacancies in the province of Quebec, and I will be moving forward with filling those vacancies in the near future.

The issue of delays is an issue that the federal government, the provinces, and territories need to address together in terms of the cultural shift that is required to eliminate the delays.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as far as the Jordan decision is concerned, the Chief Justice of the Quebec Superior Court was clear: it is time for Ottawa to get moving.

We know that the Liberals are preoccupied with legalizing marijuana and with ethical matters, but in the meantime, criminals are being released because their trials are taking too long. This is no time to be arguing over the number of judges. Whether we need 14 judges or six, it is time to take action.

Does the minister realize that her procrastination is jeopardizing public safety?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we are taking action in this regard. My office has had the opportunity to speak with the chief justice. We will continue to have conversations with the province of Quebec.

I will continue to add to the 47 appointments I have already made to the superior courts through our open and transparent process. However, with respect to court delays, there is no one solution to this issue. That is why I am working in a collaborative manner with all my provincial and territorial counterparts, including within the province of Quebec. The only way we are going to be able to resolve the issues of delays is if we do it together.

• (1505)

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I would like some clarification.

We received notice that you will be ruling on a question of privilege. Obviously, these questions are of the utmost importance to the House. I am aware of past practices of the House and have personal experience in the matter, and I wanted to ensure that the ruling will be made before we move to orders of the day.

The Speaker: It is up to the Speaker to decide when rulings will be made. In this case, it will be made after orders of the day are called.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period, I could not help but hear the government House leader said that the Prime Minister answered every question in question period last Wednesday. Having answered a question myself, I know that not to be true. I wonder if she wants to—

The Speaker: This is a matter of debate.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the Minister of Science today indicated that I had a new interest in science. It is a matter of public record that for more than 40 years I have been a supporter of science as a professional engineer, as a fellow of Engineers Canada.

The Speaker: This too is a matter of debate, although I have—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. As I said earlier today, I urge all members to be careful in the words they use and not use phrases that cause disorder.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I too am rising on a point of order, arising from the same point my friend from Sarnia—Lambton did. It is a matter of record that I have a Bachelor of Science in zoology and I served many years as a national parks warden. I served in many capacities as a fisheries technician, as a fisheries biologist. I find the comments completely unwarranted in the House—

The Speaker: Order, please. I think the members have made their points even if they are matters of debate.

Orders of the day.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to the Standing Orders. Standing Order 52(1) says:

Leave to make a motion for the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration must be asked for after the ordinary daily routine of business as set out in sections (3) and (4) of Standing Order 30 is concluded.

I have a request before you to make a motion for an emergency debate. My understanding of that Standing Order would be that I have the opportunity to make that motion prior to proceeding to orders of the day. There is a reference in that Standing Order to sections (3) and (4) of 30, but there is no reference in sections (3) and (4) of 30 to anything with respect to not having motions for introduction of an emergency debate.

The rules provide for me to make that motion with respect to emergency debates right now before we proceed to government orders.

The Speaker: I regret to inform the hon. member that we did not get to the end of routine proceedings, which has been interrupted today. Therefore, the hon. member has unfortunately lost his opportunity to raise the question today.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1510)
[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 14

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved that a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be concurred in.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1545)
[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 256)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Beech
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fragiskatos	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen

Government Orders

Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Lighbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Poissant
Ratansi
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudeau
Vaughan
Whalen
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 165

Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Khera
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peterson
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Tootoo
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Young

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif
Albrecht
Arnold
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bergen
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher
Boulerice
Brosseau
Calkins
Caron
Chong
Clement
Cullen
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeschen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Egliniski
Fast
Gallant

Albas
Allison
Aubin
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Berthold
Blaikie
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brown
Cannings
Carrie
Clarke
Cooper
Davies
Diotte
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseau
Falk
Fortin
Garrison

Généreux
Gill
Godin
Harder
Hughes
Johns
Kelly
Kitchen
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Liepert
Leslie
Lukiwski
Maguire
Marcil
May (Saanch—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Motz
Nater
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Rankin
Rempel
Ritz
Sansoucy
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stetski
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

Genus
Gladu
Hardcastle
Hoback
Jeneroux
Jolibois
Kent
Kmiec
Lake
Laverdière
Leitch
Lobb
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nantel
Nuttall
Pauzé
Ramsey
Reid
Richards
Saganash
Saroya
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 126

PAIRED

Members

Foote

Moore — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.*[English]*

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-44, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the first time and printed.

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

Mr. Garnett Genus: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, as you know, I have given notice of a request for an emergency debate, and you ruled that it could not be moved under normal circumstances. However, given the importance of this issue and partisanship aside, we need to have a debate on the situation in Syria. There needs to be a conversation in the House about that urgent foreign policy situation. I would like to request the unanimous consent of the House to proceed to a motion for an emergency debate.

● (1550)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.

*Speaker's Ruling***PRIVILEGE**

ALLEGED ACTIONS OF MINISTER OF INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS IN CHAMBER—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on March 23, 2017, by the House leader of the official opposition regarding an alleged intimidation in the chamber by the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs on March 22, 2017.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the House leader of the official opposition for having raised this matter, as well as the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, the member for Chilliwack—Hope, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, the member for Victoria, and the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook for their comments.

[English]

In her arguments, the opposition House leader stated that on March 22, after she had moved a motion to proceed to orders of the day, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs approached her in a manner she considered to be aggressive.

In response, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs admitted that she had crossed the floor, simply in order to point out to the opposition House leader the presence in the gallery of two particular visitors. Additionally, she apologized for the tone she had used.

[Translation]

To be clear, the Chair considers physical intimidation to be a most serious charge. As Speaker, I firmly believe that all members have the right to execute their parliamentary responsibilities, be it in the chamber or elsewhere, free from intimidation. It is from that standpoint that I have reviewed carefully this matter, including the video of March 22, 2017.

[English]

As with any claim of a breach of privilege, including one founded on an allegation of a member being intimidated, the Chair must assess if the member was impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties.

[Translation]

As Speaker Bosley noted on May 1, 1986, at page 12847 of Debates:

Should an Hon. Member be able to say that something has happened which prevented him or her from performing functions, that he or she has been threatened, intimidated, or in any way unduly influenced, there would be a case for the Chair to consider.

[English]

Based on a review of the video, it is clear that the minister crossed the floor to the opposition House leader's seat and can be seen pointing to the gallery. She appears to be animated. The comments of the minister in that regard indicate that she regrets and apologizes for the tone she used in that incident. What is not clear to the Chair is how the opposition House leader was impeded in the performance of her duties. As honourable members know, this is a key factor in any determination of a prima facie question of privilege of this nature.

As the second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* points out at page 109:

In order to find a *prima facie* breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the Member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions....

[Translation]

Given the procedural jurisprudence available to me, and in view of the particular circumstances of this case, I cannot conclude that there has been a prima facie breach of privilege.

[English]

Needless to say, all members are aware of the importance of professional and courteous behaviour at all times. Despite the varying views on issues which we espouse in this chamber, even vehemently at times, we are, at a minimum, colleagues who deserve the utmost respect from each other.

I remind members that this applies even during times of procedural tension.

[Translation]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

• (1600)

[English]

DISPOSITION OF PRIMA FACIE QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on April 7, 2017, by the hon. member for Perth—Wellington, in which he asks that the matter of privilege under debate on April 6, 2017, which was superseded by the adoption of a motion to proceed to orders of the day, be revived.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the member for Perth—Wellington for having raised the matter in the House, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, House leader of the official opposition, and the members for Beloeil—Chambly, Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Sarnia—Lambton, Banff—Airdrie, Calgary Signal Hill, and York—Simcoe for their contributions to the discussion on this important matter and unprecedented circumstance.

[English]

In presenting his case, the member for Perth—Wellington acknowledged that a motion to proceed to orders of the day while the House is considering a matter of privilege is procedurally in order. On this point, he and the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader agree. The Chair also agrees that the motion, as moved, was in order, and this is supported by numerous authorities.

Privilege

Rather, it is on the issue of whether and how such a matter of privilege can be revived that the member for Perth—Wellington focused his argument. He pointed out that other types of proceedings, like the consideration of motions of instruction to committees or motions to concur in a committee report, can be considered again once a motion to proceed to orders of the day has been adopted. He argued that allowing such a motion to permanently end further consideration of something as important as a question of privilege would create a dangerous precedent. He asked the Chair to effectively restart the proceedings on the question of privilege by again finding a *prima facie* case of privilege on the matter relating to the free movement of members in the parliamentary precinct, as originally raised by the member for Milton.

[Translation]

The problem facing the Chair then is determining, first whether it is procedurally in order to revive a matter of privilege that has been superseded and second, in the affirmative, how that could be done in a procedurally acceptable manner.

[English]

If a motion to proceed to orders of the day is adopted when the House is considering a motion of instruction or a motion to concur in a committee report, the motion is also dropped from the Order Paper. However, members who wish to revive the matter can again give the required 48 hours' notice of the same motion and then move it in the House. As the member for Perth—Wellington correctly stated, this means that: "one is back where one began and can reinitiate the same identical proceeding in the usual fashion appropriate to that class of motion."

These arguments are persuasive, and accordingly the Chair must conclude that it is procedurally possible to revive a matter of privilege that has been likewise superseded.

[Translation]

Having answered the first question in the affirmative, the next question for the Chair is determining how this ought to be done. The member for Perth—Wellington and others argue that this is properly done by raising the matter in the House and having the Speaker again give priority consideration to it.

[English]

As a consequence of the events of April 6, the Chair can see a few other ways the matter of privilege could be revived. The member for Milton—or any other member, for that matter—could seek to revive the question by way of written notice on the Notice Paper. As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, states at page 154, such a notice of motion, unless it were proposed by a minister, would be

placed on the *Order Paper* under the list of Private Members' Business items outside the Order of Precedence following the 48 hours' notice period.

The matter could also be brought before the House as an opposition motion.

[Translation]

However, the situation in which the House finds itself is unprecedented. The Chair can find no instance of debate on a matter of privilege superseded by the adoption of a motion to

proceed to orders of the day. At the same time, the Speaker has a duty to uphold the fundamental rights and privileges of the House and of its members. That is why, when questions of privilege are raised, the Speaker has to decide whether, *prima facie*, they ought to have immediate priority consideration.

If a superseded matter of privilege were brought forward again as the subject of an opposition day, the Chair would not likely interfere, unless the motion was found to be defective in some way.

[English]

If a superseded matter of privilege were put down for debate via the Notice Paper, it could also eventually proceed, pursuant to the procedures applicable to government or private members' business, as the case may be. However, as is stated in O'Brien and Bosc at page 154, the member in whose name the item stands has another option, and

may decide to seek priority in debate for the motion (e.g. if new information were to come to light). The Member must then seek to convince the Speaker that the matter raised in the motion should be considered a *prima facie* question of privilege.

This, in a sense, is a third manner in which a matter of privilege can be revived and it is, for all practical purposes, the same method that the member for Perth—Wellington is advocating.

Given the unprecedented nature of this circumstance, and given the weight of procedural jurisprudence, the Chair is inclined to conclude that there are sufficient grounds for allowing the matter of privilege superseded on April 6 to be revived in the manner proposed by the member for Perth—Wellington. Accordingly, without restating my ruling of April 6 in the matter of delayed access to the parliamentary precinct, I again find a *prima facie* question of privilege.

I now invite the member for Perth—Wellington to move the appropriate motion.

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC) moved:

That the question of privilege regarding the free movement of Members of Parliament within the Parliamentary Precinct raised on Wednesday, March 22, 2017, be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that your ruling today is truly a testament to your position as Speaker, and to the Speakers who have gone before you. Truly, the role of the Speaker is one of the utmost principles in our parliamentary democracy, and I think today, in the long line of Speakers who have gone before, you have found the appropriate ruling.

