



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, February 27, 2019**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan**

## **CONTENTS**

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

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 27, 2019

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayer*

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• (1405)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

### SNC-LAVALIN EMPLOYEES

**Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the SNC-Lavalin crisis is in its third week. All parties are doing their best to make the crisis last as long as possible, not resolve it.

Not once has anyone talked about protecting jobs. Despite its “workers’ party” persona, the NDP has not said a word. It is ready to sacrifice 3,000 jobs in Quebec to win seats in British Columbia.

Our Conservative colleagues have not said a word either. They say they are all about the economy, but they are ready to sacrifice a major head office in Montreal so they can spend one more day raking the Prime Minister over the coals.

We have not heard much from the Liberals either. They could resolve this crisis with a remediation agreement, but they are lying low in hopes the storm will pass.

It goes without saying that Quebecers are not getting the kind of federal representation they deserve when their representatives are willing to hold 3,000 families hostage for weeks just for the sake of engaging in petty partisan politics.

This needs to stop now.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### MARIE-ANNE GABOURY

**Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this year, Winnipeg’s Festival du Voyageur celebrated its 50th anniversary. We came together to commemorate the heroes of

the fur trade. Some voices, though, have not been heard, and once again, I stand to bring attention to Canada’s first female voyageur: Marie-Anne Gaboury. This remarkable woman broke generations of convention and made her own place in the world. Refusing to stay in Montreal, she joined the fur trade and spent five years travelling across the prairies, then made Winnipeg her home.

Fearlessly trekking through thousands of kilometres of forest and prairie, she hunted bison, traded and heroically saved another voyageur from an attacking grizzly bear. She was remarkably intelligent, learning four languages at a time when few people were literate at all.

She did everything her male colleagues did and more, yet history remembers her only as the grandmother of a famous man. Today I challenge all members to honour her memory and celebrate all the voyageurs who helped build our nation.

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### ALBERTA

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in 1905, Alberta joined Confederation and quickly became the workhorse of Canada. Our grain fed the hungry, our lumber built homes, and later, our oil provided energy.

Confederation allowed Canada to become a farmer of sorts, harvesting resources from its various plots of land. Sadly, today the farmer has forgotten how to farm. After riding this workhorse through a world recession, Alberta now has a cold. Alberta is suffering under a softwood lumber dispute. Trade negotiations have failed our agricultural producers, and a failure to approve pipelines has forced energy producers out of the province. Alberta, Canada’s workhorse, has lost thousands of jobs.

Albertans are overtaxed, and their hands are lassoed by a farmer with blinders on. We have been a willing and able workhorse for decades. Despite that loyalty, it seems like the farmer has led Alberta behind the barn to put an end to the misery. It is time for the farmer to pony up and look after his workhorse. He should call the vet or relinquish the reins.

*Statements by Members***STEINHART DISTILLERY**

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia's craft distillers are taking on the world. The Steinhart Distillery, in Arisaig, Nova Scotia, just down the road from my childhood home, recently took home the prize for Canada's best classic gin at the 2019 World Gin Awards in London, England.

I have had the pleasure of meeting Thomas Steinhart on many occasions, and he is passionate about the traditional practice he brings to his distilling craft. The Steinhart Distillery makes many varieties of gin and vodka, with distribution across Canada and internationally. His products can even be found at certain events right here on Parliament Hill. As a local representative, it is encouraging to see his work bringing good jobs to a rural community.

I want to congratulate Thomas on this prestigious award and thank him for helping grow our local economy. I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pop in and try some of his products the next time they are home. To all the distillers back home in Nova Scotia, I say, "Cheers".

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**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, gender equality requires strong social programs that help women thrive, such as affordable housing, health care and pharmacare. It means access to affordable quality child care so that women do not have to choose between having a family and having a career. Gender equality means pay equity for women who can participate in all aspects of life free from the threat of gender-based violence and free to make decisions about their own bodies.

As we celebrate International Women's Day on March 8, let us commit to continuing to work for real and lasting change for women. That is what New Democrats work for each and every day.

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● (1410)

*[Translation]***SENIORS**

**Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, seniors are often left on the sidelines. We are so quick to say that the younger generation is the brightest and most innovative. We tend to forget those who came before us.

Seniors have much to be proud of. They have shaped our country in many ways. They are here to provide a sober reminder of the mistakes of the past, so we do not repeat them.

*[English]*

This is a lesson I have learned through my Hull—Aylmer Senior Council. The council members have challenged me with their insightful views and their willingness to have frank discussions about the future of our country. I thank my council members. They can believe me when I say that our frequent council meetings are one of the highlights of my career as the member of Parliament for Hull—Aylmer.

*[Translation]*

To any seniors who may be watching, I want to thank them for everything they have done for our country. The government hopes to work closely with them to build a better future.

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*[English]***CITATION FOR LIFESAVING**

**Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in an emergency, it is important to stay calm, cool and collected. That is exactly what a bright and brave youngster did recently in my riding. One morning recently, seven-year-old Dylan Roloson, of Simcoe, found his mother, Jessica, who suffers from type 1 diabetes, unconscious. While almost anyone of any age would rightfully be frightened in this kind of situation, Dylan remained calm, cool and collected as he called 911 and explained what was happening until the paramedics arrived.

The EMS on scene praised Dylan for his actions and credited him for saving his mother's life. EMS officials were so impressed with Dylan that they presented him with a plaque of life-saving recognition, on behalf of the OPP interim commissioner, at a special ceremony at his school. Together Dylan and first responders taught a valuable lesson to everyone there about the proper use of 911 and the importance of staying calm, cool and collected during an emergency.

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*[Translation]***ANNUAL HUDSON ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE**

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for the past 10 years, an army of volunteers led by Jim Beauchamp and his family, Jay de la Durantaye, Ken Bell, Rob Dumas, Craig Nolan, Brett Nolan and Ken Doran, in partnership with the town of Hudson, has given everyone in the community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges a chance to be Irish for a day during the annual St. Patrick's Day parade in Hudson.

*[English]*

Whether it is sporting a bright green bow tie, celebrating rich Irish culture and heritage or simply enjoying our historic and quaint town of Hudson, there is always a good reason to celebrate St. Patrick's Day in our community. This year, the parade will be led by grand marshal Jamie Orchard, Irishwoman of the Year Brenda O'Farrell, parade queen Samara O'Gorman, princesses Kimberlee O'Brien and Emma Gauthier, and queen mum Janet Ellerbeck on March 16, at 1 p.m., on Main Street. I invite members to come one, come all, and let us make the 10th anniversary of the Hudson St. Patrick's Day Parade one to remember.

*Sláinte, Mr. Speaker.*

*Statements by Members***TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on February 20, I had the pleasure to table the interim report on establishing a Canadian transportation and logistics strategy. The 31 recommendations contained within the report are to promote the free movement of goods and people domestically and over international borders. It is easy to see how this fluidity could positively affect local, domestic and international business interests. Equally important is to recognize how it will impact individual citizens: Canadians.

In Niagara Centre, I look forward to working with our partners to strengthen our economy, aligning with international investment opportunities and promoting the best use of Niagara's transportation-related assets.

This report reinforces strategic, integrated transportation priorities within Niagara and will align with future capital investments. This will strengthen Niagara's overall global trade performance and will therefore provide and sustain good, stable jobs throughout our region.

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**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Cariboo—Prince George, and indeed all Canadians, are paying for this Prime Minister's mistakes. In a recent survey, half of Canadians admitted that they are having trouble just making ends meet. It is no wonder. Despite what the Liberals say, under this Prime Minister, 2018 finished with wages that are flat and household debt that is climbing.

Amid layoffs and plant closures in our energy, forestry and auto sectors, it is clear that this Prime Minister has failed workers. Worse, the only thing going up for residents in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George are taxes. This Prime Minister, who has never had to worry about money, is happy to let the fine people of Cariboo—Prince George pay for his failures. Payroll taxes are up, and the Prime Minister's carbon tax is driving up the cost of fuel and home heating.

Canadians just cannot afford another Liberal term. Why should they pay for the Liberals' mistakes, when they can choose Conservative leadership? The Conservatives are fighting for better.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as February is Black History Month, I would like to recognize some great Canadians from Whitney Pier, Cape Breton.

Clotilda Yakimchuk overcame discrimination by becoming one of the first Nova Scotia black nurses and started Cape Breton University's nursing program.

Vincent Waterman is a true human rights activist and patriarch of St. Phillip's African Orthodox Church. He served his family, his community and a greater world tirelessly for years.

Then there is Campy Crawford. He became the first black municipal police officer east of Montreal in 1964. Because of his great work, the regional police have a service award dedicated in his name.

Last but not least, a former steelworker, alderman and deputy mayor of Sydney, Eddie Parris, was an advocate for Cape Breton's black community and even had a chance to play for the Queen, in his band, the Inspirational Singers.

Let us never forget the true contributions of African Canadians, not only in Cape Breton but throughout our wonderful country.

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**NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS**

**Ms. Kim Rudd (Northumberland—Peterborough South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Canadian Nuclear Association conference taking place in Ottawa.

Nuclear power plants have been producing clean, emissions-free electricity in Canada since the early 1960s and now produce about 15% of Canada's electricity and 60% in the province of Ontario.

Today, Canada is an international tier 1 nuclear supplier, recognized for some of the newest innovation in design, life-saving isotopes, hydrogen as a clean power source and small modular reactors, recognizing their potential for, among other things, addressing climate change and supplying unlimited clean power to rural and remote communities.

Members of the CNA, like Cameco Fuel Manufacturing in my riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South, are at the cutting edge of technology and innovation and lead the way in promoting this critical sector of the Canadian economy.

I have been privileged to work with the CNA over the last few years. Its advocacy in the commitment to a course of excellence do us all proud.

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**CARBON PRICING**

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, amid a mounting list of failures, the Prime Minister's 2019 carbon tax is just the beginning of what he wants Canadians to pay. Experts agree that it will not be effective and will only lead to economic hardship for Canadians.

*Statements by Members*

The Prime Minister's carbon tax will add 11¢ to the cost of every litre of gas and hundreds more for home heating. Despite false assurances that it will not add up to much, independent analysis estimates the cost to be up to \$100 more per month. This is yet another area where the Prime Minister needs to come clean with Canadians. Canadians should not be punished with an ineffective tax for working, playing and living. Worse yet, the Liberal carbon tax will go even higher.

The Prime Minister does not worry about money or deficits, but that is not the case for most Canadians. Hundreds of dollars in added costs per year matters to most of us. In October, we have a clear choice. The Conservatives will ensure that Canadians get ahead instead of falling behind.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BULLYING**

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, bullying is a serious problem in our schools and workplaces, as well as at home and online.

[English]

As a teacher, I have seen the effects of bullying first-hand. While one might think that for most kids recess and lunch are their favourite times of the day, kids who are bullied dread time outside of the classroom because they are afraid of not having anyone to speak to, of looking like they have no friends, of being bullied.

[Translation]

Kids who are bullied experience depression and anxiety, difficulty sleeping, increased feelings of loneliness and sadness, and diminished school performance.

[English]

Bullying causes kids to stop going to class and may even cause them to drop out.

February 27 is known as Pink Shirt Day, an opportunity to raise awareness about bullying, discrimination, homophobia and transphobia. As the Pink Shirt Day movement grows each year, join me in taking a stand against bullying. People should wear their pink shirts proudly and let everyone know they do not tolerate bullying or discrimination.

[Translation]

We need to show kindness, empathy and compassion. Most importantly, we need to speak out against bullying all year round.

\* \* \*

● (1420)

[English]

**LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have raised the name Jagmeet Singh, the national NDP leader in the House of Commons, dozens of times and each time the Liberals have responded with a taunt: Jagmeet who?

Everyone in Burnaby South knows full well who Jagmeet Singh is and that is why they elected him MP with an overwhelming mandate Monday night. In just three sitting days, I will not even be able to use his name anymore because he will be sitting in the House of Commons.

Jagmeet who? He is a political leader like we have never seen before in Canada, someone who has fought through racism and discrimination and always has the utmost respect for everyone. Above all, Jagmeet Singh is a fighter. He will be fighting for the people of Burnaby South and all Canadians, for affordable housing now, for universal single-payer public pharmacare and for real meaningful and lasting reconciliation with first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Jagmeet who? Canadians will see him in action in the House on March 18, speaking up about building a Canada where everyone matters and where no one is left behind. I congratulate Jagmeet.

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**ETHICS**

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, right now, tens of thousands of Canadians are out of work because of the no more pipelines bill, the tanker ban, failure to build pipelines and failure to resolve tariffs with the United States.

Canada's borders are not secure and are our asylum system is being abused. Canadians are still detained in China. Taxes are going up, and Canada's debt is out of control.

Instead of fighting for Canada, the Prime Minister has been fighting for who—himself. He has taken an illegal trip to billionaire's island, has allowed a lucrative clam fishing contract to be directly awarded to an in-law of his minister, has had caucus embroiled in investigations on shady land deals in Brampton, four groping scandals, including himself.

Now, the Prime Minister is accused of conspiring to prevent justice being brought to rich executives accused of bribing Moammar Gadhafi's son with prostitutes. It is disgusting.

Canadians are standing up to say "Enough is enough." We stand with them against the Prime Minister, because Canada's Conservatives are fighting for better.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my city of Hamilton is home to an active francophone community, which recently held its 6th annual Black History Month Gala. This event was a celebration of our diversity, with 20 francophone African countries represented.

It was a wonderful evening showcasing the culture, music, dance, fashion and renowned joie de vivre of the African people. I had the pleasure of sharing a statement from the Prime Minister, who said that we are celebrating young black Canadians, their power, their voices, their achievements and their future. He also said that this month reminds us of the inequality and barriers many continue to face.

Canadian Heritage will invest \$9 million over three years to help address issues faced by black youth, to foster a better understanding of their experiences and to facilitate dialogue between all Canadians.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### JUSTICE

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that he is pleased that the former attorney general can share her perspective on SNC-Lavalin. Now we know why. He is still dictating what she can and cannot say about this Liberal corruption scandal.

If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, why is he still trying to silence the former attorney general?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important for Canadians to hear different perspectives on this matter.

We announced that, where appropriate, we are waiving solicitor-client privilege, cabinet confidentiality and all other obligations of confidentiality with respect to the matters being studied by the justice committee and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

We want the committee to continue its important work. We support the work of this committee and, of course, the work of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

•(1425)

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is what the Prime Minister would like Canadians to believe, but the facts tell otherwise. He is refusing to let his former attorney general share her entire story.

Here is what she had to say yesterday, “the Order in Council leaves in place whatever restraints there are on my ability to speak freely about matters that occurred after I left the post of attorney general.”

What happened between the time she was removed as attorney general to the day that she resigned that the Prime Minister is so desperate to keep hidden?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we took the unprecedented step of waiving both cabinet confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege in the matter currently under study by the justice committee and the Ethics Commissioner. This is a significant step that we took. We know that Canadians need to hear different perspectives on this matter. That is why we welcome the work the committee is doing and we welcome the work

### Oral Questions

the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is doing on this matter.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Check the fine print, Mr. Speaker, because there is an important detail that the Prime Minister is leaving out. Something happened between the time the former attorney general lost her job for speaking truth to power until the day she resigned from cabinet that the Prime Minister is desperate to keep hidden from Canadians.

Could the Prime Minister confirm that sometime in that period of time something was said to the former attorney general that proved she lost her job because she stood up to him?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the matter before the justice committee and indeed the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. That is why, as a government, we were determined to take the unprecedented step of waiving cabinet confidentiality, of waiving solicitor-client privilege, which allows the former attorney general to speak fully to the matter in question. This is something that Canadians expect. They want to be able to hear different perspectives on this matter and that is exactly what they are going to get to hear.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals were dragged kicking and screaming to the justice committee before they even started to allow people to give testimony. They are still only allowing half the story to be told, the half of the story the Prime Minister is comfortable hearing.

There is more to this story. Something happened. Something was said to the former attorney general or someone in the Prime Minister's Office validated her accusations that she lost her job because she would not let his friends off the hook. Is that why the Prime Minister will not waive full privilege in this matter?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, unlike the Harper Conservatives, we take very seriously the institutions, the processes and the procedures that are fundamental to our system of justice, to the rule of law and to our very institutions. That is why we take great care when we take an unprecedented step like waiving solicitor-client privilege in this matter, like waiving cabinet confidentiality in this matter. I think it is important that Canadians get a chance to hear from a broad range of perspectives and that is exactly what they will be able to do.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is not unprecedented. Other prime ministers have waived full privilege when it related to investigations during their time in office.

For weeks, the Prime Minister was speaking for the former attorney general. Now he is deciding what is relevant. He is deciding what he is going to allow her to speak.

This is a very simple question. Why will he not waive privilege for the time period between when she lost her job and when she resigned from cabinet? What is he trying to hide?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition seems to be shifting in its approach, because the justice committee and indeed the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner are very much focused on a very specific question that they are looking into.

*Oral Questions*

We have waived privilege and we have waived cabinet confidentiality so that the former attorney general can speak fully and expansively to the matter under study. That is what Canadians expect. That is exactly what we are doing, because we understand how important it is to make sure that Canadians hear a diverse range of perspectives.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general of Canada will be testifying before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights this afternoon, but that does not mean that we will get the whole story. Any actions or communications involving her that occurred after January 14, the day she was shuffled to Veterans Affairs, are off limits. Allowing her to tell only half the story could leave us with more questions than answers.

Why go to so much effort to control what she wants to say?

Why not allow her to talk about stepping down from cabinet, for example?

Is the Prime Minister's Office that afraid of what she has to say?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have confidence in the processes under way at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and the office of the Ethics Commissioner. That is why we waived the confidentiality requirement that was preventing the former attorney general from speaking fully at committee. We want her to share her perspective on the matter before the committee, and that is exactly what we have allowed her to do.

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the problem is that she will not be able to say anything about what happened after January 14. For example, she will likely not be able to explain why, after she was shuffled, she wrote that it is a pillar of our democracy that our system of justice be free from all political interference.

