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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will have the singing of *O Canada* led by the hon. member for Niagara Falls.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

TORONTO RAPTORS

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago today, Toronto's NBA franchise officially became the Toronto Raptors. Ever since then, the sport of basketball has been growing rapidly across our great nation.

We may all have our differences when it comes to the sport of hockey, but we are all united by our passion for the Toronto Raptors: 5.8 million Canadians watched game seven on Sunday night, and it did not disappoint. With four seconds left on the shot clock, Kawhi Leonard hit the game-winning shot to send our team to the eastern conference finals.

Tonight is game one, and I want to encourage all my hon. colleagues to watch the game and wish our team well. Let us go, Raptors; We the North.

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● (1405)

BOLT

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 342 scholarships, 80 apprenticeships, resulting in 63 job placements and counting is exactly what BOLT, Building Opportunities for Life Today, set out to do.

It is creating an opportunity for under-resourced youth by connecting them to careers in construction. This Tridel initiative is a perfect example of how industry, government and unions come together to address two critical issues facing Canadians: youth unemployment and the need for young adults to enter the skilled trades.

Since 2007, BOLT has raised over $3 million by creating awareness in supporting education and training to secure youth employment in the construction industry.

[*Translation*]

BOLT is a powerful program with a proven track record. It changes lives and creates a better future for our youth.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in applauding this extraordinary program and thanking Tridel for its boundless generosity in supporting youth while creating jobs in one of our country's key economic sectors.

* * *

[*English*]

SENIORS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are appalled by criminals who target seniors. That is why I rise today to raise awareness of seniors abuse and in support of Bill C-206, an act to amend the Criminal Code, abuse of vulnerable persons. Whether from telephone or online scams, forgery, identity theft or misplaced trust, seniors are vulnerable.

I know how easily elderly Canadians can become victims of financial abuse. My grandfather and his companion were victims of fraud committed by a caregiver. It happened during the final months of my grandfather's life and, sadly, he did not live to see the perpetrator punished.

Bill C-206 would make the age of the victim, and exploitation for financial gain, aggravating factors that must be considered at sentencing. Tougher sentences for cowardly criminals who prey on the vulnerable will send a strong signal that Canadians do not tolerate the abuse of seniors.

I urge all members to support Bill C-206.

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MANITO AHBEE FESTIVAL

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all participating and attending the 14th annual Manito Ahbee Festival in Winnipeg.

The Manito Ahbee Festival brings people together from across Canada and from around the world to experience the very best in indigenous music, art and culture in an effort to unify, educate and inspire.

The festival will start today with the lighting of the sacred fire at the Oodena Circle at the Forks and includes a friendship dance to welcome everyone attending. This wonderful celebration offers all Canadians the opportunity to honour and develop a deeper understanding of indigenous culture and heritage and to celebrate its importance in Canada's multicultural mosaic.

We thank all the organizers for their hard work and dedication to making this event a success.

I would also like to extend my best wishes for an enjoyable and memorable festival for all.

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WIKWEMIKONG HIGH SCHOOL

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, students from the high school on Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory are proving that people do not have to come from a big place to do great things.

With help from teacher-mentor Chris Mara, a 2018 Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence recipient, 20 students competed as one of only five Canadian teams at the first championship robotics competition that brought together teams from around the globe.

The students from the Wikwemikong High School first robotics team 5672 travelled to Detroit in April to compete against 600 teams. They capped their inspirational journey by being one of three teams short-listed for the prestigious Chairman's Award, which recognizes the impact teams have on their community and region.

Although the Manitoulin team was among the smallest competing, it was buoyed by support it received from its own community and across Canada. It was clear its outreach in nearby communities and through social media set it apart.

Please join me in congratulating these amazing students, whose youthful leadership makes us so proud, and in thanking all those who supported them on their amazing run.

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[*Translation*]

LAVAL SENIORS' ASSOCIATION

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seniors across Canada deserve to be recognized for their contributions and their involvement. We also need to acknowledge the important work of associations and organizations that ensure seniors' well-being.

Today I would like to talk about the Association pour aînés résidant à Laval, APARL, which is celebrating its 45th anniversary. Since 1974, in good times and bad, APARL has been there to provide services and resources that support seniors' independence and quality of life. APARL is a community hub that offers a plethora of activities to help seniors overcome isolation.

I would like to thank APARL for 45 years of serving seniors, for being involved in our community, and for making a real difference.

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● (1410)

[*English*]

VYSHYVANKA DAY

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Canadians of Ukrainian heritage as well as all Ukrainians around the world on the occasion of the Vyshyvanka Day. Every year as we mark this day, we acknowledge the importance of Ukrainian embroidery as a symbol of unity.

Today and in the coming weeks, Canadians of Ukrainian heritage will wear their embroidered shirts to remind one another of the struggles they had to overcome to establish an independent state, which Canada was the first to recognize.

Vyshyvanka unites all Ukrainians living at home and abroad. It serves as an important reminder of the ongoing challenges Ukraine is facing today. We will always stand with the people of Ukraine in their struggle for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we will never recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea and occupation of Donbass.

On behalf of Canada's Conservatives, I thank all members of the Ukrainian community in Canada for organizing and taking part in the multiple events commemorating this special day.

Happy Vyshyvanka Day.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to talk about the wonderful work being done by our government.

Since 2015, one million new jobs have been created across Canada, better than advertised. Almost 57,000 seniors are out of poverty. Almost 300,000 fewer children are lifted out of poverty as well.

However, for infrastructure, Doug Ford has stood in the way of us helping Ontarians.

Since 2018, we have $11 billion committed to Ontario. However, construction season is starting and the Doug Ford Conservatives are not taking the steps needed. Instead, they are busy spending taxpayer dollars on political ads.

Brampton needs its fair share of infrastructure investment. I urge the Ford Conservatives to think of all Ontarians, including Bramptonians, and do what is right to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Montarville.

WILLIAM LATTER SCHOOL

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are great people in my riding who work to make this country a better place. It is the case of Mrs. Rita Plante, an elementary school teacher from William Latter School.

With her students, Mrs. Plante created a quilt six feet by six feet, representing realities from all the provinces and territories in Canada. Not only is this masterpiece beautiful, but it has helped her students understand the abundance of diversity that lies within our country, a diversity that is one of our biggest strengths in Canada.

Mrs. Plante is here today with 56 wonderful students and parents to see her exposed piece of artwork in the Wellington Building and to learn where democracy takes place in the country.

I invite the House to check out this lovely quilt and I would like to thank Mrs. Plante for dedicating her career to creating the leaders of tomorrow.

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GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised transparency and accountability. He said, "sunlight is the world's best disinfectant." However, the Prime Minister shut down two committee investigations into his attempted interference in a criminal prosecution, and he is blocking the release of information in defence of Vice-Admiral Mark Norman.

The Prime Minister kicked out two ministers for telling Canadians the truth. The Prime Minister tried to hide a $10.5-million payment to a convicted terrorist and then said that veterans are "asking for more than we are able to give".

The Prime Minister promised a collaborative relationship with provinces and territories, but eight provinces oppose his no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69, and five provinces are fighting his carbon tax.

A year ago, the Liberals said spending billions of dollars would get the Trans Mountain expansion built immediately, but not a single inch has been built. He also defended funding anti-energy activists who want to stop it through Canada summer jobs program while giving Canadian tax dollars to China to build pipelines in Asia.

Clearly, this Prime Minister is not as advertised.

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ARVA FLOUR MILL

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the Arva Flour Mill, North America's oldest continuously operating water-powered commercial flour mill. Located steps outside London North Centre, this iconic mill was established in 1819. It is a small business that has been owned and operated for four generations by the Scott family.

In 2016, this historic mill was faced with a stop work order. Though efforts to make its machinery compliant appeared daunting, I worked with mill owner Mike Matthews to find a possible solution. With the guidance of Andy Spriet, a widely respected local engineer in London, the Minister of Employment, the minister's staff and many others, we found a solution that saw the importance of safety and history merge.

I would like to thank my colleague from across the aisle, the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, who also worked hard to secure a very positive outcome.

I congratulate everyone at the Arva Flour Mill. Two hundred years has never looked so good.

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● (1415)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last December I packed my bags and headed to COP 24, the UN climate change summit. I was compelled to go after reading the IPCC report, in which scientists issued a clarion call that the time to act on climate change is now.

What I learned was shocking. I learned about the impact of rising water levels on Pacific island nations and about the impact of habitat destruction on indigenous peoples. What I remember is the UN leadership pleading with the nations of the world to take action. That is why it is puzzling when elected leaders in this country challenge the ability of the federal government to do exactly that.

Climate change is not just a national problem; it is an international one. National governments have both the ability and the responsibility to act. That is what the Saskatchewan court confirmed when it upheld our price on pollution, calling climate change "one of the greatest existential issues of our time."

In the fight against climate change, I and our government will not relent. The global stakes are simply too high, and the children of Canada deserve no less.

* * *

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "Friendly Manitoba" is the slogan on the Manitoba licence plate. Having been there last week, I can tell the House that it is just as advertised. The folks in Winnipeg are friendly indeed.

[*Translation*]

The warmth of Franco-Manitobans from St. Boniface is contagious.

[*English*]

After listening to people in Winnipeg, however, there is someone who is not as advertised. He ran on delivering transparency. He failed. He ran on electoral reform. He failed. He ran on making life more affordable, but he is raising taxes. He failed.

Voters will pass judgment on the broken promises of the Liberal leader, who is simply not as advertised. It is time to change to something better, a responsible Conservative government led by a genuine leader who will focus on getting Canadians ahead.

* * *

WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was a general strike. On May 15, 1919, the call was made for all workers to put down their tools at 11 a.m. The first to strike were the female telephone workers, who failed to show up for their 7 a.m. shift.

Today is the 100th anniversary of the 1919 Winnipeg strike. I want to acknowledge the importance of the labour movement in Canada. Unions matter. Unions represent people, people who work hard, support their families and contribute to their communities and our economy.

Today I thank those pioneers. The labour movement has been essential to promoting fairness and inclusion in our economy. Unions fight for the middle class and have been the driving force behind the exceptional progress made on behalf of women, LGBTQ workers, indigenous workers and workers with disabilities.

When we were elected, we committed to being a real partner with labour. We stand by that commitment, and we will keep working on behalf of the workers and Canada's middle class.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hidden within a 392-page omnibus budget bill, the Liberal government has attempted to sneak through dangerous changes to Canada's asylum system, all in an attempt to look tough on borders. The Liberals have caved to the pressure and misinformation campaigns fuelled by the Conservatives on asylum seekers, and they are now attempting to score cheap political points ahead of an election, at the expense of humanity.

The Liberals failed to do a gender-based plus analysis of these changes. The disproportionate impact they would have on women and girls fleeing violence is breathtaking. Representatives from women's organizations in Vancouver East, such as the Atira Women's Resource Society, the BC Society of Transition Houses, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, the Migrant Workers' Centre and the Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter, signed an open letter with 40 other women's organizations from across Canada calling on the Prime Minister to withdraw these harmful changes.

I stand firmly with these true feminists and echo their call to stop the fake feminism and withdraw these changes.

● (1420)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, four years ago, the Liberal Party campaigned on an election platform full of promises that have not been kept.

The Liberals promised three small deficits, but instead we ended up with three huge deficits totalling nearly $70 billion. What a failure.

They promised to eliminate the deficit in 2019, but instead they presented a budget with a $19.5 billion deficit. What a failure.

They promised electoral reform, but after consulting Canadians, they shelved the idea. What a failure.

They promised to work in harmony with the provinces, but over half of the provinces are quarrelling with Ottawa. What a failure.

They promised to put Canada back on the world stage, declaring "Canada is back". How did that work out? Our relationships with our key partners have deteriorated, to say nothing of the shame Canadians felt after the India trip. What a failure.

Five months from now, on October 21, Canadians and Quebeckers will have a chance to tell the Liberals that they have failed.

* * *

[*English*]

SMART CITIES CHALLENGE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2017 we challenged communities to develop bold ideas to improve the lives of their residents through the Smart Cities Challenge, and boy, they delivered. Over 200 communities submitted ambitious proposals, and yesterday, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia; communities in Nunavut; la Ville de Montréal and my hometown of Guelph and Wellington County all won.

In Guelph and Wellington County, we want to become Canada's first circular food economy so that we can improve access to food and turn waste into a resource, and that is just the beginning.

[*Translation*]

I wish to congratulate the winning communities. They will be able to make their ideas a reality.

[*English*]

Now the hard work begins to turn these ideas into reality. I know they are up to the challenge. Go Storm go.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I trust I can speak for all members of this House when I say that this morning I was shocked and horrified by a recently released recording, broadcast by APTN news, of an RCMP officer questioning a young female indigenous sexual assault victim. Obviously, this line of questioning was appalling and insensitive to the young woman who was coming forward with her story.

I would like to ask the Minister of Public Safety if he could update the House as to what reviews he might be contemplating to ensure that this type of thing does not happen in the future.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what was revealed in that video was absolutely abhorrent. The apparent attitudes and techniques that were on display in 2012 are profoundly outdated, offensive and wrong. The RCMP and all police forces must work continuously to conduct themselves appropriately. No survivors of sexual assault should ever fear that their cases will not be taken seriously or that they will be revictimized in the process.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that his government "met all of its obligations with respect to the third party records applications." What he fails to tell us is the fact that it had to receive a court order to do that.

Mark Norman's lawyer said this about the documents: "None of that came willingly. We have been...day in and day out...try[ing] to get that material. It should have been handed over. It should have been handed over to the RCMP. It should have been handed over to the prosecution. It was not."

Can the Prime Minister explain why not?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear for the member opposite. The government has met all its obligations with respect to third party records applications. All documents for the priority individuals were identified by the defence in February and were, in fact, provided to the court.

It is important to understand as well that all decisions with respect to that information are made by public servants and not by the government. In this case, all decisions were overseen by the court.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about all those decisions. Decisions were made to block documents. It took a court order for the evidence that finally exonerated Mark Norman to be produced. Departmental officials were using code words to get around access to information requests.

Will the government and the Minister of Justice conduct an inquiry to determine why these steps were taken to interfere and obstruct in this case?

● (1425)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the risk of repeating myself, the review of these documents to ensure that they were truly responsive to the request of the defence was overseen by public servants and the court.

The Department of Justice's only involvement in this matter was to provide government records to respond to the requests from the defence to help support the case. The Department of Justice processed the 52 requests on behalf of seven departments, and this process determined the documents that were relevant.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister may claim that the case is closed, but the facts speak for themselves.

The Prime Minister has done everything he can to hide the truth. He withheld documents Norman's defence counsel needed to make its case. A court order had to be issued. He also knew full well that code words were being used to conceal Vice-Admiral Norman's identity and get around access to information requests.

Despite the ample evidence provided to him and to Canadians, the Prime Minister is still refusing to apologize to Vice-Admiral Norman and his family. Why?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been very willing to acknowledge and has acknowledged the dedicated service of Vice-Admiral Norman. In fact, it was the defence minister who first expressed regret for the experience of Vice-Admiral Norman.

Let me be very clear. This was an investigation conducted entirely independently by the RCMP without any government involvement or interference. All decisions with respect to the prosecution were made by the director of public prosecutions, entirely independent of any government influence. In fact, in this case, the director of public prosecutions' authority came from the Ontario provincial—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when we asked the Prime Minister to apologize to Vice-Admiral Norman, he refused to do so. It is possible that he does not want to apologize because he does not think he needs to, but it is also possible that he is disappointed because his plan to destroy Vice-Admiral Norman did not work out.