After all, often the role of the Speaker is determined to be one of a referee, and we often hear that referred to in tour groups and among university lecturers. However, the role of the Speaker is so much more than that. The Speaker is truly the defender of the rights and privileges of this place.

I am reminded from time to time of the words of a great English Speaker, William Lenthall, who said with great conviction to the King in his place in his time, when met with King Charles I, the executive of the day:

Privilege

...I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place but as this house is pleased to direct me whose servant I am....

Today the Speaker made such a ruling and stood up to the face of opposition from the government ministers.

Let me begin my remarks by saying that I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

It is in a way unfortunate that we have to have a redo of this debate. This debate was properly started last week when the Speaker did rightly find a prima facie case of privilege, and it is troubling in two manners: first, the nature of the incident itself, that two members of Parliament were prevented from undertaking their duties of voting in this House; and second, by the unfortunate actions that were undertaken by the government in preventing this matter from coming to a vote.

As the Speaker rightly found in his ruling, this is unprecedented. Never before in the history of this place has a matter of privilege been dealt with in such a way. Never before in this place has the government shut down and prevented all 338 members of this House from voting on a matter of the privileges of us as parliamentarians. Every other case of privilege has been dealt with one way or another through a vote, either in the affirmative or in the negative, but not in this case.

This is most unfortunate. It is unfortunate for so many reasons. If, as members in this House noted before, the government is allowed to proceed in this manner on this case, how many times going forward will votes on questions of privilege be prevented from coming to a vote in this House by the duly elected members of this House?

I want to state the great respect I have for this institution and for those who serve this institution. I want to state as well the respect I have, specifically, for the parliamentary protective service, in whom I have the utmost of confidence for defending us and keeping us safe as parliamentarians.

In my short time as a parliamentarian—I have only been elected for about a year and a half—I have always felt safe in the exercising of my duties here in this place, and indeed, another speaker in last week's debate, quoted from the back of our ID badges, and I think it is worthwhile to reread that into the record:

Under the law of parliamentary privilege, the bearer has free and open access at all times, without obstruction or interference to the precincts of the House of Parliament of which the bearer is a member.

In fact, the law of parliamentary privilege is enshrined constitutionally in section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, also more commonly known to us in its original title, the British North America Act, 1867.

Let us remember exactly what took place on budget day. Two members of Parliament, at least, were affected. We know of at least two. There could have been others as well. There was indication from the Speaker's original ruling that there were others potentially on the buses who were also denied access. However, at least two members, the members from Milton and Beauce, were unable to attend a vote in this House, in this place.

The outcome of that particular vote is not relevant. The fact is that they were prevented from doing their duty, the duty that they as

elected members of this place are entrusted to do on behalf of their constituents. All of us have that duty to the constituents we are honoured and privileged to represent.

• (1605)

Let us imagine for just a moment how this could have played out differently. Imagine there had been a vote of confidence and members were prevented by one way or another from attending this place to vote. Certainly in this case there is a majority government and one or two members not exercising their vote may not seem like a significant matter. Let us think back into the not-so-distant past to May 2005. There was a budget vote, a confidence vote in this very House. The Paul Martin Liberals were on the ropes. It looked as if they could be defeated. A couple of lucky floor crossings and the support of an independent member of Parliament meant that it ended up in a tie vote. Mr. Speaker Milliken at the time was forced into the position of breaking that tie vote in the affirmative. One vote would have made the difference, in that case, of an election, the dissolution of Parliament, or the continuation of that government. It would have been one vote.

In fact, in this Parliament not too long ago on Bill C-10, on a Monday morning, or afternoon by the time we voted, we had a tie vote in this House on a piece of government legislation. One vote would have made the difference between that piece of legislation moving on to third reading and that piece of legislation being defeated in this place. The Speaker at the time was forced to once again break a tie. Interestingly, in a majority government, that does not happen very often, but it happened in that case. I would point out that it is somewhat ironic that the government is currently proposing changes, and one of the changes it has mentioned is perhaps sitting earlier in the morning, but if we use the example of Bill C-10, that vote was in the early afternoon, so I would be surprised how many members might be in this House at that time.

We are faced with the question now of where we go from here, where we move forward in the appropriate manner. As my motion clearly states, it is appropriate at this point that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, as it is the appropriate location. I know there have been flimsy procedural efforts for the committee to self-direct to undertake its own study of privilege, but as we know, the Standing Orders clearly state that matters of privilege do not fall under the mandate of the procedure and House affairs committee, and it falls on the House to direct the appropriate committee to undertake a study of the privilege. After all, the rights and privileges of this House are a matter for this House to undertake.

I do feel a bit like Bill Murray in the movie *Groundhog Day*; we are redoing the same battle again and again, the same debate that has been undertaken. I have been told I am better looking than Bill Murray. I am not so sure about that, but I will say this. On a matter as important as the privileges of this House, a procedurally flimsy effort by the government to shut down the debate is truly unfortunate. Two members were denied the right to vote and now, by the Liberals' efforts, the attempt was to deny 338 members the right to vote. That is truly unfortunate.

Privilege

It is unfortunate that it is being done at the same time that the procedure and House affairs committee is undertaking a Standing Order change, a change that would be done unilaterally without the support of opposition parties. The government states that it wants to have a discussion on the matter. A discussion can only happen if both sides are listening and discussing. The privileges of this House are of the utmost importance to each and every member of this House. It is not a matter for the government to decide. Rather, it is a matter for this House to decide by way of a vote.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a rather historic moment in the House, given that the Speaker has ruled in favour of the member who raised a question of privilege pertaining to another privilege motion. This is certainly a blow for the government and especially for the member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert, who moved the motion to proceed to orders of the day.

Earlier, the Speaker gave his ruling on the motion, which was inappropriate in the circumstances. In fact, we were debating a question of privilege and the debate was to end with a vote. This debate was interrupted by the motion moved by my government colleague.

I would like to hear the member's thoughts on the Speaker's historic ruling of today on the motion to end debate that was adopted by the government one week ago. The Speaker recognized that the situation was unprecedented.

According to my colleague, what effect will this decision have on future questions of privilege raised in the House?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his question.

This is the first time in the history of Parliament that the government has interrupted an important debate on a question of privilege raised in the House. Thus, this is the first time in the history of this place that there has not been a vote on a question of privilege.

[*English*]

Never before in the House has the government shut down the opportunity to actually have a vote on a matter of privilege that is before it. This is parliamentary history without precedent. Every other precedent in O'Brien and Bosc has been clearly delineated to have been a matter that had been dealt with by the House. This has not been the case, and it is truly unfortunate that such heavy-handed tactics would be employed by the government on such an important matter of privilege.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I are both graduates of the same public affairs program at Carleton. It is a good place to go to learn all about parliamentary procedure.

I want to ask the member to highlight the importance of the fight that we are undertaking on behalf of parliamentary democracy. This is really about responsible government. It is about the fact that the executive must be accountable to the legislature and the legislature has certain rights on which the executive cannot trample.

This is a big and consequential fight for the way in which our democracy works. These procedural points all inform that broader issue.

I wonder if the member could comment on that and speak to the fact that Canadians are concerned about this and they are writing to us about these issues.

• (1615)

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, my former classmate is right. The issue before us is one where the government is ramming down procedural changes to the Standing Orders of the House without the consent of the opposition. In every major case, the practice of the House is that these changes are made by consensus, by agreement of all political parties.

The House does not belong to the executive branch. The House belongs to the legislative branch, to each and every one of us as parliamentarians, for us to decide how we govern ourselves within this place, not to be told how to govern ourselves by the executive branch.

I will continue to oppose the one-sided, unilateral efforts by the government in the Standing Orders standoff.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member across the way could assist me in better understanding what he believes his constituents would want. I believe my constituents are in favour of modernizing Parliament. Does he believe his constituents are in favour of modernizing Parliament?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, we as Canadians and we as members of the House have to undertake our duties to this place, and our duties should not be done by unilaterally ramming down changes.

Let us get to the real work by having a real discussion in the procedure and House affairs committee, not by having it one-sided with a guillotine motion that is directing the committee to report back by a certain date without the consensus of the opposition parties.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this question of privilege. I also want to commend the Speaker for the precedent-setting decision today, in which he recognized that, yes, debate had been shut down by the government on the question of privilege, which prevented the House from having a vote, taking the next step, allowing every member to stand to voice his or her yea or nay on the subject of the question of privilege and the next process.

Privilege

I have been a member of Parliament for 17 years and I have seen many questions of privilege come before the House. The question of privilege that was brought forward was on budget day, and that was unusual. When the member for Milton brought forward her question of privilege and spoke to it, and she said it again on April 6, she quoted former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau saying that 50 yards from the parliamentary precinct the MPs were nobodies. I think what Prime Minister Trudeau was saying at that time was that although we were involved in the running of government and bringing forward legislation on the Hill, when we were away from Parliament, we were really just average Joes, that we were really just, as he said, nobodies.

When members of Parliament go back to their constituencies, they understand they need to earn the respect of their constituents. They cannot believe that respect will be afforded to them until they earn it. They earn it during the election, but they need to earn it between elections. The Speaker knows the work we do as members of Parliament. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau may have believed that we were nobodies away from Parliament, but make no mistake, there are certain privileges given to members of Parliament in the parliamentary precinct.

There are certain privileges we are afforded because of our position. For example, members have immunity in the House. We can say pretty well anything we want to say in the House with complete immunity. It may not be in order and the Speaker may cut us off, but we are given immunity for the things we say in the House. Many times one member will tell another member to say something outside of the House, because members know that outside of the House they do not have that privilege. In the House there is privilege.

When a prima facie case of breach of privilege has been found, it is a very serious thing. On budget day, there was another ruling. The member for Don Valley East, though she has been in the House for a long time and ran for Speaker, was snapping pictures in the House. The Speaker rightfully said that was not in order and shut it down. Also, that very same day, the budget was handed out early. The Liberal Party received the budget early. We know that was out of order as well.

However, when two members are on their way to the House of Commons to vote and are prevented from doing that, this becomes, as my colleague said, a very serious matter. It is typically a matter that is then studied and if there are certain reasons it occurred, it is prevented from happening again.

On budget day, when the prima facie case was brought forward, the member for Beauce said that he had missed the vote, as did the member for Milton, because they were holding the buses on account of the empty motorcade, or the cars for the Prime Minister, needing to return in order for them to be brought to the House of Commons.

• (1620)

He said that when he was on the bus, they were being stalled. He got out and asked security why they were being held up. The security guards, who were using walkie-talkies and radios, said that it was because the Prime Minister's empty motorcade was waiting. The members had to wait and, consequently, missed the vote.

There are a couple of other times where we have seen this happen. I remember a former colleague, as will some of my colleagues here, Yvon Godin. We remember him well. In 2014, on the day the German president or chancellor was here, he tried to get to the Hill and was prevented from that. Mr. Godin said that he was a member of Parliament, that he had to get on to the Hill. The security officials, at the time, the RCMP, said that they did not care whether he was a member of Parliament. Members in the House cared. Mr. Godin cared. He stood in the House and the old temperature was rising. His face was getting redder and he passionately spoke about the privileges of a member of Parliament. It made us all feel pretty good that he was defending our rights as members of Parliament.

What happened? The Speaker found there was a prima facie case. It went to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and proper measures were put in place so security realized the importance of members getting to this place.

In 2012, again, the access of members to the House was impeded when the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was on the Hill. I think all of us would understand that massive security measures had to be in place when he was here. Again, a number of members of Parliament were impeded from getting up to the Hill and, again, the Speaker found a prima facie case of a breach of the privileges of members.