She will not be able to explain why she resigned from cabinet and, most importantly, she will not be able to tell us what she said during her unprecedented appearance before cabinet following her resignation, which could shed a lot of light on the situation.

If the Prime Minister can give five different versions of the story, why will he not lift all of the constraints preventing the former minister of justice from telling her version?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we understand that the members opposite want to maximize the political impact of this matter. However, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and the Ethics Commissioner are looking into a very specific question.

We waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidentiality to allow the former attorney general to speak fully to the matter in question. That is exactly what Canadians deserve, and that is what we did.

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the former minister of justice has let it be known that she is still

being silenced by the Prime Minister regarding the conversations that occurred between her and the Prime Minister's Office prior to her decision to step down as veterans affairs minister.

The Bob Fife story broke on February 7. On February 11, the Prime Minister said that her continued presence in cabinet was a sign that everything was hunky-dory. She quit the next day.

We know she was under intense pressure in that period. The simple questions are these: Who spoke to her from the PMO? What was said? Why is the Prime Minister refusing to let her tell her whole story?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the issue that is before the justice committee and before the Ethics Commissioner is one that Canadians want to see answers to and want to hear diverse perspectives on. That is why we waived cabinet confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege to enable the former attorney general to speak fully to the matter under study.

That is what Canadians expect and that is exactly what we have delivered. The principle of confidentiality, at cabinet and in solicitor-client privilege, is an important one.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, diverse perspectives, yes, there is truth and non-truth. I remember in Sunday school they said that what is whispered in the backrooms is going to get shouted from the rooftops.

This is the Prime Minister's opportunity to come clean. Stop hiding behind those legal-weasel mechanisms that are preventing the former minister from telling the whole truth. Will he waive the cabinet confidence on what was said to the member of Vancouver Granville in the lead-up to her resignation? Better yet, will the Prime Minister agree to testify about his interference in this case and come clean on this whole tawdry affair? Will he testify?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite qualifies fundamental tenets of our justice system, of our cabinet government, as "weasel" words, we see the partisan political approach that he is desperate to take. On this side of the House, we respect our institutions, we respect the full integrity of our justice system and that is why we take very carefully and seriously the responsibility to defend those institutions and always will. That is why we took the important step of waiving in this matter the confidentiality.

• (1435)

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is preventing the former attorney general from speaking. She specifically said that he is preventing her from speaking about her time when she was veterans affairs minister, about the conversations they had just before she resigned, specifically in Vancouver, and about what she told cabinet last week.

Why is it that the Prime Minister only wants his version of their interactions to be disclosed? What is he hiding?



*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the matter in question before the justice committee and before the Ethics Commissioner is focused on her time as Attorney General, and that is why when we went forward to waive confidentiality in regard to solicitor-client privilege, in regard to cabinet confidence, we took very seriously this unprecedented step, because we know that Canadians need to hear all perspectives on this. That is why we are moving forward in a responsible way that respects our institutions.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if we need to hear all perspectives, then we need to hear her full perspective.

Will the Prime Minister do this very simple thing. Will he write a letter right now, he has just over an hour, and tell the former attorney general that she can speak about the time when she was veterans affairs minister, she can talk about their conversations in Vancouver before she resigned and she can talk about what she told cabinet last week. It is very simple. Will he do that right now?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite do not seem to want to talk anymore about the fact that every step of the way we stood up for good jobs across this country, we stood up for Canadian workers and we stood up for the growth of our economy, which we have been delivering on over the past three years, while at the same time defending our institutions, defending the independence of our judiciary and standing up for the rule of law. That is what Canadians expect of this government, of any government, and that is exactly what we are delivering on in every different instance.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in her letter to the chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, the former attorney general of Canada said that she would not be able to speak freely about the interference by the Prime Minister and his cronies. If we understand correctly, everyone who has appeared before the committee has been able to tell everything they knew, except the former attorney general. She will be the only witness who cannot speak freely.

Could the Prime Minister just tell us why he is trying to muzzle her instead of freeing her to tell Canadians everything she knows?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the matter before the committee and the Ethics Commissioner is very specific. That is why we have enabled the former attorney general to speak fully to the matter currently under study by the committee. This is a significant step that we took. The decision to waive solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidentiality is not one to be taken lightly. In this case, and for this important study, I think it was the right thing to do.

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we on the opposition side are not making this up. It is the former attorney general herself, who remains a Liberal member sitting on that side of the House, who clearly said that she does not have free rein to speak before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. She will not be able to speak about what happened when she was veterans affairs minister. She will not be able to speak about what happened during the meetings in Vancouver before she resigned. She will not be able to speak about what happened during

last week's cabinet meeting and Liberal caucus meeting after she resigned. She will not be able to speak her truth, because the Prime Minister does not want to give her—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have empowered the former attorney general to share all of her experiences and give full testimony regarding the matter before that committee.

I understand that the members opposite are using this matter to try to score political points. We on this side are interested in the rigorous process that is under way. That is what we always do, and what we will always do. We respect our institutions, while also standing up to protect the workers and businesses across this country that deserve to be supported, not attacked, as the opposition is doing.

• (1440)

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the former attorney general wrote to the chair of the justice committee to indicate that the Prime Minister's order in council “falls short of what is required” in terms of sharing all relevant information.

The Prime Minister has just a little over an hour. If he truly has nothing to hide, then why will he not simply lift all solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidentiality? What is he afraid of?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, defending our institutions, defending the rule of law and defending the independence and rigour of our justice system is something that we take very, very seriously. The decision to waive solicitor-client privilege and, indeed, cabinet confidentiality is not one to be taken lightly, but it is one that we took in this case because it is important that the justice committee and that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner are able to do their work. That is why we took that unprecedented step.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's order in council prevents the former attorney general from discussing her resignation from cabinet, the presentation that she gave to cabinet following her resignation and discussions that she had upon being fired as the Attorney General, all matters relevant to getting to the heart of the truth.

Why is the Prime Minister trying to silence his former attorney general? What is he afraid of?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite obviously misunderstands what the order in council is all about. It is actually about waiving solicitor-client privilege and waiving cabinet confidentiality so that the former attorney general can speak to—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. Members know that each side gets its turn and there will be more turns for each side. I remind members to show that they can be patient, act like adults and not interrupt.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, the principle of solicitor-client privilege and the principle of cabinet confidentiality are fundamental tenets of our justice system and, indeed, of our system of government. We do not and will never take those principles lightly.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been refusing to tell the truth since the news about SNC-Lavalin broke.

For nearly three weeks now, the message has changed daily. He even refused to let the former attorney general speak while allowing the current Attorney General to speak every day. It is completely ridiculous.

After question period today, the Prime Minister will finally let the member for Vancouver Granville talk about what happened, but only some of what happened.

The Prime Minister promised to be different, so why is he not giving her free rein to speak her truth?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, I have always been very clear about what we did.

As we have always done, we will continue to stand up for jobs, workers and businesses across the country while respecting and protecting our institutions, the rule of law and the principles of our democracy.

That is what we are doing now by waiving solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidentiality so the former attorney general can speak to the matter.

[*English*]

**Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of the SNC-Lavalin saga, the Prime Minister sent mixed messages to Canadians. First, he refused to allow the former attorney general to speak at all. Then he gave in but only a little bit. This week, she wrote the justice committee and said that she will not be able to tell us anything as to what happened after January 14.

Are these the actions of a Prime Minister who says that sunlight is the best disinfectant? Enough is enough. Will the Prime Minister let the former attorney general tell her story, speak her truth and tell Canadians exactly what happened?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite has deep respect for our justice system and for the fundamentals of that justice system and knows full well that solicitor-client privilege is one of the foundational tenets of our justice system and that cabinet confidentiality is one of the fundamental necessary tenets of the functioning of our democratic system. That is why, when we take the step to waive cabinet confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege in this matter, he must recognize it as a significant step toward—

• (1445)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not

answering the question. Will the Prime Minister, right now, give permission to the former attorney general to speak freely about her time as veterans affairs minister, about the meetings she had with the Prime Minister in Vancouver and her presentation to cabinet last week, and if not, why not?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we respect the responsibility of the justice committee and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to get to the bottom of this matter and to have a full airing of this. That is why we have taken the unprecedented step of waiving cabinet confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege in regard to the matter that is under study by that committee.

The members opposite do not seem to be pleased with that, because they are playing political games with it. What we are doing is allowing for a full airing of this matter at committee.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister respects the committee, let it do its job. Let it hear from the former attorney general. We are asking the Prime Minister, and Canadians deserve the truth. They deserve an answer from the Prime Minister right now.

Will the Prime Minister waive the privilege? Will he waive the cabinet confidentiality and let the former attorney general speak freely about her time as veterans affair minister and speak freely about their meeting in Vancouver? Will the Prime Minister waive the privilege?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have moved entirely off the actual matter in question, which is regarding what happened while she was attorney general and minister of justice. This is something we know Canadians want to hear and that is why we have taken the unprecedented step of waiving cabinet confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege to enable the former attorney general to speak to the matter it is studying at committee.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has expressed his admiration for dictators and some might say that he wants to lead Canada in that way.

In the SNC-Lavalin case, the former attorney general wanted to enforce the law, but that did not suit the Prime Minister. He, his chief of staff, his principal secretary, and even the Clerk of the Privy Council pressured the former attorney general to halt the trial, which began on October 29.

What lawful authority did the Prime Minister have to get his collaborators to talk to the former attorney general's staff on December 18?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what our government has done every step of the way is stand up and defend workers and jobs in Quebec and across the country, and stand up for the companies and the work that Canadians do across the country.

*Oral Questions*

We will always stand up for Canadian jobs, while respecting the independence of our judicial system, our institutions and the rule of law.

That is what we have always done and that is what we will always do.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, no one should be breaking the law to protect jobs.

On December 19, the Prime Minister and his cabinet had lunch with the Clerk of the Privy Council. Later in the day, the clerk called the former attorney general to ask her to stop the trial. The Prime Minister, his chief of staff, his principal secretary and the Clerk of the Privy Council are all involved.

What lawful authority did the Prime Minister have to instruct the clerk to put pressure on the former attorney general? Canadians want to know.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is troubling to see that the Conservatives have chosen to play politics by going after SNC-Lavalin workers and workers across the country.

Quebeckers and Canadians know very well that we will always defend jobs on this side of the House. We will always defend workers, but we will also respect the rule of law and our institutions, including the independence of our justice system. The Conservatives' attacks will not change this.

\* \* \*

• (1450)

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, hundreds of young people sent an SOS to all politicians during “La planète s’invite à l’école” event. They know that their generation will pay the price for global warming.

Will the Liberals listen to them and include measures in the budget to end fossil fuel subsidies and begin massive investments in renewable energy?

Given the urgent need to address climate change, young people understand that the time for dithering and half-measures is over. Will the Liberals recognize this and take appropriate action?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister and Minister of Youth, I have the opportunity to spend a lot of time speaking to youth across the country. Despite what the NDP is saying, young people understand that we cannot choose between economic growth and environmental protection. We must do both at the same time.

That is exactly what we are doing by putting a price on pollution and investing in safer ways to transport our resources to markets other than the United States. That is what young people expect and that is what we will continue to do.

[English]

### GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, throughout the by-election in Burnaby South, people made it clear to Jagmeet Singh that the Liberals only care about the wealthy and the well connected.

Everyday Canadians are struggling to put food on the table. They cannot afford the medication that they need. While the Liberals will move heaven and earth to help the corporate elite, everyday Canadians are left behind. All Canadians deserve safe, affordable housing, public universal pharmacare and food on the table.

No more delays. No more excuses. Will the Prime Minister put everyday Canadians first for a change, and make real investments in budget 2019 for the people who are most in need?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP never lets the facts get in the way of a good rhetorical question.

On this side of the House, we set a goal of achieving the lowest poverty level in Canada's history, and yesterday the Canadian income survey showed that we hit our first target three years ahead of schedule.

In the first two years of our mandate, our investments helped to lift 820,000 people out of poverty, including almost 300,000 children.

That is what we are doing to help people in Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Official Languages and I are extremely proud to be starting our study on the modernization of the Official Languages Act, which is turning 50 this year.

This act has helped Canadians make great strides in linguistic development and identity building over the years. That is why the committee has launched this study. Canada's official languages are a source of national pride and an integral part of our identity.

Could the Prime Minister tell us how the government will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Official Languages Act?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Madawaska—Restigouche for his hard work on the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Conservative politicians across the country are attacking the French fact in Canada, backed by the Conservative Party leader across the aisle. We will always stand up for minority language communities. I have asked the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie to review and modernize the Official Languages Act. Our goal is to ensure that the act responds to the challenges arising from the transformations that Canada has undergone and to always protect our official language minority communities.

*Oral Questions***JUSTICE**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in less than an hour, the former attorney general will be testifying before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Unfortunately, she will not be able to speak her full truth because the Prime Minister will not let her. We are not the ones saying this. It is the former attorney general herself who said it.

However, the Prime Minister can reassure Canadians by answering a very simple question here in the House.

Did anyone in the PMO or in a minister's office contact SNC-Lavalin representatives to assure them that they would not have to go to trial, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have done what Canadians expect of us every step of the way. We have stood up for jobs, stood up for workers and invested in our country's economic growth, while at the same time defending our institutions, standing up for the rule of law and defending the independence of our judiciary.

That is what we have always done, and that is what we will always do, to protect jobs and to protect our institutions at the exact same time.

• (1455)

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the best way to protect our institutions is to let everyone state the facts clearly. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister denied the former attorney general of Canada that freedom to speak. She herself acknowledged that she will not be able to speak her full truth.

I will ask my very simple question again. Did anyone in the PMO or in a minister's office contact SNC-Lavalin representatives to assure them there would be no criminal trial, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have always stood up for good jobs across the country, stood up for employers, and stood up for the workers who work so hard every day to build a better Canada and help their families, and we always will.

That is exactly what we will always do, and, at the same time, we will ensure that we always comply with the law, protect the integrity of our justice system and defend our institutions. That is what Canadians expect, especially after 10 years under a Conservative government that did not do any of those things well.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the Prime Minister is aware that the former attorney general has written a letter to the justice committee explaining that the order in council that the Prime Minister keeps bragging about falls far short of what is required. She said:

[It] does nothing to release me from any restrictions that apply to communications while I served as Minister of Veterans Affairs....

The letter goes on:

...[and it] leaves in place whatever restraints there are on my ability to speak freely about matters that occurred after I left the post of Attorney General.

Why has the Prime Minister kept the restraints on the former attorney general unless he is afraid of what she is going to say?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the question that is before the justice committee and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is entirely focused on her time as Attorney General. We know that the system of cabinet confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege is a fundamental tenet, extraordinarily important both to our democracy and to our system of justice. That is why we took the unprecedented step of waiving those elements so that Canadians could hear directly from the former attorney general on this matter.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister had no trouble talking about that period of time after he had fired her as Attorney General and until she resigned. The Clerk of the Privy Council had no trouble talking about that period of time after the former attorney general was moved along and then resigned.

Why is the Prime Minister preventing the person who was fired and who resigned from sharing her full truth? Why is he placing restraints on her? Why will he not do the right thing and lift them right now?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for 10 years Canadians watched Stephen Harper and his Conservatives disrespect their institutions, play games with the rule of law, and meddle with the independence of the judiciary. They expect a government to stand up and defend our institutions, including one of the fundamental tenets of our justice system, which is solicitor-client privilege, and indeed a fundamental tenet of our government, which is cabinet confidentiality.

When we made the decision to waive those elements so that the former attorney general can speak to this matter, that is a big deal.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. There is too much noise, and I would ask the member for Chilliwack—Hope and others to not interrupt when someone else has the floor.

The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, northerners are taking part in the ice road jiggling challenge to raise awareness about ice road communities. Their message is clear: We need roads that work all year to bring supplies to our communities and to travel to doctor appointments.

The Liberals do not seem to understand that climate change is making Hatchet Lake first nation inaccessible because the ice roads are open for shorter periods of time. Why does the Liberal government keep neglecting the basic needs of northerners?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have made historic investments in infrastructure, including in partnership with indigenous communities right across the country.

I personally had the pleasure and honour to spend some time with the community in Hatchet Lake one winter a few years ago and got to see directly the challenges they are facing. That is why this government is committed to reconciliation, to investment, to partnership with indigenous communities right across this country to make sure we are building a better future together for everyone in this country.

\* \* \*

**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first nations leaders from Manitoba came to Ottawa this week to once again call on the government to respect their rights and move on treaty land entitlement. For two months they asked to meet with the new minister, but he could not be bothered. When he was appointed, he said he had a lot to learn, yet he could not bother to walk two blocks to meet with leaders who want to help him understand his historic obligation.

Learning? This is failing the test.

Will the Prime Minister direct his minister to do his homework, and will the government stop disrespecting first nations' rights to land?

• (1500)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am extraordinarily proud of the work that the Minister of Indigenous Services is doing every single day to build a better future for indigenous peoples.

In regard to northern Manitoba, it was this government that moved forward to restore rail service to Churchill. We did that in a way that partnered with indigenous communities along the way and that gave them ownership over the railroad to make sure they are integral and empowered in the future of northern Manitoba and, indeed, of northern Canada.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that if he had allowed SNC-Lavalin to face criminal conviction, the company would be banned from getting federal contracts and would go out of business.

However, in December 2015 the government gave SNC-Lavalin a deal exempting it from the ban despite criminal charges. Now the government is changing the policy to exempt SNC-Lavalin even if it gets convicted.

If the Prime Minister plans to allow SNC-Lavalin to get contracts even after a conviction, why did he need to intervene to stop the company from going to trial in the first place?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we will always defend Canadian jobs. We will always defend workers. We will always defend

pensioners. We will always stand up for the economic growth that, unfortunately, simply did not happen under 10 years of Conservative government.