One way or another, the Prime Minister will have to be accountable. Why not show goodwill and apologize to Vice-Admiral Norman immediately?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the obligation of the government is to support the independent work of the RCMP and not to engage in any interference in its independent investigations. That took place in this case. The RCMP's investigations were entirely independent of government. The decisions of the Public Prosecution Service were equally independent of any influence of government.

Our responsibility is to ensure that the integrity of the judicial process is maintained. In this case, it absolutely was.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government gave Loblaws $12 million, claiming that the money would help combat climate change. The Liberals then exempted new oil sands development projects from the environmental assessment process. This week, they moved a motion on the climate emergency, but it does not contain any measures.

When will the government understand that empty rhetoric is not enough to address the greatest crisis we have ever faced?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there is a climate emergency, and it is evident across Canada. People, families and homes in the national capital region have been affected by floods. We have a plan.

I would like to know what the NDP's plan is, since it is not very clear.

We have a plan for the economy and the environment. The NDP is flip-flopping. It supported LNG Canada, but now it does not. There are 10,000 jobs on the line.

We have a plan to combat climate change and create jobs. We have created one million jobs, and we are very proud of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby South.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Liberals gave $12 million to Loblaws for fridges and then gave their billionaire buddies a go to deny workers a living wage. Liberals talk about climate emergency but exempt oil sands projects from environmental reviews. Young workers face not only an increasingly perilous planet but also a future of increasingly precarious work.

Why can the Liberal government not understand that its approach is failing? Why will Liberals not join the New Democrats and fight climate change in a way that leaves no worker and no community behind?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the leader has a plan to leave 10,000 workers behind, because he has flip-flopped on a project that was approved by an NDP government in B.C. that is all in on climate change.

We all need to come together on climate change. That is why we brought in a motion for a climate emergency. I certainly hope everyone in the House will support it and that they will support serious climate action, support creating good jobs and support making life more affordable, because that is exactly what we are doing.

* * *

● (1430)

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a horrible response on YouTube.

After Conservatives bought the Phoenix pay system from IBM, they signed a contract for help that was valued at just under $6 million. Eight years later, it has ballooned to almost $400 million. The contract has been changed 46 times. Only Liberals and Conservatives working together could mess it up so badly. This is great news for IBM, but bad news for taxpayers.

Instead of giving millions to private companies, why not use public workers under fair contracts to finally fix this mess?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to act with laser focus on addressing the Phoenix pay system. We know how completely unacceptable it is that public servants still continue to not be paid.

IBM is a partner in this, and we need IBM to continue along on this journey with us. We are holding IBM to account. In addition, contractual amendments are just part of any relationship with an ongoing partner.

I can assure everyone that this problem is being fixed. We are moving on. We have reduced the queue by almost 40% in one year. We are delivering for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are having trouble accessing the services they need, as the Liberals put rich companies first. Meanwhile, public servants are not being paid because of the Phoenix pay system, and the Liberals have handed over another $385 million to IBM for a program that does not work.

Instead of putting big business first, when will the Liberals start making people a priority?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard to stabilize the Phoenix pay system. The backlog dropped by 40% last year. We are transitioning to our new system and working with the unions to implement it in the public sector.

We assure the member that it is a priority for our government. People deserve to be paid.

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, this House of Commons agreed unanimously and stood and thanked Vice-Admiral Mark Norman for his years of service to this country, as well as apologized for his treatment over the past three and a half years.

It was reported by some media this morning that unfortunately the Prime Minister was not present in the House for that apology, and I am wondering if he would like to take the opportunity now to apologize himself for the treatment of Vice-Admiral Mark Norman.

The Speaker: The hon. member is an experienced member and will know that members are not permitted to draw attention to the presence or absence of a member in the House

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect the member opposite for that question and also for raising that unanimous consent motion in this House. When it is endorsed by this House, it is endorsed by every member of this House. That is the first point.

The second point, and it needs to be restated, is that there are three important factors here. The people who decide to lay charges are the independent RCMP officers, whom we respect and I hope all members respect.

The second point is that the people who decide to lay charges are the independent director of public prosecutions, and the people who decide to withdraw charges are also the independent DPP.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people who decided to withhold the documents from the defence of Vice-Admiral Mark Norman were this government, plain and simple.

It was only because of an abuse of process motion brought forward by the Vice-Admiral that we started to get a look at the documents that clearly showed that there was political interference in this matter, but we only got to see it after six months of fighting in court. Yes, the court had to order the release of these documents because the government said that it would not release them.

Will the government apologize to Vice-Admiral Mark Norman?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak to everyone in this House, but especially to that lawyer opposite, who shares some of the same background as I do as Fox scholars in Britain, and what we learned when we were learning and training in Britain is to respect court processes.

The way it works on an O'Connor application for third party records is that the documents are identified, and then if there are claims of privilege, the issue goes to the court. Then the court goes into the claims of privilege, ascertains whether they are valid or not, and makes a decision. That is how one respects the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.

That is exactly what we did in this case and what we do in every case.

● (1435)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker, let us talk about respect for the judicial process in this case. Twice the Prime Minister said that Vice-Admiral Norman would end up in court, even before charges were brought. That was the first mistake.

The second was that the Prime Minister's Office withheld as much information as possible until a court ordered it to disclose this information, which was needed for the accused to make full answer and defence. That is political interference.

Will the Liberal government and its Prime Minister do what all Canadians want and issue a genuine, formal apology to Vice-Admiral Norman?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are three things I want to say.

First, the decision to conduct an investigation is made by the RCMP, which is independent. Second, the decision to lay charges and take someone to court is made by the director of public prosecutions, who is independent. Third, the decision to withdraw a charge is made by the the director of public prosecutions, who is independent.

Perhaps these words from the director will reassure members. She said, and I quote:

[*English*]

> No other factors were considered in this decision, nor was there any contact or influence from outside the PPSC, including political influence in either the initial decision to prosecute or the decision to stay the charge today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the most comical things the Prime Minister ever said was that he did not need a political lieutenant because he is a general. What a general, indeed.

Let us talk about a real soldier, an honourable soldier: Vice-Admiral Norman. Unlike some, he is devoted to his career. Unlike some, this is a man who commands respect.

Could the Prime Minister act like a statesman and apologize?

Could he try bringing Canadians together instead of playing general?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of respect for Mr. Norman and for any man or woman who works for Canada, such as police officers or members of the RCMP.

There was no political interference in this file. That would be impossible because, in this instance, the DPP was working on behalf of the Attorney General of Ontario.

If hon. members have any questions they can ask Ms. Mulroney.

[*English*]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just because one did not get away with the money does not mean that one is not guilty of trying to rob the bank.

The Prime Minister refuses to apologize for the disgraceful way Vice-Admiral Mark Norman and his family have been treated. We know the Prime Minister alerted the RCMP to investigate, refused to provide documents and tampered with witnesses. He even had his lawyers ask the public prosecutor to engineer the issues at stake in his favour.

When will the Prime Minister admit that what he did was wrong and apologize to Vice-Admiral Mark Norman?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to walk the member opposite through this process.

A demand is made for third party records; 144,000 are identified. Then we cull that group to see which ones are responsive; 8,000 are then deemed responsive. Then claims of cabinet confidence are made, not by members of the political staff but by civil servants in this country, and when those claims of privilege are made, the court then verifies if they are valid or invalid.

This happens every day in litigation around this country. There is nothing different in this case from any other. However, the most important thing that did not happen is that there was never a decision by a political person to interfere in this matter or any other matter.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no matter how one tries to explain it, frustrating the process is still political interference, and it has tarnished the admiral's reputation.

The fabric of our democracy relies on all citizens being innocent until proven guilty, being given a fair chance to defend themselves and being equal before the law, but that is not what happened to Admiral Norman, so the House came together to recognize that Admiral Norman had been wronged and offered him an apology, but it was not unanimous: for the Prime Minister, it was sorry, not sorry.

When will the Prime Minister apologize to Mark Norman?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take great issue with actually challenging a unanimous consent motion that was delivered on behalf of this Parliament through you, Mr. Speaker, and which represents every member of this Parliament.

However, the most important thing is that the Conservatives continue to assert political interference when that was not the case.

Second, as I explained in French and will explain again to the member in English so that she can fully understand it, is that in this case, the director of public prosecutions was acting in the name of the Attorney General of Ontario, and in that event, if there could have been any direct political involvement, it would have been done by the attorney general of the province and not by the Attorney General of Canada.

● (1440)

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. parliamentary secretary not to question the ability of members to understand.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us follow the money.

The Prime Minister gets lobbied by Loblaws and gives $12 million to Galen Weston, but says it is about saving the planet. Then Galen's company votes to deny its workers a living wage. While the Liberals are hosting photo ops at Loblaws, the Prime Minister is exempting the tar sands projects from environmental review. What is with that?

He is carrying on the same sellout of young people and the planet that have joined the Liberals and the Conservatives at the hip for decades. When is he going to admit that the billionaire class is not the solution, but the problem?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is something that has to be corrected here, because it is a real problem.

We are actually building better rules for approval of major projects. No one gets a pass. The whole point is making sure that we have rules that rebuild the trust of the public in how we review projects, that we work with indigenous peoples and that we make sure good projects go ahead in a timely way, with clear rules. That is what we are doing.

We are also tackling the climate change crisis. We are phasing out coal. We are ensuring a just transition. We are not flip-flopping on projects that are supported by the NDP government in B.C. and are creating good jobs.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they do not just have a climate crisis; they have a credibility crisis.

Let me go on talking about their friends in the billionaire class and the lessons the Prime Minister learned from the SNC debacle. It cost him his attorney general, the President of the Treasury Board, his right-hand man and the head of the Privy Council. Then to fix it, who is he bringing in? Oops, I have to be careful when I say the name: Ben Chin, the guy whose fingerprints are all over this scandal like a bad enforcer.

Why is he promoting the backroom boys involved in the scandal when he kicked out the two women who stood up for the rule of law and stood up to the Prime Minister?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that the NDP have been holding hands with the Conservatives so much that they are following the same politics that they do. There was a time that the NDP would actually be concerned about jobs, about Canadians. However, that is exactly what we are going to do, which is remain focused on Canadians.

The Conservatives have done whatever they can to try to discredit the work of this government. They oppose it at every occasion, and now that seems to be the NDP's approach as well.

The NDP should be proud to know that through the tax-free Canada child benefit, over 300,000 children have been lifted out of poverty. Canadians have created over one million jobs, and we are talking about good jobs. The economy is stronger today than—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this centralist, paternalistic Liberal government refuses to include the provinces in its decisions. Since 2015, it has clashed with the provinces on many different issues, including illegal border crossings, the carbon tax, marijuana legalization and the Trans Mountain pipeline. Furthermore, this week's federal-provincial infrastructure announcements in Quebec were slapdash and failed to include Quebec.

Why does this government refuse to work in partnership with our main partners, the provinces?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only a Conservative could object to an announcement about reducing congestion in the suburbs north of Montreal. Local residents have been waiting for this project since 1970. We are proud to have invested—

The Speaker: Order. I apologize for interrupting the hon. minister, but the interpretation does not seem to be working.

It is working now. The hon. minister.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to repeat that only a Conservative could object to an investment aimed at reducing congestion in the suburbs north of Montreal. Montrealers have been waiting for this project for decades.

We are proud to be investing $345 million to improve road travel in Montreal. We are proud to have invested in the extension of Highway 19 between Highway 440 and Highway 640. We are proud to have invested in the rehabilitation of the Pie-IX Bridge. We are proud to have added a lane for bus—

● (1445)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has managed to alienate Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, British Columbia and, as of yesterday, Quebec.

This morning the Premier of Quebec confirmed that, although he did deliver a number of proposals to the government, the Liberal government has not been inclined to collaborate.

Why is the government refusing to partner with Quebec and all the other Canadian provinces?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, respecting Quebec means working for Quebec. Asking questions in the House is one thing, but in the end, what matters is approving Quebec's proposed projects in time for the construction season. That is what unions and workers expect.

We will keep investing to make life better for people across the country. We will keep working with Quebec. We will keep working with all the provinces to make sure our construction workers are on the job this summer.

* * *

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Toyota Canada released a poll today showing that half of British Columbians believe that fuel prices are too high and they will have to change their summer vacation plans. Prices have reached $1.80 a litre, a record for North America, and when the Prime Minister was asked about it, he said this is "exactly what we want". However, it is not what he wants. He is jetting around at taxpayers' expense, burning fossil fuels to vacation in Florida and Tofino.

Why will the Prime Minister not give taxpayers a break instead of engaging in high-carbon hypocrisy?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the price of gas has gone up 1¢ because of the price on pollution, but in the party opposite, all they do is spread misinformation, whether it is Doug Ford or Jason Kenney or the party opposite, who refuse to actually tell their constituents in their flyers that the biggest incentive that they can get through the tax system is a climate action incentive. All Canadians, those in Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, are entitled to more money back. Eighty per cent of families will be better off. It is no longer free to pollute. We are taking action on climate change—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what they are giving is a small cheque before the election and a massive bill after it. It is the carbon tax trick.

The reality is, accordingly to the Financial Post, the carbon tax will cost a family $600 just for a trip from Toronto to Vancouver. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister takes trips to Tofino on the public dime. He goes to Florida and then back, then to Florida and back again so that he can sneak in an extra Twitter photo op.

Why will he not end the hypocrisy and give consumers a break?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I feel like the party opposite is worried about debt and worried about costs, but it should be worried about the costs that we are passing on to our kids, the cost of climate change.

We have an emergency here, and the party opposite is not telling the truth to Canadians. We are paying. We have gone from $400 million a year to over $2 billion because of the cost of climate change. Why does the opposition not step up? Why does the opposition not step up for climate action? Why does it not step up for the economy of the future and stop misleading Canadians?

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we do have an emergency.

Over the last three years, we have seen the worst flooding and forest fires in B.C. history. On Vancouver Island, in January, we had the worst wind storm in recorded history, the biggest snowstorm in February, the worst drought in March, and the forest fire season has already started.

Climate change is affecting our forests, our oceans, our ecosystems, and things are escalating. Instead of introducing urgent action, the Liberals are offering more platitudes. When will the Liberals get serious and bring in urgent action to attack the climate emergency we are faced with right now?

● (1450)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is like whiplash here in the House of Commons. On the one side we have the Conservatives, who do not want to take climate action and do not seem to understand the economic opportunity, and on the other side we have a party that is attacking us.

Liberals are taking serious climate action. We are phasing out coal. We are ensuring a just transition for workers. We are making investments in energy-efficient and clean solutions. We are making it no longer free to pollute. We are taking all the action we need to.

I would ask all parties in the House, why not join us? Why not be serious on climate change? Why not think about the future that we want for our kids and the good economic—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Quebeckers want to have a government with a real strategy to tackle climate change.

By asking the government to declare a climate emergency, the NDP is calling on the Liberal government to not proceed with the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project, to say no to the energy east project, to immediately eliminate all federal fossil fuel subsidies and to increase the scope of the government's greenhouse gas reduction targets.

In view of the climate emergency, will the Prime Minister commit to giving the green light to ensure that Liberal members support our motion?

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is real, and we know that first nations are disproportionately impacted, but the subsidy that the NDP wants to eliminate would leave at least 24 first nations in Ontario alone in the dark, literally.