Why? Because we are here not only to collect a paycheque, but to do the business of the people of Canada. We are here to represent our constituents. We are here to stand up and make a difference. We are here to hold the government to account. We are here to ensure we bring things forward that are in the best interests of Canadians.

The other day the government prevented this from going to PROC. It prevented us from having a vote to ensure this went to the committee.

Why? Right now PROC is taken up by a government that is trying to push through changes to the Standing Orders that give opposition members privileges, that lay out the rules and groundwork for those privileges. For these types of changes, historically, prime ministers, whether it be Prime Minister Harper, or Prime Minister Chrétien, or other prime ministers, have said that we need unanimity to do this. Because we are elected members of Parliament, we cannot unilaterally change everything in the House. Again, members are expected to represent their constituents and to hold the government to account, a government in waiting on this side and the government in power on that side. However, that does allow the current government the privilege of changing, unilaterally, the Standing Orders in the House.

Again, we know the Prime Minister would like to show up and answer questions in question period for one day instead of throughout the week. We know he wants to shut down Fridays so members of Parliament are not here holding the government to account. The more we carry on with this Parliament, the more we see it is really just an inconvenience to the Prime Minister. He would like to go on without being slowed down in any manner.

Before I conclude my speech, I move:

That the motion be amended by adding the following: "and that the committee make this matter a priority over all other business including its review of the Standing Orders and procedure of the House and its committees."

Privilege

• (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He talked about what happened to our former colleague, Yvon Godin.

I would like to talk about his amendment. I believe that the matter raised by the members for Beauce and Milton, the former member for Acadie—Bathurst, Mr. Godin, and others, is coming up much too frequently.

I do not want to call into question the work that RCMP and security officers are doing on the Hill. They are doing an outstanding job of keeping us safe and protecting Parliament Hill. Still, I think this needs to be a priority for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It really is happening way too often. I think we need to put an end to this problem once and for all.

I would like my colleague to comment on what we can do to ensure, as much as possible, that MPs are no longer accidentally or deliberately prevented from getting to their workplace.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, when I came here 17 years ago, I remember walking in on that first day and the security guard said “Good morning, Mr. Sorenson”. How in the world did he know me, a nobody, a first-time member of Parliament? The security guard made it a point to know most members of Parliament. It was not that we were wearing our pins. He had seen our pictures and studied them, so when members came in, they were shown a certain degree of privilege, a certain respect.

My colleague is absolutely right. It is not that we are walking around here expecting that people will just afford us this. However, when we come to the House, we realize that this is a sacred duty given to us. We do not take this for granted. We do not build pride in who we are, but we are humbled by the fact that we have been sent here by constituents because they have confidence in us to represent them well. Therefore, we expect that security or other measures that may impede members from getting here, especially for a vote, be corrected if it is important that we be here.

Again, the Prime Minister is trying to shut down Fridays and only show up one day. Perhaps he does not think it is that important. If we take our responsibility seriously, things like this need to get to PROC and get cleared up.

• (1630)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are seeing all kinds of disrespect for this institution from the government. Just yesterday, I had to make three separate calls for quorum because we were below quorum at certain times during an important debate. I will not name which party did not have very many members in the House at all, but frankly, when quorum is only 20 members out of 338, we would think members could show up for work. That was on a Monday.

We have a government that wants to eliminate Friday sittings. It struggles with quorum, and a range of other issues, including now this discussion of access to a vote.

The member has been a parliamentarian for a long time. Has he seen any precedent for this kind of disdain for Parliament that we have seen from the government?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, I cannot recall anything like what we are seeing now. Perhaps it is because there are so many new members of Parliament over there. I am not certain if they believe that because they have been elected, they have been elected almost in a dictatorship position, or what. However, I do know it is much different from what we saw even under Mr. Chrétien. Certainly this type of unilateral bullying was never done by Prime Minister Chrétien or by Prime Minister Harper.

This is new. What we are seeing happen here is unprecedented. The Liberals are trying to change the very rules of how we debate and carry on within Parliament. It is a shame.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. 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 Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, Ethics; the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, Public Services and Procurement.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to provide some thoughts regarding a lot of the things I have heard in the very short time span since the ruling of the Speaker. I would argue that the real shame is the distortion of reality. We have seen opposition members take a certain view of what has been happening over the last little while and I would argue that is a great disservice in part because of their actions.

I would like to give a few examples to the member opposite. I use as an example when members opposite talk about the issue of Fridays. We want members to be engaged in the discussion paper. Members of the House work seven days a week. I work seven days a week and I believe that all members in this chamber work seven days a week. It is a choice whether we want to work in Ottawa or in our constituency. I do not hear any members talk about the part of the discussion paper that talks about sitting more days in the month of January. I do not hear other aspects of the discussion paper that are being talked about.

When members talk about question period and the Prime Minister, not one Liberal is saying that the Prime Minister would only show up one day a week. It is just the opposite.

My intention is not to speak long, but rather to encourage members to watch and listen to what they are saying. I believe that privileges are very important. I think there is a lot of manipulation possibly taking place—

• (1635)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: By whom? By your party.

Privilege

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member across the way said “by whom”. Let me suggest to all members of the House that we have seen questions of privilege being raised in the past and they have been dealt with. I have been on the other side talking about questions of privilege. When I talked about privileges and unfettered access to the chamber, even then members of Stephen Harper’s government commented about the importance of unfettered access, but never before have I witnessed this type of politicization of a question of privilege.

If people were to read what members opposite have tried to attribute to this privilege, they would see that those members constantly attempt to score political points. It would seem that political points mean more than privilege. That is the reality. I would challenge any member across the way to come over and share their thoughts with me personally if they really believe that I am wrong in making that assertion.

We are all intelligent people in the House. We all work and strive hard to represent our constituents. The government of the day is attempting to modernize Parliament. That has been a very hot issue. I do not believe that dealing with the privilege needs to tie in the politics of that issue. I would find it very difficult if someone were to imply that it has nothing to do with it and I would be interested in having that one-on-one discussion.

I have been a parliamentarian for 25 years, most of those years in opposition—

An hon. member: This is the pot calling the kettle black.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I just want to remind members that when members have the floor, they are deserving of respect when giving their speech. I would appreciate it if members would afford the member that respect.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the point I was trying to get across is that after many years of being a parliamentarian, I understand both the government side of things and the opposition side of things in the sense that I was in opposition for more than 20 years.

I recognize the importance of changing the rules. I have first-hand experience when it comes to changing the rules, both here in Ottawa and more specifically in my home province of Manitoba where I worked both with a Conservative government and an NDP government. To say it is the Prime Minister or this government and the way by which we are trying to implement changes is—

An hon. member: Unprecedented.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, it is unprecedented, Madam Speaker, as the member across the way just said.

In my experience, it is unprecedented the way opposition parties have taken a position that does not allow for dialogue. It is not too late, and I am hopeful that the opposition will understand that by working together we can make some positive changes. We have to agree on the need to modernize Canada’s Parliament. If we agree to that, then there is an opportunity for us to achieve something by working together. We need to agree to modernize Parliament. I want to see that happen.

When I participated on PROC, we made some changes to the rules, but they were not anything of great significance. I have had discussions in regard to rule changes. Some members talk about getting the low-hanging fruit. There are some changes that would be significant and would make a world of difference in allowing us to better serve the constituents that we represent and our country as a whole.

I am challenging opposition members, as they like to challenge government members, to put politics aside. Both sides of the House need to do that. If the intent is genuine to make this a better place, then it can be done, but goodwill has to come from both sides of the House. To be honest, PROC did a great deal of work prior to the discussion paper which has been taken into consideration. I remain optimistic. I believe PROC can still do some good work in regard to helping us modernize our Parliament.

● (1640)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I also read the discussion paper that was put forward and I gave it serious thought. One of my colleagues said it best in saying that the government is trying to turn the opposition into an audience. That was a very profound statement.

The suggested changes are a big concern. To suggest that this is just about modernizing Parliament and that it is just a discussion paper, but then to move forward with a motion would really hamstring members. If the government intended what that member talked about just now, it would have taken a very different approach to this conversation. The member often talks about the former Liberal government. Look at what Prime Minister Chrétien did when he was looking at making changes.

I would suggest that what is happening right now in the House in terms of many of the issues is of the government’s own making. Perhaps the member could do a bit of soul searching and consider taking that information back to his leadership. Then maybe we could have the important discussions that need to be had without the Liberals using their majority to ram things through to change the opposition into an audience.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me give an example. If members at PROC were sitting down and having that discussion based at least in part on the discussion paper, there is a litany of ideas. One of them is in fact at the committee level, where opposition members and government members would have 10-minute limits if there is more than one member who would like to speak. It does not prevent a filibuster from occurring. When I was in opposition and sometimes when I wanted to address something in committee, there would be one member who would go on for hours. Sometimes it would be nice to contribute to the debate. This particular rule actually would benefit opposition members. In fact, I would suggest it would benefit all members. That is something I would have argued for while I was in opposition. The point is, let us have that dialogue. There is no reason that we cannot be having that type of a dialogue.

Privilege

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, the debate we are having right now relates to the fact that the Speaker of the House of Commons has ruled that by ending the debate on the question of privilege raised by the member for Milton and the member for Beauce respectively, the government acted in an unprecedented and unacceptable manner. Accordingly, he decided to allow us to resume this debate.

When one says “unprecedented”, I think the meaning is pretty clear. As many people like to say, and with all due respect to my Conservative colleagues, this kind of thing did not even happen in the previous Parliament under Stephen Harper.

My colleague wants to talk about conversations and the importance of sharing ideas. Does he not understand that preventing us from expressing those ideas and having our say effectively ends the conversation? Can he also explain why, in his comments, he keeps avoiding the fundamental issue, that is, that the Speaker ruled that the government acted in an unprecedented and unacceptable manner when it tried to end the debate on the question of privilege? I would like to hear the member's comments on that.

• (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is important for us to acknowledge that there are members on PROC who have recognized what has been taking place in the House. There was a motion brought forward at PROC to deal with the privilege issue. We know that PROC will be dealing with the issue. All members of the House know that.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, we will indeed be dealing with this issue when this motion is passed. That is when we will deal with it, not based on this ridiculous idea that the Liberals developed of killing the motion here and then introducing a parallel motion in the committee. I will not repeat my objections to that. I did that last week for about 40 minutes.

I just want to say this, though. With regard to the issue of how to have an intelligent debate when, and this is one of the most objectionable of the Liberals' suggestions, we have little 10-minute chunks in which to present an opinion, there are some issues where it is impossible to present a reasoned argument with all supporting facts in 10 minutes. The member is right. Assuming they enact the rules and permit multiple interventions, which is no sure thing, we could have this sort of disjointed thing where if someone intervenes, we would get a fresh start, and so on. I am not sure what purpose this would serve if that is the case.

However, with regard to the suggestion that somehow someone gets the floor and no one else can speak, I will just point out that in the procedure and House affairs committee right now, the practice we have established is that when someone has the floor, with the unanimous consent of the committee, which is something permitted under the current rules, anybody else can intervene to make a comment. This is permitted. We have found a way of working with this. In other words, there is no monopolization of the conversation and we can actually have a dialogue. That is despite the fact that we are in the midst of a very dysfunctional, record-setting filibuster. The

need to come up with some 10-minute garrotte on how much we are allowed to say is just stuff and nonsense.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I respect the member's opinion, and I would hope he would respect mine. When I sat in the third party inside this chamber, and I would be in a committee room listening to someone speak for hours on end and not have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion, because one member wanted to consume all the time, I had a difficult time with that.