At the same time, what also did not happen under 10 years of the Conservative government is respect for our institutions, respect for the independence of law, and the kinds of thoughtful processes that actually defend our justice system. That is exactly what we are doing, at the same time: We are protecting jobs while standing up for the rule of law in this country.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that he needed to protect SNC-Lavalin from conviction, because they would not be able to bid on federal work and the business would go under.

However, yesterday, his public services minister confirmed that a simple policy change would have allowed the company, even after conviction, to bid on those federal contracts and continue to operate.

Given that revelation, and given that he was not doing this to protect workers, who was the Prime Minister trying to protect?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we did what Canadians expect us to, which is to stand up for jobs, defend Canadian workers and defend the economic growth that did not happen under 10 years of Stephen Harper, while at the same time protecting our institutions, standing up for the rule of law and defending the integrity and the independence of our judicial system.

That is what this government has always done. That is what we will always do.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister still fails to answer the question.

He claimed for so long that he needed to allow SNC-Lavalin to avoid conviction so it could continue to have federal contracts. We now know from his own minister's admission that a simple policy change would allow SNC-Lavalin to go on getting contracts and employing people. That cannot be his real motivation.

Obviously, the Prime Minister was protecting someone else. If this is not about protecting jobs, who was he protecting?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for 10 years, the member opposite was part of a government that did not do a good job of protecting jobs or of creating growth for Canadians. Indeed, it had the lowest growth rate of any prime minister since R. B. Bennett in the depths of the Great Depression.

At the same time, in those 10 years, we saw countless examples of that government's torquing the truth in favour of partisan interests and disrespecting the judiciary, including Supreme Court judges.

We will consistently stand up to create jobs, to protect jobs and to protect our institutions at the exact same time.

*Oral Questions***POVERTY**

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last summer the government announced “Opportunity for All”, Canada’s first-ever national poverty reduction strategy. The strategy highlights all the investments the government has made in the fight against poverty. It also sets ambitious targets of reducing poverty by 20% by 2020, and by 50% by 2030.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House what progress is being made towards meeting these targets?

• (1505)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we set a goal of achieving the lowest poverty level in Canada’s history. Yesterday the Canadian income survey showed that we hit our first target three years ahead of schedule.

In the first two years of our mandate, our investments helped lift over 820,000 people out of poverty, which includes 278,000 children. Thanks to programs like the Canada child benefit, which was of course opposed by the Conservatives, we are giving every Canadian a real and fair chance at success.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, former Ontario Liberal attorney general Michael Bryant stated that a crime may have been committed when the Prime Minister conspired to stop the criminal trial of a company charged with bribery. Legal experts, including a former judge, agree that a crime may have been committed and that the RCMP should investigate.

I have a simple question requiring a simple answer. Has the Prime Minister, any former or current cabinet minister, or anyone in his office been contacted by the RCMP?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no, not to our knowledge.

\* \* \*

**PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, I stood in the House to raise the alarm on the increase in rejections of disability tax credit applications. It is a disturbing fact that there is a 60% increase in rejections. To make matters worse, Liberals have clawed back over \$26 million from people with severe and prolonged impairments. They still have not fixed this problem. Liberals are clearly out of touch.

What Canadians really want to know is how the Liberals could let this happen.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is the government that moved forward on the historic accessible Canada act for the first time, moved forward with a comprehensive approach to removing barriers for all Canadians. We recognize that a country like Canada needs to make sure that every single Canadian has a full opportunity to participate and has the support and benefits they need in order to succeed and contribute to our country.

That is exactly what we have done with this historic legislation. There is still much more work to do, and we will do it, but we will do it together.

\* \* \*

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know Canadians need access to telecommunications services to participate fully and to succeed in a digital economy. Canadians have expressed concerns about the quality, coverage and, most significantly, the cost of these essential services, and they are looking for lower-cost options and innovative services.

Can the Prime Minister please update the House on our government’s work to ensure that Canadians have access to quality services at more affordable prices?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore for his hard work and thoughtful questions. We are constantly listening to the concerns of Canadians. We are taking action to increase competition, because that is the best way to bring down the costs of services like Internet and cellphone plans.

Yesterday, we proposed clear direction to the CRTC to build on our work to date. Telecommunications policy decisions must put consumers first. We need to ensure that Canadians can get the access they need at prices they can afford, and that is exactly what we are doing.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister conspired to stop the criminal trial of a company charged with bribery, and this is what the bribery looked like—

**The Speaker:** Order. I invite members to be judicious in their use of words. There are certain accusations we cannot make here, except in certain ways. I would ask the member to be careful in the use of her words.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. Members ought to be familiar with the rules, and I am prepared to talk to them privately if they wish.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. Speaker, this is what SNC-Lavalin’s intervention looked like: 30 thousand dollars’ worth of Canadian prostitutes given to Moammar Gadhafi’s son. This is the so-called victimless crime that our woke feminist Prime Minister is moving mountains to cover up.

When did the Prime Minister learn that SNC-Lavalin paid for prostitutes for Moammar Gadhafi’s son?

• (1510)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we will stand up for Canadian workers. We will stand up for good jobs right across this country. We will do so in a way that is consistent with our values, with our expectations and with the rule of law. That is the matter we will stay focused on in this. We will defend Canadian jobs, and we will ensure that we are being consistent, both with our values and with the rules and laws in place.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is always “we will, we will, we will”.

The Prime Minister has known for over a year now that SNC-Lavalin risks losing all government contracts if there is no remediation agreement. His inaction has cost SNC-Lavalin \$1.6 billion over the past few months. Funds belonging to the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, the nest egg of Quebecers, are at stake. His inaction could cost Quebec thousands of jobs and a head office.

Why has the Prime Minister turned his back on the workers at SNC-Lavalin?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois and all Quebecers know very well that our government takes very seriously its responsibility to protect good jobs, promote economic growth and stand up for workers.

That is exactly what we are doing, but we will always do so in accordance with the laws and rules in place, while respecting our institutions and respecting the independence of our justice system. That is what all Canadians expect.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Mr. Speaker, in just a moment, I will ask for the unanimous consent of the House, because the National Energy Board has once again failed in its duty regarding official languages.

This is such a serious situation that I am sure you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House condemn the actions of the National Energy Board, which tabled its reconsideration report on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project in English only, and call on the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie to use her regulatory powers to ensure that all reports from federal agencies are systematically tabled in both official languages.

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

**Some hon. members:** No.

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There seemed to have been some confusion on the Liberal side during question period. The Liberals seem to think that the allegations that were made today come from the Conservative side, but it is, in fact, from the former attorney general herself. I would ask

### Private Members' Business

for unanimous consent to table the letter that the former attorney general wrote to the justice committee, which indicates that the Prime Minister's actions fall “short of what is required” when it comes waiving privilege in this case.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. Leader of the Opposition have the unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

### PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

The House resumed from February 22 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:12 p.m., pursuant to order made Tuesday, February 26, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 194 under Private Members' Business in the name of the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

[English]

Order, please. As I said yesterday, if a member is in the House when the question is read, one assumes he or she can hear the question and therefore is allowed to vote. Members should keep this in mind.

• (1520)

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

(Division No. 1002)

### YEAS

#### Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Amos
Anandasangaree	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Beaulieu	Beech
Bennett	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Block	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Bratina
Breton	Brosseau
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Chagger
Champagne	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cooper
Cormier	Cullen
Cuzner	Dabrusin

*Private Members' Business*

Davies  
Deltell  
Diotte  
Donnelly  
Drouin  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)  
Duvall  
Eglinski  
El-Khoury  
Erskine-Smith  
Eyolfson  
Falk (Provencher)  
Fergus  
Finley  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fragiskatos  
Freeland  
Gallant  
Garrison  
Genius  
Gill  
Goodale  
Graham  
Hajdu  
Hardie  
Hehr  
Hogg  
Housefather  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Johns  
Jones  
Jowhari  
Kelly  
Khalid  
Kmiec  
Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lamoureux  
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)  
Laverdière  
Lebouthillier  
Leitch  
Levitt  
Lighbound  
Lobb  
Long  
Ludwig  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
MacKenzie  
Maguire  
Martel  
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)  
Mathysen  
May (Cambridge)  
McCauley (Edmonton West)  
McDonald  
McKay  
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)  
Mendès  
Mihychuk  
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)  
Morneau  
Morrisey  
Murray  
Nassif  
Nault  
Nicholson  
Obhrai  
Oliphant  
O'Regan  
Paradis  
Pauzé  
Peterson  
Philpott  
Plamondon  
Poissant  
Qualtrough  
Rankin  
Rayes  
Rempel

DeCoursey  
Dhaliwal  
Doherty  
Dreeshen  
Dubé  
Duclos  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Dusseault  
Dzerowicz  
Ehsassi  
Ellis  
Eyking  
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)  
Fast  
Fillmore  
Finnigan  
Fonseca  
Fortin  
Fraser (Central Nova)  
Fuhr  
Garneau  
Généreux  
Gerretsen  
Goldsmith-Jones  
Gourde  
Grewal  
Hardcastle  
Hébert  
Hoback  
Holland  
Hughes  
Hutchings  
Jeneroux  
Jolibois  
Jordan  
Julian  
Kent  
Kitchen  
Kusie  
Lake  
Lametti  
Lapointe  
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)  
LeBlanc  
Lefebvre  
Leslie  
Liepert  
Lloyd  
Lockhart  
Longfield  
Lukiwski  
MacGregor  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Maloney  
Masse (Windsor West)  
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
McCrimmon  
McGuinty  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McLeod (Northwest Territories)  
Mendicino  
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)  
Motz  
Nantel  
Nater  
Ng  
Nuttall  
O'Connell  
Oliver  
Ouellette  
Paul-Hus  
Peschisolido  
Petipas Taylor  
Picard  
Poilievre  
Quach  
Ramsey  
Ratansi  
Reid  
Rioux

Robillard  
Rogers  
Rota  
Ruimy  
Sahota  
Sajjan  
Sangha  
Sarai  
Scarpaleggia  
Schieffe  
Schulte  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)  
Sikand  
Sopuck  
Sorenson  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Sweet  
Tan  
Tilson  
Trost  
Van Kesteren  
Vandenbeld  
Viersen  
Wagantall  
Warkentin  
Webber  
Wilkinson  
Wong  
Yip  
Yurdiga  
Zimmer — 293

Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Rudd  
Rusnak  
Saini  
Samson  
Sansoucy  
Saroya  
Scheer  
Schmale  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Shields  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Simms  
Sorbara  
Spengemann  
Ste-Marie  
Stubbs  
Tabbara  
Tassi  
Tootoo  
Trudel  
Vandal  
Vaughan  
Virani  
Warawa  
Waugh  
Weir  
Wilson-Raybould  
Wrzesnewskyj  
Young  
Zahid

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Dhillon Moore — 2

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

The House resumed from February 25 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made Tuesday, February 26, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 206 under Private Members' Business in the name of the member for Newmarket—Aurora.

The question is on the motion. Shall I dispense?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[Chair read text of amendment to House]

● (1530)

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

(Division No. 1003)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif  
Albrecht

Albas  
Aldag



*Private Members' Business*

Alghabra	Alleslev	O'Connell	Oliphant
Allison	Amos	Oliver	O'Regan
Anandasangaree	Anderson	Ouellette	Paradis
Arnold	Arseneault	Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Arya	Ayoub	Peschisolido	Peterson
Badawey	Bagnell	Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Bains	Barlow	Picard	Plamondon
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval	Poilievre	Poissant
Baylis	Beaulieu	Qualtrough	Ratansi
Beech	Bennett	Rayes	Reid
Benzen	Bergen	Rempel	Rioux
Berthold	Bezan	Robillard	Rodriguez
Bibeau	Bittle	Rogers	Romanado
Blair	Block	Rota	Rudd
Boissonnault	Bossio	Ruimy	Rusnak
Boudrias	Brassard	Sahota	Saini
Bratina	Breton	Sajjan	Samson
Carr	Carrie	Sangha	Sarai
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Chagger	Saroya	Scarpaleggia
Champagne	Chong	Scheer	Schieffe
Clarke	Cooper	Schmale	Schulte
Cormier	Cuzner	Serré	Sgro
Dabrusin	DeCoursey	Shanahan	Sheehan
Deltell	Dhaliwal	Shields	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Diotte	Doherty	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Dreeshen	Drouin	Simms	Sopuck
Dubourg	Duclos	Sorbara	Sorenson
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Spengemann	Stanton
Dzerowicz	Eglinski	Ste-Marie	Strahl
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Stubbs	Sweet
Ellis	Erskine-Smith	Tabbara	Tan
Eyking	Eyolfson	Tassi	Tilson
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Tootoo	Trost
Fast	Fergus	Van Kesteren	Vandal
Fillmore	Finley	Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Finnigan	Fisher	Viersen	Virani
Fonseca	Fortier	Wagantall	Warawa
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Warkentin	Waugh
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland	Webber	Weir
Fuhr	Gallant	Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Garneau	Généreux	Wong	Wrzesnewskyj
Genuis	Gerretsen	Yip	Young
Gill	Goldsmith-Jones	Yurdiga	Zahid
Goodale	Gourde	Zimmer — 257	
Graham	Grewal		
Hajdu	Hardie		
Hébert	Hehr		
Hoback	Hogg		
Holland	Housefather		
Hussen	Hutchings		
Iacono	Jeneroux		
Jones	Jordan		
Jowhari	Kelly		
Kent	Khalid		
Kitchen	Kmieć		
Kusie	Lake		
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Angus	Ashton
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Aubin	Benson
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Blaikie	Boulerice
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Boutin-Sweet	Brosseau
Lefebvre	Leitch	Cannings	Caron
Leslie	Levitt	Choquette	Christopherson
Liepert	Lightbound	Cullen	Davies
Lloyd	Lobb	Donnelly	Dubé
Lockhart	Long	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseau
Longfield	Ludwig	Duvall	Garrison
Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Hardcastle	Hughes
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Johns	Jolibois
Maguire	Maloney	Julian	Kwan
Martel	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	Laverdière	MacGregor
May (Cambridge)	May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)	Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McCrimmon	Nantel	Quach
McDonald	McGuinty	Ramsey	Rankin
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Sansoucy	Trudel — 36
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)		
Mendès	Mendicino		
Mihychuk	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)		
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)			
Morneau			
Morrissey	Motz		
Murray	Nassif		
Nater	Nault	Dhillon	Moore — 2
Ng	Nicholson		
Nuttall	Obhrai		

**NAYS**

## Members

**PAIRED**

## Members

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled “Convention Concerning Labour Inspection in Industry and Commerce”, adopted on July 11, 1947; “Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930”, adopted at Geneva on June 11, 2014; and “Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Canada and the European Space Agency”, concluded at Paris on February 12, 2019.

\* \* \*

• (1535)

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

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

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, entitled “Making the Most of the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future”.

As we know, the Government of Canada launched the action plan for official languages in late March 2018. It is the Government of Canada's fourth five-year strategy for official languages. This \$2.7-billion action plan is critical for our official language minority communities.

I want to thank my fellow committee members for their work, for staunchly defending the language rights of all Canadians, and for helping to promote linguistic duality in Canada.

I also want to thank our clerk, Christine Holke, and our analyst, Lucie Lecomte.

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

*[English]*

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, entitled “Insect Management in Canada's Forest Sector: Strengthening National Cooperation Against Current and Future Outbreaks”.

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

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, on behalf of my Conservative colleagues, the Conservative supplementary report to the study on forest pests that was recently completed by the natural resources committee.

Our report highlights the many challenges to Canada's forestry sector, including the uncertainty created by Bill C-68 and Bill C-69 for resource development and rural infrastructure, increased costs from the Liberal carbon tax and the new Liberal fuel standard. Committee members have heard repeatedly that Canadian lumber mills are being closed or idled and jobs are being moved to the United States.

During the study, the Liberal member for St. John's East also repeatedly suggested that there should be no action against the mountain pine beetle so that “nature will take its course”.

Conservatives agree with the executive director of the National Aboriginal Forestry Association, who said during the study that to tell the community that is sitting in the middle of what are basically matchsticks ready to go up that we shouldn't do anything would be “a recipe for loss of human life and devastation”.

Conservatives believe combatting and preventing forest pests like the mountain pine beetle and the spruce budworm are important federal responsibilities, just like the track record of the previous Conservative government that made unprecedented investments and took measures to fight foreign pests and successfully secured a softwood lumber deal to protect Canadian forestry producers and workers.

*[Translation]*

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 86th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee advises that pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the subcommittee on private members' business met to consider the order for the second reading of a private member's bill originating in the Senate and recommended that the item listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

## PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, two reports from the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

*[English]*

They are the 31st report on the supplementary estimates (B), 2018-19, and the 32nd report on the interim estimates, 2019-20.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1540)

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SERVANTS DISCLOSURE PROTECTION ACT**

**Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-432, An Act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, 22 years ago, I decided to pursue the great adventure of developing expertise in fighting financial crimes. I made a promise during my election campaign in 2015 to help victims by contributing to improving the outcome for those who might be affected by this type of scourge.

My contribution consists in introducing this bill to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act.

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

\* \* \*

**COMPETITION ACT**

**Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-433, An Act to amend the Competition Act, the Criminal Code and the Inquiries Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the authorities and police forces that work hard to help people dealing with this type of crime and fraud, and I hope to make a contribution by tabling this bill to amend the Competition Act, the Criminal Code, and the Inquiries Act.

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

\* \* \*

[English]

**PETITIONS**

## FALUN GONG

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions I am tabling today on behalf of Canadians.

The first petition is from 495 signatories. They are drawing the attention of the Government of Canada to the illegal arrest of a Canadian citizen. Sun Qian, 51 years old, was illegally kidnapped in China on February 19, 2017, and has since then been detained at the Beijing detention centre, along with those practising Falun Gong. The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to condemn the illegal arrest of a Canadian citizen for practising Falun Gong and it also calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Canadian citizen Sun Qian.

## VIETNAM

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on behalf of over 670 Canadians. They are drawing the attention of the Government of Canada to the unjust targeting of Montagnard Highlanders, who practice Degar Protestantism, and the detention, torture and arrest for their religious and political beliefs in Vietnam. They are asking the Government of Canada to demand that the Vietnamese government end its abusive politics and practices as a way to safeguard minority rights, and to apply sanctions against Colonel Vu Van Lau and senior Colonel Pham Huu Truong, under the Sergei Magnitsky act.