These are communities that rely on the federal electricity subsidy program to maintain critical infrastructure, like water facilities and schools. The NDP quite literally wants to turn off the lights, heat and power to the communities' schools and water facilities, leaving some 16,000 people in the dark.

While the NDP continues to put forward these policies, we will ensure thoughtful and effective climate change policies.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we see Conservatives across the country cutting access to French education, our government strongly believes that all Canadians should have access to an education in the official language of their choice.

[*Translation*]

Last Monday, I was extremely pleased to see the minister make an important announcement at Simon Fraser University.

I would ask the minister to explain to the House the steps our government is taking to ensure that we address the shortage of the French teachers in Canada.

[*English*]

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being a bilingual country is who we are and what we believe in. The reality is that while the Conservatives are cutting services to French immersion and also francophones, we are investing. There is a French teacher shortage in this country. We just reinvested $62 million to make sure that our kids have the capacity and the chance to become bilingual.

Will the Leader of the Opposition stop taking his orders from Doug Ford and denounce these cuts the provincial Conservative government is making in Ontario?

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Tides Canada has made it its primary objective to stop the construction of any pipelines in Canada, especially those that would get Canadian energy to new markets. Sarah Goodman served as the vice-president of Tides Canada, and the Prime Minister has just appointed her to be his director of policy.

Our energy sector has taken hit after hit from the current Liberal government and this is another slap in the face to Canadian energy workers. Why did the Prime Minister choose someone who has actively worked to destroy our energy sector to be his director of policy?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are building pipelines. Enbridge Line 3, which we gave approval to, is almost complete on the Canadian side. We are advocating for the Keystone XL pipeline with the United States. We are moving forward on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion in the right way. If the members of the Conservative Party were really serious about that process, they would not have voted it down to kill and shut down the process that would allow us to reach a decision on that project by June 18.

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● (1455)

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal, we saw how two former Liberal ministers were treated when they tried to ensure respect for the rule of law.

A Liberal minister's chief of staff did his best to intervene in the process. He was promoted even though he, too, tried to direct the former attorney general in the SNC-Lavalin case and even threatened his staff.

Can the Prime Minister explain why all someone has to do to get a promotion in the Liberal government is to obstruct justice?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have always respected our institutions. We know that our institutions are independent of the government. We will continue to work on behalf of Canadians.

We know that the Conservatives continued to debate policies and programs that make life better for Canadians and that have put us in an economic position that is more affordable for Canadians today. That was not the case when the Conservatives were in power for 10 years under Stephen Harper. That is exactly why they do not have a plan for the economy or for the environment.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general named Ben Chin as one of the most aggressive actors in the Prime Minister's attempt to interfere in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. She testified that he directly threatened her staff.

Let us think about this. The Prime Minister fired the attorney general and kicked her out of caucus for defending our rule of law, but he has promoted Ben Chin to the Prime Minister's Office after he worked to undermine our rule of law. Can the Prime Minister tell us how much of a bonus Ben Chin gets for doing the Prime Minister's dirty work?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that we were elected on a platform that committed to delivering for Canadians. That is exactly why today we have an economy that is working for Canadians, and that is exactly why we have invested in Canadians and skills development and Canadians have created over a million jobs.

Canadians should be proud of the work we are doing, but we know there is a lot more work to do. The tax-free Canada child benefit that we introduced three years ago, today has seen almost 300,000 children lifted out of poverty. Over 800,000 Canadians are benefiting.

The Conservatives continue to vote against these measures, and they continue to mislead Canadians because they have no plan of their own.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Liberal plan, the careers and reputations of two accomplished and competent ministers were profoundly maligned by the Prime Minister. Both the member for Vancouver Granville and the member for Markham—Stouffville were punished for standing up for our rule of law and against the actions of the Prime Minister and his operatives.

We found out today that one of those operatives, Ben Chin, who attempted to interfere in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, has been rewarded. In what world is it right to reward those who attempt to undermine our rule of law and punish those who stand up for it?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the world that I live in, we actually respect our rule of law and we know that it is intact in Canada. We respect the independence of our officers of Parliament as well as our court system, something that the Conservatives have continued to undermine under their new leader, and something that they did under 10 years of Stephen Harper. All we know is that they have a new leader, but nothing has changed; they remain the party of Stephen Harper.

We on this side will continue to focus on Canadians. That is exactly why we lowered taxes for middle-class Canadians by increasing taxes on the wealthiest 1%. Conservatives voted against it. We brought in the tax-free Canada child benefit, which is lifting 300,000 children out of poverty. What did the Conservatives do? They voted—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while thousands of public service workers are waiting to get paid, the Liberals are tossing money out the window. They are wasting even more money on a system that is not working, specifically $137 million since January.

On top of that, IBM employees are being called on to stabilize Phoenix. While IBM gets paid, our workers continue to have problems. This scandal has gone on long enough. Phoenix must be fixed.

Why do the Liberals keep giving money to a big corporation rather than helping the workers directly?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that the persistent problems with the Phoenix pay system are unacceptable. We are working every single day to fix the problems with this system.

We reduced the backlog by about 40% a year ago. We are working with the unions and the President of the Treasury Board to bring in a new system to replace Phoenix. Our message to public service workers is clear: we stand behind them.

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● (1500)

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Athéna Gervais's death, caused by FCKD UP, a sweetened alcoholic beverage, should have raised a red flag—

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member to choose her words carefully. I know that it is the name of a beverage, but I encourage members to find ways around using non-parliamentary language.

The hon. member may continue.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, Athéna Gervais's death, caused by a sweetened alcoholic beverage, should have raised a red flag. Experts and Éduc'alcool are calling on the government to make these products less attractive to young people, but the government is refusing to meet with them.

While new regulations around these beverages were being studied, the company that produces the beverage consumed by Athéna actively lobbied the Liberals, contacting them over 100 times.

Why have the Liberals yet again sided with powerful lobbies instead of helping our young people?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we of course mourn the death of any young person who came in contact with the drinks. I do take exception, though, to the hon. member saying that we are somehow influenced by the industry, because we are not.

The Canada food guide is a very good example of where we looked at the best evidence and came up with a policy, came up with a food guide that would make Canadians the healthiest in the world. We take the health and safety of Canadians very seriously.

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[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can see why the Liberals and the NDP are flip-flopping in response to the Green Party's gains in the byelection. They are electioneering. The Liberals are getting a wake-up call on the environment after three and a half years.

My question is very simple. Will the Paris Agreement targets be met?

Can the Liberals tell Canadians the truth for once and admit that they will not meet these targets?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so happy to hear the member opposite talk about the environment. I did not think he had ever heard the word.

Climate action is indeed necessary. We have a plan. Do the opposition members want to join us in combatting climate change and growing our economy?

We have created 1 million jobs and we have a climate plan. We can do both at the same time. I invite the opposition to join us.

Mr. Joël Godin: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, who asked the question, to listen to the answer, whether he likes it or not.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after taking a beating from the Greens in last week's by-election in B.C., the NDP and the Liberals are now desperately trying to one-up each other on climate change; more fearmongering by the NDP, more empty rhetoric and false information from the Liberals who are desperately trying to distract from their own climate failures.

The reality is that Canada has fallen way behind in meeting its Paris targets. The Liberals' own emissions report actually shows that.

When will the minister finally admit that her government will not meet its emission targets?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three and a half years ago, I was with the member opposite. We brought members of all parties to COP21, including the member opposite. We stood with the world to negotiate an ambitious Paris agreement. I was extremely proud that we had members of all parties there.

Then what did we do? We came home and did the hard work. For one year, we negotiated with provinces and territories, indigenous peoples, with all Canadians to develop a climate plan. However, in the face of that, the Conservatives continue to deny that climate change is a serious problem, that we are in a climate emergency, that we need to take action.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is in denial. She knows very well that her government has fallen way behind in meeting its Paris targets.

Today we have learned from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that it is costing the Liberals $175 million a year to operate their carbon tax scheme. That is $175 million to administer this cash grab. The reality is that the Liberals do not have a climate plan; they have a tax plan.

When will the minister admit that her climate plan is not as advertised?

● (1505)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this day and age, Conservative politicians do not understand that the environment and the economy go together.

There was a time when Brian Mulroney took serious action on environmental challenges. What did he do? He tackled the biggest challenge I remember when growing up, which was acid rain. How did he do it? He showed leadership, he listened to scientists and he worked with business. What did he do? He put a price on pollution. Canadian companies innovated and we tackled that problem.

We can tackle climate change, but the only way we will do it is by coming together as a country.

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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, supporting young academics who are pursuing world-class, interdisciplinary research is an investment that our government recognizes as important. Science and research are vital to ensuring Canada's continued innovative progress.

Could the Minister of Science and Sport please tell the House about the new frontiers in research fund, which will help support young researchers undertake high-risk, high-reward research?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science and Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after a decade of neglect by the Harper Conservatives, we knew we had to invest in and modernize Canada's research system.

That is why this week I announced the first winners of the new frontiers in research fund. This fund will invest in international, interdisciplinary, fast-paced, high-reward research. It will be the largest pool of funds for researchers in Canadian history.

Unlike the previous government, we are taking action and investing in our researchers and students.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Terri-Lynne McClintic was moved to a healing lodge last year, it took the Liberals months to do the right thing and put her back behind bars. Now she is seeking compensation after being back in jail for murdering eight-year-old Tori. She called the decision "unreasonable".

Tori's father has pointed that what is really unfair is the continued injustices of the correctional system. He is right.

Will the Liberals finally stand up for Canadian families and promise to not give Tori's killer a dime of taxpayer money?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to all the victims of crime for the loss they have endured.

Correctional Service Canada reviewed its transfer policies in this case. After careful consideration, some of those policies were improved.

Members can be assured that the Government of Canada will very strongly defend its position.

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FINANCE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just last year, $5 billion was funnelled through B.C.'s housing market and $47 billion was the amount laundered across Canada. As a result, homes are less affordable for people.

Today, British Columbia launched a full public inquiry. However, while the B.C. government takes action and shows leadership, the federal Liberals have been on the sidelines.

Will the Prime Minister finally show some leadership, agree to launch a joint public inquiry and fully co-operate with the Province of British Columbia?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes the threat posed by money laundering very seriously. That is precisely why we introduced, in budget 2019, significant new measures and significant new investments to increase the RCMP, CBSA and FINTRAC's ability to deal with this issue.

We have also been working very closely with the attorney general of British Columbia. I spoke to him just yesterday. I have assured him of our full co-operation and support in B.C.'s inquiry.

We are not standing idly by. We brought forward new measures. We have created new offences and new regulatory authorities, with new resources, to deal effectively with this issue.

[*Translation*]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people of Pontiac understand the importance of protecting wildlife, biodiversity and our marine species.

[*English*]

Canadians from coast to coast to coast think that putting whales and dolphins in captivity should be banned and that shark finning is a practice that should be ended in Canada. I agree.

Could the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard update the House and all Canadians on what our government has done to ensure these inhumane practices have no place in Canadian society?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pontiac for his commitment to these important issues.

[*English*]

I want to start by thanking my colleagues from Saanich—Gulf Islands and Port Moody—Coquitlam for their hard work on these files.

Because these issues are so important, our government is taking leadership by supporting Senate amendments to Bill C-68 to include provisions to ban the captivity of whales and dolphins and prohibit shark finning in Canada.

Our government is firmly committed to the protection of biodiversity and the humane treatment of marine mammals and sharks.

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● (1510)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are refusing to allow Thursday's emergency meeting on Vice-Admiral Norman to be televised. Canadians deserve transparency, but the Liberals would rather hide in the dark.

Vice-Admiral Norman has said he has a story to tell that Canadians want to hear. Canadians need to be assured that the Prime Minister is not orchestrating another cover-up.

My question is for the chair of the national defence committee. Will he do the right thing and have our committee meeting televised live by the House of Commons?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of my responsibilities as the government House leader, if nobody else rises to answer a question, I have the privilege and opportunity to do so.

I now have the privilege and opportunity of reminding the member of the Conservatives that when it comes to the work committees do, they are independent of this place. I know the Conservatives cannot fathom that the Liberal members on the committee make their own choices but they do. We have seen this on numerous occasions where committees are able to do the important work they do. That is why they are part of the process.

I would encourage the Conservatives to stop undermining the work of committees. Canadians have not forgotten the playbook they put out.

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[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canada-Quebec infrastructure agreement is very clear. Canada's role in infrastructure is to provide funding, and that's it.

Quebec's public transit fund is short $200 million because increased ridership from the outskirts of Montreal was not taken into account.

Rather than making announcements about Quebec highways, which do not fall under the federal government's jurisdiction, will the Minister of Infrastructure instead do his part and give Quebec the $200 million it needs?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are different ways of working for Quebec. One way is to ask questions in the House. Another is to actually approve projects for the construction season.

We received a request from the Quebec government regarding Highway 19 in September 2018. On October 5, 2018, the Legault government made that project a priority. On March 26, 2019, my department approved it. On May 13, I announced the project to Quebeckers.

We are working in partnership with the Government of Quebec and will continue to do so.

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[*English*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the finalists for the 2018 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing: Abu Bakr al Rabeeah, Winnie Yeung, Sarah Cox, Rachel Giese, Jacques Poitras and Harley Rustad.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

There have been talks among the parties, and I am very hopeful that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That in light of the decision made by the United Nations Human Rights Committee on January 11, 2019, which ruled that the ongoing sex-based hierarchies in the registration provisions of the Indian Act violate Canada's international human rights obligations, this House calls upon the federal government to bring into force the remaining provisions of Bill S-3, an act to amend the Indian Act in response to the Superior Court of Quebec decision in Descheneaux v. Canada, which would remedy the discrimination no later than June 21, 2019.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

We have had discussions among the parties, and I believe if you seek it, you will receive unanimous consent for the following motion: Whereas Canada and Sri Lanka share deep people-to-people ties; whereas in recent times countless lives have been lost to senseless violence, natural disasters and war in Sri Lanka; whereas Canada condemns the recent terrorist acts targeting Christians' prayer on Easter Sunday and civilians at hotels in Colombo; whereas Canada condemns the recent anti-Muslim violence in Sri Lanka; whereas Canada stands together with its allies and partners around the world in condemning all acts of terrorism, violent extremism and hatred; whereas this month marks the 10th anniversary of the end of the 26-year armed conflict in Sri Lanka, yet peace and reconciliation have not been achieved; whereas the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights investigation on Sri Lanka in 2015 established that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed during the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka; whereas truth-seeking and accountability measures are critical for realizing justice for the victims, ending impunity and ensuring lasting peace and reconciliation; therefore, this House, one, extends its condolences to all the victims of violence, terrorism and war in Sri Lanka; two, supports the Government of Sri Lanka in its efforts to pursue justice for those affected by the Easter Sunday attacks, protect the rights of religious minorities and defend all places of worship; three, reaffirms Canada's call for Sri Lanka to implement its obligations under UN Human Rights Council resolutions 30/1 and 40/1 and reaffirms Canada's support in advancing accountability, peace and reconciliation among all peoples on the island; and four, calls upon the United Nations to establish an international, independent investigation into allegations of genocide against Tamils committed during the last phase of the war in Sri Lanka in 2009.