Maybe it is 15 minutes, maybe it is 20 minutes, or maybe it is a half hour. What is wrong with having that discussion, because maybe we can find a compromise? Maybe it is not 10 minutes, as I think it should be, but I do not think it needs to be four hours. Maybe it is somewhere in between, hopefully closer to the 10 minutes.

As members across the way know, I am not shy to speak, but I recognize that there are ways we can improve the system, and I think that is what this discussion paper is all about. Why the fear to have that dialogue in committee? I do not understand that.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand that there is a great deal of apprehension and opposition to a conversation about changes to the rules, and I understand entirely that it is coming from a place where the opposition is trying to explore how it can be effective. I do not think we begrudge them the debate at all. I think that is part of what we are trying to stimulate with the letter.

What I find odd is that in the House we can speak once to an issue and we have a time limit, and that seems reasonable, but in a committee the same rules are suddenly unreasonable.

Before I served in the House, I was a city councillor in Toronto, and the structure in our committees was that we could question once and speak once to motions. Why is trying to frame the work of the committee so unparliamentary, when in fact we frame the work in the House?

The most unfair thing, in the previous term, was when an omnibus bill was presented, and we could speak for only 10 minutes when there were 50, 60, or 70 pieces of legislation to address.

Why is framing the work seen as so troublesome?

• (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to that point, let me maybe take a different line. We can think of our mother Parliament, in England. I would ask members across the way what it is within this legislation, or this discussion, or anything related to the Standing Orders, that is so offensive that is not necessarily taking place in England, in the mother of our Parliament.

Processing times or time limits are all things other parliaments have put in place. I would argue that Canada is, in fact, falling behind. In the past, all we dealt with was the low-hanging fruit. We finally have an opportunity to see how we can modernize our Parliament.

For the life of me, I do not understand this type of resistance to it. This is an opportunity. Point out within that discussion paper where this is a great offence against parliamentary tradition, based on our mother Parliament. At least let us have that talk.

Privilege

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the next speaker, I want to remind the members of the motion before the House, and that is to refer the motion that was presented to the committee, and again, that the committee make this the priority. I know that there is some leeway, but now the discussion seems to be more about the current item that is before that committee, so I just want to remind members to keep it to the issue before the House right now.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, as you pointed out, this motion is before us again because, last week, the Liberals decided to shut down debate on a question of privilege concerning MPs' access to Parliament Hill.

I also want to remind everyone that the Chair made it clear this was unprecedented. We have a government that not only decided to shut down debate on a question of privilege about MPs' access to Parliament Hill, but did so cavalierly.

The Chair ruled on the matter and emphasized that it is of utmost importance. As our Standing Orders clearly state, questions of privilege take precedence over everything else, not because we like to spend time talking about ourselves, but because privilege is what enables us to do our job. Access to the Hill and our presence in the House of Commons are central to our ability to do our job.

[*English*]

Once again, recognizing what the Speaker has rightly highlighted about being on topic, I think these issues start to get a bit mixed up. The reason they do is that we have a government that has decided to end the debate on the question of privilege that is now before this House. Why? What is happening over on the government side, on the Liberal benches, that it would decide to do something that is unprecedented, that has never been done before, and end the debate on a question of privilege, which, as our rules say, is the core issue with which the House should be seized?

That is a question that, unfortunately, despite our attempts, we did not get an answer to from the Liberal speaker who just rose, I assume on behalf of the government. That is problematic.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

I think the government decided to put an end to this discussion because it could not take the heat. It is starting to have a hard time reconciling the things it said during the election campaign and the way it treats Parliament. This is directly affecting our ability to do our job.

I want to stick to the issue of access to the Hill, which we have talked about at length, because I need to express my deep frustration. In a few weeks, it will be six years since I became a member of Parliament. I have seen this matter come up time and time again, and I still do not understand why a solution cannot be found, although I am well aware that these things are never perfect.

Before I go any further, I think it is extremely important to recognize the work done by the RCMP and the parliamentary security officers in Centre Block and everywhere on the Hill. This is

not about pointing the finger at anyone, and that is precisely why we have a motion that calls on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to study the matter.

That is why my Conservative colleague moved an amendment for this to be the first item on the committee's agenda. It is because this issue comes up too often and is causing a lot of problems. This could affect new members, who may not be very familiar with our privileges despite the best efforts of the people who provide us with training when we arrive here. As my colleague said earlier, it feels quite strange when security officers know what we look like and know our names. That is quite impressive and can take us by surprise.

A new member who arrives at the bottom of the Hill before a vote when a foreign dignitary is on the Hill, or when the Prime Minister's vehicles are blocking the way, may not necessarily boldly invoke his privilege as a member and go ahead in order to get to his seat. He would not say it out of a sense of self-importance, but because he represents his constituents by voting, giving a speech, or carrying out any of his duties in the House.

[*English*]

It reminds me of a story involving one of my former colleagues, Jean Crowder. She and I were participating in, not a protest but a gathering, on the Hill. Some folks were here on the Hill to represent an issue. There were members from all parties at this gathering. Speeches were made by representatives of all parties.

We went back up the steps, and the security guard did not recognize me. I had only been a member for two months, and I did not have my pin. Sometimes I do not have it now. Sometimes I forget it on another suit jacket. I have had that issue before, so I always keep my ID card handy. That is the alternative.

That being said, even if a member has the pin, there is a jacket over it. Ottawa, with its lovely tropical climate, can get to a balmy -40 in the winter. We nonetheless have these gatherings, because some groups are courageous enough, and issues cannot wait until June. Sometimes these folks who are coming to the Hill to represent and lobby for issues they hold dear have to be here in January.

We walked up the steps, and the security guard did not recognize me. I said, "Oh, I am sorry." I was fiddling, looking for my pass. Jean Crowder, who was a person I had never seen be curt with people said, "No. This is a member of Parliament. He has the right to pass." The security guard said, "Okay", and backed off.

Again, as my Conservative colleague so rightly pointed out, it is not a lack of humility that leads us to have this instinct, which we certainly do not have as new members. It is a question of being able to come here to do our jobs and represent Canadians.

Privilege

That is why we call it privilege. That is why the government ending the discussion of that very privilege, and the Speaker stating that it is unprecedented, should say a lot about what the government is doing.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals shut down debate on our ability to do our work. Our privilege is our ability to do our work, which is to represent our constituents. The fact that the government shut down debate on protecting these privileges tells the House and the people listening a lot about this government's priorities.

That is the link to the discussion we are having right now. That is the government's approach. It wants to talk about privilege and the ability of members to do their job. The government wants to hear their ideas, but it does not want to provide them with a proper process that would let them have their say. As I said earlier, it is a dialogue of the deaf.

It is very problematic because something very important is being called into question. We were given examples of what happens in Great Britain under the Westminster system.

Without straying too far off topic, I just want to add that during debate on Bill C-22 and in the committee that analyzes and studies matters of national security, we said that we could elect the chair the same way they do in Great Britain. The government said that we must not move too quickly, that Canada was new to the idea, while Great Britain had several years to figure out how it would work. The hypocrisy is pathetic.

It is disappointing to see that when it works in the government's favour the government provides examples from around the world, but when it does not suit the narrative, the government ignores other examples. That is why it is important to have a structured process that allows the opposition parties to have their say.

• (1700)

[*English*]

This is not something new. This is how it has always been done, whether it was Stephen Harper, Paul Martin, Jean Chrétien, or anyone who came before them. This is how we have always changed the rules of the game. That is what they are. I know that game analogies are something we might chafe under. It is not always the best example to use, because what we do is not a game, but these are the rules that govern this place.

The Liberals now might feel that this is a good thing and that they can do it unilaterally and ram it through. What happens, after they create that precedent, when it is a Conservative prime minister, or, being an eternal optimist, a New Democrat prime minister or another Liberal prime minister with whom these members may not necessarily agree? Many of them, I have no doubt, ran because they appreciated the approach of this Prime Minister, but maybe another Liberal leader not so much.

As I saw in *The Hill Times* earlier today, a former Liberal MP was on the Hill today saying that this filibuster is a waste of time. That sounded like a criticism of the opposition, but it was not. He said he did not understand why his party created a toxic environment that is now leading the opposition to this recourse. That is the problem.

They are trying to paint the opposition as the bad guys here, but we are just using the limited tools we have at our disposal, which they are trying to take away. They tried to do it with this question of privilege we are debating today by cutting off debate. That says a lot about their approach.

That debate, at its very core, is about our ability to do our jobs. It is not "Let us move to government orders, because we are here to be efficient and to pass legislation." I am here to defend my privilege, because my privilege is not my privilege; it is the ability of my constituents to be heard, and ending that debate ends my ability to defend their ability to be heard in this place, and that is simply unacceptable.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals keeps using words like "modernization" and "discussion", but those are just words. We cannot have a discussion until parameters are set for that discussion. A union would not have conversations with the employer in the hallway. There is a process and guidelines for collective bargaining. Similarly, teachers cannot teach their students whatever they want. They have to follow a curriculum. Every discussion on fundamental issues is structured.

Why does the government fail to see that this is not about the substance, but the process that we will use to get to our findings? Every other prime minister recognized that the process was the cornerstone of all this. Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin recognized it, and despite our considerable political differences, I will even acknowledge that Stephen Harper recognized it.

There are a lot of new members on the other side of the House, and I have had the opportunity to meet many of them either at functions on Parliament Hill or in committee. Most of them have told me that they ran as Liberals to do politics differently because their country and their Parliament was suffering. I told them they were exacerbating the problem they were meant to fix.

Everyone here is to blame for the toxic environment that currently exists, but the fault lies primarily with the government, which is unilaterally imposing sweeping changes. The government claims it is only acting to keep its election promises, but it never promised to impose anything on the opposition. The government promised to make Parliament work better. It lights fires and blames the opposition, and then cuts short debates on questions of privilege and the workings of Parliament. That is the opposite of making Parliament work better. That is the opposite of what motivated most of the Liberal members to go into politics, many of them for the first time.

What message is the government sending to those who really want to support us so that we can improve Parliament? It is not the same message that the Liberals were sending during the election campaign. It is not the same message as the one the government is trying to send with its supposed discussions. It is the very opposite.

Privilege

● (1705)

[English]

I want to look at a great example south of the border, because the government seems intent on looking at the examples from other countries, whether they be Westminster models or otherwise. I look at what happened last week when the U.S. Senate was approving a Supreme Court nominee, which, dare I say, is probably one of the most fundamental responsibilities of a legislative body, given the importance that the Supreme Court has both here in Canada but also, looking at that example, in the United States.

What happened when there was a risk that Democrats in the Senate might engage in a filibuster, might use procedural tactics to delay the approval of a Supreme Court nominee where the consensus did not seem to be unanimous? I do not want to get into that debate, because that is not my business. What happened was that Republicans decided to use what they called the nuclear option. Instead of having the super majority that is normally required—60 votes to approve a Supreme Court nominee—they used their majority to change the rules of the game and make it so that it only required a simple majority of 50% plus one, 51% in that case.

What happened then? Respected senators like John McCain said that whoever thought of that idea was an idiot. Why did he say that? He said that because when he dealt with Democrats in the Senate on a nominee from President Obama, Republicans were very disappointed that the Democrats did the same thing. There were two parties changing the rules of the game to suit their political agenda, and in both cases, they chafed under that. Why? It is because it sets a precedent and creates a problem. Down the line, they can say it is how they will always solve their problems.

Coming back to Canada, what the government does not seem to understand is that changing the rules of the game might suit it this time, but it might not suit it next time when it loses an election after the broken promises start to pile up and people finally start getting fed up with the snake oil that they have been sold. That becomes a problem because it sets a precedent.