## FIREARMS

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present petitions signed by Canadians from the ridings of Cape Breton—Canso, Central Nova, Mississauga—Lakeshore, Guelph, Brampton North, Kanata—Carleton, Orléans and Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. They call on the House of Commons to respect the rights of law-abiding firearms owners and reject the Prime Minister's plan to waste taxpayer money by studying a ban on guns that are already banned.

## ABORTION

**Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to introduce a petition from nearly 3,800 Canadians from across the country who note that Canada has been founded upon the principle of the rule of law and that section 7 of the charter guarantees the right to life of the person. Therefore, as citizens of Canada, they call upon the government to initiate a respectful debate in the House of Commons with the intent to form an all-party committee that will draft a bill governing the conduct of abortion in Canada, and that consideration of the bill be by a free vote in the House of Commons.

● (1545)

## AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

**Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, I rise to present this petition on behalf of many Canadians, primarily from Ontario. I would like to initially thank Dee Gordon for her work on this and for bringing it to this House. The petition is calling for a pan-Canadian strategy on autism spectrum disorder, ASD, a pervasive disorder that affects one person in 88 in this country. It is characterized by social and communication challenges and a pattern of repetitive behaviours and interests. ASD is lifelong and certainly is of great importance to many families with young children suffering from ASD.

## TIME BANK SYSTEM

**Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to table two petitions signed by people in Don Valley North and across Canada.

The first petition is calling on the Government of Canada to introduce a time bank system as soon as possible. Time banks in other countries help address the physical, social and mental health needs of many seniors and persons with disabilities. Time banks offer a variety of services needed by many seniors, including friendly visits, phone chats, transportation, minor home repairs, tips on how to use a computer and outings aimed at combatting social isolation. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada and its National Seniors Council to support the creation of a Canadian time bank system as soon as possible in this country.

*Routine Proceedings*

## CHINATOWNS

**Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is calling on the Government of Canada to work with municipal and provincial governments to preserve historical Chinatowns nationwide. Chinatowns throughout Canada have played an essential role in the narrative of Asian immigration to Canada for generations, yet today, Canada's Chinatowns are facing increased gentrification and redevelopment, which is threatening the very existence of these historically significant traditional communities. Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to work with municipal and provincial partners to help preserve historically significant neighbourhoods like Chinatowns and to keep them from vanishing from urban centres across Canada.

## FIREARMS

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of victims of crime and Canadians who understand that preventing firearms violence means taking illegal firearms off the streets, not the sport shooting equipment of people who lawfully own firearms, I am pleased to present a petition, signed by 38,697 people, asking the Prime Minister to scrap Bill C-71 as well as ensure that there is not a firearms ban on law-abiding firearms owners. This is a very reasonable petition. It is something the government needs to take into account, especially when it comes to ensuring that victims of crime are protected. Banning these tools will do nothing to protect these victims. I am more than proud to stand on behalf of law-abiding firearms owners and of victims of crime especially.

## NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition, signed by over 500 residents of Canada from western Canada, Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. These petitioners are pointing out to Parliament that the Liberal government has established a prison needle exchange program that will be implemented across Canada. The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers was not consulted on this plan, which puts its members and the Canadian public at risk. Our previous Conservative government passed the Drug-Free Prisons Act, which revokes parole for those who are caught using drugs behind bars. Under the new regulations, an inmate who is approved for the prison needle exchange program is not required to disclose this fact to the Parole Board. Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety to end the prison needle exchange program and to implement measures that would increase the safety of correctional officers and our surrounding communities.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 2272.

[Text]

Question No. 2272—**Mr. Michael Barrett:**

With regard to the Clerk of the Privy Council: did the Clerk have any discussions or interactions with the Prime Minister or his exempt staff, or other ministers or their

exempt staff, regarding his appearance at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on February 21, 2019, prior to his appearance at the Committee, and, if so, what are the details of any such discussions or interactions, including (i) date, (ii) form, (iii) list of participants, (iv) summary?

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the answer is no.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Furthermore, I would ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

\* \* \*

• (1550)

## MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

\* \* \*

## THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA ACT

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I have a Speaker's statement on Private Members' Business.

As hon. members are aware, by virtue of their office, ministers and parliamentary secretaries are not eligible to propose items during the consideration of private members' business. Currently, among the items in the order of precedence, there is one Senate bill standing in the name of a member recently appointed as a parliamentary secretary, Bill S-1003, an act to amend The United Church of Canada Act.

[Translation]

As a result, Bill S-1003, which is awaiting debate at second reading, is now without eligible sponsors.

The principle expressed at pages 558 and 1,138 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, provides that bills remain on the order of precedence since they are in the possession of the House, and that only the House can take a further decision on them.

[English]

In accordance with past practice, if no action is taken by the House at the appropriate time, this item will be dropped from the Order Paper, pursuant to Standing Order 94(2)(c).

I thank members for their attention.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### CANADA–MADAGASCAR TAX CONVENTION IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2018

The House resumed from February 22 consideration of the motion that Bill S-6, An Act to implement the Convention between Canada and the Republic of Madagascar for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 18 minutes.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

[English]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here this afternoon. Bill S-6 is along the lines of what our government's platform and agenda has been over the past three and a half years. The bill fits well within our tax treaties with our international partners and international organizations. It is a routine bill, a routine tax convention, which we need to have implemented.

If I may, I will take a step back in terms of what our government has done over the last three years with regard to improving our tax system, investing in the CRA and investing in middle-class Canadians. Yesterday we had Statistics Canada report to us on the annual Canadian Income Survey, 2017. As an economist by training and someone who reads the daily notices from Statistics Canada, it was wonderful for me to see this report. It was wonderful to know that from the work we have been doing for three years, not only have 900,000 jobs been created by hard-working Canadians and Canadian entrepreneurs but also that the growth that has occurred is inclusive, widespread and benefiting Canadian families from coast to coast to coast, including families and their children in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. It was great to see that over 850,000 Canadians have been lifted out of poverty.

We based our platform three years ago on the Canada child benefit, which benefits nine out of 10 Canadians. It is tax free, simple and monthly. We based it on cutting taxes for nine million middle-class Canadians, which benefits them and their families. We also asked the 1% of Canadians, the wealthiest, most fortunate in our country, to pay a bit more. Now we see the fruits of those results, which have lifted hundreds of thousands of Canadians and their families out of poverty.

We ran on a platform of strengthening the middle class and helping those working very hard to join the middle class. I am happy to say that we are getting there. We have seen our poverty rate decline significantly. We know we have more work to do.

We have seen tens of thousands of seniors now being lifted out of poverty. That 10% increase in the guaranteed income supplement for our most vulnerable seniors is benefiting my riding and the 17,810 seniors who, according to Statistics Canada, live in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. I know that 1,530 of those vulnerable

### Government Orders

seniors in my riding received, on average, \$800 more every year from the 10% increase in the guaranteed income supplement we campaigned on, that we promised and that we implemented.

I look at this Canada–Madagascar tax convention bill, Bill S-6, as another step forward in improving our tax treaties with our international partners and in building a stronger Canada by ensuring that all Canadians pay their fair share of taxes and that all Canadians can depend on the services that we, as a government, deliver. When I say we, I mean all members of Parliament.

Over the past three years, we have taken action on multiple fronts to ensure that this happens, because when everyone pays his or her fair share, the government can continue to deliver the programs and services Canadians need while keeping taxes low for middle-class families. Again, I allude to the fact that we cut taxes for nine million Canadians, as we promised at the outset. Promise made, promise kept.

As members know, one of the government's first actions was to cut taxes for middle-class Canadians. Over nine million Canadians are now benefiting from this change, with nearly \$20 billion over five years of tax relief for families from coast to coast to coast. To help pay for this middle-class tax cut, we asked the wealthiest to pay a little bit more.

Next we made changes to better provide targeted, more generous and simpler support for Canadian families with children. We accomplished this with the introduction of the Canada child benefit, or the CCB, which was implemented, proudly, on July 31, 2016.

• (1555)

In my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, in looking at the numbers for one of the time periods, I see that nearly 17,000 children benefited, and 9,510 payments were made on a monthly basis for nearly \$5 million.

If I look quickly at the numbers for the year, I see that nearly \$57 million was paid out from the Canada child benefit to families in Vaughan—Woodbridge. That is incredible. That is lifting families and their children out of poverty. That is helping families save for a rainy day and pay for their kids' winter boots. I understand it is a snow day back home in Vaughan—Woodbridge and that the buses were cancelled. If those funds paid for those kids to have an extra pair of boots or a new pair of boots, then I am proud of that.

The CCB is particularly helpful for families led by single parents. These families are most often led by single mothers, who tend to have lower total incomes. In fact, close to 95% of CCB amounts paid to single parents with incomes below \$30,450 are paid to single mothers.

*Government Orders*

The government is committed to ensuring that Canada's tax system is fair, effective and competitive. I am certain that all hon. members know how important small businesses are to Canada's economy. They account for 70% of all private sector jobs and are vital drivers of economic growth in communities all across the country.

In looking at Bill S-6 and this tax convention with Madagascar, we see that this is another tax treaty that is made for the benefit of businesses on both sides of the Atlantic. We need to know that we as a country are eliminating barriers to investment and eliminating barriers to trade, and we have done that with the implementation of CETA and the implementation of the CPTPP and, mostly recently, the newly signed USMCA accord with the United States and Mexico, our two largest trading partners.

This is about creating good middle-class jobs, growing the economy, and growing the economy in an inclusive manner that benefits all Canadians, all middle-class Canadians and all those working very hard to join the middle class.

When small businesses succeed, Canada succeeds. That is why the government reduced the small business tax rate to 10% in January 2018, with a further reduction to 9% coming on January 1, 2019. These low tax rates will enable small businesses to create good, well-paying jobs in communities across Canada.

We know that the best poverty reduction plan is a job. It is giving Canadians skills training and lifelong learning. Hard-working Canadians and entrepreneurs, such as the 13,000 small business owners in the city of Vaughan and in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, have created approximately 900,000 jobs in Canada since we were first elected. The unemployment rate hit around 5.4%—I think it is at 5.6%—because people are being drawn into the labour market. The unemployment rate is at a 40-year low, something that we should be proud of.

We know there is more work to do, but the fact is that there are over 500,000 job openings in Canada currently. The fact is that people from all over the world want to come and work and invest in our country. There is a reason for that: We have the best entrepreneurs, we have one of the best educational systems in the world, and we are a great place to invest. We have access, through three major trade deals, to all our major trading partners. We have free trade access to over 1.6 billion people, and businesses across the world know this.

These low tax rates will enable small businesses to create good, well-paying jobs in communities across Canada. When we say we expect these results from small business tax cuts, it is because we have a track record of success, giving us confidence in the direction we are headed.

Many positive signs tell us our plan is working. Since 2016, hard-working Canadians have created—as I said, to re-emphasize—hundreds of thousands of jobs, pushing the unemployment rate to a 40-year low and giving Canada one of the strongest records of economic growth in the G7.

Canadian workers are experiencing the strongest wage growth in a decade. We have seen some of the numbers that came out yesterday from the Canadian income survey, showing that after two years of

stagnation, wages are on the rise and incomes are on the rise. That is more money in the pockets of Canadians, whether they are low-income, middle-class or upper-class. That is a good-news story. It is more income to invest, more income for Canadians and their families to save.

• (1600)

Most importantly, I would argue, as we compare our finances of governments around the world, that we have had the flexibility in Canada to invest in Canadians. We invest not only in skills training and the Canada child benefit but also in infrastructure through a \$180-billion, 12-year infrastructure plan. We sat down at the table with our municipal, regional and provincial partners and worked on both the urban side and rural Canada, where we invested funds in both broadband and public transit. That is due to the inherent flexibility in our fiscal strength in Canada, where we can make these investments and plan for the long term.

Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio is the lowest among all G7 countries, and we intend to maintain it and bring it down over the medium and long term. However, we understand, as Canadians do, that more needs to be done to encourage long-term economic growth. As I said earlier, one of the things we need to do is ensure that everyone pays his or her fair share of taxes. It is unacceptable that some corporations, both foreign-owned and Canadian, take advantage of Canada's tax rules to avoid tax. It is unacceptable that some wealthy people use offshore jurisdictions to hide income and evade tax.

I am happy to re-emphasize that we as a government, since taking office, have invested nearly \$1 billion in CRA to provide it with resources, after a number of years when the prior government cut funding to agencies like CRA and did not allow them to have the tools to do their jobs effectively. We have reversed that. Canadians understand and appreciate that, because our services are delivered and funded through taxpayers, and, as a government, we respect them. We have lowered taxes for nine million Canadians, but we have also asked the wealthiest 1% to pay a little more, and those who attempt to avoid paying their fair share need to be held accountable.

We have addressed base erosion and profit shifting, which was recently debated in the House and which we had the pleasure of speaking to, and we have worked with our multilateral partners to look at ways to deal with transfer pricing for corporations, strengthening the exchange of information with our multilateral partners and providing the tools to CRA to do its job effectively. We need to ensure that corporations and wealthy individuals continue to pay their fair share of taxes and that our tax laws are being enforced judiciously, diligently and effectively.

*Government Orders*

In order to stop this profit shifting from happening, the Canada Revenue Agency needs information from foreign jurisdictions. That is why the tax convention in this bill puts in place measures to make possible the exchange of tax information from one country to the other. Bill S-6 would help Canadian tax authorities prevent international tax evasion while gathering the information they need to enforce our tax laws.

Canada's network of 93 income tax treaties currently in force is one of the largest in the world. However, we must keep updating and expanding this network in order to encourage international trade and make it easier for other countries to invest in Canada. In this way, getting our tax treaties in order will help the Canadian economy and Canadian businesses compete globally and enable them to hire workers, invest, grow our economy and improve the future of middle-class Canadians, such as those living in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. Bill S-6 gives Canadians more certainty about the tax implications involved in doing business with, working in or investing in Madagascar.

This bill would make our tax system more efficient, while also ensuring tax fairness for Canadians who already pay their fair share. It would encourage more foreign investment in Canada, remove barriers to international trade and help grow and strengthen the middle class across the country. I encourage all members to support this bill.

As I conclude my remarks on Bill S-6, an act to implement the convention between Canada and the Republic of Madagascar for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income, I see this bill much like Bill C-82 on base erosion and profit shifting and much like the work we have done in the finance committee on a study with regard to tax avoidance and tax evasion, which was done very judiciously by the finance committee.

● (1605)

It is great to see committees doing the work that they are tasked to do independently. They work judiciously, make recommendations and produce reports, which are then looked at both externally and internally by ministers.

On this issue of a tax convention and its implementation, it is obviously very important for Canada as a country to work with all of its international partners, no matter how big or small, no matter how near or far, to ensure that we have the proper information exchanged between the two entities so that on a technical basis we ensure that we eliminate double taxation between the two countries for individuals investing both ways, reduce the risk of burdensome taxation and ensure that taxpayers are not subject to discriminatory taxation.

In closing, I will say that by strengthening our ties with Madagascar, our government is seeking out the kind of investments and trade opportunities that are vital to grow the economy.

I have spoken about the treaties we have put in place on the trade front, such as CETA, CPTPP and USMCA. I have also spoken of our plan to grow the economy by lowering taxes for middle-class Canadians and asking the 1% to pay a little more, and the results are bearing fruit. The numbers that were produced yesterday by

Statistics Canada show that over 850,000 Canadians have been lifted out of poverty in the last two and a half years. These are real people working hard every day to provide for a better future for themselves and their families. We as a government will continue to invest in them, believe in them, work with them and work with all of our partners.

**Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very disconcerted by my Liberal colleague's speech today, because Canadians understand that all is not well. The results of the government's actions are not bearing fruit for everyone. We have reports right now that there are more people living with disabilities who are using food banks. We have more people living in poverty. We have more homelessness. We have more people not able to afford their first home. Last month, we had the media reporting that 46% of Canadians are within \$200 of financial insolvency. These are very profound facts that speak to the realities of regular Canadians.

A tax regime is just a part of the systemic issues that we have to address. What about stock option loopholes? I have not heard anything about how we are going to address problems in dealing with corporate bailouts, for instance. What about pension reform? These corporations need to be taking their responsibility for their workers and retired workers more seriously.

It is true that we will be supporting this tax regime with Madagascar. However, the situation is very disconcerting, and it is disingenuous to hear our economy being painted with this healthy brush. A lot more work needs to be done. What is next in line that needs aggressive overhaul in our tax regime?

● (1610)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Before we go to the answer, I would remind hon. members in the House that the other day when we debated this bill, there was a lot of talk about everything but the treaty between Canada and Madagascar. Therefore, I would ask hon. members, whether they are giving a speech or asking a question, to try to stay on topic and be as relevant as possible.

The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, this tax convention entered into by Canada and Madagascar is based on the OECD Model Tax Convention. The convention is expected to contribute to the elimination of taxes, to trade and investment between Canada and Madagascar and to solidify economic linkages between the two countries. It is similar to other models of tax conventions that Canada has entered into with 93 partners around the world.

To answer the other part of the question from the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh, our government is not stopping. We are working to ensure that all Canadians benefit from the growth in our economy. We know that one person looking for work is one too many. We want to ensure people have the skills to find that first or second job or transition from one job to another.

*Government Orders*

Individuals who are helped through the Canada child benefit will now benefit from the Canada workers benefit, which again is targeted at low-income Canadians. It will lift literally 75,000 people out of poverty. It can provide Canadians with additional hope along the lines of what our values are as a government, which is to ensure that all Canadians are included in the growth and, more important, that no Canadian is left behind.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and many interventions at the Standing Committee on Finance. I know that he is very knowledgeable about his files, especially tax conventions and double taxation agreements, which aim to help our corporations be successful and to ensure tax fairness for corporations that do business abroad.