● (1515)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That, in the opinion of this House, the government should (a) respect the Canada-Quebec infrastructure agreement, which states that Canada's role in any project is limited to making a financial contribution, and that it will have no involvement in the implementation or operation; (b) refrain from unilaterally calling press conferences on infrastructure projects in Quebec without having any announcements to make.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am hopeful that you will find the support of the House for this stronger unanimous consent motion: That this House extend its condolences to all the victims of violence, terrorism and war in Sri Lanka; call on the Government of Sri Lanka to promote justice for those affected by the Easter Sunday attacks, protect the rights of religious minorities and defend all places of worship; reaffirm Canada's call for Sri Lanka to implement its obligation under UN Human Rights Council resolutions 30/1 and 40/1; reaffirm Canada's support in advancing accountability, peace and reconciliation among all peoples on the island; call upon the United Nations to establish an international, independent investigation into allegations of genocide against Tamils committed during the last phase of the war in Sri Lanka in 2009; instruct the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to conduct hearings into allegations of genocide against Tamils committed during the last phase of the war in Sri Lanka in 2009 and report its findings to the House by January 19; and invite the Minister of International Development to table a report in the House at her earliest convenience, explaining development projects funded in Sri Lanka and their impact on the implementation of resolution 30/1 and on peace and reconciliation in general.

The Speaker: Does the House give its consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify something for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

I disagree with his explanation and response to my question but not because I failed to understand him. I understand both French and English.

The Speaker: That is a matter of debate. However, I did not appreciate the parliamentary secretary questioning the hon. member's ability to understand. I ask him to apologize.

● (1520)

[*English*]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. My intention was never to question anyone's ability, let alone her ability, to understand the French language. I was simply trying to repeat an answer that I had already given.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the hon. member for the electoral district of Honoré-Mercier has been appointed member of the Board of Internal Economy in place of the member for the electoral district of Beauséjour, for the purposes and under the provisions of section 50 of the Parliament of Canada Act.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS CALENDAR

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 28(2)(b), I have the honour to lay upon table the House of Commons calendar for the year 2020.

* * *

[*English*]

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 three petitions.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation in the co-chairs' annual visit to Japan held in Tokyo, Fukushima and Sapporo, Japan, from October 9 to 12.

I also have the honour to present two reports of the Canadian delegations of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting their participation in the 39th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, held in Singapore from September 3 to 7, 2018, and the 27th Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, held in Siem Reap, Cambodia, from January 14 to 17, 2019.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, entitled "Shifting Paradigms".

On March 20, 2018, the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology invited the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to conduct a study on the remuneration models for artists and creative industries to supplement its review of the Copyright Act. This report responds to that invitation.

I thank all of the members on the committee and the support staff for all their hard work, as well as all of the artists for speaking up.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled "Main Estimates, 2019-20: Votes 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20 under Department of Fisheries and Oceans".

* * *

PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present a petition on the trafficking of human organs that have been removed from victims without their consent.

This petition urges Parliament to pass legislation, both in the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, that would prevent people who have done that from entering Canada.

AIRLINE SERVICE TO CRANBROOK

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say I was happy to rise today to present this petition, but I am not.

On April 29, Air Canada ceased to provide service between Calgary and Cranbrook, a service that has been in place since 1967. We have an annual passenger load coming in and out of Cranbrook of almost 69,000 passengers, and over these years every flight I took with Air Canada, back and forth, has always been full.

My riding is very important for skiing. I have nine downhill ski areas. I have 18 golf courses. Tourism is on the rise. We really cannot afford to see this airline stop flying in. We are happy to have WestJet still flying.

My citizens—

● (1525)

The Speaker: Order. I have to remind the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia that presenting petitions is not a time for debate. It is not a time for commenting in terms of personal views on a matter, but for simply presenting what the petition contains. I would ask the member to wrap up.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are calling on the Minister of Transport to recommend to Air Canada president and CEO Mr. Rovinescu to maintain a minimum of one flight a day, each way, between the Canadian Rockies International Airport and the Calgary International Airport.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting a petition initiated by Erica Hutton and the customers at Bath and Body Works in my riding of Guelph. It concerns Bill S-214, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act with regard to cruelty-free cosmetics.

The petition supports banning the sale and manufacturing of animal-tested cosmetics and their ingredients in Canada.

NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first is signed by residents of Canada who draw to the attention of the House that the Liberal government has established a prison needle exchange program that will be implemented across Canada, and that the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers was not consulted on this plan, which puts its members and the Canadian public at risk.

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 their surrounding communities.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is signed by hundreds of residents of the Waterloo region.

The petitioners point out that animal testing is unnecessary to prove the safety of cosmetic products, and alternative safety tests tend to be faster, more accurate and cheaper.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to support Bill S-214 and to ban the sale and manufacture of animal-tested cosmetics and their ingredients in Canada.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of presenting 19 petitions calling on Parliament to establish a national strategy on palliative care to ensure that every Canadian has access to high-quality palliative care at end of life.

In Carter v. Canada (Attorney General), the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that competent and consenting adults who have a grievous and irremediable medical condition that causes enduring and intolerable suffering should be allowed to access physician-assisted dying mechanisms, and that it is impossible for a person to give informed consent to assisted suicide or euthanasia if appropriate palliative care is unavailable to them.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to establish a national strategy on palliative care.

[*Translation*]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to present two petitions from my constituents. However, before doing so, I would like to wish you a happy birthday.

The first petition from my constituents is on the freedom of religious groups.

FORCED MIGRATION

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also from my constituents, who call on the House to do more to fight the root causes of forced migration and guarantee humanitarian assistance to all refugees and their host communities.

[*English*]

TAX STATUS OF JNF CANADA

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present an e-petition today that was signed by 3,514 Canadians.

Simply put, the petition calls on the Minister of National Revenue to investigate certain activities of JNF Canada to determine if those activities are in violation of the Income Tax Act rules and regulations regarding charities.

I am sponsoring the petition in recognition of the right of every Canadian to express their opinion through petitions to their government. This petition, in my view, is in no way anti-JNF Canada. It is to make sure that the laws are followed regarding charities, and that every charitable organization follows the rules and regulations.

● (1530)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table two petitions today.

The first petition is in support of Bill S-240, which has been through the House and is now back with the Senate. The petitioners are hopeful that the bill will be passed as soon as possible to confront the scourge of forced organ harvesting and the potential of Canadians being complicit in it.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS INITIATIVE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms in the context of the Canada summer jobs program.

The petitioners continue to be concerned about the way the government approaches this program and the lack of respect for freedom of conscience, thought and belief.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition that was coordinated, circulated and collected by my youth council in my riding of Kingston and the Islands and signed by 780 individuals.

The petitioners call on the minister of environment to enact a ban on the production and distribution of all single-use plastics.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present a petition from many members of my constituency, who are concerned with the fact that we still have a crisis of violence against women in the country, that it particularly and disproportionately affects indigenous women and girls and that we still have unanswered questions in the tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women.

The petitioners call for a full program to address the threat of violence against women, including shifting cultural attitudes toward women and gender minorities, requiring structural changes in education and socialization.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise and present 22 petitions on behalf of hundreds of residents from British Columbia, who believe that the fundamental conscience rights of doctors and health workers are not being protected by the government in relation to participation in assisted suicide.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to enshrine in the Criminal Code the protection of conscience for physicians and health care institutions from coercion or intimidation to provide assisted suicide or euthanasia.

I trust the government will faithfully deal with the concerns of these citizens.

VISION CARE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions containing the signatures of literally hundreds of British Columbians, who urge the Government of Canada to commit to acknowledging that eye heath and vision care are a growing public health issue, particularly among Canada's most vulnerable populations, children, seniors, indigenous people and those with diabetes. They want the government to do this through establishing a national framework for action to promote eye health and vision care.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I bring a petition forward on behalf of a number of my constituents, who call on Parliament to recognize the inalienable right of farmers and other Canadians to freely save, reuse, select, exchange, condition, store and sell their seeds. They do not want restrictions put on farmers' rights and/or farmers' costs by restricting or eliminating this privilege that farmers have.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to have the opportunity to table this petition, which was signed primarily by Quebeckers, in particular those living on the North Shore, and calls on the Government of Canada to provide universal access to employment insurance.

We know that approximately 38% of the people who pay into the EI fund are eligible for benefits. When we look at the statistics by gender, the situation is even worse because only 35% of unemployed women who pay into EI are eligible for benefits compared to 52% of unemployed men.

The petition calls for the enhancement of the current employment insurance system to ensure universal access to it by lowering the eligibility threshold to 350 hours or 13 weeks, establishing a minimum threshold of 35 weeks of benefits and increasing the benefit rate to 70% of salary based on the best 12 weeks of salary.

Those are some of the measures being proposed. I am pleased to table this petition.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if a revised response to Question No. 2178, originally tabled on March 18, and the government's responses to Questions Nos. 2347 to 2361 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

● (1535)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 2178—**Ms. Karine Trudel**:

> With regard to federal spending from January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2018: (*a*) what expenditures were made in the following municipalities (i) City of Saguenay, (ii) City of Saint-Honoré, (iii) Municipality of St-Ambroise, (iv) Municipality of Saint-Fulgence, (v) Municipality of Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, (vi) Municipality of Saint-Charles-de-Bourget, (vii) Municipality of Bégin, (viii) Municipality of Saint-Nazaire, (ix) Municipality of Labrecque, (x) Municipality of Lamarche, (xi) Municipality of Larouche, (xii) Municipality of Saint-David-de-Falardeau; and (*b*) what are the particulars of all grants, contributions and loans given to any group, broken down by (i) name of recipient, (ii) date of funding, (iii) department or agency that provided the funding, (iv) amount received, (v) program under which the funding was granted, (vi) purpose of the expenditure?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2347—**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs**:

With regards to the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot program by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada: (*a*) what is the projected cost of administering the program; (*b*) what were the estimated benefits of this program to rural and northern communities predicted by the Government of Canada; (*c*) what is the expected financial benefit in quantifiable terms to the Canadian economy from this program; (*d*) was there an analysis conducted by the department of the negative impact of proposed government policies, including Bill C-68, Bill C-69, Bill C-88, as well as the carbon tax on the economic opportunities of newcomers to these regions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2348—**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs**:

With regards to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Case Processing Centre in Vegreville Alberta: (*a*)(i) how many employees requested an extension on the time limit to sell their homes under Section 8.2 of the National Joint Council Relocation Directive (NJCRD), (ii) how many employees have received an extension on the time limit to sell their homes under Section 8.2 of the NJCRD, (iii) how many applications for these employees took longer than the 10-day deadline for the department to respond to the request for an extension on the time limit to sell their homes under Section 8.2 of the NJCRD, (iv) what measures is the department taking to accommodate employees because of the depressed housing market conditions in Vegreville, (v) what steps is the department taking to ensure that the National Joint Council Relocation Directive is followed for these members; (*b*) of the employees that did not move to Edmonton, (i) how many current and former employees are potentially affected by the adjudication decision in August 2018 by the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board (Citation: 2018FPSLREB74) that the department failed to offer voluntary programs to employees who were not relocating, (ii) what is the maximum liability to the federal government for the potential cost of transition support measures and education allowances for these employees; (*c*) what is the current cost of the closure of the Case Process Centre in Vegreville Alberta, broken down by (i) costs related to relocating staff, (ii) costs related to surplus staff that chose not to relocate, (iii) costs related to closing the physical facility in Vegreville, (iv) fit-up costs for the workspace of employees that relocated to Edmonton, (v) fit-up costs for employees that relocated to other locations, (vi) costs related to any grievances and adjudications related to the closure, (vii) all other costs related to the closure, including salary costs of employees outside of the Vegreville Centre (management and internal services, headquarters staff, etc.) that advised, planned and oversaw the closure of the Centre; (*d*) what steps were taken to follow the "good neighbors policy" through the closure process; and (*e*) with the inclusion of the potential liabilities of the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board, what was the initial projected total cost of the closure of the Vegreville Case Processing Centre when the decision was taken to close the centre and what is the current projected total cost of the closure of the Vegreville Case Processing Centre?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2349—**Mr. Charlie Angus**:

With respect to the government's answering of access to information requests, broken down by year from January 2011 to date : (*a*) how many times did the government fail to answer an access to information request within (i) 45 days, (ii) 90 days, (iii) 135 days, (iv) 180 days, (v) 225 days, (vi) 270-plus days; and (*b*) for each question which took over 180 days to answer as identified in (*a*)(iv), (*a*)(v) and (*a*)(vi), (i) what was the question, (ii) how much time did it take to provide an answer?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2350—**Mr. Ted Falk**:

With regard to the government's plan to implement a comprehensive Border Enforcement Strategy as outlined in Budget 2019: (*a*) when will the details of the strategy be finalized; (*b*) will the government publicly release the details of the strategy; (*c*) of the proposed $1.8 billion investment (i) what is the breakdown of the funding by department or agency, (ii) what percentage of the funding will be dedicated to managing irregular migration, (iii) what percentage of the funding will be dedicated to discouraging irregular migration, (iv) what percentage of funding will be dedicated to preventing irregular migration; (*d*) what specific legislative changes is the government considering to "better manage, discourage and prevent irregular migration"; and (*e*) what is the government's timeline for introducing the changes identified in (*d*)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2351—**Mr. Ted Falk**:

With regard to federal spending to improve connectivity in Manitoba from November 4, 2015 to present: (*a*) what are the details of all expenditures made to projects through the Connect to lnnovate program including (i) recipient of funding, (ii) name of project, (iii) project start date, (iv) projected project completion date, (v) amount of funding pledged, (vi) amount of funding actually provided to date; (*b*) what are the details of all other expenditures intended to improve connectivity, including (i) recipient of funding, (ii) name of project, (iii) project start date, (iv) projected project completion date, (v) amount of funding pledged, (vi) amount of funding actually provided to date (vii) department or agency that provided the funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2352—**Mr. Ted Falk**:

With regard to federal spending in Manitoba from November 4, 2015 to present, broken down by year: (*a*) what expenditures were made in the following electoral districts (i) Brandon—Souris, (ii) Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, (iii) Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, (iv) Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, (v) Elmwood—Transcona, (vi) Kildonan—St. Paul, (vii) Portage—Lisgar, (viii) Provencher, (ix) Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, (x) Selkirk-lnterlake-Eastman, (xi) Winnipeg Centre, (xii) Winnipeg North, (xiii) Winnipeg South, (xiv) Winnipeg South Centre; (*b*) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans given to any business, group, municipality, or organization including (i) name of recipient, (ii) date of funding, (iii) department or agency that provided the funding, (iv) amount received, (v) program under which the funding was granted, (vi) purpose of the expenditure; (*c*) for infrastructure projects in each of the electoral districts identified in (*a*), what are the details of each projects including (i) recipient of funding, (ii) name of project, (iii) project start date, (iv) projected project completion date, (v) amount of funding pledged, (vi) amount of funding actually provided to date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2353—**Mr. Ted Falk**:

With regard to federal spending in Manitoba from November 4, 2015 to present, broken down by year: (*a*) what expenditures were made in the following municipalities (i) Rural Municipality of De Salaberry, (ii) Rural Municipality of Emerson, (iii) Rural Municipality of Hanover, (iv) Rural Municipality of La Broquerie, (v) Rural Municipality of Montcalm, (vi) Town of Niverville, (vii) Rural Municipality of Piney, (viii) Rural Municipality of Reynolds, (ix) Rural Municipality of Ritchot, (x) Rural Municipality of Springfield, (xi) Village of St. Pierre-Jolys, (xii) Rural Municipality of Ste. Anne, (xiii) Town of Ste. Anne, (xiv) City of Steinbach, (xv) Rural Municipality of Stuartburn, (xvi) Rural Municipality of Taché, (xvii) Rural Municipality of Whitemouth; (*b*) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans given to any business, group, municipality, or organization including (i) name of recipient, (ii) date of funding, (iii) department or agency that provided the funding, (iv) amount received, (v) program under which the funding was granted, (vi) purpose of the expenditure