[Translation]

Instead of looking farther back and saying that Jean Chrétien sought Parliamentary consensus before making changes in the early 2000s, the next Conservative, Liberal, or NDP government can use this precedent and tell everyone not to worry because the government of the current Prime Minister, the member for Papineau, decided that a simple majority was enough to change the rules of the House.

I mentioned the United States because if the Liberals want to follow examples set elsewhere, they should look to respected individuals. For example, John McCain said it was idiotic to think that changing the rules was a good short-term solution to a problem that, in this case, does not exist. We have to think of the long-term consequences.

The long-term consequences have to do with the fact that we have to make a decision about a recurring question of privilege related to access to Parliament Hill. Precedent is not what worries me. I said at the outset that I was worried about the fact that we keep coming back to this issue of access to Parliament Hill, as several of our colleagues

pointed out. I am concerned about the precedent the Speaker referred to, the precedent of shutting down debate. This is a problem. It is unacceptable, and it will cause problems for future generations of members of Parliament.

The government is using various tools. It forces votes in the House when, for example, we are debating motions that it does not like, since the government seems to think it is here to get its agenda passed as quickly as possible. If we read between the lines, this means imposing its will without debate using time allocation motions. The government wants to cut the debate short. The reason we are using these tactics and having this debate, which has been going on for three weeks at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, is closely linked to the debate we are having today on the question of privilege. These are the tools we have to call on the government to seriously rethink the process. We have fundamentally different ideas on the substance of the issue. We could debate that. What unites the opposition is that we refuse to debate it until we know that this will not be dealt with unilaterally. This is central to parliamentary privilege. This is central to what is driving us here today, that is, questions related to access to the Hill, the length of the debate, and the fact that the government cut the debate short. Why? Because the privilege of the member for Beloeil—Chambly is not my privilege; it is the privilege of the people of Beloeil—Chambly. This goes for all of my colleagues and their respective ridings. This is crucial, and the opposition is united in saying no.

● (1710)

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been watching some of this debate, and it has certainly strayed away from the question that is on the table today. My question, simply put, for the member is this. What has to be done to move past this point and get Parliament working again? That is the key question. I have watched this for a number of days. I do not speak in the House lately very much, but I see all sides talking past each other, taking shots at each other. We know that the proposal that is on the deck is not for the Prime Minister to be here just one day a week. We know different from that, but that is what has been said. We know some of the things said to the opposition are not quite 100% either.

However, this place is called the House of Commons for a reason. It is not the House of cabinet or the House of PMO. Protecting the rights of members in this place, whether it is the opposition members in terms of the stance they are taking, is also protecting the rights of the other members here who are not members of cabinet or the government. We talk about government as if this whole side is the government. The government is the executive branch. We do need to protect these rights.

What I am saying for all sides is this. Let us get this place working again. We need to get to the budget implementation act. We need a number of things done. Can everyone step back, take a break, look at this again, and table something that will protect our rights and get the business of government done?

Privilege

• (1715)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right that it is not just our privilege in the opposition; it is also the privilege of the members of the Liberal caucus who are not in cabinet.

The member asked the key question, and the answer is quite simple. Once again, we have not had a chance to discuss these substantive issues because the government has been unable, whether through the government House leader or the Prime Minister, to stand and tell us the one simple thing that opposition parties want, and I dare say Canadians want, and that is that it will not proceed with changing the rules on this, as the member so eloquently put it, House of Commons and how it functions, without consensus, which seemed so important when it came to reforming the way we vote. I dare say it should be equally as important for the way we work in this very place.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was not going to make an intervention, only because I am going to be speaking on this question of privilege in just a few moments from now, but I must respond to a comment from my good friend from the island, whom I respect very much, who has been a parliamentarian of some distinction in this place for many years.

However, I have to take some umbrage at his suggestion that unilateral changes to the Standing Orders really are something that we should not be discussing. In fact, he made his specific point that having a prime minister's question period does not prevent the Prime Minister from attending other question periods throughout the week, and criticizes opposition members for suggesting that the Prime Minister will then have an out, and only have to appear in this place to answer questions once a week.

I want to ask my colleague from the NDP, who made his presentation, if he agrees that if those changes are made, even if we take the Liberals today in good faith, over time the consequence, whether intended or unintended, will be that prime ministers in the future will feel no obligation to attend question period except for one day a week.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I acknowledge the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly, I just want to say I hope he will bring it back to the question of privilege that is before the House.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

[*Translation*]

M. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, with regard to the manner in which we operate, I understand that people are frustrated because the question of privilege is monopolizing the debate and taking up a lot of time, whether we are talking about the question of privilege regarding access to Parliament Hill or the Speaker's ruling regarding the fact that the government put an end to the debate last week on the same question of privilege.

As my colleague from Malpeque said, if I am not mistaken, we can move on to other things. However, like my Conservative colleague who just asked a question, I would say that the problem is the precedent that will be set. Something that is codified could work

well now, but it might not work with another party or another prime minister. If members want to move on to something else, we simply need the assurance that the government will not go off on its own and impose things unilaterally. It is that simple. If the government would make a formal commitment in that regard, we could move on to other things, but it refuses to do so.

About what you said, Madam Speaker, this ties into the question of privilege because of the recurring theme of Liberals refusing to address these issues, whether access to Parliament Hill or any other question of privilege. That is extremely frustrating for the opposition and it prevents us from having the sort of the atmosphere in Parliament that Canadians want us to have. In this case, unfortunately, the burden lies on the shoulders of the government.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I actually want to thank the member for Malpeque for his question and his intervention. It shows there is a spirit amongst all members here to do something that is positive, without putting words into the mouth of member for Malpeque, who has served in cabinet and who has served many years. I think he was elected in 1993 or 1997.

It seems he understands, although we have so many new Liberal members of Parliament, and indeed a brand new government House leader, who is kind of the one who is carrying this ball as she tries to ram it through PROC and the House here, that members of Parliament need to take a look at this from an unbiased side.

The thing I appreciate about my colleague's speech is this point that he made. If the Conservatives win the next election, will they be allowed to just come and ram these secret Standing Orders that give them certain rights down the throats of the Liberals? What about the next governing party?

Maybe the member wants to build on that a little. We have a two-week break coming up. That may well be a time when we can take a pause and reflect on some of this, and then come back to work together, with all parties.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: For the young students I see on my school speaking tours, especially primary school students, the concept of a political party can seem quite strange.

I often compare the House of Commons to a hockey game. We might hit one another hard, not literally of course, but afterwards we will all go out together for a beer. This comparison is appropriate because it is obvious from the questions posed by the members for Battle River—Crowfoot and Malpeque that we all agree on the importance of members' privileges. In fact, as I mentioned in my speech, a member's privilege is first and foremost to express the opinions of our constituents.

*Privilege**[English]*

Therefore, I think that whether it is with respect to the changes to the Standing Orders being imposed unilaterally by the government, whether it is access to the Hill, or whether it is cutting off the debate on access to the Hill, all of these things fundamentally should unite all parliamentarians, and, hopefully, at their weekly caucus meeting tomorrow, or at another meeting—because it seems it has not gotten through yet—some of these Liberals who are not in cabinet will recognize that what the opposition is fighting right now affects not only them in this Parliament but, as my colleague rightly pointed out, could affect them in another parliament when they might be sitting on this side, and maybe they will suddenly realize that what is good for the goose is not necessarily good for the gander.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to lend my voice to this very important debate. May I ask you to remind me when there is just about a minute left in my presentation as I have an amendment to the current amendment to the motion which I want to bring forward.

Before I begin my remarks on privilege and how it affects each and every one of the members of this place, I want to go back to a few words that my colleague, my friend from Perth—Wellington, mentioned when he brought forward the motion, seeking a Speaker's ruling on the prima facie case of privilege. That is when he applauded the Speaker's ruling that came down, saying that yes, in the Speaker's opinion, there was a prima facie case of privilege when the government of the day prevented a vote on two members' privileges being impugned by not being allowed to vote, by being denied access to this place.

That ruling within the last hour has been called by some as historic. I would concur in that. I think some would also perhaps suggest it would be courageous. I will stop short of calling it that, but I believe this ruling today underscores and reaffirms in the eyes and the minds of many Canadians the total impartiality of the Speaker.

I think most Canadians understand when a Speaker is elected to the chair in this place, he comes with a background of partisanship. He comes obviously from a political background and represents a political party, not necessarily in the chair but back in his home constituency.

I believe there is a tendency for some Canadians to believe that because of the background of political partisanship, that a Speaker, once elected to the chair, would find it almost impossible to separate his political allegiance to his duties to be impartial to all members.

I must applaud the Speaker of this Parliament because he did exactly that. He made a difficult ruling, but he underscored the fact that his role was to be impartial, to represent all members of Parliament. He did that today, and for that ruling, I applaud him, and I applaud him mightily.

We are here to talk about this motion and the fact that the initial motion of privilege, the debate on the privilege brought forward from two of my Conservative colleagues, was in fact not only delayed, but it was snuffed out by the government of the day. That in itself was unprecedented.

It is so ironic that the privilege debate was being conducted because two members were prevented from voting in this place. What was the response of the government, the great irony? It prevented 338 members from voting on the privilege. It is truly something I have never seen before, and I sincerely hope I will never see again.

Madam Speaker, you have also admonished some of us, very slightly, very gently, to try to speak to the motion before us today and not get off track with what is happening in procedure and House affairs, with the filibuster over the government's attempt to unilaterally change the Standing Orders of this place. I would suggest that there is a lot of commonality between what is happening in procedure and House affairs and what we saw the government do just a few days ago by shutting down debate on privilege.

The commonality obviously is the fact that the government is acting in such a ham-handed, heavy-handed, mean-spirited way that it is disallowing and disenfranchising members of this place to exercise their ability, not only to debate but to vote. That is a very dangerous precedent.

For the benefit of members who may perhaps be minor historians on procedures of this place, I would like to point out something as an example of why this is so dangerous. I do not believe many Canadians and perhaps many parliamentarians understand the history of time allocation and when time allocation was actually introduced into the Standing Orders in this place. I believe it happened in the mid-1960s, although I do not know the exact year. It was brought in unilaterally by a Liberal government.

● (1725)

Now we consider time allocation to be a normal procedural tactic used by governments of the day to ensure that legislation is debated and passed speedily. However, because time allocation was brought in unilaterally, without the consent of opposition parties in the 1960s, it was almost entirely not used until at least two decades later.

Why was that? It was because Parliament itself recognized it as being almost illegitimate. Since the rules of this place, the rules that govern us all, were brought in unilaterally, without the agreement of other parliamentarians, Parliament itself did not utilize the provision of time allocation for at least two decades. Why? It was because Parliament knew that it was wrong to bring in any change to a standing order in that fashion.

That is what the present government is trying to do right now. It has shown its unwillingness to co-operate with members of the opposition. Despite the government's utterances to the opposite, its actions have proved that it is absolutely unwilling to co-operate or even discuss issues of fundamental importance to all of us. I find that to be not only disappointing, but a very dangerous course of action and path that the government is taking.

As was exhibited by my example of time allocation not being recognized as a legitimate standing order or parliamentary tactic for at least two decades, what the government is attempting to do now by unilaterally changing the Standing Orders would have the same effect. It would poison the well, in other words. Members of the government may not recognize that now, but as surely as time allocation was recognized as such over half a century ago, any changes that the government wants to bring down without the co-operation and consent of members on the opposition benches will be viewed similarly. I do not want to see that happen. I simply do not want to see that happen.

I made reference to the fact that in the last Parliament I chaired an all-party committee on proposed changes to the Standing Orders. My friend and my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, was a member of that committee. In fact, he was vice-chair of that committee.