With Bill C-82, the government hopes to revise all our tax conventions because public officials have indicated that some taxpayers abuse them. I know that my colleague is very conversant with Bill C-82 as well.

Would he also acknowledge in the House that, absent the changes provided for in Bill C-82, our tax conventions are being abused by certain Canadian taxpayers in order to avoid paying their fair share of Canadian taxes?

• (1615)

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Quebec for his question. I would like to answer in French, but it is a bit tricky.

[*English*]

Our government has invested over \$1 billion in the CRA to provide the wonderful folks who work there with the services and tools they need to ensure that all Canadian organizations, including multinationals, pay their fair share of taxes.

Our government is working extremely well with our international partners to ensure that tax avoidance, because there is a difference between tax avoidance and tax evasion, is brought down, that we ensure corporations and high net worth individuals do not take advantage of loopholes. We are closing loopholes. We are investigating. Most important, we have the right tools to do such a thing and CRA and its associate partners have those tools. This will be very effective with Bill C-82, base erosion profit shifting.

We all know that under 10 years of the former government, under the Harper regime, that money was cut from the CRA and it was unable to do its job effectively and diligently for hard-working Canadians, much like the ones in my hon. colleague's riding, who I was able to serve with on the finance committee, and those wonderful Canadians in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Before the member begins, I want to remind members that we are debating Bill S-6 on the trade agreement between Madagascar and Canada, in case they are wondering what the topic is and they stray a bit.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was just paying attention to the testimony

going on at the justice committee. If people are watching at home, I suggest they turn to that and watch the testimony by the former attorney general. It is quite riveting. I will not take offence if my words get missed.

It is my pleasure to speak to Bill S-6, an act to implement the convention between Canada and the Republic of Madagascar for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income. In November of 2016, the convention was signed between the governments of Canada and Madagascar. While reviewing the bill, I was surprised to learn that we have had diplomatic relations with Madagascar for nearly 55 years.

In terms of economic activity between our two countries, Canada imported \$100 million in goods last year. The bulk of these imports were mineral and vegetable products. Madagascar imported \$16 million of Canadian goods last year. Global Affairs Canada reports that Canadian direct investment to Madagascar was \$28 million in 2017. Canada has mining companies there. We do business with Madagascar.

Since 1976, Canada has entered into similar tax agreements with countries all around the globe. In fact, we currently have 93 such agreements in place. The main purpose of the convention is to eliminate double taxation and prevent international tax evasion.

I want to support Bill S-6 and the international efforts coordinated by the organization for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development aimed to reduce treaty shopping for tax havens. However, the bill reminds us that the government's overall approach to addressing international tax evasion is inadequate and more needs to be done.

I had the pleasure of rising in the House on September 28 of last year to speak to Bill C-82, an act to implement a multilateral convention to implement tax treaty related measures to prevent base erosion and profit shifting. For the benefit of those at home and as a reminder to my colleagues in the House, Bill C-82 aims to make it more difficult for corporations to hide money in offshore tax havens.

What is double taxation? It is a taxation principle referring to income taxes paid twice on the same amount of earned income. It could occur when income is taxed at both the corporate level and the personal level. It also occurs in international trade when the same income is taxed in two different jurisdictions.



*Government Orders*

I had a number of concerns with Bill C-82. I will not repeat them all here, but one of my major concerns, which is an underlying problem with these agreements, is this. I really have no problem with the agreements that inevitably make other jurisdictions more attractive to Canadian investment. Promoting investment in Canada should be a priority for the federal government, but in truth we live in a global community with economic opportunities for Canadians outside the country, whether through direct investment or indirectly through mutual or pension funds.

What I see as a problem is when the government fails to support competitively lower taxes for Canadians and businesses domestically. With respect to businesses, we need to lower corporate taxes, reduce red tape and create an investor-friendly climate. This is something we must do in concert with bills like Bill C-82 and Bill S-6.

We have companies moving from Canada to the United States because of a lower corporate tax regime. If we want to stop the use of tax havens, we need to make it attractive to invest at home and make tax rates competitive with other jurisdictions. The more investment dollars we can attract and retain in Canada, the less taxes we need to spend in pursuit of those who exploit loopholes in tax rules.

Let me be clear. The Conservatives support measures to crack down on tax evasion. Aggressive tax avoidance is a major source of lost tax revenue for high tax jurisdictions like Canada. The vast majority of citizens and businesses in Canada pay their taxes and follow the rules. We need a competitive and fair tax system for all Canadians and corporations that do business in Canada. That is fundamental to a healthy and equitable economy.

During the fall economic statement, the Minister of Finance confirmed that the Liberals were borrowing about \$18 billion this year and almost \$20 billion next year to pay for their spending, and they have no plan to balance the federal budget. This year's deficit is more than three times what the Prime Minister said it would be. He has added \$60 billion in debt.

• (1620)

We are giving the impression to Canadians, through bills like Bill S-6, that the Liberal government is more interested in hunting down tax evaders in Madagascar, although I am not aware of an outbreak of tax evaders in Madagascar, than creating a fair and equitable system here in Canada.

Canadians know that one does not need to be an economist to understand that more debt today means higher taxes tomorrow. Tax treaties might be important, but something that is far more important is the halting of the ongoing plundering of our children's economic futures.

Canadians are going to pay higher taxes once the government's Canada pension plan tax increases are fully implemented by 2025. That is up to \$2,200 per household. The Prime Minister's national carbon price, the carbon tax, will cost up to \$1,100 per household. Canadians are going to pay more in future taxes to service the interest on the government's ballooning deficit fuelled by out-of-control spending.

The Liberals' previously proposed tax grab would have forced business owners in Canada to pay 73% on savings income, penalized family businesses for sharing earnings and work with family members and doubled the tax on the sale of a farm from parents to children, forcing them to sell to multinational corporations instead.

This is not how we create a friendly investment climate in Canada. This is not how we create wealth and lift people out of poverty. This is not how we safeguard our children's future.

The previous Conservative government signed tax agreement's like Bill S-6, but we did this in concert with reducing taxes for Canadian families and businesses. The average Canadian middle-class family is paying \$800 more income tax today than it did before the Liberal government took office in 2015.

The Conservatives implemented family tax cuts, arts and fitness tax credits and education and textbook credits, all of which were cancelled by the government.

Bill S-6 is more than just about cracking down on tax evaders. Trade and commerce between two countries are supported by these agreements. That is why our previous Conservative government signed a record number of them.

Under the previous Conservative government, Canadian workers and businesses won free trade access to more than 50 countries around the world, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs and opportunities for everyone. In just three years, the Prime Minister has failed to secure a trade deal with China and delayed and nearly derailed plans for Canada to join the CPTPP trade agreement.

Worst of all, the Prime Minister made massive concessions to the United States at the NAFTA negotiation table. He backed down on cars, giving the U.S. limits on how many cars we could export. He even backed down on pharmaceuticals, giving the U.S. higher profits at the expense of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Canadians cannot bid on American government contracts and we still have tariffs on steel, aluminum and softwood lumber, with no timeline to end them.

Bills like Bill S-6 are important and need to be supported. Tax evasion is a real issue. We need to crack down on tax evasion, but we also need to support lower taxes for Canadian businesses. We have lost out on tens of billions of dollars' worth of investment because of the government's misguided fiscal policies.

Investment is fleeing, we are losing jobs, families are worse off than they were before and we are going in the opposite direction with respect to what most countries are doing by lowering taxes and making themselves investment magnets.

• (1625)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to a number of the concerns and issues raised by the member opposite.

*Government Orders*

In his conclusion, he indicated that we were losing jobs. We know there is a Conservative spin machine behind the wall and speaking notes that are not necessarily accurate or reflective of the reality of what is actually taking place in Canada.

Again, he has tried to give the impression that Canada is losing jobs. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have actually seen well over 800,000 jobs created in the last three years by working with industries and Canadians in every region of our country.

Could the member reflect on the number of jobs that have been generated in the last three years and compare that to Stephen Harper's work when he was prime minister? It is totally night and day, Mr. Harper being the night. We are seeing substantial growth taking place. How does the member reconcile those facts with his closing comments about massive job losses?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I just want to remind hon. members that we are debating Bill S-6, a treaty between Madagascar and Canada.

The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, first, the American economy is going along very well. There are seven million unfilled jobs in the United States right now. They are begging for workers. Canada is benefitting because of that, because of our trade agreements with the United States.

If we look at the energy sector, we are losing tens of billions of dollars in investment in the resource sector as we speak. Investments have already left. We already heard, just a few short weeks ago, that yet another energy company is leaving Canada to invest its money elsewhere. It does not see this as a friendly place to do business. When we see hundreds of thousands of people out of work in the Prairies and beyond, because the Liberal government has not created an environment that allows private sector growth to succeed, especially in the resource industry, we have a problem.

When we look at the mining industry, we do have mines in Madagascar. They are Canadian companies. The mining companies in Canada are extremely concerned about the Liberal government's policies. They do not see much of a future going forward, because they do not see certainty in the process. Especially in the northern areas, in Yukon, Northwest Territories and northern British Columbia, which rely on mining as a way of life and for their economy, when that certainty is taken away and companies are looking elsewhere for investment, we are not looking forward enough into the future to be able to save those jobs and ensure there is a future for our children.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, though his remarks were a little unsettling at times. In fact, the member seems to probably have a different view of taxes than most Canadians.

I have a very specific question, which I will ask him after providing a bit of context. At this time, all governments around the world are in a race to lower taxes. All countries are competing on taxes. My colleague seemed to suggest that the solution is to take part in this race to the bottom and to make our taxes as low as those of tax havens. This would allow us to compete with them, stop the

flow of money that should stay in Canada and return money to Canada thanks to lower taxes.

Is the Conservatives' position really to have taxes that are just as low as those of tax havens to ensure that there will be no loopholes and that Canadians will no longer use tax havens? Is that the Conservatives' position?

• (1630)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, I did say in my speech that I believe tax evaders need to be dealt with according to the law, but as we are talking about bringing investment dollars back to Canada, I will give my friend opposite this headline from Reuters from December 31, 2018: "U.S. companies repatriate over half a trillion dollars in 2018".

I will quote the article: "The change offered a powerful incentive to bring home some of the \$3 trillion U.S. firms were believed to hold in jurisdictions" outside of U.S. borders.

That is because the U.S. changed the regulation and the tax system. This way, companies were able to bring those dollars they were keeping offshore back to the United States, which would then be taxed and the country would be able to use those tax dollars to spend on the programs they chose.

We want to tax them at a fair level, but we also want to get that money back into Canada so that we can use it here, rather than having it held offshore. We say there is a difference.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech.

I wonder if he believes that it is critical for a society like ours to enter into as many such agreements as possible to help establish clear and precise rules for companies and business owners, people who do business abroad. How will the bill before us help achieve those objectives?

[*English*]

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend for that last-second question. It was a fantastic question.

Basically, as we have been saying all along, jobs are not created because the government says it is going to create jobs or comes up with the next new great government program. Jobs are created by having low taxes and reasonable red tape and regulations. That is how we get jobs started in our country.

Increasing taxes, rules and regulations to the point where they are strangling business investment, strangling those trying to get ahead, is not how we move forward.

My area has a lot of agriculture, so I will use this as an example. If there are two, three or four inspectors on a farm, constantly, over-regulating, creating more red tape, basically putting a stranglehold on that farmer, preventing him or her from producing the food that we need, it becomes harder and harder for that farmer to produce an income for his or her family and to provide for his or her children.

*Government Orders*

When it becomes more lucrative to regulate farming than it does to actually farm, we have a problem. This is why we keep harping on and on about the economy, and why we need the right formula to repatriate those dollars that corporations are keeping outside the boundaries, bring them back into Canada so that we can tax them at the tax rate here, and also have low taxes here at home and reasonable red tape and regulations so that businesses can start up, expand, invest in their workforce and in research and development, and continue to grow, creating jobs, opportunities and wealth in our communities.

● (1635)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona, Canada Post Corporation.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has been an interesting debate. I was here the other day when we were talking about Bill S-6. It goes to show that members on both sides of the House really want to have that discussion about taxation and Canada's economy. There is a lot of contrast between the Conservatives, New Democrats and the Liberals on those types of issues. What I thought I would do is provide what I think is a fairly accurate snapshot in terms of the types of things that we have seen, and Bill S-6 is a good example of that.

Bill S-6 is about Madagascar and Canada achieving a tax agreement. However, tax agreements are not new. There are tax agreements between Canada and many other countries, but when we look at the bigger picture, we see that Canada is in fact a trading nation. In order to sustain ourselves going forward, trade is critical and of the utmost importance for all Canadians, whether they are directly, indirectly or not at all engaged in trade, particularly with the exports of services, goods, technology and so forth.

Over the last few years, we have seen the government, on a number of fronts, focus its attention on Canada's middle class, and one of the ways was by dealing with the issue of tax fairness between Canada and other countries. One of things we have to look at is the OECD and the tax conventions. We have to take a look at the individual tax agreements that we have been able to achieve, and Canada has seen dozens of tax agreements achieved over the last number of years. All of this assists us in facilitating trade and investment. We are very much dependent on that.

I have stood in my place on numerous occasions talking about the importance of the middle class. When we talk about how we support the middle class, we address it directly by saying that, as a government, the first thing we did was bring in legislation to cut the taxes for Canada's middle class, which was a very popular piece of legislation, at least on this side of the House. It was very well received by Canadians throughout the country, because it literally put hundreds of millions of dollars directly into the pockets of Canadians. However, less direct but just as supportive for Canada's middle class is our aggressive trade agenda, which takes place in

different forms, such as in legislation, budgetary announcements and discussions among different levels of government, with ministers and internationally with governments around the world.

In a relatively short period of time, we have seen a good number of agreements reached between Canada and other countries. The previous speaker made reference to Stephen Harper and 50-plus trade agreements, but that is not necessarily accurate. However, I will give credit where it is mostly due, and that is with some incredible civil servants who have been at the table negotiating on Canadians' behalf. They recognize the importance of international two-way trade and the potential for agreements with many different countries.

● (1640)

Within a few months of our taking office, our Prime Minister was in Ukraine, signing off on a trade agreement. We were all very proud of that. There is a valid argument to be made that a good portion of that work was in fact done by the previous administration, but let there be no doubt that it was actually finalized through this government.

The significant trade agreement that has so much opportunity for firms and companies across Canada has to be the European Union trade agreement. This agreement was off the rails. It was because we were aggressive on that trade agreement that we were able to get it back on track and ultimately bring it across the line. We still have to see other countries sign off on it and so forth, but that was an agreement that was achieved under this administration.

We can also talk about the trans-Pacific partners that we have, and the trade agreements that have been achieved there. Earlier today, I was talking to one of our ministers, and he was mentioning that because Canada was one of the original six who actually passed it off, we were able to deal with some other issues that allowed us to benefit more than other trading partners within the trans-Pacific agreement, which has enhanced our export sales of industries dealing with pork, cattle and more.

Whenever I hear of pork being sold outside of Canada, I think of the fabulous, fantastic pork industry that we have in the province of Manitoba. We actually have more pigs in Manitoba on an annual basis than we have people. We are a great exporter of the best pigs, I would argue, in the world. We have a product that is in high demand, and it is creating thousands of jobs in my home province. In Brandon, Winnipeg or Neepawa, three beautiful communities in Manitoba, we get a sense of the size of the pork industry, not to mention the many farmers and other individuals within our agricultural community. There are many success stories as a result of that one industry.

There are many different industries out there that have benefited directly as a result of the aggressive trade agenda of this government. That is something that has assisted in the generation of hundreds of thousands of jobs in the last three years. That is something that should be recognized, at least in part.

*Government Orders*

When we talk about the tax agreements with other nations, we should be reflecting on how important it is, as much as possible, to get that level playing field. Having these tax agreements allows us to move that much further ahead in serving Canadians, because it is about trade and investments.

We understand how important it is to watch and be very diligent about tax avoidance and tax evasion, and we know they are very different. I would like to think that as a government we have been very progressive in our thinking and actions to ensure we are minimizing the amount of evasion and avoidance out there.

A couple of years ago, the Minister of National Revenue, the minister responsible for the CRA, announced well over \$400 million to deal with individuals trying not to pay what we would argue is their fair share of taxes, through tax avoidance.

● (1645)

When we think of the money that is lost as a direct result of both avoidance and evasion, we are going into the hundreds of millions, into billions of dollars on an annual basis. It is hard to believe that for 10 years, while Stephen Harper was our prime minister, very little was done on that file. It took our government to say we need to put additional resources in the budget in order to ensure that the CRA is better equipped to go after those who are avoiding paying taxes, or those who are evading paying their fair share.

It is not like it was a commitment of just one budget. The following year, once again, we saw hundreds of millions of dollars invested in the CRA in order to again deal with the issue of tax avoidance and evasion. In total, we are probably looking at somewhere in the neighbourhood of close to a billion dollars of additional resources that have been allocated in order for us to deal with those two very important issues.

As a government, we see these tax agreements. Today, it is about Madagascar. We have seen other tax agreements achieved that allow the Canada Revenue Agency and the many different departments involved to continue to build relationships with other countries through tax agreements.

Most countries around the world recognize that in order for us to move forward where there is more world wealth, we need to do what we can to enhance trade. There is a sense of competition, and we have to be in a position to compete.

I differ from my colleague across the way, when he said that all we have to do is lower taxes and the jobs will come. Arguably, that is the formula Stephen Harper attempted with the boutique taxes. He reduced the GST. I will give him that. However, we need to recognize the economic performance of the 10 years of Stephen Harper's governance. We will find that in many ways the economy moved ever so slowly forward. We have created more jobs in three years than the Conservatives did in over 10 years.

My friend across the way talked about investment and said investment is leaving the country. The Conservatives have to take some responsibility for that loss of investment. The example the speaker before me gave was in reference to our oil industry. He talked about investments leaving the country because of pipelines not being built. I would challenge members across the way to reflect on that. On these tax agreements and trade agreements, we believe

Canada has the competitive edge. If we are on a level playing field, we will do exceptionally well.