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2354—**Mr. Pierre Poilievre**:

With regard to contract employees, per diem employees or other similar compensation arrangements for all government departments, agencies and Crown corporations, since November 2015: how many people have worked for rates equal to or more than (i) $300/hour, (ii) $400/hour, (iii) $500/hour, (iv) $700/hour, (v) $1000/hour?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2355—**Mr. Larry Maguire**:

With regard to federal spending in Manitoba from November 4, 2015 to present, broken down by year: (*a*) what expenditures were made in the following municipalities, (i) City of Brandon, (ii) Rural Municipality of Wallace-Woodworth, (iii) Rural Municipality of Sifton, (iv) Rural Municipality of Pipestone, (v) Rural Municipality of Two Borders, (vi) Town of Virden, (vii) Municipality of Grassland, (viii) Municipality of Brenda-Waskada, (ix) Municipality of Deloraine-Winchester, (x) Municipality Boissevain-Morton, (xi) Municipality of Killarney-Turtle Mountain, (xii) Cartwright-Roblin Municipality, (xiii) Rural Municipality of Argyle, (xiv) Rural Municipality of Prairie Lakes, (xv) Municipality of Glenboro-South Cypress, (xvi) Municipality of Oakland-Wawanesa, (xvii) Municipality of Souris-Glenwood, (xviii) Rural Municipality of Whitehead, (xix) Rural Municipality of Cornwallis, (xx) Town of Melita; (*b*) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans given to any business, group, municipality, or organization, including (i) name of recipient, (ii) date of funding, (iii) department or agency that provided the funding, (iv) amount received, (v) program under which the funding was granted, (vi) purpose of the expenditure?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2356—**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus**:

With regard to Statistics Canada's plan to collect financial transaction data on Canadians: (*a*) by what means will data be anonymized; (*b*) which employee's classification will have access to data that has not been anonymized; and (*c*) what cyber security protection measures have been put in place to protect this sensitive data?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2357—**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus**:

With regard to the briefings provided to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness or his staff by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) since November 4, 2015: (*a*) what are the titles, dates and subject-matter of all briefing notes provided by the RCMP; (*b*) what were the dates and subject-matter of oral briefings provided by (i) the Commissioner of the RCMP, (ii) the Deputy Commissioner, Federal Policing, (iii) the Senior General Counsel, (iv) the Chief of Staff to the Commissioner; (*c*) did any of the oral briefings referred to in (*b*) relate to an ongoing investigation; and (*d*) did any of the oral briefings referred to in (*b*) relate to a matter before the courts?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2358—**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus**:

With regard to the disbanding of the "O" Division of the Marine Security Enforcement Team Program: (*a*) what measures is the government taking to ensure marine security of our Great Lakes; (*b*) what is the reason for removing protection of most of Ontario's international border; (*c*) what is the government's new plan for patrolling known smuggling routes on the Great Lakes with limited marine capacity; and (*d*) what enforcement costs are anticipated due to the resulting influx of illegal goods such as firearms and contraband tobacco?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2359—**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus**:

With regards to the implementation of the needle exchange program in Canadian penitentiaries: what are the details of all the meetings between Public Safety Canada officials and union heads, including (i) the dates, (ii) the concerns that were raised, if any, (iii) whether inmate feedback was sough?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2360—**Ms. Georgina Jolibois**:

With regards to the Ile-a-la-Crosse Indian Residential School and the Timber Bay Children's home: (*a*) how many students attended these schools from their respective openings until the schools were shut down; (*b*) how much funding from the government was provided to these schools for the duration of their respective operations; (*c*) on what basis does the government not recognize these schools as residential schools or as part of the residential school settlement; (*d*) what actions has the government taken to provide justice to the survivors and families of attendees of these schools; (*e*) what discussions and meetings have taken place since 2015 to provide survivors and families with financial compensation; and (*f*) by what date can survivors and families expect financial compensation for the experiences at these residential schools?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2361—**Mr. Wayne Stetski**:

With regard to Gatineau Park: (*a*) what land within the current boundaries of Gatineau Park is provincially owned and controlled; (*b*) what agency or agencies are responsible for law enforcement in Gatineau Park and under what authority; (*c*) what are the powers of the National Capital Commission (NCC) conservation officers in Gatineau Park; (*d*) which level of government is responsible for the water quality of Gatineau Park's lakes, ponds and streams; (*e*) why does the National Capital Act not require that the responsible Minister report on the state of Gatineau Park at least every two years, as is required by the National Parks Act on the status of National Parks; (*f*) how does the protection regime in Gatineau Park compare to that in Canada's National Parks; (*g*) why is Gatineau Park not managed by Parks Canada, the only federal agency which has the requisite experience and expertise to manage an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Category II protected area; (*h*) how many properties in Gatineau Park acquired by the NCC since 2008 have been leased back to their previous owners or other parties, and under what conditions; (*i*) how many properties in Gatineau Park acquired since 2008 have been re-naturalized or been left to re-naturalize; (*j*) how does the NCC evaluate the impact of private property development on the ecological integrity of Gatineau Park; (*k*) has the NCC sought to undertake negotiations with the responsible municipalities, or the Government of Quebec, with the view to arriving at mutually acceptable standards for private property development in order to mitigate the impact of such development on the natural environment of Gatineau Park; and (*l*) what impact does provincial ownership of land within the boundaries of Gatineau Park have on the management of the park?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP) moved:

That the House call on the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to declare an environment and climate emergency following the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and urge the government to bring forward a climate action strategy that: (a) prioritizes reconciliation with Indigenous peoples; (b) invests in a transition that leaves no workers or communities behind; (c) increases the ambition of its 2030 greenhouse gas reduction targets to avoid a more than 1.5 degrees Celsius rise in global warming, as recommended by the IPCC report; (d) includes robust rules for implementing the Paris Agreement; (e) prescribes transparency and accountability mechanisms to address climate change; (f) does not proceed with the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project; (g) immediately eliminates all federal fossil fuel subsidies, including through Export Development Canada funding; and (h) integrates human health into Canada's climate commitments.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the incredible member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

It gives me immense pride to stand today as the leader of the New Democratic Party to bring forward our motion, which calls for a declaration of an environment and climate emergency. However, we go beyond just words.

[*Translation*]

The time for good words is over. What we need now is concrete action.

[*English*]

More than ever, we need to go beyond just declaring the emergency. We need to commit to certain concrete steps, and I want to lay out some of those steps today.

Our motion acknowledges that some of those key steps will include prioritizing reconciliation. We know we cannot achieve our goals with respect to defending the environment and fighting climate change without acknowledging the importance of reconciliation.

Another key component is that in the fight against climate change, it is going to take thousands of people working together toward the goal of reducing our emissions. We cannot do this alone. That is why our plan will ensure we leave no worker and no community behind. We all need to do this together.

There are additional other components. The IPCC report makes it clear now that the science is so abundantly clear, there is a preponderance of evidence. Everyone is pointing out that there is a serious and dire threat, not just of climate change but of catastrophic climate change if we do not act.

In the past, we have seen other initiatives and plans. In fact, the Liberals talked about targets and completely missed them, with no repercussion whatsoever. Our motion calls for strong transparency and accountability measures to ensure that the government attains those goals. If it does not, there will be repercussions.

Our motion points out that right now, at the federal level, a project has been proposed that would dramatically increase emissions. That would put our coastline in B.C. at risk. It would threaten marine diversity. The toxic tanker traffic will severely impact and threaten the entire coastline, and we do not know how to clean up diluted bitumen. If it spills, it will devastate the entire coastline, threatening jobs, marine diversity and communities. This is terrible.

In addition, if we are truly committed to tackling climate change, we need to, once and for all, end all subsidies to fossil fuel sectors. It is a basic requirement. There is no way we can continue forward by continuing to subsidize these sectors. Instead, we should be spending our public money on investing in green and clean energy jobs that will generate good work and sustainable economies.

Finally, we want to integrate human health into the climate discussion, because we are seeing the impact on health. Members will know that last summer was the second summer in a row of the worst fires in the history of B.C. There were ramifications.

I met a mom who had a young daughter. She told me her number one concern was climate change. I saw her daughter and I assumed she meant for the future. I told her I understood that she was worried about the planet and the environment her daughter would grow up in. She said that she was worried about the environment and about the future, but not the future I was talking about. She said that she was not worried about a distant future; she was worried about next summer. That would be her baby's first summer. She worried whether she would be able to breathe the air.

Last summer, we had numerous days when we were told we could not go outside. We were told we could not breathe the air because it was a risk to our health. She is worried about her baby not being able to breathe the air this coming summer.

We have seen massive floods in eastern Canada. Floods have devastated communities in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. The cost of pollution is real. The impact of climate change is real.

Today I was shocked to hear a member of the Conservative Party talk about fearmongering. This is not fearmongering. These are the facts and we are seeing the impacts of climate change on the lives of Canadians right now, on the lives of Canadians in Conservative ridings. This is not a matter of Conservative or Liberal. This is a matter of fairness and justice for people and for the planet on which we live.

I also want to touch on the commitment I made as leader to fight for a brighter future for the environment and tackling climate change. I put forward a number of initiatives, but I did not do that in isolation. I built on the strong work of Jack Layton, who was one of the first elected officials to take the issues of the environment to the next level, bringing forward climate accountability measures and strong innovative approaches to defending the environment. I built on the work of Megan Leslie, who fought fearlessly to end microbeads, alongside a number of other members who are currently sitting in the House.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

My commitment was more than just good words. My team and I have been working tirelessly to get the Liberals to drop the half-measures, stop sounding like a broken record, and focus on taking concrete action.

[*English*]

Unfortunately, the Liberal government has consistently chosen the side of powerful and wealthy corporations over that of everyday Canadians. Liberals voted against two of our motions last year regarding Trans Mountain and investing in a clean economy that works for everybody.

They have shown that this is not a priority for the Liberal government. The Prime Minister has made it clear that the government's initiatives and its work are to protect the most powerful instead of the people who need it.

[*Translation*]

They refused to make Quebec a world leader in transportation electrification. Quebec already has the necessary infrastructure, as well as some of the most innovative companies in the world.

[*English*]

We put forward a plastics ban because it is abundantly clear that there is a rise in plastics levels in the ocean, to the point that experts believe if we do not change our course of action, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. That is the reality we face. It is not fearmongering; these are the facts and this is evidence.

Instead of supporting our motion and our plan to end the use of single-use plastics and supporting the initiative brought forward by the member from Vancouver Island, which proposed a bold way forward, Liberals voted against it.

[*Translation*]

They chose to give Loblaws $12 million for new fridges, instead of investing in retrofitting all housing stock in Canada by 2050, an initiative that would create thousands of jobs, save every family almost $900, and help fight climate change.

● (1545)

[*English*]

This is an issue that impacts young people. We have seen thousands and thousands of young people go out on the streets because they are worried about their future. They are worried because they see a planet that will not be habitable for humans.

These are some of the headlines we have seen: “Canada warming two times faster than the rest of the world”, “Canada produces more greenhouse gas emissions than any other G20 country”, “Canada provides more government support for oil and gas companies than any other G7 nation and is among the least transparent about fossil fuel subsidies”, “Nature is in the worst shape in human history”; “Canada on pace to meet Paris climate target...two centuries late”.

The hopeful news is that if we make better decisions, we will get better results. All experts say that it is possible to change course. It is possible to save our planet and fight climate change. It is a matter of having the courage to do so. It is a matter of coming together and realizing that this is our united fight, that all of us, together, must do this.

If we make better choices, we will get better results. Making better choices means stopping investments and subsidies in fossil fuel sectors. It means building a sustainable economy. It means ensuring that we are looking to and working in the interests of the young people who will inherit this planet. It means ensuring we end precarious work and invest in a clean energy economy that creates good jobs for today and tomorrow.

We can do this if we have the courage. The New Democrats have the courage to make the right choices. We ask all members in the House to make a commitment to support our motion and show that they care about climate change. It is not just about good words and saying the right things. It is about doing the right things. Members should have the courage to follow up their words with concrete action and support our motion. Together, we will build a brighter future.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the passion shown on this issue by the leader of the NDP and his entire caucus. Everybody in the House believes that the NDP is committed to protecting our environment and doing as much as possible to save it within the timelines prescribed.

The problem that we always seem to run into is that we must have a balance. We must have a balance between protecting the environment by doing what we can and making sure that our economy continues to thrive. The reality is that if our economy becomes considerably affected by policies, people will put pressure on us to reverse some of them.

I am wondering where the NDP sees that balance. Does the NDP believe that the environment trumps absolutely everything and the economy comes second? Where does it put those priorities with respect to pushing forward this particular agenda?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that building a sustainable economy and defending the environment, fighting climate change, go hand in hand. They cannot be separated. There is no way we can build an economy without representing and defending the interests of the planet. We cannot build a sustainable economy if we are poisoning the air we breathe, the land that is the basis of our sustenance and the water that we drink, so we need to do both. We reject the notion that there is a choice between one and the other. We have to fight climate change. We have to defend our environment. We have to do so by putting thousands of people to work in an economy that is sustainable, long-lasting and includes everyone.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech by my colleague from Burnaby South in the House on this important motion. This is a climate emergency and there is no doubt that measures need to be taken, as the member for Burnaby South said so eloquently.

After we tabled our motion, the Liberals tabled a motion that does not talk about a single measure. It does not address any of the issues that need to be addressed and is relatively just a statement of fact about climate change. I want to ask the member for Burnaby South why he feels the government would table something that does not deal with or address any of the issues. It does not take measures to combat climate change in a meaningful way. Should the Liberal members not support the NDP motion, which has concrete measures and would make a difference?

● (1550)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, for a long time folks have been hopeful about some of the speeches, declarations and comments made by members of the Liberal Party. The reality is that those words did not translate into any action. Without action, the words are meaningless. That is why our motion calls for some concrete steps, steps that I think everybody in this House can agree we need to take. We need to recognize the science. We need to recognize that we should be spending our public dollars and investing in the future. That is why our motion calls for concrete steps that acknowledge the path forward for us to defend the environment.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will vote for the NDP motion. We are in a climate emergency. I will also vote for the Liberal motion. We are in a climate emergency. That requires less partisanship.

With all due respect to the hon. member for Burnaby South, I need clarification, because I did not hear him say in his speech that we must end the use of fossil fuels and I did not hear any targets. Will the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party commit that we are prepared to cut fossil fuel use by at least 50% by 2030 and completely by 2050?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I will point to the specific portion of our motion where we include our ambitious targets: "[to increase] the ambition of [the] 2030 greenhouse gas reduction targets to avoid a more than 1.5 degrees Celsius rise in global warming, as recommended by the IPCC report".

This would require a significant reduction in our emissions, which would require a significant reduction in the use of fossil fuel-burning energy.

The future of energy, not just in Canada but in the entire world, is one that is not based on burning, fracking or fossil fuels. The future energy source for the world and Canada has to be carbon-neutral. In fact, it has to have zero emissions. It has to be a future of renewable energy. It has to be a future of clean energy. That is the future.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if anyone thought that there was no reason to adopt the motion that the NDP is presenting today, which the NDP leader has just spoken to so eloquently, the motion that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change declare an environment and climate emergency, if anyone thought that somehow that should not be a priority, that person should talk to the many flood victims we have seen in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick just over the course of the last few weeks.