I will get back to the privilege connection in just a moment, but my final point on that for now is that the member who is now arguing that the government should have the right to unilaterally change the Standing Orders was an unabashed and enthusiastic supporter in the last Parliament of the idea that unanimous consent should be a requirement before any change is made. That—

● (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member, because I reminded other members, of the subject of the discussion. There is some leeway; however, the discussion is on the privilege motion about members not being able to come to the House to vote, and the amendment touches on the work that is currently being done by saying that they want this issue to be at the forefront of the committee.

I want to remind members that the discussion is on the privilege motion about not being able to have access to the Hill to come to vote.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Madam Speaker, I take your advice and I will follow it to the best of my ability, but of course if this matter is presented to the procedure and House affairs committee and if the amendment is accepted by the House, then this privilege motion would take precedence over the filibuster that is taking place in the procedure and House affairs committee currently. That is the interconnection.

As a former member of the procedure and House affairs committee, when I was the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, I sat through three distinct discussions in PROC dealing with privilege and the rights of all members to have unfettered access to this place. This is not new. Unfortunately, this happened too many times in the past when, for whatever reasons, certain members from time to time were prevented from attending votes in this place because they were denied access to this place. Mainly they were denied access by security forces. Whether they be the RCMP, municipal police officers, or the security forces that take care of all of us here, members were prevented from having access in the past.

We have had many discussions and many witnesses come forward in the procedure and House affairs committee. We had the commissioner of the RCMP the last time privilege was discussed

Privilege

at procedure and House affairs. We had videotapes of all of the evidence of why certain members were not able to get to the House in time for a vote. I can say this about the members of the RCMP from the top leadership down to the rank and file members who protect us on the premises. None of them, in my opinion, wants to see any member prevented from attending this place to do the work that members were elected to do. Unfortunately, from time to time, circumstances happen where members are prevented.

I want to go back a few years and discuss some of the elements that caused that prevention of members from getting to this place. Normally it is when special events occur, for example, if we have visiting dignitaries attending Parliament or there is a motorcade of some sort where security forces must provide adequate protection for those visiting dignitaries to come into this place. Some members who perhaps have not tried to get to the House in an early fashion have been prevented from gaining access because of the motorcade. We talked on many occasions with members of the RCMP about how we could prevent that from happening in the future. They have shown a true willingness, in my opinion, to try to do whatever they need to do to make sure that these types of situations do not occur, but it has occurred once again.

My colleague moved an amendment to the original motion asking that the procedure and House affairs committee deal with this issue of privilege immediately. I think that is quite a fair amendment and I would appeal to all members of this place to vote in favour of that amendment when the time comes. Right now, as members know, there is a filibuster in the committee. It has been going on now for well over a week and shows no signs of abating. If that filibuster continues, and continues, and continues, there is a real chance that we may adjourn this Parliament for the summer without dealing with this question of privilege. That would negatively impact every member of this place. To not have the ability to deal with an issue that so fundamentally affects all of us would be a shame, but I would suggest it would be far more than that. I would suggest it would be almost unconscionable.

● (1735)

What we will have is a question that only the government will be able to answer, and that is on the amendment to the motion before us today. Will the government support that amendment and then suggest to the procedure and House affairs committee that it deal with this issue of privilege immediately, or will they vote against it and allow the filibuster to continue?

If the government votes against the amended motion, in effect it will be saying to all parliamentarians that the Liberals are putting their own political interests ahead of a matter of privilege of fellow members. They will be sending a clear and distinct message that they wish a filibuster on an action that is absolutely, fundamentally, and profoundly opposed by every member of the opposition benches to be put ahead of a discussion on privilege of parliamentarians. I hope it does not come to that, but it appears that it might.

If we cannot ensure that all of us have the ability to do our jobs, the jobs that Canadians in each one of our ridings elected us to do, then we have problems and issues far larger than probable changes to the Standing Orders.

Privilege

I believe that the amendment calling for this issue of privilege to be referred immediately to the procedure and House affairs committee and for that committee to deal with it in an expeditious manner, to deal with it as a matter of precedence and priority, is absolutely fundamental to each and every member in this place.

We have heard much about privilege and parliamentary privilege. I recall a seminal 1982 publication by Joseph Maingot on parliamentary privilege in Great Britain and Canada. He spoke mainly of privilege as freedom of expression and freedom of speech within this place. More fundamental than that, even though that is an important tenet of privilege for all parliamentarians, far more important than that, in my view, is a privilege which says that members of Parliament should not be impugned in any way from conducting their business and doing their job. They should not be prevented from having unfettered access to this place to do the most fundamental job for which their constituents elected them, and that is to vote both on behalf of their constituents and on behalf of all Canadians.

It appears the government does not feel that this discussion and that privilege are important. The Liberals have shown that. They have demonstrated that by shutting down the initial debate on privilege. They tried to ensure that the procedure and House affairs committee would not deal with the two specific examples of members being prevented from attending a vote. It is only because of the wisdom of our current Speaker that this debate is back on in Parliament.

I call upon members opposite. I beseech them to think about the precedent they will be setting if they do not allow this motion, as amended, to pass. Once again, they will be saying to all members of this place and to all Canadians who may be listening to this debate that they believe their own political partisan interests are more important than the privileges of members of Parliament. If it comes to that, and if they vote against the amended motion, it would allow the filibuster to then have precedence over a matter of privilege. All I would be able to say, through you, Mr. Speaker, to each and every member of the government is shame on them.

• (1740)

I truly hope that there can be a resolution to the impasse that is seemingly never-ending in the procedure and House affairs committee, but it would take a willingness from both sides to come together and try to ensure, as others before me have said in this debate, that Parliament is the place it is intended to be, a place of rational and reasoned debate, a place where, although there may be differences, we all have one motivation at heart, and that is to represent our constituents and represent all Canadians.

Having said that, I now move:

That the amendment be amended by adding the following: “provided that the committee report back no later than June 19, 2017”.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the debate the Assistant Deputy Speaker was

dealing with relevancy at times, and if we were to take a look at previous privileges that were referred to by the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, as an example, and looked at the debate that took place in those questions of privilege and compared them to what is taking place in questions of privilege today, we would see that all three of them deal with unfettered access.

I sat with the hon. member across the way at committee, where we looked at changes. I would ask him to reflect on how the changes that we passed were taken into consideration. What were those strong, progressive changes that we made in PROC, where unanimous consent was required?

I am not talking about the change in relation to the Speaker or about electronic petitions, because those were private members' business. Could the member list the types of changes that were actually achieved? If a government wanted to modernize Parliament, would the member not acknowledge that if opposition parties did not want to modernize Parliament, it could pose a problem?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I would simply point out to my hon. colleague opposite that he was part of the committee that enthusiastically supported the concept of unanimity. He agreed with all members of that all-party committee examining the Standing Orders that unless we had unanimous consent, a standing order would not even be debated. He was a part of the decision-making process that agreed that unanimity was a prerequisite, a requirement.

Why the change of heart? I can tell members why the change of heart occurred. Unfortunately, it is because now the government does not feel that members of the opposition need to be consulted. The Liberals are trying to use bullying, ham-handed tactics, mean-spirited tactics, to be able to unilaterally impose their will on the opposition.

The last time I checked, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition had a role to play, as did all opposition members in this place, whether they represented a recognized party or were independents or not. We recognized that fact when we were in government. As the member well knows, I was the one who suggested we have unanimous consent, and if any proposed changes to the Standing Orders were not universally accepted, the standing order was taken off the table. It was not even discussed. The member wanted to make sure that we did that.

There were some minor changes made. We were interrupted before the final, completed version of our study took place, but all of the changes that were made—and there were several, as the member well knows—were unanimously passed. That has been the long-standing tradition in this place. The member fails to recognize that.

• (1745)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a point and a question following my colleague's good speech.

My first point is that just because we are calling it “modernizing” does not mean it is modernizing. Let us just call it “changing” the Standing Orders. Let us not call it “modernizing” the Standing Orders, because that is not what we are talking about here. The government wants to change the Standing Orders. In the government's mind it is modernizing, but that is only one perspective.

We also hear about this being a discussion paper, but there will be a concurrence at the end of this report, which is in effect a vote, so it is not really a discussion paper. There is a vote on the Standing Orders, and they will be changed in the House. I am wondering if my colleague, who has great experience in this, could elaborate on what we are actually facing here. It is not really a discussion paper.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is quite correct. It is most certainly not simply a discussion paper. The government is attempting to have the procedure and house affairs committee table a report in this place recommending changes that it wants to the Standing Orders. We know that because the government has a majority in this place electorally, it also has a majority on the committee.

Despite the opposition's best efforts to reason with the government, if a report from the procedure and House affairs committee were tabled in this place, it would undoubtedly recommend the changes the government wants to ram through. That would then allow the government to fall back on the committee report and say that it did not do it unilaterally but just accepted the recommendations of an all-party standing committee. We all know that this would be a sham, because the government, unfortunately, is using the procedure and House affairs committee as political cover.

The government well knows, and I do not have to give it any lessons on procedure, because it has its own procedural experts, that if it wanted to unilaterally impose changes to the Standing Orders, it could do so without having to go through the procedure and House affairs committee. Any one of its members could simply introduce a motion introducing changes, and once the vote was held in this place and the motion was agreed to, the changes would happen automatically. The reason the government does not want to do that is that it does not want to appear to be heavy handed and mean-spirited.

It is trying to use the procedure and House affairs committee as political cover. That subterfuge will not sit well with Canadians and will not disguise the fact that the Liberals are trying to do what we know they are trying to do, which is impose changes to the Standing Orders that do not benefit all parliamentarians but only Liberal themselves.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I deeply appreciate the speech made by my hon. colleague, who has a lot of experience. It is very important to emphasize the fact that when we want to change something in the House, we should do it with consensus. This is the key word we must keep in mind.

[*Translation*]

Without giving away any caucus secrets, I would nonetheless like to inform the House that my colleague was our coach, as they would say in hockey, for question period. He explained to us, the 33 new opposition parliamentarians, how to properly ask questions. I have to say that he was an excellent teacher.

• (1750)

[*English*]

My question for my colleague is this. Based on his experience, can he explain the arrogance of the Liberal government?

Privilege

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could explain it, other than the fact that I think it is in the Liberals' DNA to believe that they are entitled to their entitlements.

All kidding aside, we know that partisanship plays a big role in this place, too much, from time to time. I find that the longer I sit in this place, the less partisan I become, and that is why what the Liberal government is trying to do is so distressing to me.

I believe in the Standing Orders. I believe in the rules that govern us all, and I believe that as parliamentarians, we should have the ability to conduct ourselves in a mature, adult fashion and understand that when changes are made, they have consequences. Any changes made to the Standing Orders must be made, in my view, in a way that benefits all parliamentarians, not just one political party. That is, unfortunately, the reality we are faced with. We are protecting the rights of all parliamentarians, not just the Liberal Party, and I would ask it to please think forward a few years, because, as has been said before, governments change over time.

One day, perhaps sooner rather than later, in view of the current government, Liberals will be sitting on this side of the floor, and I can guarantee one thing. Even if they were sitting on this side of the floor now, and the Conservatives were in government or the NDP happened to be in government and were trying to do what the Liberal government is trying to do with its ham-handed attempt to change the Standing Orders, there would be holy hell to pay. The Liberal government knows that, but it is still trying to ram through changes in the short term. That is unconscionable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that I will be sharing my time.

Earlier, my hon. colleague from Beloeil—Chambly reminded us that as elected members we are sometimes invited to elementary or secondary schools to answer questions and explain what we do. I must admit that I am having a hard time these days explaining what we do in the House and why it is important, but it is.