I think of what we could have been doing as a government, because we need to recognize that there is a role for the government. Far too often, the previous administration would step aside and not take action. Let me use the very same example that the previous speaker used, the issue of pipelines.

● (1650)

Over 99% of the oil that comes out of our ground goes first to the U.S. through the lines that are currently in place. That was the case when Stephen Harper became the prime minister of Canada. When Stephen Harper lost the election in 2015, that was still the case. The Conservatives were completely reliant on the U.S. market, and that is one of the reasons that sector is hurting today.

When the Conservatives talk about taxation fairness and the importance of tax agreements and so forth, yes, that is really important. However, when my colleague from across the way tries to give the impression that it is the only thing the government needs to do, he is wrong in that assertion.

We have a government that was prepared to move forward to get that commodity to new markets. We were able to acknowledge that by setting up a process that takes into consideration indigenous issues, environmental issues and others. It might not be happening as fast as the opposition members would like, but they had 10 years and it did not change.

If we go back to the issue of trade and commerce, and how we attract investments, I would suggest that in the future we will see many of those oil or commodity dollars continue to be invested in Canada, because we are in many ways giving attention to issues of our environment, with green technology as an example.

When we look at the future of exportation, we are going to be at an advantage or have a competitive edge because we have a government that recognizes that. We have a government that not only goes out to secure trade agreements and tax agreements but also recognizes that there are other ways in which it can contribute.

That is why having Canada's investment bank, having investment hubs and supporting our economic diversification funds have all become very important to this government. If we can build on taxation fairness and trade and investment, we will have a healthier economy. On many occasions I have indicated that if we have a healthy economy, we will have a healthier middle class. Those aspiring to be a part of it, those individuals who are in need and in fact all Canadians will benefit.

It is taking a holistic approach at developing Canada's economy and being sensitive to the areas and stakeholders that we need to be listening to. At the same time, I know that these tax agreements and trade agreements are not something that have happened overnight. They have taken years to develop. I recognize that the two major parties in the House can share some of the credit in terms of the trade we have seen.

*Government Orders*

•(1655)

I am running out of time. To conclude my remarks, I would like to thank members for the opportunity to speak on a very important issue.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell how desperate the government is right now when I hear my colleague opposite, particularly that colleague, talk about how the two major parties in the House can share credit on the trade issue. I do not think I have ever heard him say anything like that before, given that the Conservatives did most of the work. We did 46 trade agreements, and the Liberals have virtually nothing since then.

My colleague was talking a little earlier about pork. He was talking about evasion and avoidance and about investments leaving this country. As he was talking about avoidance and evasion, I could hardly help thinking that he is avoiding reality and is evading the truth. At the justice committee today, the testimony was a litany of coercion, of political corruption, of incredible pressure on a minister and of misleading information, much of it from the highest officeholder in the country, our Prime Minister.

Does he believe this epic of coercion, corruption, evasion and avoidance damages our relationships internationally? We are talking about international trade agreements. Does he think it will impact these agreements when other countries see a government demonstrating such remarkable levels of coercion and corruption at the highest level?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the member is trying to focus his question on misleading. He started off by saying that Stephen Harper had 46 trade agreements. In reality, that is absolutely not true. The member is misleading Canadians by making that statement. The Conservative government did not sign off on trade agreements that affected 46 countries.

In fact, it has been this government that was ultimately able to take the negotiations that had already begun but had not been finalized and get them across the goal line. To try to give the impression that the EU agreement, as an example, was finalized by the Conservatives is wrong. That is not the case. It is far from reality.

To answer my colleague's question, there is no doubt in my mind that the Conservatives are very good in opposition. I hope they are in opposition for many more years. At the end of the day, they are masters at misleading themselves. We saw a good example of that, and I look forward to any other questions.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the minister who actually negotiated trade agreements with 46 different countries, I can say that those agreements represent a huge step forward for Canadians in opening up markets in the European Union and the Asia-Pacific region.

I would like to ask the member a question that is similar to the one asked by my colleague, the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. We have just heard incredibly damaging, appalling testimony from a courageous former attorney general and justice minister about corruption taking place in the highest office in this country, involving the most powerful man in this country and one of the most powerful corporations in this country. What on earth would

possess the member for Winnipeg North to think the rest of the world wants to do business with such a corrupt government?

•(1700)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I have been a parliamentarian for 30 years and I know when people are ramping things up with political rhetoric, and I suspect that over the next few days we are going to witness a lot of political partisanship being ramped up by the other side.

I have a fairly good idea of what I believe is important and what the constituents of Winnipeg North believe is important, and those are the things on which I am going to focus my attention. The Conservative Party wants to focus—and always has been focused, virtually since day one after losing—on personal attacks and on things that are not related to issues of importance to Canadians, those being the middle class, jobs, our health care and so many other issues.

Our government will continue day in and day out to fight for these things, and we are starting to see the results. The numbers are amazing. Hundreds of thousands of children have been lifted out of poverty. We have hit targets three years before they were supposed to be hit. More than 800,000 jobs have been generated.

Let the Conservatives to continue with their political rhetoric; we are going to focus on Canadians and the economy and on making life better for all Canadians.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while the opposition would like to focus on other matters, the reality of the situation is that this government is bringing in good legislation that will have a meaningful impact on people in communities throughout the country.

The member spoke about his riding of Winnipeg, but how does he see this translating throughout the country?

When he was talking just now about lifting children out of poverty, there was heckling coming from the other side of the House. How does my colleague see the disconnect that the opposition has as it relates to what people in this country are worried about on a day-to-day basis, as opposed to the trumped-up conspiracy theories that the opposition is trying to bring forward?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, one of the most tangible examples I could give my colleague is the Canada child benefit program. Just over \$9 million a month goes into Winnipeg North to support children. That same principle applies in all 338 constituencies across Canada. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. It is policy initiatives like this that have lifted thousands of children out of poverty.

To me, that is why we are here. We are here to help and assist and boost our fellow citizens while at the same time bringing in policies that are going to make a difference, things like the Madagascar trade agreement, Bill S-6, and expanding trade, having better tax laws, fighting tax evasion and making sure that there is a higher sense of tax fairness.

*Private Members' Business*

That is what this government is all about. That is what this government is going to continue to advocate day in and day out, no matter what kind of political rhetoric and criticism comes from the other side.

Those members want to make it personal; we want to make it all about Canadians.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if we are going to talk about personal attacks, I am hoping that the member can comment on the comment made by the member for Kingston and the Islands regarding trumped-up conspiracy theories.

We are talking about the integrity of the government here as we are coming up with international trade deals. If they are accusing a member of their party of raising trumped-up conspiracy theories, does the member agree with those sentiments?

• (1705)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I can say that in my 30 years, I am only aware of Conservatives having gone to jail. I am not aware of that happening on the Liberal side. If the member wants to compare ethics, I was in opposition while Stephen Harper was the prime minister, and we could maybe relive the Senate scandal.

At the end of the day, it is all about focus. We are going to continue to focus on Canada, the economy, our social fabric and the way in which we can continue to support Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I declare the amendment defeated.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 5:30 at this time so that we could begin private members' hour.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

• (1710)

[English]

**MENNONITE HERITAGE WEEK**

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the contributions that Canadian Mennonites have made to building Canadian society, their history of hope and perseverance, the richness of the Mennonite culture, their role in promoting peace and justice both at home and abroad, and the importance of educating and reflecting upon Mennonite heritage for future generations, by declaring the second week of September as Mennonite Heritage Week.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to my own motion that would establish the second week of September as Mennonite heritage week.

Why Mennonite heritage week? First, this is an opportunity for the Government of Canada to recognize the contributions that Mennonites have made in building our great country. The Mennonite community is incredibly diverse and has invested heavily in building a community that is tolerant and prosperous, where we care for one another and are generous with each other.

Let me start off by talking about who the Mennonites are. We are an understated and unassuming hard-working group of people. We try to stay out of trouble. We serve our communities. We serve our country and our fellow human beings.

It goes without saying that our modern Canada was built by immigrants, many of them fleeing war, strife, persecution and economic devastation. We are all proud of the men and women, and their families, who have risked everything to leave their homes elsewhere around the world and come to Canada to build a new life. The Mennonites are among those people groups who came to find a refuge in Canada. Their history and reputation for peacemaking, creativity and hard work speak to the hope and opportunity that Canada has always offered to the world.

I am a descendant of those people who fled fierce persecution in Europe and in Russia, and risked everything to move a vast distance to an unfamiliar land for an uncertain future. That risk was rewarded as my ancestors settled in an immeasurably rich land and became part of a community that is built, and continues to build, what is arguably the most desirable country in the world.

I am immensely proud of my Mennonite heritage and propose the motion to honour the role that Canada's Mennonites have played in building the foundation of the country we know and love today.

Who are the Mennonites? We have our roots within the Anabaptist movement that occurred in German- and Dutch-speaking parts of central Europe during the Protestant Reformation. The most distinguishing theological feature of the Anabaptists was their rejection of infant baptism and their firm belief in what is called the believer's baptism, namely baptism of adults who profess faith in Jesus Christ and his work on the cross.

This foundational element of faith ensured that the Anabaptists were persecuted by the church and government authorities of the day, both Catholic and Protestant. Many Mennonites were tortured for their faith and sent to their deaths. Despite strong persecution, the Anabaptist movement spread quickly across western Europe, primarily along the Rhine River.

Another key tenet of the Anabaptist confession is a commitment to non-violence and that included resisting all military service. This resulted in many smaller groups of Anabaptists being destroyed because of their conviction that all violence, even when used to defend themselves, was against God's teachings.

In the early days of the Anabaptist movement, a priest left the Catholic church after his brother and his companions were attacked and killed because of their Anabaptist faith and their refusal to defend themselves. This priest became a respected leader within the Anabaptist movement and became so influential that many Anabaptists began carrying his name. His name was Menno Simons and today we call the people that followed him the Mennonites.

In addition to their distinctive faith perspective, the consistent theme across the history of the Mennonite people has been their persecution. In fact, whether it was in Germany, the Netherlands, Prussia or even Russia, these industrious people have travelled much of the western world looking for a safe place to call their home.

• (1715)

Due to the severe persecution faced by the Mennonites, they were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere in the world.

Some fled immediately to the United States, where they found freedom to practise their faith without interference from state authorities. Of these, a number of groups ended up migrating to Canada and establishing communities in our country, primarily in Ontario. Other persecuted Mennonites first fled to Prussia, seeking freedom to practise their faith and live in peace.

Then in the 1770s, Catherine the Great invited the Mennonites to resettle in Russia, promising them land and the right not to participate in military service. Therefore, many Mennonites moved to Russia, establishing communities and colonies across western Russia, successfully farming previously infertile land and becoming successful business people. In fact, my great grandfather Cornelius Martens was among those who built and operated a large machinery factory in the town of Millerovo, a community in Russia that still exists and of which my brother and I have been made honorary citizens.

For 150 years, the Mennonites prospered and lived in peace in Russia. Then everything changed. By the end of the 19th century, in other words, the end of the 1800s, and beginning of the 20th century, the flames of revolution were beginning to be fanned across Russia and the Mennonites felt less and less welcome in their adopted country. More and more of them were again leaving their homes and seeking refuge in a place that would offer peace and freedom. That place was Canada.

As Bolshevism and Communism inflicted more and more horrors upon Russia, thousands upon thousands of Mennonites fled their adopted home and landed in Canada, first settling in the inhospitable prairie provinces and then in British Columbia and Ontario. They

### *Private Members' Business*

worked hard, they cared for their families and communities and made the difficult sacrifices, which is the hallmark of immigrant life.

At the very heart of their communities was their church and their faith. Different Mennonite denominations sprang up across our country, including the Mennonite Brethren, Mennonite Church Canada as it is now known, the Amish, the Old Order Mennonite church, the Holdeman Church of God in Christ and others. At the heart of each were the core tenets of faith in Christ, a belief in the adult believers baptism and a commitment to non-resistance and peacemaking.

Let me talk about the Mennonites today.

Since their journey to Canada, Mennonites have become an indispensable part of the Canadian fabric, distinguishing themselves in a broad range of endeavours, from the arts to the sciences, from sports to politics, from business to music and everything in between.

Indeed, the Canadian Mennonite community has done more than just promote outstanding human values. It has also given Canada not one, not two but innumerable talented athletes, including, for example, five-time Olympic medalist, speed skater Cindy Klassen.

Other Mennonite athletes of note include NHL players such as Jonathan Toews, Dustin Penner, Robyn Regehr, James Reimer and former St. Louis Blues great, Garry Unger. There are many others either in the NHL today or formerly in the NHL.

There are also football players such as former CFLers John Pankratz and Matthias Goossen.

There are other notable Mennonites who have left their mark on Canadian society, including authors David Bergen, who is a Giller Prize winner, and Miriam Toews, a best-selling author and winner of the 2004 Governor General's Literary Award. That list also includes Canadian conductors Howard Dyck and Glen Fast, and well-known artist Gathie Falk, whose artwork hangs in Canada's embassy in Washington, D.C. Incidentally, Gathie Falk was one of my Sunday school teachers when I was a young child.

• (1720)

Members might be surprised to know that there are at least 15 members on this side of the House who trace their roots back to the Mennonites.

The history of the Mennonites and their ability to constructively contribute to building a tolerant, welcoming, healthy and prosperous Canadian society stands as a testament to the fact that our Mennonite values are Canadian values. They are values such as compassion and loving each other, including the vulnerable and marginalized. They are values such as hard work, forbearance, forgiveness, reconciliation and peacemaking. These, as well as other values such as thrift and generosity, are the values that arise out of our Mennonite faith. Maybe that is why the Mennonite MPs in the House are on this side, not that side.

*Private Members' Business*

However, I digress. These values I have articulated were strung out of the Mennonite culture and faith, a deep, abiding faith in God and his providence. Throughout Mennonite history, those values have been tested within the crucible of persecution, conflict, war and famine. We would do well as a country to reflect upon that history and the values that have sustained the Mennonites, as a guide to direct us as we stand on guard for the true north, strong and free, our wonderful country called Canada.

Therefore, by dedicating the second week of September to our Mennonite community, we are not just highlighting one people group's history. We are highlighting the refuge that Canada has provided to so many people groups, vulnerable people groups around the world, persecuted people groups. We can be very proud of that legacy that Canada has left behind.

I talked about the Mennonites fleeing persecution in Europe and finding new places all over the world. I mentioned the United States and Canada. However, today we find Mennonites in places like Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil. Do members know that the largest population of Mennonites is actually found in Africa? Africans have very much embraced the faith values that Mennonites have espoused for so many years.

I want to wind up by saying that I am very proud to be a Mennonite. I am very proud of our country for embracing the Mennonites. I am pleased that we have a motion today that will declare that every second week in September will be known as Mennonite heritage week.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Abbotsford for bringing this motion forward and for being proud of his heritage. I come from a Sikh heritage. We all come from different heritages and bring those values to Canada, but we are all proud Canadians. In fact, if there is one historic Sikh site outside of Pakistan and India, it is in the hon. member's own riding.

However, some Canadians have raised concerns as to why motions such as this, that seek to designate a Mennonite or Sikh heritage month or day, are important. Therefore, I would like to ask the hon. member why motions such as this are important, should be brought here and should be respected.

• (1725)

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, these kinds of motions allow us to celebrate the diversity of our country. I note that my home riding of Abbotsford, which I proudly represent, is known for being a community where large Sikh, Mennonite and Dutch populations, as well as many other people, all live in harmony together. These kinds of motions allow us to re-emphasize for Canadians how fortunate we are to live in a country like this, where we celebrate that diversity, live with each other in peace and learn from each other. That is a great thing to celebrate.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the great contributions of Mennonites in Canada has been some of the outstanding work they do sponsoring refugees to come to Canada and supporting them once they are here. I wonder if the member would like to speak a bit about that work.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, that is a great question from the member for Elmwood—Transcona. I know he has a lot of Mennonites living in his riding as well.

Mennonites banded together to form an organization called the Mennonite Central Committee, which was actually able to be an agent for bringing the persecuted Mennonites from Europe and Russia to Canada in the first place. It was agents of that wonderful service that allowed us to settle in this wonderful country we call Canada.

MCC and Mennonite congregations across Canada have been very active, as my colleague knows, in sponsoring refugees from war-torn places around the world, focusing on the most marginalized and vulnerable refugees. We have them in our own church. Some very good friends of mine are refugees from Iraq. We are working with them to bring their children to Canada. They faced immense persecution there. They have now landed in the community of Abbotsford and are finding that community welcoming and supportive. They still face challenges, as all immigrant families do, finding jobs and trying to find housing. These are big challenges, but they are up to the challenge, as most immigrants have been who have come to Canada and have built this amazing country.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this might be the third or possibly even the fourth time I have had the opportunity to talk about a heritage week and heritage month. I, for one, truly believe in Canada's diversity, which, as our Prime Minister has often said, is one of our greatest strengths.

That is amplified when we attend Winnipeg during the summer months of Folklorama, where we see a cultural smorgasbord of sorts, of all different ethnic groups sharing their heritage with the broader community in a very real and tangible way. On that note, this is a very special year for Folklorama because it is the 50th anniversary. I want to recognize that and applaud all of those individuals who have made this one of the most successful multicultural and diversity events in North America. It has been truly an amazing effort by a lot of wonderful people and highlights just how diversified Canada really and truly is.

In terms of the motion that has been brought forward by my colleague across the way, it makes reference to the Mennonite community. It is a community that I am very familiar with. Although I might not be of Mennonite heritage, personally, at times I might question that because of my father and the engagement he had with the Mennonite community. He was a great consumer of many Mennonite products, in particular agricultural products over the years when I was fairly young and growing up. I have had the opportunity to also experience first-hand as an adult many of the exchanges that have taken place, again, based on commerce. A number of years back, in the 1990s, I was able to get a bit better sense of the Mennonite community, when I started to get engaged in the whole issue of leadership within political parties and reaching out and so forth.

I would like to share a few thoughts and then talk about diversity.