I visited the Ottawa River last night and, like so many of us, I was appalled by the extent of the damage that we have seen. When we look across communities, and that is communities in all three provinces, what we see is devastation and heartbreak. Families are coming back to homes where all of their possessions, all of their memories, everything they have invested has simply disappeared under the waters and can never be reclaimed.

If anyone in the House thought that we do not need to declare a climate emergency, that person should visit the families of the victims of last summer's catastrophic heat waves. Dozens of people in Quebec, in Montreal particularly, died of heat stroke over the course of that devastating period of record temperatures. As the Quebec coroner has pointed out, so many of the victims who passed away in that terrible heat wave were people living in homes without access to air conditioning and without access to fans. Dozens of people died. Anyone questioning the importance of the climate emergency should speak to the families of those victims.

From personal experience, I can say that anyone who comes to the west coast can see the impacts of the climate change emergency that we are living through, just through the course of the devastating forest fires, which have already started. My colleague from Courtenay—Alberni, who spoke in the House during question period, raised the fact that for the first time ever in the month of May, more than a dozen out-of-control forest fires are burning our forests in British Columbia.

Over the last three years in the Lower Mainland, the month of August has meant unbreathable air. The month of August has meant the sun literally disappearing under the heavy weight of clouds as the forests all around us burn. Can anyone think for just a moment that we are not living through a climate emergency, let alone the devastating typhoons, cyclones and hurricanes that we are seeing? Categories that did not even exist a decade ago now exist and are carrying devastation throughout coastal areas. We see the rise of sea levels and the fact that some countries are now planning for a time when they will no longer exist because they are at low levels, like the Maldives in the Indian Ocean.

We do not need to look at the international examples to understand how vividly climate change is transforming our planet. As Bill Nye said this week in a social media post that has been seen worldwide, the planet is literally burning.

The question is, as members of Parliament, what do we do? We have a motion before us that talks about concrete action. We know from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the Paris Agreement is nowhere near enough now.

As the leader of the NDP mentioned just a few moments ago, the Liberal government's current approach to climate change means that even those targets that are no longer adequate will not be reached for 200 years. We went backwards last year. There are 12 million new tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions put into the atmosphere under the Liberal government. We do not have the luxury of delay. We see the impacts on the ground, and the IPCC has made it very clear that we need to take action.

Tragically, and that is why the motion speaks very clearly to fossil fuel subsidies, as Oil Change International has pointed out, over the last five years under the former Conservative government and the current Liberal government, we have seen an unbelievable $62 billion in subsidies to the oil and gas industry, largely through EDC.

● (1555)

These are scant resources devoted to renewable energy, yet the climate burns, and Canada fails in any way to meet its obligations.

[*Translation*]

I blame the former Conservative government, which prioritized pipelines. It tried to build the energy east, Trans Mountain and Keystone pipelines. It wanted to build pipelines all over the place instead of investing in renewable energy, where the jobs of the future will be.

I blame the former government, but I also blame the current government, which is prepared to give $12 million to Loblaws and push forward on the Trans Mountain pipeline even though British Columbians do not want it and it will significantly increase the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing our planet so much pain.

I blame these governments. All the disasters I just talked about created victims, from the record flooding in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario to last summer's heat wave, which killed over 60 Quebeckers.

The victims tend to be young people who are poor, disabled or struggling to find a decent place to live.

I blame these two governments for refusing to implement an action plan. Every year, British Columbia sees forest fires that blot out the sun and make the air unbreathable.

[*English*]

What is most important is that in this tragedy, this unrolling catastrophe so many Canadians are now living through, there is so much opportunity. If we have a government that is willing to show leadership, and if members of Parliament adopt the NDP plan in the next few days, we will see action that will allow us to create literally millions of jobs in this country.

I give that figure because Canada's Building Trades Unions have evaluated what an action plan on climate change would mean for the Canadian economy. Currently, it is costing us $5 billion a year, which is rising incrementally. It will cost us up to $40 billion to $50 billion a year in just a few decades.

However, if we make the investments, Canada's Building Trades Unions have said that we could create up to four million jobs over the next 30 years in this country. Imagine a young generation of workers who could go to work in the building trades building renewable energy, building regional and municipal heat plants and building all the infrastructure needed to address this climate crisis.

It is not just reducing subsidies to oil and gas; it is making the investments. As I mentioned, $62 billion in the oil and gas sector has not created the jobs that $62 billion in renewable energy would have created. These are the kinds of investments that will make a difference.

There is a dream behind this that most Canadians share, those Canadians who have suffered through the increasing number of climactic climate change events. Their dream is that parliamentarians will vote yes on this motion. Their dream is that we will have a government that will take action, remove the fossil fuel subsidies, invest in renewable energy and show the transparency that is so important for us to battle back and beat climate change.

Our dream is very simple. It is a springtime when we are not hearing about communities devastated by record levels of flooding due to climate change. It is summers on the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, where people will be able to walk outside and breathe the air, like when I was a kid. We have not seen that over the last few years, but when I was a kid, August was a wonderful time. We could breathe in the sea air and see the sun and the mountains. That no longer happens, because we have not taken action.

● (1600)

I think all of us would like our children and their children to live in the kind of environment we had when we were children. That takes action, and I hope all members of Parliament will support this motion so we can take the steps, declare climate change an emergency and fight back against climate change.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening I watched an interview with the leader of the NDP on *Power & Politics*, when this question was put to him three times. He was asked, in light of his stance on fossil fuel subsidies, whether he supported the investment by LNG Canada, the largest private sector investment in the history of Canada, in the province where he sits as a member of Parliament.

Could the hon. member clarify the position of the New Democrats? Do they support that LNG Canada investment and the B.C. NDP government's subsidies to help make that investment come to pass?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to talk about the B.C. government. The B.C. NDP government, under Premier John Horgan, has made a tremendous difference. It is putting a price on carbon that is meaningful rather than meaningless. We have the Liberals putting a price on carbon and then telling all the large emitters that they do not have to pay it. British Columbia has actually done the right thing, which is why greenhouse gas emissions have fallen in British Columbia.

Second, CleanBC leads the country in terms of initiatives to combat climate change. Should the Liberals follow that example? Yes, but they have not. They have refused to take the best practices. The best government in the country in terms of the environment has been British Columbia, which actually has a carbon budget. If we applied the same rules as the carbon budget the B.C. NDP has put in place under Premier John Horgan, the Liberal government would be saying no to Trans Mountain instead of trying to ram it through and increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

There is a reason the Liberal government has failed. There is a reason emissions are increasing. There will be 12 million tonnes more this year than last year. The reason for the failure of the Liberals is that they have refused best practices, refused to follow the good example set, for example, by the B.C. government and refused to listen to Canadians. They have a chance to rectify all that by voting yes to the NDP motion tomorrow.

● (1605)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will read directly from British Columbia's department of the environment website, which states, "Total greenhouse gas emissions in 2016 in B.C. were 62.3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This is a 1.5% increase in emissions since 2015". I would like the member to reconcile that with his earlier statement.

Also, in the community of Kitimat, there is a large investment by LNG Canada, which was referred to earlier. A number of people are counting on that project to move forward. Does the member support that project, yes or no?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I now gather why the Conservatives have not been able to produce any sort of climate change plan. They still need to go back to school in terms of climate change.

The member cited 2016 and then 2015. Those were two years when the B.C. Liberals were in power, not the B.C. NDP, which came to power in 2017. Of course, the more recent figures in 2017 and 2018, the member would know, show, because of the B.C. NDP initiatives, that emissions are declining.

Yes, under the B.C. Liberals, like the under the federal Liberals, it was a disaster. Former premier Christy Clark simply did not understand the impact of climate change and did not put in place any sort of plan to deal with it. I think the member has proven my point. Emissions increase when Liberal or Conservative governments are in power and do not take the proper initiatives. They go down when there are good, effective NDP governments in place. The member has proven my point for me.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

> That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Member for Burnaby South, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Thursday, May 16, 2019, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions; and that, the recorded division on the motion for second reading of Bill C-266, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (increasing parole ineligibility) standing in the name of the Member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, currently scheduled today, immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business, be further deferred until the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions on Thursday, May 16, 2019, immediately after the opposition motion is disposed of.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—THE ENVIRONMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is real. The consequences are serious. We are feeling them today, and we know that they are only going to get worse.

There is no doubt in my mind that the challenge we are facing when it comes Canada's climate constitutes a national emergency and that we need to take action urgently to combat the most dire consequences. However, I am optimistic, because I know that we have the opportunity to do something about it if we pull together to face this greatest political challenge of our generation and muster the political will to implement the solutions that we all know exist.

Last week, our government announced that we would be tabling a motion to debate the issue of Canada's climate emergency in the House of Commons. Subsequently, on Monday of this week, NDP members tabled a motion that seems to do a similar thing, although they have added a few extra positions that seem to formulate the basis of their party's platform. The NDP motion we are debating today includes similar elements, which are deeply flawed, and as much as I want to support the idea that we are in a climate emergency, I will not be supporting the motion.

Our approach is informed by facts, science and evidence. We know beyond a shadow of a doubt that a dramatic increase in global emissions in recent history is directly tied to human activity and has caused the climate change we are witnessing in our communities today. The IPCC has been sounding the alarm on this issue for decades now. Most recently, we have seen a report from Environment Canada, "Canada's Changing Climate", that confirms not only that climate change is real and happening in our communities but that Canada is actually warming at twice the global average.

If members do not believe the science, I think they should be able to trust the insurance industry, which monitors its money very closely and has paid out more in the past six years than it has in the previous 40 years as a result of the consequences of climate change. These consequences are not something far-fetched that happen somewhere else 100 years from now. We are feeling them in our communities now, whether it is the floods we witnessed recently in New Brunswick, the heat waves that took dozens of lives in Ontario and Quebec, the forest fires that have ravaged western Canada or the hurricanes and storm surges that hit my province of Nova Scotia.

Wildlife across the world is in crisis as well, with 60% of our wildlife having disappeared since the 1970s. Canada is in a position to do something about this, being one of five countries that contain three-quarters of the world's remaining wilderness. However, we are seeing the impact of biodiversity loss at home in our most iconic species. If we look at certain caribou species, they are threatened with potential extinction. If we look at the challenges facing the orca on the west coast of Canada, the situation could not be more dire. On the east coast, the northern right whale is facing severe challenges. The list goes on and on, and we need to do something about it.

The consequences we need to be concerned about are not just environmental in nature. There are social and economic consequences that should scare us all. We are seeing communities that are actually being displaced as a result of climate change.

I mentioned the insurance sector earlier, which now has losses that exceed $2 billion a year. It is only going to be harder and more expensive to get insurance as the consequences become worse. From 1983 to 2008, the average payout from the insurance sector for severe weather events was between $250 million and $450 million. Since 2009, that figure has skyrocketed to an average of $1.8 billion.

Climate mitigation infrastructure is paid for with Canadians' tax dollars. There is also the prevention of economic activity as a result of climate change. If we look at the state of Maine, its fishery has lost 22 million pounds in its catch as a result of the warming ocean temperature. Things are good back home in Nova Scotia right now in the lobster fishery, but if we continue to experience climate change at the rate we have been witnessing in the past few years, I wonder how long it is going to last. We see crop failure as a result of climate change. The forest fires in western Canada prevented serious economic production in places like Fort McMurray.

Put simply, the cost of inaction is too great to ignore, and we ignore the problem at our own peril.

The NDP seems to have criticized the motion we put before the floor to be debated tomorrow, but the government's plan has been formed by experts. It is designed to ensure that we do the most effective things to allow us to continue to experience economic growth and make life more affordable for Canadian families. It includes over 50 different measures.

Perhaps most notably, we are putting a price on pollution for the first time. This approach follows the advice of last year's Nobel Prize winner in economics. It also has the support of folks like Stephen Harper's former director of policy, Mark Cameron. Doug Ford's chief budget adviser, who testified before the Senate in 2016, said that the most effective thing we can do to transition to a low-carbon economy is put a price on pollution. Notable Conservatives like Preston Manning support this kind of approach. I would note that the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, when it was defeating the provincial government's challenge to the constitutionality of our climate plan, said that “GHG pricing is not just part and parcel of an effective” climate plan, it is “an essential aspect...of the global effort to limit... emissions.”

● (1610)

However, we are not a one-trick pony. We are making investments in energy efficiency, because we know that it is cheaper to reduce the use of energy than it is to produce a similar unit of energy. We are investing in transportation by introducing a clean fuel standard and adopting new and more ambitious vehicle emissions regulations. We are also investing in electric vehicles, both in infrastructure and the affordability of vehicles themselves, because our country is at a tipping point. We know that the future, when it comes to vehicles, is electric.

We have made the single largest investment in the history of public transit in Canada, and we have invested in new energy generation to ensure that we are promoting the transition toward renewables and phasing out coal by 2030, more than 30 years ahead of schedule. On that timeline, 90% of electricity in our country will be generated from non-emitting sources. This is serious progress.

At the same time, we know that workers in the traditional energy sectors need assistance to ensure they are not left behind. These are good people with skills that are transferable. That is why we have invested in a just transition program that will help ensure they receive the training and skills development they need to enable them to be part of the transition to a new and green economy, and to capitalize on the economic opportunity that stares us in the face today.

There are many benefits to taking action on climate change. First, we can avoid many of the harmful consequences I laid out earlier in my remarks. We can also become a leader in the new green economy. Globally, the value of this opportunity is thought to be in the ballpark of $26 trillion, and we should go get our share.

This is not some imaginary opportunity. It is real, and I am seeing it in the communities I represent today. I can look at companies like the Trinity group of companies in Pictou County, Nova Scotia. It started out as two guys who were good with their hands and knew how to fix up a home. When they transitioned towards energy efficiency projects and home retrofits, supported by different levels of government, they added dozens and dozens of employees. They put people to work retrofitting homes, and helped bring the cost of electricity down for homeowners.

I can look at CarbonCure in Dartmouth, which has developed a carbon sequestration technology that it can inject into concrete to make it stronger.

In western Canada, companies like Carbon Engineering are doing incredible things to help pull carbon out of the atmosphere.

One of the members from the NDP mentioned earlier that if we have a serious climate plan, the construction opportunity could create millions of jobs in our country.

The fact is we are also investing in more efficient and effective trade corridors that could help our producers get products to global markets at a cheaper price and with a lower carbon footprint. I mentioned homeowners paying less, month to month, for their energy bills.

When we invest in public transit, it will reduce traffic congestion. We can expect better health outcomes, like a reduction in childhood asthma and lung disease when we phase out coal, or prevention of the spread of Lyme disease in provinces like Nova Scotia when we combat climate change and reduce the rate at which temperatures are rising.

I have to point out that both the Conservatives and the NDP have failed when it comes to the introduction of their own policies. The Conservatives do not seem to take the issue seriously; conversely, the NDP members, whom I know to be well intentioned, seem to be throwing ideas at the wall to see what sticks, without thinking through the consequences of what they are proposing, whether it has unintended consequences, or whether it has the ability to achieve meaningful progress without a devastating impact on the Canadian economy.