Our work is important because it shows the “true nature of Bernadette”. It shows what the Liberal government is made of. Just scratching the surface reveals that Liberal arrogance we know so well. Despite its fine speeches and rejuvenated and renewed image, the Liberal government just wants to impose its views, change the rules unilaterally, and grab as much power as possible by crushing the opposition and ensuring that it is the only skipper on board. The Liberals want to make sure that the democratically elected opposition shrivels up and is hamstrung from doing its work effectively.

Why are we having this debate right now? There was a breach of privileges, which is not nothing. There is nothing more important than the rights and privileges of the 338 people who sit in Parliament. Two official opposition members, for many reasons that are yet to be explored and verified, were prevented from entering the House to exercise their right to vote on government legislation. One hon. member rose on a point of order and the Speaker had to rule on whether or not there was a breach of privilege. The answer was yes and that we should debate the breach of privilege.

Privilege

I do not want to describe the context in which that happened, but members can imagine what would happen if preventing members who are here in Ottawa from voting were to become a habit or even systematic.

The Speaker of the House of Commons initiated a debate on the breach of privilege, and he said that we should debate it to find out what happened.

That is where things got interesting. The Liberal government used its majority to try to put an end to the debate. It used a false parliamentary majority based on 39% of the votes to put an end to a discussion among parliamentarians about a breach of the privileges of two of our colleagues. Another point of order was raised. The Liberals no longer wanted to talk about this issue, and they used their majority to put an end to the debate. Another point of order was raised.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, in your wisdom, you said that this was indeed a second breach of privilege, that the government should not have done that, and that we should resume debate on the original breach of the privileges of the two members who were unable to get to the House to vote.

This shows the character of the Liberal government, which is trying to sweep the debates and discussions it does not want to have under the rug. To make matters worse for the Liberals, the debate did not stop. Instead, it started up again. Rather than looking foolish once, the Liberals have made themselves look foolish twice. Since it is their own fault, they will have to live with the consequences.

● (1755)

I want to make sure the people tuning in understand the context of this debate.

This is not the first time the Liberal government has tried to prevent parliamentarians from doing their job, from expressing themselves freely, and from debating issues that matter to them. Who could forget Motion No. 6, which was withdrawn at the last minute? That caused an uproar. Another important element is the debate the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is having right now. In committee, all of the opposition parties are united because we are all extremely concerned about the proposed changes the Liberal government wants to make in the name of modernization.

The Liberals want nothing less than to strip committee members of the opportunity to do their work, work that involves putting pressure on the committee and the government to ensure a relative balance of power, thereby making negotiation possible and enabling opposition parties to wrest compromise from the government. That is pretty much the issue here.

What is happening is the opposite of what the Liberals said during the election campaign. The Liberals said they wanted to put an end to a Parliament where the government makes all the decisions, where democracy is silenced, and where parliamentarians cannot work.

It is funny, because since the Liberals won the election and came to power, they have been doing exactly the opposite. That is why the opposition members and the opposition parties unanimously disagree with the government. Indeed, we think that if the Liberals want to change the ground rules in the House, regarding

parliamentarians' ability to exert pressure on the government and to do their job properly, they cannot do so unilaterally. The Liberals must seek a consensus with the opposition parties.

I do not understand why the Liberal government insists on completely ignoring this and bullying us, why it is being so heavy-handed and using its majority to impose its viewpoint. That is what is most troubling right now.

I will soon hand the floor over to my colleague from Sherbrooke who will continue this important discussion and this debate much more eloquently and in a more scientific way.

Let me give another example of this Liberal arrogance, which could be characterized as "Do as I say and not as I do" and "I'm the boss and I will do as I please."

In the Liberal Party platform, it is written in black and white that the Liberals wanted to put an end to turning budget implementation bills into omnibus bills. The budget implementation bill was introduced today and guess what? It is an omnibus bill. Oops. We get the same old Liberal arrogance and another broken promise. There are financial aspects to the budget implementation bill, but there are also some rather fascinating things. The bill would amend labour laws, drug laws, and the Judges Act. This bill takes all the bills that were not passed and crams them in the middle of a budget implementation bill.

Again, the Liberals have this extraordinary ability to take people for a ride and have them believe that they are going to do politics differently and that they will govern differently. However, the Liberals systematically and successively do everything they can to crush the opposition, undermine Parliament, attack democracy, and ensure that they have more and more power that is more and more concentrated, with no regard for the rules of the House, no regard for democracy, and no regard for the people we have the honour of representing.

● (1800)

[*English*]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is important for Canadians who follow what is happening in the House to understand the significance of what we are doing. This question of privilege about access to the House is of utmost importance, but it is going to bump something else we are talking about out of PROC. Canadians may not really understand that connection.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could explain, as he does when he goes into schools to explain the parliamentary process, the importance of what is being sought here with respect to the decisions of government making changes to our Standing Orders, that they be made unanimously rather than unilateral. Perhaps he could explain why that matters in the House of Commons and why that matters to privilege.

Privilege

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, what is going on here with our rules is what we would call inside baseball. Our rules are so important for our work and the quality of our democracy. I try to explain this to kids when I go to the schools. If the government is able to change the rules of the House and our Parliament by itself, it can lead to disrespect for authority.

[*Translation*]

The quality of our democracy depends on people's votes and the quality of the debates, and also on the ability of parliamentarians and opposition parties to do their job effectively in the House. Otherwise, power is concentrated in the hands of the party in power, and then in the cabinet and the prime minister.

If we accept that the government alone can establish House rules when it was elected with 39% of the votes in our rigged electoral system, we are all at risk, as is our democracy and the quality of our parliamentary life. That is why we are standing with all our other opposition colleagues.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously we are all now in the opposition, on this side of the House. However, in recent years, my colleague criticized the Conservatives many times for all sorts of reasons. Most of the time he was wrong.

Nevertheless, I would like to give him the opportunity to say today that we are all in the same boat, on this side of the House, and that the Liberal Party's arrogance is bad for Canada and for all parliamentarians.

● (1805)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, even though I disagree with how my criticisms of the Conservatives have been interpreted.

However, what interests me today is to see how we can all work together in the House to come up with the best laws, the best legislation, and the best budget to meet the needs of our constituents.

Regardless of our political colours, whether they be blue, orange, or green, we all have the duty to hold the government to account. However, it seems that the Liberal government is trying to take away our parliamentary tools, our freedom of speech, and our ability to delay the proceedings.

People need to understand that, when there is a majority government in office, time is basically the only currency the opposition has to put pressure on the government and send it a message. If the government takes that away, it is taking away the bulk of our capacity to do our job.

This Liberal government promised to hold consultations, to work with others in a spirit of harmony, and to show respect for everyone. However, now that it is in office, we are seeing its true colours.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today. I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for sharing his valuable time with me so that I may have a turn at speaking to the issue before us today, which is to refer the question of privilege to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

This question of privilege was raised by two of our colleagues who, on the day that the budget was tabled, March 22, were held up when they were heading to a vote in the House. They raised this question of privilege, which was accepted by the Speaker.

Now, we must come back to this question after briefly getting off topic. I will explain why we stopped talking about it and why we are coming back to it now. For those watching at home, I will give a brief overview of the question of privilege. I find this subject to be quite interesting and quite important, especially as a parliamentarian. However, it is important for people at home to understand the privileges of the House and why it is important for us to debate them today and for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to be involved in this matter later in the course of the debate.

Questions of privilege are extremely important. I can give some examples of the House's privileges. MPs have privileges as elected members of the House, but the House as a whole has privileges too. MPs' rights and immunities include freedom of speech. My colleague talked about this earlier. We also have freedom from arrest in civil action, exemption from jury duty, and exemption from attendance as a witness in court. One of the most important privileges, especially in the context of today's debate, is freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation, and molestation.

The matter before us today specifically concerns protection from obstruction. Nobody can obstruct an MP who is attempting to attend the House to represent his or her constituents. That is exactly what happened to our two colleagues who raised this question of privilege. When I say that is exactly what happened, that is not my personal opinion. It is the opinion of the Speaker of the House. In preparing his ruling, he spoke to several individuals involved in the incidents. After analyzing the facts and the situation, and probably after looking at surveillance camera footage, he found that, on the basis of the evidence before him, there was a *prima facie* breach of the parliamentary privilege not to be obstructed when attempting to attend the House.

When the Speaker rules that, first of all, there has been a breach of privilege, he is then ready to hear a motion for the House to be seized of the question. This has happened many times in the history of this place, without naming any specific examples. On several occasions, we have been seized with questions of privilege, and the Speaker has sometimes ruled that a breach of privilege did in fact occur. In other instances there was not enough evidence to rule that a breach of privilege occurred. Ultimately, however, it is up to the House to vote on the matter, but we were deprived of that because of the government's actions, and that is why we are all here today.

Privilege

When my colleagues raised the question of privilege, the appropriate motion was moved so that the matter could be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which would have been seized with the matter. The debate began last week, I think. Arguments on both sides were heard. The committee even heard from some government members who disagreed. They felt that a breach of privilege did not necessarily occur. Naturally, the members on this side believed that a breach did occur and that the matter needed to be referred to the committee.

● (1810)

What happened during that debate is unprecedented in the history of this place. The government moved a motion to proceed to orders of the day, and that motion, moved by my colleague from Brossard—Saint-Lambert, was adopted. She did not seem to realize the consequences it would have. Indeed, it set a precedent in the House.

While the House was seized with a question of privilege, the government decided to cut the debate short and proceed to orders of the day. That meant that the debate was over, and the House never voted on the question of privilege to refer it to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Even the Conservatives never went this far, and that is something that we cannot often say. I was here in the House from 2011 to 2015, and I saw many surprising things from the Conservative government. However, this time the Liberals went even further. At least the Conservatives had the decency to simply vote against motions to refer matters to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. When questions of privilege were raised, we debated them and voted on them.

Even though it is difficult for us, we sometimes have to accept that a certain party holds more than half the seats. We therefore have to accept the democratic decisions of the House, even though they may not always be the decisions we want. At least the matter was brought before the House and voted on. That is the least we should be able to expect.

Under the Conservatives, we would vote. The motion would not be adopted and the matter would not be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. At least we could say that the House had expressed its opinion on the matter. A government does not automatically win all the votes just because it holds a majority. There are many members of the House who are independent enough to vote according to their conscience, particularly when it comes to questions of privilege.

We could at least have voted on it. However, in an unprecedented move, the government decided to quite simply interrupt the debate. That is why we are still talking about it today. The Speaker ruled that the interruption of the debate was completely inappropriate, and that this question must return to the House so that we may continue debating it. The matter was to be revived, as I recall it was put, because we had not really finished discussing it.

Thus, I applaud the ruling by the Speaker, who agreed to again recognize that there was a *prima facie* case of privilege and who again allowed a member to move a motion to refer to committee the same question of privilege raised last week concerning members who were prevented from coming to vote in the House. It goes

without saying that it is now up to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, a committee of parliamentarians, to study the matter and to hear from witnesses, as it has in other cases.

The case of Yvon Godin was mentioned earlier. He, too, was prevented from voting and, like others, he testified before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee, which is made up of MPs, will look into the matter, hear from witnesses, try to shed light on what happened that day, and make recommendations to correct the situation. It is important to note that this is not the first time that a question of privilege concerning members' access to the House has been brought before this chamber, and I have the feeling that it will not be the last. That is why the government must absolutely support the Conservatives' motion to refer this matter to the committee.

● (1815)

We must identify permanent solutions, and it is the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that will be able to do that. I encourage all my colleagues to support this motion.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. The member for Sherbrooke always has such interesting things to say. His remarks are always very intelligent and logical. It is always such a pleasure to hear from him in the House.