As the member indicated, the Mennonite community is fairly well dispersed in Canada, but I want to talk about the Manitoba Mennonite community. In and around the time of Confederation, we had Mennonites. Russian Mennonites who were in Ukraine came to Canada in and around the 1870 to 1875 era and settled in southern Manitoba. Interesting enough, we see that some of the healthiest communities today in rural Manitoba are found where our Mennonite community has been second to no other, in terms of the driving force of the economic and social development of that area of the province.

Obviously, the Mennonite community has grown considerably over the years and has had significant influence on all aspects of our society. One of the questions asked was in regard to the Mennonite heritage community and the fine work that it does as a non-profit agency. We continue to hear on an annual basis of the charitable works that are done from within our Mennonite community, again arguably second to no other.

Earlier I was talking about the issue of trade and I want to draw the connection. One of the first tours I had of a really large farm operation was on a Mennonite-run hog farm. I walked into a massive barn that had about 10,000 hogs in it and the first thing I saw was computers. The computers controlled the feedings, which ultimately controlled the weight and determined when a pig was ready to go to market.

● (1730)

By my using this as an example, members get an appreciation of what the member for Abbotsford was been referring to. The work ethic of the Mennonite community is truly amazing. In many ways, Mennonites have been pioneers in what we are today. I do not think we can really underestimate their contributions to Canada's diversity.

Our diversity continues to grow every day, as our heritage is enriched through immigration on a daily basis. However, on many different fronts, our Mennonite community has brought wonderful attributes to Canada's heritage.

On many occasions I have had the opportunity to have exchanges with members of the community. They have a very high sense of pride in their Mennonite heritage. It was nothing but an absolute delight. Whether in my riding of Winnipeg North, which may not have as high a concentration of Mennonites as in the Kildonan area, or in southern Manitoba, the community has definitely had an impact.

The member for Abbotsford was asked an important question by my colleague on why we recognized heritage weeks, months or days. I will attempt to answer that question in my own words.

We need to have an appreciation for one of Canada's greatest strengths, which is our diversity. By having these heritage days, weeks or months, we provide an opportunity for individuals, whether inside or outside the chamber, to appeal to the broader community to recognize or host a special event.

Let me give members three examples. Last fall, the House passed a motion to have a heritage month for our Filipino community in Canada, which occurs in the month of June. We also had a motion for Sikh heritage last fall, which I believe is currently in the Senate. That is to recognize Sikh heritage in the month of April. Today, we

### *Private Members' Business*

are talking about recognizing Mennonite heritage in the second week of September. Those three communities provide so much to our society.

As members of Parliament, we can encourage school boards, provincial levels of government or businesses in our communities to present awards and to do things that heighten awareness. I have always believed we should not ask people who become Canadian citizens to forget about their homelands. We, in fact, like to encourage them to use their home, their country and their grouping to grow Canada's heritage.

I will be hosting a heritage month. I will be giving out medallions. I will take a look at what role I might be able to play. Why? It is because the member for Abbotsford has taken the time to recognize a really important community and he wants to ensure there is a heightened sense of public awareness, public pride and individual pride in our communities. We are Canadian but we are Mennonite Canadians in many ways. We need to know our roots.

That is why I applaud the member for bringing this forward and I look forward to the ongoing debate.

● (1735)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of the initiative to establish a Mennonite heritage week. I want to start by talking a bit about the contributions of Mennonites to northeast Winnipeg and to Manitoba.

Manitoba has quite a significant Mennonite population, and it is one that has definitely made a mark on Manitoba culture and society. Some of the institutions in northeast Winnipeg, such as Concordia Hospital, owe their existence to Mennonites who came to Winnipeg. The Concordia Society was originally established in 1928, and the Concordia Hospital followed shortly afterward, in 1931. It was located on Desalaberry Avenue for a long time, on the bank of the Red River, right where the Columbus housing co-op is today. In 1974, it moved to its current location on Concordia Avenue. Not long after opening, it was found that the emergency room was well frequented and that the ICU was too small. By 1983, the emergency room was being expanded and the number of beds in the ICU was being doubled from four to eight.

Concordia Hospital is in the news a lot today because the current Conservative government is endeavouring to close the emergency room and the ICU. It is something people in northeast Winnipeg are very aware of and, frankly, very upset about, because it has become such an important institution for them. It is open 24/7 and is an important point of access for northeast Winnipeggers to get access to the health care system. Debates are alive and well regarding the Concordia Hospital and the role it plays. That institution was originally founded by Mennonites in Winnipeg.

Not far down the road is the Bethania personal care home, which started out in Middlechurch in the 1940s and moved to Concordia Avenue in 1970. It currently cares for some 148 residents.

*Private Members' Business*

There is also Sam's Place, which is an excellent restaurant and a great place to get a bite. It also has a wonderful used bookstore. In addition to being a lovely place to get a meal and find a good book, it is also a social enterprise run by the Mennonite Central Committee. It helps train youth and gives them the skills to go out into the job market and find employment when they are ready for full-time employment. I have hosted events at Sam's Place and held many meetings there. It is a really great place. To people listening back home who have not been there, I exhort them to go check out Sam's Place.

The MCC Thrift Shop can be found on Chalmers Avenue in Elmwood—Transcona. It is one of many. There are over 100 shops across North America raising millions of dollars for the work of the Mennonite Central Committee. It started as a modest effort in rural Manitoba and quickly turned into a great success.

We also have the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Elmwood—Transcona, which is an important part of the community. It has many students and is involved in the wider community. For example, the Happy Days on Henderson festival is held on the grounds of MBCI every year.

Headquartered in Winnipeg is the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, which is an important organization. It was originally founded to help Mennonite farmers who wanted to help people across the globe by sending their surplus grain to places with an intense need. It was established in the early eighties, and continues to do good work across the planet for people in many different countries.

Those are just some examples of the institutions in Winnipeg, and particularly in northeast Winnipeg, where Mennonites have made a very pronounced and lasting contribution.

I have had the honour of knowing people who have been involved in politics in northeast Winnipeg, mostly people involved in the NDP. I think of MLAs such as Vic Schroeder, Harry Schellenberg, Erna Braun and Matt Wiebe, the current MLA for Concordia.

● (1740)

Political contributions have been made by Mennonites not just on the NDP side. Obviously, there are Mennonites in various parties who have made a number of different contributions.

Mennonites originally came to Canada, and started coming to Manitoba, in the 1870s, when the Russian Czarist government of the day undertook some reforms. It released the serfs, but in exchange, it required military service, and it took over the education system. I highlight those two things, because it was very important to Mennonites that they be able to teach their children their own language and faith and therefore have control over their education. It is also an important principle of Mennonites that they abstain from military service, so that was not compatible with the Russian government's draft at that time. They came to Canada under agreements that both exempted them from military service and gave them a fair amount of autonomy with respect to schools for their children.

Already in the 1890s, some of that was beginning to be challenged. There was the Manitoba schools question that came up. It was controversial at the time. Mennonites began to feel some pressure and discomfort, in a sense, that not all the deals they had

made as a condition of coming to Canada were being honoured. That was exacerbated with the onset of the First World War, when Mennonites had to make the decision as to whether they would serve with Canadian forces and fight in Europe or whether they would stay home. The overwhelming majority decided not to participate. That was not well received by all. I want to come back to that in a moment.

Some ended up leaving. They went to Mexico. They went to Paraguay and other places to try to get back those kinds of agreements on education and military service they thought they had with Canada. For those who stayed, they became a really important part of Manitoba culture and society. They were an important part of promoting and cementing the co-operative movement in Manitoba, for instance, with consumer co-ops, grain co-ops and other kinds of co-ops, to try to make life more affordable for themselves in rural communities. They were an important part of the credit union movement. We have a huge Steinbach Credit Union building in Elmwood—Transcona, right off highway 59. That is a credit union that is going strong. They continue to support that movement.

I have talked a lot about the achievements of Mennonites and their importance to Manitoba culture, but I want to highlight that Canadians did not always think they would be a good fit, and there was opposition to having Mennonites settle here. In fact, there was an order in council in passed in 1919 that prohibited the immigration of Mennonites, Hutterites, Doukhobors and other undesirables. For a period of about four years, Mennonites were expressly prohibited from coming to the country. In the 1920s, there were comments made in this very place, such as this, from a Mr. Buchanan, who was serving as a member at the time. He said:

I intend to argue that they are not desirable citizens, although probably not on the same ground as defined in the Bill itself. I look upon a desirable citizen as one who comes into this country prepared to associate with the rest of the people and to assume all the obligations of citizenship. If immigrants fail to do that, then I do not look upon them as desirable citizens, and we should refrain from allowing such classes of people to enter the Dominion of Canada.

A colleague, Mr. Green, said:

I do not think we would ever be able to assimilate these people so long as they are allowed to remain in these communities, and we should not allow the Doukhobors, Hutterites and Mennonites or any people of that sort to come into Canada and live under their present customs. If we are going to build up a united Canada we must have people whom we can assimilate and who eventually will join the family of Canadian life.

We hear comments like this today in debates on immigration.

Mennonites are a great example of people who came to this country, worked hard and made significant contributions. I believe that is still true of people coming to our country from other parts of the world. Our job is to welcome them and work with them to ensure that those contributions are positive.

● (1745)

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as a Mennonite, I am pleased to support the motion put forward by the hon. member for Abbotsford, Motion No. 111, which proposes to recognize the second week in September as Mennonite heritage week.

Faith, persecution and the dream of a better life: these were the driving forces that brought thousands of Mennonites to Canada from the 18th century onward. Today nearly 200,000 Mennonites call Canada home.

In 2010, the largest concentration of urban Mennonites was found in Winnipeg, in my province of Manitoba, followed by Vancouver, Saskatoon, Kitchener and Waterloo. Each of these urban populations is fed by large Mennonite rural communities, such as those that exist in southern Manitoba. In fact, today Winnipeg has one of the largest urban Mennonite populations in the world, with more than 20,000 Mennonites and dozens of Mennonite churches.

As we consider the idea of designating the second week of September Mennonite heritage week, we naturally lean on the rich history of the Mennonite community in Canada.

Mennonites go back to the 16th century, as a people forged out of the Protestant Reformation. With the invention of the printing press the century before, faith was transformed. People were in a position to read and understand the Christian scriptures for themselves. The Anabaptist movement was born.

The movement spread throughout Europe. In northern Germany and the Netherlands, a man by the name of Menno Simons became an influential Anabaptist leader. Originally a Roman Catholic priest, Simons had concerns about infant baptism. He ultimately came to believe that baptism should be voluntarily chosen by mature believers. This was contrary to the widely practised tradition of infant baptism within mainstream Christian communities.

Simons wrote extensively, preached constantly and eventually turned a fledgling movement into an ever-expanding community of believers that came to be known as the Mennists.

The Mennists were peaceful, with a tendency toward self-sufficiency and isolation that produced a particularly unique social-religious culture, a culture that held a deep conviction of faith that was not simply a private matter but a way of life that expressed itself in every facet of one's being. Commitment to God and family was paramount.

Fierce persecution characterized the life of these believers. Many were imprisoned and executed. Being Anabaptist was considered a crime, so persecution led them to migrate throughout Europe and North America. Mennonites were looking for a place where they could truly and fully enjoy one of humanity's most basic and fundamental rights, the right to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion.

Much as it is today, Canada was a desired destination for many who were suffering at the hands of their persecutors. The first waves of Mennonites to arrive in Canada came from Pennsylvania in 1786, which eventually led to the creation of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec, believe it or not.

The second wave of European immigrants arrived in 1822 and established a large Amish settlement that would become the Ontario Amish Mennonite Conference, in 1923.

A third wave saw more European immigrants from Russia and Prussia settle in the Canadian Prairies beginning in the 1870s. At the time, the Dominion of Canada was looking for European farmers to

### *Private Members' Business*

settle the new province of Manitoba. That led the government of the day, through the minister of agriculture, to issue an invitation known as a privilegium. The letter, signed by the secretary of the department of agriculture, made 15 provisions for Mennonites, should they choose to relocate.

Timing is everything. At that time, the Mennonite populations in Russia and Ukraine were particularly nervous about their future in that region. Changing legislation meant that Mennonites were required to teach Russian in schools. Moreover, they were losing their exemption from military service, which created a problem, given their adherence to the principle of pacifism.

A delegation visited Canada in 1873 and determined that Canada would be a suitable new home. The minister of agriculture, the hon. John Henry Pope, made an arrangement with the delegation, in view of their formal announcement to him of their intention to settle in the province of Manitoba. According to an order in council from 1873, the arrangement included an exemption from military service. Guarantees were also provided for the fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles and educating their children in their schools, as provided by law, without any kind of molestation or restriction whatsoever.

● (1750)

The order in council also reserved eight townships in southern Manitoba for Mennonite settlement and offered each Mennonite adult a free quarter section of land. What a bargain, and Mennonites love bargains. They saw it, recognized it and jumped on the opportunity. The option to purchase the remaining three-quarters of a section was given to them at a dollar per acre. This arrangement worked well for both parties. Canada would have farmers to settle the Prairies and unleash its agricultural potential, and the Mennonites would be free to exercise their religious freedom without fear of persecution.

Between 1874 and 1880, some 17,000 Mennonites left Russia, and 7,000 of those came to Manitoba. While they kept the new faith, these new Canadians were free of the persecution that had plagued them in Europe. Upon coming to Canada, however, there were still challenges to overcome, such as sickness, clearing the land for farming and building homes for their families. Nothing came easy. One writer called the region a "wilderness since time immemorial, wild and covered with forest".

Another member of the group that arrived in Manitoba in late July humorously wrote about their experience with mosquitoes, "The misery that these numerous tormentors inflicted upon us in those three days and nights in the open flatboat was something extraordinary. We had never seen anything like this. If Pharaoh's plagues were similar, it is no wonder that he became pliable and yielded to Israel's departure."

The condition of mosquitoes in Manitoba has not changed.

*Private Members' Business*

Facing the raw elements would be one of the enduring challenges of settlement for Mennonites. Settlers would come together regularly to accomplish significant tasks: removing stumps, building barns, cutting wood. However, Manitoba's first nations and Métis populations also helped the early settlers stay alive in those first few difficult years. They sold them fish, cattle, potatoes and other goods, and provided moccasins for footwear. They also showed them where to find sources of fresh fruit, like chokecherries and Saskatoons. Thanks to the hard work of the pioneers and the kindness of Canada's first nations and Métis, Mennonites pulled through the most challenging years of the settlement.

A fourth wave saw Russian Mennonites come to Canada in the 1920s. These people settled in small communities stretching between British Columbia and Ontario, ultimately forming individual Mennonite conferences as the wave continued. It is this wave that saw all four of my grandparents come to Canada.

Prior to their departure from Russia, Mennonites had been invited by Catherine the Great to settle in her land. Catherine recognized that the Mennonites were skilled farmers, and the queen needed people to occupy recently seized territories. They were officially promised that they would never have to serve in the military and they could practice their religion freely. By the 1900s, Russia's Mennonite colonies had become the most prosperous and well-developed rural regions in the country. However, with the outbreak of war between Russia and Germany in 1914, the German-speaking Mennonites started to face increasing persecution. Mennonites were labelled agents of Germany and enemies of the state, but things got even worse when the Bolshevik revolution led by Vladimir Lenin erupted in 1917. With the emergence of a new communist government followed by a civil war, Mennonites faced an uncertain future.

My grandparents, like many others in the area, wondered whether they would be able to live, worship and farm as they had for generations. In the years following the revolution, my grandparents were forced to flee, walking away from their homes, their businesses, their farms—everything. Property was confiscated. Women were raped. Men were tortured and killed. Everything was lost. With the help of those already living in Canada, around 21,000 people arrived here between 1922 and 1930.

The Second World War also saw more than 12,000 Mennonites migrate to Canada from the U.S.S.R. and Germany. Not long after, another 8,000 Mennonites migrated to Canada. Driven by the core belief that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God offers salvation from sin to all people, Mennonites have made their mark in modern Canada.

However, one of the most significant contributions that Mennonites have made to Canada is in the area of generosity. Stirred by their faith, Mennonites promoted peace, justice and genuine love for one's neighbours over generations. According to Statistics Canada, many southern Manitoba communities are the most generous charitable givers in the country. The city of Steinbach in my riding has the highest median donation for cities over 10,000 in population at \$2,160 as the median donation, with the average Canadian's being \$300.

● (1755)

One other point is on the community of Abbotsford. Abbotsford is the largest census metropolitan area for charitable givers.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to address Motion No. 111, which seeks to recognize the contributions of Mennonite Canadians in building Canadian society by recognizing the second week of September as Mennonite heritage week.

It is well known that Canada is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Canada is home to approximately 200,000 people of Mennonite faith. Ontario and Manitoba have the largest Mennonite population in the country, with 58,000 and 44,000 Mennonites respectively.

Canadians of Mennonite faith have contributed much to Canadian history and to the overall fabric of Canadian society. Many Mennonites have received international recognition for their work and have established themselves as leaders in Canadian communities.

Mennonite Canadians continue to leave a lasting mark on our diverse national fabric in every aspect of Canadian life, strengthening Canada in the process. They are prominent in Canadian film, television, radio broadcasting, newspapers and magazines. They are active in political life at all levels of government.

I would like to quickly speak about a few Mennonite Canadians who are currently reshaping Canadian society while also introducing the world to Mennonite-Canadian heritage and culture through their work and art.

Dawna Friesen is an Emmy Award-winning Canadian journalist with a career that spans both Canada and the world. Her hard work and determination have led to many successes, such as winning a Gemini Award in 2011 for the best news anchor. Travelling the world, she has been able to tell us many stories that have touched our lives as Canadians. She is one of the country's first female news anchors to lead a nightly newscast.

Howard Dyck is a Canadian conductor and broadcaster. He has had a long, distinguished career in classical music, including being the artistic director of the Grand Philharmonic Choir and chamber singers and the conductor of the Bach Elgar Choir of Hamilton. He received the Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

Miriam Toews, a celebrated Canadian author, writer and actor, is best known for her novels, such as *A Complicated Kindness* and *All My Puny Sorrows*. She has won a number of literary prizes, including the Governor General's Award for fiction and the Writers' Trust Engel/Findley Award for her body of work. She is a two-time finalist for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and a two-time winner of the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize. Her work explores the challenges and notions of patriarchy, family and community, using her Mennonite heritage as the anchor for her work.