When it comes to the Conservatives, in the face of rock-solid evidence and scientific advice, we see Conservative politicians disputing the science based on their ideology alone. I have seen MPs from the Conservative Party cite pictures of snowbanks in parking lots in Saskatchewan in February to demonstrate that climate change is not real. I have seen them liken global warming to the phenomenon of when people show up in a room and give off body heat, raising the temperature of the room. I have seen members who want to retreat on the Paris Agreement because they deny that human activity is connected to climate change. I have seen Conservative MPs show up in videos of school groups, saying that CO2 is not pollution but simply plant food that we need.

I have seen them saying, without evidence, that Environment Canada's reports have been debunked, and then shamefully deleting the tweets, pretending they never happened when they were called out for this misinformation. Perhaps worst of all, I have seen the Leader of the Opposition refuse to put forward a plan or to explain clearly that he remains committed to the Paris Agreement and to doing our part by the world.

It is entirely unacceptable that we have to have a debate today about whether climate change is real, rather than debating what solutions exist and could be implemented. The Conservative strategy seems to be to mislead Canadians about our plan, because they have not been developing their own. They previously showed support for the Paris Agreement, as I mentioned, but now seem to treat this commitment as an inconvenience rather than an essential aspect of governance in the 21st century.

● (1615)

In 2019, Canadians are going to have a choice between a Liberal government that understands and takes seriously the threat of climate change, or a Conservative government that wants to turn back the clock to the days of Stephen Harper.

Now, I assume that the Conservatives are going to produce some kind of a plan at some point, and I hope they are watching, because I know they are not taking it seriously. If their plan does not include a pricing mechanism, then they are rejecting the advice of the world's leading experts. If the plan simply involves the expansion of Canadian fossil fuels to displace fuels elsewhere, then they are shirking their responsibilities at home.

We see Conservative premiers who are setting aside tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars to fight climate action rather than fight climate change, and Canadians do not support it. It was recently discovered that the Premier of Saskatchewan was burying reports about the economic impact of carbon pricing because he did not like the results, which demonstrated that there was not a negative impact to implementing carbon pricing in his province. We cannot afford to turn back the clock. We cannot afford to abandon our commitments, and we cannot afford another Conservative government with the same ideology that Stephen Harper brought towards climate politics.

With respect to my New Democrat colleagues, I believe that they are honest and well intentioned on matters in the environment and climate change. I support different aspects of their motion, but cannot support it in its totality. However, it is obvious to me that they do not bring a level of thoughtfulness to their policy development process on these matters that require complex solutions.

The NDP's new leader, who genuinely seems to be a nice person, has indicated that his approach is to eliminate the development of our natural resources overnight, which would bring our economy to a halt. Not only would it have far-reaching economic impacts, but such an approach may only have a modest impact on emissions until we have the ability to displace the difference between supply and demand with renewable resources. We do not want to create a circumstance where foreign producers simply scoop up the Canadian market and pollute elsewhere in the world.

Moreover, the social consequences of cutting off energy supply to Canadians before we have the ability to meet their needs with renewable resources would result in driving up the expensive things like home heating, making it harder for people to get to work, and making the basic necessities of life unaffordable to low-income families.

When it comes to LNG Canada's investment in B.C., I know that the leader of the NDP previously seemed to support the proposal when he was running as a candidate, and now that he has seemingly lost a seat in B.C., he has shifted his position and will not state clearly whether he stands for or against the investment. I just put the question to another member, who refused to answer.

This is a position of convenience, not principle. If the leader cannot get behind the largest private sector investment in the history of Canada, which will create 10,000 jobs and help reduce foreign reliance on coal, then I question his ability to form a position on any issue of importance.

When it comes to pricing, NDP members seem to lack thoughtfulness and foresight when it comes to the process of developing that policy. It seems that they do support pricing, but will not say whether they will return the rebates to citizens. They did say that they want to support low-income families, which is a laudable goal, but they do not seem to appreciate that the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that that is exactly what our plan is going to do. They repeatedly say that big emitters are exempt from our plan. I can tell the House unequivocally that that is false.

Before they start criticizing ideas, it would be nice if they would at least read the proposals that have been put forward by our government, which now form part of Canadian law. The fact is, big emitters contribute under our plan, and that is why eight out of 10 Canadian families will be better off.

The motion that is actually on the floor today has a couple of flaws, and I want to draw attention to one in particular. It calls for the immediate end to all fossil fuel subsidies. We want to transition to a circumstance where we are not reliant on fossil fuels, but this is a knee-jerk reaction that once again demonstrates that the NDP did not do its homework when formulating this policy. The proposal outlined in the motion, if implemented, would end support for diesel in rural and northern communities, and would literally turn the electricity off for communities that rely on diesel for power today.

We are helping with that transition, but if we supported the motion, it would mean leaving communities in the dark. I do not believe that was their intention, but I believe it demonstrates a lack of the thoughtfulness that they should have brought to the discussion. Similarly, it would erase investments in electric vehicle and alternative fuel charging stations that we are making across Canada to help transition to a more effective transportation sector.

Importantly, it would end investments in research that are actually helping to bring climate emissions down. In my own community at StFX University, we have an investment through Dr. David Risk's Flux Lab, where he has developed instrumentation that can detect methane leaks from a significant distance. If implemented across Canada in a widespread way, this has the potential to reduce emissions from our methane and gas sectors by almost 20%.

These are positive investments, and that is why we phased out some of the tax subsidies that we knew existed and launched a consultation to help identify the ineffective and inefficient non-tax subsidies that are still propping up the fossil fuel subsidy. I think the NDP members come from a good place, but they just did not look into the consequences of what they are proposing in an attempt to grab lightning for political gain.

● (1620)

When it comes to Trans Mountain, the New Democrats have prejudged the outcome of a thorough review process that is currently under way. In the 21st century, developed economies need to have an objective process by which industries will have confidence that their projects are being considered fairly. This project in particular is undergoing extensive consultation, including with indigenous communities, and I do not believe it is fair to pull the rug out from under the people who are taking part in that process and dictate an outcome before they have considered all the facts.

The NDP's approach to economic development seems to determine the fate of a project, find a reason for it afterwards, and then change positions when it becomes politically inconvenient. Even the NDP premier of B.C. is now calling for increased shipping of refined fuel through the Trans Mountain pipeline to help with the cost of gas in that province, but it seems to be falling on deaf ears with his federal counterparts.

The fact is, Canadians expect and deserve a climate policy that is thoughtful and deliberate. The NDP plan is seemingly not well thought out and would have a dramatic negative impact on the economy and on affordability for Canadian families. A credible climate plan does not require a campaign against Canadian jobs or the Canadian economy. Having watched the NDP leader's performance on these key issues, Canadians would be right to dismiss his approach as unserious and, quite frankly, disappointing.

For these reasons, despite my ready acknowledgement that our country is facing a crisis, an emergency of climate, the motion on the floor is simply not supportable. That fact is, our government is seeking real and meaningful action to combat climate change, which we know is a national emergency. We are doing so in a way that has allowed the economy to add over a million jobs since we took office in 2015, and has made life more affordable for Canadian families.

However, government alone is not going to solve this challenge. We need Canadians to embrace the task before us. I implore Canadians from coast to coast to coast to take advantage of the efficiency programs that will help reduce their environmental footprint and actually save them money month to month on their power bill; to consider installing products in their homes, like heat pumps or solar panels when there is a program that makes them more affordable, and to take part in community initiatives, cleanups and co-operatives. If they have access to public transit in their community, or if a new system is under construction because of the investments our government is making, I encourage them to think about taking the bus or the train instead of driving their car to work. For rural residents, I know that may not be possible, but there are other things they can do.

I want people to speak to their representatives at the local, provincial and national levels and push us all to do more. Perhaps most importantly, I ask the parents who might be watching to talk to their kids. Kids know what is the right thing to do here. Young people care so deeply about protecting their environment because they know that when they look 20, 30 and 40 years into the future, the greatest asset we have in our community is our natural environment.

If we were a municipality, we would be expected to have an asset management plan. We would be expected to replace and repair pipes before they burst. Well, the pipes are bursting, and the planet is on fire. We need to manage the most valuable asset we have, and that is planet Earth.

The time to come together is right here and right now. We need to address the existential threat that climate change represents. It is the right thing to do, and we simply have no choice but to act. People are going to look back at this moment in our political discourse and our political history as a turning point. I want our generation to be the one that our kids will one day be proud of.

● (1625)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are some falsehoods in the parliamentary secretary's speech. An example of one of the falsehoods is the member likes to allege that nobody in this House except for the members on that side actually takes the time to find out what kind of measures exist that, if they were taken, would reduce greenhouse gases.

Let us not take my word for it, but take the word of the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, the word of the Auditor General and the word of the OECD.

The commissioner, in her report of just this spring, was highly critical of failed action by the current government and its slow action on climate change. She said it was disturbing that for decades successive federal governments had failed to reach their targets for reducing greenhouse gases. Of course, the current government is simply sticking with the Harper targets. There is a dichotomy here, because the Liberals promised in Paris not only to keep it at 2°C; they promised 1.5°C, yet their target already far exceeds that.

The Auditor General said that this government, both the finance department and the environment and climate change minister, had abjectly failed to address "perverse" subsidies. The government promised in 2015 and again in 2016 that it would immediately take action on perverse subsidies, yet the Auditor General was saying that the finance minister had not even looked into what those were, and neither had the environment minister, including looking at regulatory measures and looking at the subsidies to the fossil fuel industry.

The OECD is saying we need to "review and adjust tax, royalty and subsidy regimes" to deliver on what we promised to the G20.

What does the member have to say about that?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, a lot was built into the member's question, but I will try to address as much of it as I can. I always appreciate the member's thoughtful approach. I miss our time together, sitting on the transport committee early in this Parliament.

With respect to targets, what we agreed on with the various provinces was something attainable and realistic, which, in our mind, it represents a starting point.

She talked about a shortfall. The data on file does not consider certain investments that were made, such as in public transit, which received the largest investment in the history of Canada, and recent investments in electric vehicles. If we are at a tipping point, this will make an enormous difference. As well, like technologies are emerging with respect to carbon sequestration.

When it comes to subsidies, I accused the NDP of not doing its homework on what it was proposing. The NDP does not seem to understand that there are certain social consequences of the proposal that are completely unsavoury and are fatal to this application.

However, we have moved forward and have started to phase out eight tax subsidies that were made available to the fossil fuels sector. In addition, in order to identify subsidies that are not effective, we launched a consultation with Canadians in recent months. We look forward to identifying which subsidies do not have the desired impact so we can ensure we transition effectively toward a more affordable future.

● (1630)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate that the parliamentary secretary is weighing in on this subject.

There was a lot in his speech. It seems like the government is clothing itself in white-knight garb, telling us it is here to protect the environment and the remaining parliamentarians need to get in line with it. However, what has it done?

The parliamentary secretary's own minister has granted large exemptions, specifically in Nova Scotia, for companies to burn coal past 2030. In places such as New Brunswick, the government has exempted them 95%-plus from the carbon tax. In his home province of Nova Scotia, companies are burning tires for energy in Brookfield.

At the same time, the Liberals in Nova Scotia have been clear on the record that they do not want natural gas fracking. That process has allowed places such as British Columbia to have a stable source of energy that is not as intensive in carbon as the coal-fired plants in the member's home province.

Why does the parliamentary secretary continue to paint other parliamentarians as not caring about the environment when he ignores what is going on in his own backyard?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, as far as I could discern, the member raised at least four distinct issues.

We do not purport to be the white knights and expect everyone to fall in line. We purport to be the reasonable adult and expect others to comport themselves in the same way.

When it comes to the phase-out of coal in my home province of Nova Scotia, the province has taken a leadership role and has had serious emissions reductions across the various parties that formed government. We are working on an equivalency agreement to ensure that if there is any extension beyond 2030, there will be equivalent measures that will reduce at least as much carbon emission from the atmosphere as occurred previously.

When it comes to the Lafarge issue in Brookfield, that decision was taken by the provincial government. If the hon. member wants to wear the responsibility of the decisions of Conservative provincial governments, I am happy to let him do so. However, I expect he will not have a job very long.

Finally, on the issue of fracking in Nova Scotia, I point out that the geology of Nova Scotia is not very well understood. There are serious issues with the age of fault lines there and we cannot predictably control the outcomes of expansion. Until we understand and know that the environmental consequences will not cause irreparable harm, it is a responsible thing to have in place.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I agree there is a climate environment emergency. However, I want people watching, especially my constituents in Whitby, to understand why I will not be supporting the motion.

Could the hon. member speak to whether he agrees with the fact that in the NDP motion, there is a disconnect between item (b) to leave no community behind and item (g), which asks for the immediate elimination of fossil fuel subsidies? A part of that will negatively impact northern communities and those communities will be left behind. There is a disconnect within the motion.

Also, does he agree that it is disingenuous for the NDP to put the motion forward on the floor, given that the NDP leader, the member for Burnaby South, will not state his position on LNG?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague for her thoughtful approach to politics. There is certainly a cognitive dissonance within the motion between items (b) and (g), as she has correctly pointed out.

Of course it is important not to leave any worker behind. I note in particular that the NDP seems not to have read some of the investments we made in budget 2019 and previously, with a total of $185 million toward a just transition that will help ensure workers are not left behind.

However, the member makes an excellent point. The NPD said that it wanted to immediately end all fossil fuel subsidies. We heard today in question period that just in her home province of Ontario, 24 indigenous communities would have their electricity shut off if we did that overnight. We need parties to do their homework before they propose ideas. That is one of the reasons I hope we can gain support for the over 50 measures our government has put forward.

The member asked a final point about the inconsistency on the position of LNG. The hypocrisy is stunning. When the leader stands and says that we should not invest in any fossil fuel subsidies and when the question is put to him whether he supports the subsidies that helped secure the investment in LNG Canada, in the province he now represents, it is stunning that he does not have the courage to express a position, whatever his position may be. I hope we will find out one day.

● (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passion for the environment and his truly enlightening speech.

I want him to know that people in my riding, Vimy, are really benefiting from federal, provincial and municipal incentives in the form of electric vehicle rebates. The rebate is more than $13,000. It can be up to $15,000 with the City of Laval's $2,000 rebate.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say that the City of Laval benefited from all this, too, as it became the first city in Canada with a long electric bus.

I have made several announcements in my riding about electric buses and bus shelters. We want all 400,000 or so residents of Vimy and Laval as well as everyone in the suburbs north of town to benefit from these public transit announcements.

What have our government's incentives done for my colleague's riding in Nova Scotia?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question. It is an opportunity to practice my French.

[*English*]

The leadership demonstrated by communities, municipalities and provinces has been incredible. We have seen a subsidy at the federal level for electric vehicles, which is the largest investment in public transit and green infrastructure in the history of Canada.

In my home province of Nova Scotia, we have partnered with the province to offer a $56-million contribution toward home efficiency. This is making life more affordable, helping reduce carbon footprint and putting people to work in my hometown.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. for Vancouver East, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Intergovernmental Relations.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Abbotsford.

Mercifully, we are in the dying days of the Liberal government, praise the Lord. The Prime Minister now is waking up every morning and seeing the same polling data that we are. He knows Canadians are fed up with his government and, more important, fed up with the scandal we see day after day with the government. We have seen SNC-Lavalin, the Mark Norman trial, his illegal trip to the Aga Khan island and the embarrassing trip to India.

He sees that polling data and he knows Canadians hate the fact that his record includes increased taxes, the disintegration of relations with major powers, including the United States and China, increased tariffs on Canadian goods and manufacturers and job losses. The Prime Minister also recently watched his lunch get eaten in two by-elections.