I am new here, so I was not around from 2011 to the change in government. I decided to run for office in 2015 because I believed in this democracy. I believed that all of us, whether in government or in opposition, could express ourselves, and I believed that what I had to say in the House had a real impact. That included our right to vote. When I vote on bills here in the House, whether I vote for or against them, I always do so very proudly as a representative of the people of Jonquière.

We are debating a motion to recommend clarifying the situation in committee. In his speech, my colleague said that this has happened before. In his opinion, what concerns or fears might be preventing the government from sending this motion to committee to clarify the situation once and for all?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comment and her question.

I do not know what goes on in the mind of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who seems to be the one behind all this procedure. He is often involved in these matters.

I do not understand why he would not think it appropriate to give the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs the mandate to examine the question of privilege raised by our two colleagues, who felt their privilege had been breached. I see no explanation for that. I understand that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is busy at the moment. It has a rather full agenda, to say the least.

That said, as the Speaker said earlier in his ruling, this matter takes precedence over everything else. That is why we are discussing it here today. This matter is so important to the House that it is at the top of the agenda.

Privilege

It would go without saying that it is same thing at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs; although it has a full agenda, this issue would be considered first. It is of capital and fundamental importance to the House and must be dealt with as soon as possible. If we want to find lasting solutions to the problem of obstruction and access to the House, then we must discuss this at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs as soon as possible. I do not understand how the government could refuse that.

Instead of taking up the House's time to deal with this issue, why does the government not refer the matter to committee, which could do its study at its own pace and then report back to the House with recommendations and its observations on the situation? I do not understand the government. I hope that the Liberals will provide some explanation if they truly intend to not support this motion to refer the matter to committee.

● (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member across the way is aware that a notice of motion has been provided at the procedure and House affairs committee by members of the procedure and House affairs committee indicating the importance of dealing with this particular privilege. No matter what this House does collectively, my understanding is that the procedure and House affairs committee will in fact be dealing with the privilege issue of unfettered access and, hopefully, it will be able to do a fairly comprehensive job.

Does the member have confidence in the standing committee, as the standing committee in the past was able to deal with these issues, and will he allow the standing committee to do its work and to set its own agenda on it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is extremely relevant, but he forgot to mention that, in order to be able to examine the specific question of privilege raised by our colleagues, the committee must be instructed by the House to do so.

The committees are free to examine any issue they want. In this case, the committee can examine the issue of access to the parliamentary precinct in general, but to examine the specific question of privilege raised by my two colleagues with regard to what happened to them and set the record straight, the committee must be instructed by the House of Commons to do so. It cannot undertake a study of its own volition when it comes to a question of privilege.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. However, I would like to remind him that the debate will be interrupted at 6:30 this evening, obviously. Not 6:30 tomorrow morning.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is kind of you to clarify that debate will be interrupted at 6:30 this evening and not tomorrow morning. I would be filibustering if I were to speak for 12 hours. My colleague opposite would not like that.

I would like to give an introductory course to the people of my riding; those in the galleries; and the Canadians who watch us every day on CPAC, the television station that broadcasts the proceedings of the House of Commons.

Heaven knows that the House of Commons is an esteemed place in Canada. It is a very important place for our democracy. This democracy is guided by a book entitled *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which is our bible. The book is updated any time changes are made by Parliament and its parliamentarians, not by a political party. There is a fundamental difference between the two because, historically, any changes to the way the House of Commons operates were made unanimously by all of the parties.

Earlier, I was pleased to hear my colleagues say that the Conservatives never went as far as the Liberals. I do not know if it is because the Liberals were the third party in the last Parliament and they were insulted or frustrated to have been left out in the cold for four years. It seems that their frustration is causing them to treat all members in an extremely disrespectful manner.

Once again, the NDP criticized the Harper government a great deal. I will not speak to all their criticism, but I can say that, clearly, most of it was not founded. I will say that their criticism of the government today is even more severe. We have the right to say that the Liberals are much more disrespectful than the Conservatives were in the last Parliament.

It is important to understand that the question of privilege that we are discussing today is very important. We need to tell Canadians that the privileges we have as parliamentarians are important.

It is almost as though we are in a bubble here on Parliament Hill. Canadians do not necessarily see everything that happens every day here, but we are the ones, as parliamentarians, who look after the Canadian Constitution and the business of Parliament so that the country can be properly administered, despite the fact that we have some serious reservations at this time. We can come back to that.

We are in this situation today because the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs should examine an issue. Indeed, the government moved a motion to implement some fundamental changes regarding how the House of Commons operates. Obviously, some elements of the changes are debatable, but at the same time, some elements require discussion and openness on the part of all parliamentarians.

The reason the Liberals say they want to change all this is to bring Parliament into the 21st century. We take no issue with that, but it has to be done in a way that is respectful to all members of the House, by giving them the chance to vote and make a decision together. We have to be able reach a consensus. That is not happening.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Liberal Party is literally trying to shove down our throats new ways of running Parliament, including having the Prime Minister come here only one day a week. We would no longer sit on Friday. There is a whole slew of fundamental changes on the horizon. It is important for all parliamentarians to be able to express their opinion. We need to have an open and frank discussion. We have not had that, and are not seeing that in committee.

Several people have mentioned that even during the Liberal years of the Chrétien government, all the changes made in the House of Commons were made unanimously. It is fundamentally important.

• (1825)

This is a fundamental issue. As the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has not tired of repeating for the past several weeks, she wants to have a discussion, a conversation. Those are important words.

I am in business. If I had the kind of discussions and conversations that the member wants to have with us or says she wants to have with us, then I am sorry, but I would be in business alone. No doubt about it. I would not be able to have a conversation with someone who does not want to listen to what I have to say and does not want me to participate in making decisions. It is like a company with a number of shareholders. People have to talk to each other and understand each other. They have to make a decision and vote on it. The same general principle applies here.

It is of vital and fundamental importance that all parliamentarians have a chance to speak. This is not the kind of thing I say often, but once again, I would like to thank my NDP colleagues for recognizing that the Conservatives never tried to go as far as the Liberals are going now. This is utterly indefensible. Those of us on this side of the House, along with the Green Party member, are unanimous in saying that consensus in the House of Commons is the only way to change the Standing Orders.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member will have another 13 minutes and 30 seconds when we resume debate.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am coming back to a question I originally raised on December 5 with the Minister of National Defence on the procurement issue of sole-sourcing the Super Hornets. The minister started talking about a fabricated capability gap. This is a debate we have raised in the House on a number of occasions during question period as well as at committee.

We need to talk a little about the history of the so-called capability gap. We need to remember that first and foremost, the Royal Canadian Air Force has said numerous times, and this includes the

commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, General Hood, when he was at committee, that there is no capability gap. The fighter jets the Royal Canadian Air Force employs today can easily meet all of the targets we have in having enough planes to serve our NORAD commitments, to protect Canadian sovereignty, to participate in NATO operations, as well as participate in other coalition activities, as we do from time to time.

When the Conservative Party was in government, we deployed our CF-18s to Kuwait as part of the air combat mission bombing ISIS in both Iraq and Syria. We also have to remember that the current fleet of CF-18s is being upgraded. The CF-18s are in the process of being upgraded to extend their life expectancy to 2025. We have a fleet of 77 CF-18s, the legacy Hornets, that are operational and can meet all the needs of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Just last week, I raised this question again during the adjournment proceedings, and was able to document to the government that not only are Conservatives saying this, but 13 retired commanders of the Royal Canadian Air Force have also told the government and have written directly to the Prime Minister saying that sole-sourcing the Super Hornet is a bad idea, that it will be more expensive and will reduce the defence posture of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

We also know that defence analysts, as well as Defence Research and Development Canada, which is a part of the Department of National Defence, also published a paper saying that our current CF-18s will fulfill all the requirements of the Royal Canadian Air Force until 2025.

Therefore, I again implore the government to quit fabricating this capability gap. Let us get down to having an open and transparent competition so that we can get the right jet at the right price that is in the best interests of the Royal Canadian Air Force, our troops, and Canadian taxpayers.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for the opportunity to talk about the replacement of our fighter jets. This is an item of unfinished business that we inherited from the previous government.

On November 22, the government announced a plan to replace our fighter fleet. It is a simple, three-part plan.

First, we agreed to implement new measures to extend the life of the fleet of CF-18s, which would allow them to remain operational until they were replaced. Second, as promised, we are going to launch an open and transparent tendering process to acquire a new permanent fleet. Third, we also agreed to explore the possibility of buying 18 Super Hornets to replace our aging CF-18s.

Over the past few months, Canadian officials have been meeting regularly with representatives of the American government and Boeing in that regard. The Minister of National Defence met with his counterpart, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, General Mattis, and has also written to ask him to give this matter his personal attention and support.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Government of Canada recently sent a letter of request to the U.S. government, which described our requirements, indicated the timeline, and confirmed our intent to apply the industrial and technological benefits policy to this future acquisition. These discussions and these exchanges will allow us to determine whether the U.S. government can provide an interim fleet of Super Hornets at a reasonable price, in an acceptable time frame, and on terms satisfactory to Canada.

We must ensure that our Canadian Armed Forces can carry out their mission, both here and abroad. A modern fleet of fighter jets is vital if we are to defend Canada and exercise our sovereignty, especially in the north. It is a vital contribution to NORAD and to the protection of the continent that we share with the United States.

The fighter jets are also a key element of our commitment to our allies in NATO, the alliance that ensures peace and stability in Europe.

We are fully aware of the challenges that a mixed fleet could pose. We will ensure that our air force has the resources to face these challenges. In fact, the majority of our partners and our close allies, including the U.S., the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Australia, already operate mixed fleets.

The least we can do is provide our troops with the equipment and capacity they need. That is why we are going forward with this plan. Taken together, these measures will assure Canadians that Canada's fighter jet needs are met in both the short and long terms.

We will take as much time as we need to make sure the RFP process to permanently replace our CF-18s is fair and permanent. We will ensure that the industry has every opportunity to participate. The RFP process will also be guided by the results of the defence review. This process will ensure that we acquire fighter jets that are suitable for the Canadian Armed Forces in the long term, that are priced right, and that will have robust economic spinoffs for Canada.

• (1835)

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the parliamentary secretary, but, again, he is just going on with this fabricated capability. The Liberals have a credibility gap on this. Let us look at what people actually have said about the sole-sourcing of the F-18.

Alan Williams said it best. He is a former assistant deputy minister for materiel. He said, "You don't tell a company you intend on buying their product and then try to negotiate a price... You lose any negotiating power you might have had." Even the government is saying that it is going to cost \$5 billion to \$7 billion to buy 18 fighter jets. That is over \$330 million apiece. That is ridiculous and a waste of taxpayer money.

George Petrolekas, a retired colonel, said, "an interim new aircraft purchase solves little, and if anything, constrains Canada's future options." We just cannot go ahead with this.

It comes down to this. We have a government that is led by the Prime Minister who has no interest in funding our Canadian Armed Forces properly. The government has cut now over \$12 billion from future procurement, so I do not know how it will pay for this fighter jet. The government should move immediately to an open, fair, and transparent competition so we get the right plane today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind members that we inherited an issue that the previous government was unable to resolve. The previous government did not have the will and was unable to advance the replacement of our aging fighter jets or to make the right decisions at the right time. The Conservatives also lost many years as a result of their poor management and indecisiveness. Too often they became mired in processes that were highly politicized and resulted in repeated failure.

Since coming to power, we have worked very hard to correct past mistakes and to ensure that our troops have the necessary equipment to meet Canada's defence needs.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given. Accordingly, the notice has been deemed withdrawn.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 3 p.m. pursuant to order made Monday, April 3.

(The House adjourned at 6:40 p.m.)

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