Dr. Henry George Friesen is a Canadian endocrinologist; a distinguished professor at the University of Manitoba; and the discoverer of human prolactin, a hormone that is best known for enabling the production of milk in mammals. He is a recipient of the Canada Gairdner International Award in recognition of his contributions to the fields of biochemistry, physiology and pathophysiology.

The President of the Treasury Board, a practising doctor and politician, has earned much acclaim. As a doctor, my esteemed colleague has worked in Canada and abroad to address issues of social inequality and enhance opportunities for individuals that improve their socio-economic outcomes.

Her work to promote global health includes founding a grassroots response to the global HIV epidemic in 2004. Give a Day to world AIDS challenges Canadians to raise money for people affected by HIV. She was also instrumental in the launch of Ethiopia's first family medicine training program through her work with the Toronto Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration. She was raised in my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler.

Finally, James Reimer is a professional NHL goaltender who is currently playing for the Florida Panthers. He made his NHL debut with the Toronto Maple Leafs in 2011. Reimer plays for Canada internationally and first represented our country in the 2011 world championships.

● (1800)

Despite immigrating to Canada in the 1870s and being key contributors to building our nation, Mennonites experienced discrimination and adversity due to their customs, habits, modes of living and practices. Remembering our past provides us a moment of pause to think about how we see ourselves as a nation in the world today.

The first Mennonites to Canada arrived in the late 18th century, settling in southern Ontario and Manitoba and moving into the Prairies and the Northwest Territories. Today, Canadians of all ethnicities take part in Mennonite beliefs, practices and traditions. Early Mennonites to Canada were Dutch, German, Russian, and American. They came to Canada for the promise of land, cultural and educational autonomy and a guaranteed exemption from military service.

After the First World War, many religious groups were refused entry into Canada under the Immigration Act due to their customs, habits and practices, making it hard for Mennonites. Today, we recognize that Mennonite settlements in the west were instrumental in the development of our nation.

There is a wide scope of worship, doctrine and traditions among Mennonites today and there are many types of practising Mennonites. Some avoid all forms of technology and live traditionally, while others use modern machinery and electronics. They are Canadians, living and practising their beliefs in a manner consistent with their community ideals.

In 1988, Canada became the first nation to proclaim a Multiculturalism Act. The act requires that we continually safeguard equality for all Canadians, in all economic, social, cultural and political aspects of their lives.

### *Private Members' Business*

Our multicultural heritage is about more than just a commitment to welcoming diverse people from around the world. It is a commitment to principles of equality and freedom, grounded in human rights and enshrined in our legislative framework, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act.

A little connection to my riding would be that in 1857, the Hespeler part of my riding was named after Jacob Hespeler, a native of Württemberg, Germany, an immigrant and entrepreneur who established successful industries in my riding of Hespeler.

Many Mennonites came from many areas in the United States, particularly from Pennsylvania, and settled in southern Ontario in my hometown city of Kitchener, which at the time was named Berlin. It drew many immigrants from Germany, approximately 50,000, to the region and continuing well after the war.

Some of the local names one may see in certain areas of my riding would be Bechtel, Eby, Erb, Weber and Cressman. My first summer job was in construction. The last name of my employer, the gentleman who owned company, was Cressman. His cultural ties and his heritage were linked to Mennonites. I had the privilege of working with him. It was great to see how he helped build our community and a lot of the region.

Diversity is a core component of our Canadian identity. The historic and contemporary contributions of Mennonite Canadians are a vital part of the diversity and the social, economic and political fabric of our country.

Finally, I would like to thank all Canadians of Mennonite heritage for their commitment to building our great nation. Celebrating our interconnectedness and the many unique communities and cultures that thrive here gives us a chance to discover what we all share in common. This allows us to fully appreciate the value of our differences. In celebrating our diversity, we learn about our common struggles and our shared values. We learn how far we have come, but also the hurdles that we must overcome.

I want to thank the member for bringing the motion forward. It is a great motion and I will be happy to support it.

● (1805)

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have a personal connection to the bill, not because I am a Mennonite but because of the strength of the Mennonite community in my riding. I am from southwestern Saskatchewan. It is one of the areas where people have come from all over the world to settle and build communities, and the Mennonites have been a very large part of that. A whole area of my riding is primarily Mennonite.

A few years ago I was going through some of the language statistics for my riding on people's first language and what they spoke and trying to discover the different communities. I was surprised to find that German was by far the second largest language spoken in my riding.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

When my colleague from Abbotsford introduced his bill, he mentioned some of the names, such of Klassen, Friesen, Toews, Penner, Reimer, Dyck, and I am familiar with those names.

A number of things really stand out about those communities and those people. Many of them had agricultural backgrounds. In my province, agriculture manufacturing has been a very large part of what Saskatchewan rural life has been about. Many of the Mennonites who worked in their shops were very thrifty. They were inventive and they led much of the early development of agricultural manufacturing in Saskatchewan. Because of that and because of the leadership they shown over the years, we are now one of the leaders around the world in agricultural manufacturing. A lot of that comes from small towns.

• (1810)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member will have a little over eight minutes the next time this matter is before the House.

It being 6:10 p.m., the time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1815)

[*English*]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to follow up on some matters I raised in question period last fall. At that time there was a rotating strike by CUPW members at Canada Post. In the context of that rotating strike, and this was prior to back-to-work legislation being introduced and passed, Canada Post made a mean-spirited decision.

Workers were out on the rotating strike, which meant they were missing a few days in month they were on strike. They were being paid for the days they worked, but members who were not working, those who were on short-term disability, were deprived of their benefits. It was a mean-spirited decision taken by Canada Post. It was a tactic, and an ugly tactic at that, to try to put pressure on the union.

I am wondering how many postal workers showed up to work on the Liberals' campaigns. I know a lot of postal workers worked on the campaigns of Liberal MPs. They believed what the Liberals were telling them, that they had their backs. They were very disappointed when this all came to a head. They were not impressed with the back-to-work legislation. However, it was the Liberal government's prerogative to tell Canada Post to cease and desist on that decision, which it could have chosen not to take.

Canada Post could have chosen to continue on with the short-term disability benefit payments as well, not just on a case-by-case basis and not on a compassionate basis. When someone is sick or injured, he or she is already dealing with a substantial amount of

stress and financial hardship. These workers had been on a reduced salary and now they did not collect a salary while applying for those compassionate grounds.

Canada Post did not have to do it that way. It could have said that as a matter of policy, it would continue to pay those short-term disability benefits. The fact that it chose not to do meant that those people who were already sick and injured had to suffer having no salary, while their colleagues who were able to work, and because it was not a full strike, were still largely getting paid.

I never did get a satisfactory answer from the government on why it did not choose the high road and decide to continue to make those short-term disability payments as a matter of course instead of on an exceptional basis for only some of the people who needed those benefits. I wonder what government members say to those postal workers in their ridings, those who came out and campaigned for them in 2015, when they express disappointment and anger at the fact that their sick and injured co-workers had to go without that money.

The other thing the Liberals could have done was to make those workers whole after they legislated them back to work and they did not do that either. We still want to know why.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, during the last election campaign, there was a lot of talk about Canada Post and its future. We promised to destroy Mr. Harper's plan and adopt a new plan. We consulted at length with people across the country, including postal workers. We concluded these consultations with a good plan, a plan for the future that respects Canada Post employees.

[*English*]

I would like to clarify some of the facts about the benefits employees are entitled to in the event of a strike. It is an unfortunate fact that during a strike, some of the benefits that Canada Post employees receive could be affected because the collective agreement has expired. However, this would not be true for all benefits. For example, during a strike, employees could continue to have prescription drugs covered.

Moreover, during the strike action that took place in November 2018, Canada Post put in place a mechanism to make it possible for employees to request an exemption from any denial of benefits on compassionate grounds. I would like to also add that employees continued to keep their EI benefits, such as maternity and parental benefits, during the strike.

[*Translation*]

Although the employees are now back to work, negotiations on a final agreement are under way. I believe that we will reach a good collective agreement.

Our government urged the two parties to continue with bargaining for more than a year. We believe that a respectful dialogue between the two parties is the best way forward and the best way to reach a fair agreement.

We reached a turning point last year, with the stalled negotiations and weeks of rotating strikes across the country. Jobs, the well-being of the most vulnerable Canadians and our economy were all in jeopardy.

[English]

It is our job to do what is right for Canadians. That is precisely what we did when we introduced and passed Bill C-89, which got Canada Post back to work on November 27, 2018, while setting out a process for continuing negotiations with an independent mediator-arbitrator.

I am confident that Canada Post values its relationship with the union. Certainly, that is something that we have encouraged the new management and new board to pursue. I am encouraged that they have been able to find common ground on many issues. Moreover, I know Canada Post values its relationship with Canadians, who more than ever depend on it to deliver.

Both sides of this dispute are working hard to resolve these issues. The arbitration process outlined under Bill C-89 officially began on January 16 of this year.

As the Minister of Labour said when tabling Bill C-89, this was a last resort, something that our government had done everything in its power to avoid. While we did not take the decision lightly, we acted as we always do, with the best interests of all Canadians in mind.

[Translation]

Canadians should expect nothing less from us as parliamentarians. Our objective has always been to restore necessary services to all Canadians in the immediate term and to encourage those involved to find common ground for the long term.

[English]

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, I think the member knows that we disagree about back-to-work legislation, as well as the

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

government's characterization of the strike. However, I want to focus particularly on the issue of short-term disability benefits.

The question is not whether the collective agreement expired or not. I do not think that is the interesting question. The interesting question is whether there was anything prohibiting Canada Post from acting in good faith and continuing those short-term disability benefits. The expiration of the collective agreement does not require that it discontinue those benefits. It made it an option.

Therefore, will the member stand up and admit that Canada Post had the option, and that the minister had the option to direct Canada Post to continue those benefits, notwithstanding the fact that the collective agreement was deemed to have expired?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately, labour negotiations are very difficult. They certainly appear to have been in this case, and sometimes messy. The operational decisions of Canada Post are generally not something that the minister or the government interferes in. Our role, both legislative and on a day-to-day basis, is to name the CEO and the board of Canada Post and to approve its general business plan, all in accordance with its governing legislation. That is a job we take very seriously.

Of course, we have encouraged it to pursue a more meaningful dialogue and to meaningfully improve the labour-management situation in the corporation. That is something we are reassured it is continuing to do. We all look forward to the conclusion of this matter.

• (1820)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:21 p.m.)

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# CONTENTS

Wednesday, February 27, 2019

<b>STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS</b>			
<b>SNC-Lavalin Employees</b>		Mr. Scheer .....	25853
Mr. Boudrias .....	25849	Mr. Trudeau .....	25853
<b>Marie-Anne Gaboury</b>		Mr. Caron .....	25854
Ms. Mihychuk .....	25849	Mr. Trudeau .....	25854
<b>Alberta</b>		Mr. Caron .....	25854
Mr. Viersen .....	25849	Mr. Trudeau .....	25854
<b>Steinhart Distillery</b>		Mr. Angus .....	25854
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova) .....	25850	Mr. Trudeau .....	25854
<b>International Women's Day</b>		Mr. Angus .....	25854
Ms. Mathysen .....	25850	Mr. Trudeau .....	25854
<b>Seniors</b>		Ms. Bergen .....	25855
Mr. Fergus .....	25850	Mr. Trudeau .....	25855
<b>Citation for Lifesaving</b>		Ms. Bergen .....	25855
Ms. Finley .....	25850	Mr. Trudeau .....	25855
<b>Annual Hudson St. Patrick's Day Parade</b>		Mr. Rayes .....	25855
Mr. Schiefke .....	25850	Mr. Trudeau .....	25855
<b>Transportation</b>		Mr. Rayes .....	25855
Mr. Badawey .....	25851	Mr. Trudeau .....	25855
<b>Government Programs</b>		Mr. Cooper .....	25855
Mr. Doherty .....	25851	Mr. Trudeau .....	25855
<b>Black History Month</b>		Mr. Cooper .....	25855
Mr. Eyking .....	25851	Mr. Trudeau .....	25855
<b>Nuclear Power Plants</b>		Ms. Brosseau .....	25856
Ms. Rudd .....	25851	Mr. Trudeau .....	25856
<b>Carbon Pricing</b>		Mr. Rankin .....	25856
Mr. Nicholson .....	25851	Mr. Trudeau .....	25856
<b>Bullying</b>		Mr. Barrett .....	25856
Ms. Lambropoulos .....	25852	Mr. Trudeau .....	25856
<b>Leader of the New Democratic Party</b>		Mr. Barrett .....	25856
Mr. Julian .....	25852	Mr. Trudeau .....	25856
<b>Ethics</b>		Mr. Paul-Hus .....	25856
Ms. Rempel .....	25852	Mr. Trudeau .....	25856
<b>Black History Month</b>		Mr. Paul-Hus .....	25857
Mr. Bratina .....	25852	Mr. Trudeau .....	25857
		<b>The Environment</b>	
		Mr. Boulerice .....	25857
		Mr. Trudeau .....	25857
		<b>Government Priorities</b>	
		Ms. Kwan .....	25857
		Mr. Trudeau .....	25857
		<b>Official Languages</b>	
		Mr. Arseneault .....	25857
		Mr. Trudeau .....	25857
		<b>Justice</b>	
<b>Justice</b>		Mr. Deltell .....	25858
Mr. Scheer .....	25853	Mr. Trudeau .....	25858
Mr. Trudeau .....	25853	Mr. Deltell .....	25858
Mr. Scheer .....	25853	Mr. Trudeau .....	25858
Mr. Trudeau .....	25853	Mr. Strahl .....	25858
Mr. Scheer .....	25853	Mr. Trudeau .....	25858
Mr. Trudeau .....	25853	Mr. Strahl .....	25858

Mr. Trudeau .....	25858
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Ms. Jolibois .....	25858
Mr. Trudeau .....	25859
<b>Indigenous Affairs</b>	
Ms. Ashton .....	25859
Mr. Trudeau .....	25859
<b>Justice</b>	
Mr. Poilievre .....	25859
Mr. Trudeau .....	25859
Mr. Poilievre .....	25859
Mr. Trudeau .....	25859
Mr. Poilievre .....	25859
Mr. Trudeau .....	25859
<b>Poverty</b>	
Mr. Peschisolido .....	25860
Mr. Trudeau .....	25860
<b>Justice</b>	
Ms. Alleslev .....	25860
Mr. Trudeau .....	25860
<b>Persons with Disabilities</b>	
Ms. Hardcastle .....	25860
Mr. Trudeau .....	25860
<b>Telecommunications Industry</b>	
Mr. Spengemann .....	25860
Mr. Trudeau .....	25860
<b>Justice</b>	
Ms. Rempel .....	25860
Mr. Trudeau .....	25861
<b>Employment</b>	
Mr. Fortin .....	25861
Mr. Trudeau .....	25861

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

<b>Precarious Employment</b>	
Motion .....	25861
Motion agreed to .....	25862
<b>Standing Committee on Health</b>	
Motion agreed to .....	25863

#### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	
Mr. Leslie .....	25864
<b>Government Response to Petitions</b>	
Mr. Lamoureux .....	25864
<b>Committees of the House</b>	
<b>Official Languages</b>	
Mr. Paradis .....	25864
<b>Natural Resources</b>	
Mr. Maloney .....	25864
Mrs. Stubbs .....	25864

<b>Procedure and House Affairs</b>	
Mr. Bagnell .....	25864
<b>Public Safety and National Security</b>	
Mr. McKay .....	25864
<b>Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act</b>	
Mr. Picard .....	25865
Bill C-432. Introduction and first reading .....	25865
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	25865
<b>Competition Act</b>	
Mr. Picard .....	25865
Bill C-433. Introduction and first reading .....	25865
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	25865
<b>Petitions</b>	
<b>Falun Gong</b>	
Mr. Kmiec .....	25865
<b>Vietnam</b>	
Mr. Kmiec .....	25865
<b>Firearms</b>	
Mrs. Gallant .....	25865
<b>Abortion</b>	
Mr. Trost .....	25865
<b>Autism Spectrum Disorder</b>	
Mr. Simms .....	25865
<b>Time Bank System</b>	
Mr. Tan .....	25865
<b>Chinatowns</b>	
Mr. Tan .....	25866
<b>Firearms</b>	
Ms. Rempel .....	25866
<b>Needle Exchange Program</b>	
Mr. Albrecht .....	25866
<b>Questions on the Order Paper</b>	
Mr. Lamoureux .....	25866
<b>Motions for Papers</b>	
Mr. Lamoureux .....	25866
<b>The United Church of Canada Act</b>	
The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota) .....	25866

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

<b>Canada–Madagascar Tax Convention Implementation Act, 2018</b>	
Bill S-6. Second reading .....	25867
Mr. Sorbara .....	25867
Ms. Hardcastle .....	25869
Mr. Dusseault .....	25870
Mr. Schmale .....	25870
Mr. Lamoureux .....	25871
Mr. Dusseault .....	25872
Mr. Berthold .....	25872
Mr. Lamoureux .....	25873
Mr. Anderson .....	25875
Mr. Fast .....	25875
Mr. Gerretsen .....	25875

Mr. Lloyd.....	25876
Amendment negatived .....	25876
(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee) .....	25876

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Mennonite Heritage Week**

Mr. Fast.....	25876
Motion.....	25876
Mr. Dhaliwal .....	25878
Mr. Blaikie .....	25878

Mr. Lamoureux.....	25878
Mr. Blaikie .....	25879
Mr. Falk (Provencher).....	25880
Mr. Tabbara .....	25882
Mr. Anderson.....	25883

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

**Canada Post Corporation**

Mr. Blaikie .....	25884
Mr. MacKinnon .....	25884

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