I am sure the Prime Minister when he wakes up in the morning, looks at all of this and thinks that the left, his vote, is deeply divided in Canada. I would surmise that he understands this is a problem for him, and is probably an upside to the rest of Canada, in that his electoral prospects have been greatly diminished.

This is why we have seen the Prime Minister and other leftist leaders put forward motions this week in the House of Commons even though other leftist leaders in the House have flip-flopped on issues related to the environment, including the NDP leader. I would propose that everything we see this week is crass politics, and I want to break down why.

Rather than giving two rips about fixing any of the problems that the Prime Minister has created or getting my constituents back to work, the Prime Minister desperately needs to change the channel. He hopes that if the press gallery and Canadians are not talking about SNC-Lavalin, his attempts to influence the independence of the judiciary, his failed record on taxes, the economy, then somehow he can dupe Canadians into giving him another term in government. Thus enters the lefts great push to put virtue signalling, do nothing, empty motions on climate change in this place.

Climate change is a real problem and it is a global problem that requires concrete and measurable action to solve. How we do that, the policy outcome, is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and Canada has a role to play in that both domestically and internationally, but we have to do this while protecting our economy and, to reiterate, showing we are actually reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

How we do that, those policies, is not what any leftist leader, especially the Prime Minister, the leader of the Liberal Party, wants to talk about in this place. It is much like his virtue signalling on feminism, his fake feminism. He unceremoniously turfs a strong indigenous woman from his cabinet and a strong physician after taking credit for their CVs. It is the same thing on immigration and on the economy. I could speak at length to that, but I will not. He wants Canadians to get super-duper excited about his virtue signalling on climate change, because he wants to distract from his scandals and the fact that he has done absolutely nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

One of my colleagues said that we had no choice but to act. Why have the Liberals not acted for three and a half years? We are in the dying days of this Parliament. This virtue signalling motion has no policy on how it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It does not even mention the economy. All the motions we are talking about this week have nothing in them about how we are going to meet our Paris targets or how we are going to ensure that the people in my riding get to work. That is why the left is divided, because it is fighting over the dregs of failed virtue signalling policy, and Canadians have had enough of that.

● (1640)

Members will remember a picture that was taken a couple of Halloweens ago of the Prime Minister and the environment minister, the high priestess of the climate change elite cocktail circuit herself, dressed as Captain Planet and the Climate Crusader. She took this cape and was like, “Yeah, the environment”.

That is the perfect summary of the Liberal government's climate change approach. It is all costumes. It is all smoke and mirrors. It is all photo ops. That would be fine if it did not cost Canadians hundreds of millions of dollars or if it reduced greenhouse gas emissions and did not ruin the Canadian economy. That is why we have to reject any virtue signalling from the current government.

Here is a very inconvenient truth. The last Liberal government, under Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, the climate change-crusading Liberal government of the Kyoto accord, saw greenhouse gas emissions grow by 30%. That is the last Liberal government's record.

Here is another inconvenient truth. The only time in Canadian history we have seen a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions growth was under Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Why? It was because we understand that in a Canadian context, we have to heat our homes because it is cold eight months of the year. Also, we are a vast country and have to drive to places, because Liberal governments perpetually fail to get transit infrastructure built. That is because they are more concerned about SNC-Lavalin and their buddies than about getting track built to get passengers off the roads and into the downtown cores.

We put in place emissions regulations on light-duty passenger vehicles, heavy-duty passenger vehicles and the coal-fired sector. Any emissions reductions the current government sees—none yet—will happen because of those regulations. Why? It is because the current Prime Minister has said he wants to shrink the economy by taxing people with a carbon tax.

We cannot change the reliance of people on carbon in Canada, because there is no substitute. They need to drive around to get to work and they need to put gas in their combines and heat their homes, so we are not going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by putting a tax on gasoline. Hence, when gas prices in Vancouver went to $1.80 a litre, the only behaviour that changed was that people in Vancouver said, “Better not support a carbon tax.”

The Liberal-Green-leftist-NDP alliance in British Columbia all of a sudden wanted a pipeline. Now these parties are saying we need to further reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. I agree that we do, but we need to further double down on our targets. The Liberals cannot even meet the targets they have already agreed to. Why would we support anything they put forward?

This is empty virtue signalling. What do we need to do? We need to stop reverse tariffs, like allowing the Chinese to dump steel into our country when China does not have a carbon tax but our manufacturers do. We have to stop these ridiculous policies that stop clean Canadian products from being bought in our own country. We have to stop importing Saudi oil and start using clean Alberta energy. We have to stop all these things.

These are the real measures. We need a sector-by-sector regulatory approach.

We know why the big oil and gas companies were cheering Rachel Notley's $40 a tonne. It was because they had already priced it into their production. They can buy up the assets of juniors that did not do it and get profits through consolidation. That is not reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Rather than flip-flopping for votes, we have to take a leadership stand that manages to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, that does without Captain Planet's virtue signalling and that is not at the expense of the jobs in my constituency.

● (1645)

This party on this side of the House will reduce greenhouse gas emissions just as we always have done. We refuse to take the virtue signalling garbage that we hear day after day about greenhouse gas reduction. It is exacerbating an important issue for political gain without doing anything to materially support it.

Climate change is an emergency, and the last person on this planet to have any credibility for doing anything about it is that Prime Minister.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if there is a contest today on how often we use the term "virtue signalling", but I can say this: in terms of what has been said, this kind of virtue signalling is spinning like cotton candy.

Right now we have a claim by my hon. colleague about all these great things that were done by the Conservative government. However, I can recall a promise for cap and trade—broken. I can recall a promise for regulation of emissions from fossil fuels—broken. Then Conservatives had this very popular home energy retrofit program, but it had to be cancelled because they needed to reduce the deficit.

The reality is that the only reason there were emissions reductions was that we had economic problems. That is the reality. I would like hear, very specifically, why this colleague believes that there is no climate emergency. I do not know what reality she is living in, but let us just hear a little more.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, very specifically, I believe it is around page 35 of the 2014 emission trends report. My hon. colleague can flip through that and see, to completely counteract her claim, that the only time in Canadian history that emissions decreased while the economy grew was under a Conservative government.

Of course we are going to look at a North American context for a regulatory framework, because if the Americans are going to reduce their taxes and make it easier for people to invest in natural resources, why would we not do the same? Why would we price our jobs out of competitiveness, without the Americans contributing to some sort of a North American context?

This member probably got up in the House of Commons to applaud Barack Obama as a climate change champion. The Americans never put any sort of carbon tax on their industries. It was all virtue signalling there too.

Why would we put my constituents out of work and send those jobs to the United States, which is exactly what is happening right now? That is not reducing greenhouse gas emissions; that is just shifting the profit and the jobs to a country that understands that we have to make this a global issue.

All of these parties here have abdicated the responsibility to make this a global problem. They take cocktails and canapes in Davos and at all these different conferences, but they refuse to address the problem. We will not.

● (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been interesting to listen to my friend across the way.

On the government side, we do have a plan. There is a very tangible plan that has resulted in the creation of well over a million jobs since the last federal election as a result of working with Canadians and understanding that it is not only about the economy but that we also have to be sensitive to the environment, and we have a plan there with the price on pollution.

Conservatives, on the other hand, feel that they do not have to share any sort of a plan. We have been waiting days, turning into weeks, turning into months for the Conservative plan, and now we are at well over a year. What are we waiting for? Why can Doug Ford, Stephen Harper, Jason Kenney and the current leader not sit around a table and come up with a plan? That is what we are waiting for.

The real strength in the Conservative Party today here in Ottawa is Doug Ford, Stephen Harper, the current leader, and the recent add-on of Jason Kenney, all of whom, I would suggest, do not have a plan to protect Canada's environment. Why should Canadians have any faith, when the only leadership they see coming from the Conservative Party in Canada is from those individuals?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have Captain Planet costumes, money for Loblaws for refrigerators, $1.80-a-litre gas prices and lobbyists with steak dinners who invent programs that have green in them just to get corporate welfare.

The Liberals are not reducing greenhouse gas emissions. If that is the Liberal plan, I want none of it, and neither does any Canadian. The member is right that Canadians are waiting for leadership, and they are going to get it from the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative Party of Canada when he becomes prime minister in October.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, about the futility of the Liberal environment plan. Honestly, it is a national disgrace.

Let me refer specifically to the motion before us. We have two competing motions. As we know, the NDP put forward a motion declaring a national climate change emergency, and very quickly our Liberal friends jumped in and put forward a motion saying, effectively, the same thing. We have these competing motions before us, and it reflects the fact that both the NDP and the Liberals are posturing because we are approaching an election in the fall and they have not done anything to justify their being in government, certainly not on the climate change file.

I note that it is the Liberals in this House who brought forward this last-minute motion declaring a national climate emergency. Where were they when the west was burning, when forest fires were sweeping the four western provinces, when Fort McMurray was burning? Were they in the House putting forward a motion declaring a national climate emergency? Of course not.

This is all about political posturing by both the NDP and the Liberals. Canadians are not looking for political posturing; they are looking for a real climate plan that makes measurable reductions in our emissions, that continues to foster a strong economy and that allows Canada to be a leader in the areas where we have a comparative advantage.

In this NDP motion, there are a number of things that I take issue with. Aside from a declaration of an emergency, under subsections (c) and (f) are two items that Canadians should be really worried about.

The first is that the motion asks for this House to increase Canada's ambition when it comes to climate change targets.

Let us think about that. We have a motion on the floor that asks Canada to increase its targets under the Paris Agreement when Canada is not even meeting its current targets and in fact is falling further and further behind.

I know my Liberal friends still claim that they are on track to meet the Paris targets. The last time the minister made a statement about it was at committee a couple of weeks ago, when, with a very straight face, she looked us in the eye and said we are on track to meet our targets—yet her own department's documents reported that in 2016, they fell 44 megatonnes short of their climate change targets under the Paris Agreement. In 2017, they fell 66 megatonnes short of their Paris targets. In 2018, they fell 79 megatonnes short of their Paris targets. Now the most recent report out of that department reveals that Canada's emissions are projected to be even higher and will fall short by even more, by about 150 megatonnes. That is less than halfway to the target that was set.

Therefore, the government is failing on its most important file, and the Prime Minister identified it as being his, so this failure rests at his feet.

If anyone doubts what I am saying, the commissioner of the environment, the Auditor General of Canada, the United Nations itself and even David Suzuki have all said the government will not meet its United Nations Paris targets.

● (1655)

The bottom line is that the plan the Liberals brought forward is not working. It is not a climate plan. Everybody knows it is a tax plan. Why do I say that? Well, let us talk about the carbon tax.

The parliamentary secretary, just a few minutes ago, talked about the 50 different measures that the Liberal government had implemented to achieve its Paris targets. Well, the Liberals are failing to meet those targets. Why, out of those 50 measures, is there only one measure, the carbon tax, that is being made mandatory and being forced upon the provinces? This is only one tool out of 50. Imagine giving the provinces a tool kit and telling them that they can use whatever they want from the tool kit as long as they meet their targets, but that the one tool they need, which will be forced on them and shoved down their throats, is the carbon tax. Now Canadians are paying for it.

Why is this the one tool the government is making mandatory? It is because its plan is to make this a cash grab from Canadians: more revenues for the government to spend on its priorities rather than on the priorities of Canadians. However, we cannot tax our way to a cleaner environment. The Liberals believe the carbon tax is the be-all and end-all, but theirs is a tax plan.

The Liberals often refer to British Columbia, the paragon of virtue when it comes to the carbon tax, except for the promises that were made when that carbon tax was introduced. There were three promises. One was that it was going to be capped at $30 per tonne of emissions. What happened to that promise? It is gone. Today, the carbon tax in British Columbia is $40 per tonne and it is going up every single year, so that promise is gone and broken.

The second promise was that it was going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the province of British Columbia. What is happening today? The emissions continue to go up and up. It is another broken promise.

The third promise was that it was going to be a revenue-neutral carbon tax. Do members remember that promise? The government takes a dollar out of one pocket and gives it right back to people in the other pocket through tax relief. Does that sound familiar, similar to what the Liberals claim is going to happen federally? What happened to that promise in British Columbia? The NDP got elected and revenue neutrality was legislated out of existence. Today, it is a tax grab. It is a cash cow for governments to spend on their political priorities rather than on the priorities of Canadians. That is what is coming down the line with the Liberal tax plan.

The Liberals' carbon tax does nothing for the environment. We have seen that they are failing. They are falling further and further behind. It is not working. All it is doing is imposing a burden on average, middle-class families, which now have to pay more for everything: for their cars, homes and to buy groceries. This is a tax on everything.

Beyond that, the Liberals were not really upfront about what they were doing. Do members know that the Liberals are charging GST on the carbon tax? It is a tax on a tax. What is happening to the GST they are collecting on all the carbon tax that is being paid? Are they giving that back to Canadians? Of course not. We are talking about half a billion dollars today, and in the future it is going to go up and up as the carbon tax goes up. Canadians are getting fleeced. Why is the government not being upfront about that? Why is it not being honest with Canadians? This rests at the feet of the current Prime Minister.

Finally, who is the target of the carbon tax? One would assume that, in Canada, if the government was going to impose a carbon tax, the biggest polluters would pay. What is happening in Canada? The Prime Minister made sure that the biggest polluters in Canada get exemptions. Members can guess how much that exemption is. Is it 30%? No. Is it 40% of the carbon tax value? No. Is it 60%? No. The exemption is up to 90%. When we add up all the carbon tax that is being collected in Canada, do members know how much is actually being paid by the big polluters? Is it 8%.

● (1700)

Canadians are paying the balance: 92% of the burden of this carbon tax is on the shoulders of ordinary, average Canadians. That is a national scandal, which is why we are opposing any kind of motions that are going to perpetuate the failed tax plan of the Liberals.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two very quick questions, connected together, I hope.

Number one, does the hon. member believe there is a climate emergency? Number two, knowing that he opposes the carbon tax, what would he do instead?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, a number of my colleagues in this House have acknowledged that we face a climate crisis. It is a global climate crisis that requires global solutions. Of course, Canada is perfectly positioned to respond to that challenge because we have the technology, we have the know-how and we have the cleanest products in the world that we can sell to the world.

To the member's second question, I know he is trying to get a sneak peek into our environment plan. We have made it very clear that we are going to release that plan prior to the end of June. It is going to be a plan that does not include a carbon tax, and it is going to be a much better plan than the Liberal plan because it is going to make measurable improvements in Canada's emissions. It is going to be a plan that is responsible and accountable, and it is going to very much reflect the concerns that Canadians have. I am confident that this plan is going to be well received by Canadians.

● (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, countries from around the world went to Paris and generated a number of ideas. One of the most popular ideas that were discussed was having a price on pollution. That idea is something that then came to Canada. In Canada, we now have the current government, the New Democratic Party, the Green Party and, I suspect, even the Bloc Québécois that recognize the value of having a price on pollution.

Stephen Harper and the current leader of the Conservative Party here have said that they know better than all those other countries around the world and they know better than all the other political parties inside this chamber; they say that a price on pollution is a bad idea. I would argue that the Conservative Party and the brains behind the Conservative Party that tend to want to deny climate change in the first place are wrong on this.

A majority of my constituents in Winnipeg North are going to be financially further ahead because of the price on pollution. Would it be the Conservatives' intention not only to take that money away, but to penalize those provinces that currently have a price on pollution?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I made it pretty clear that we are going to eliminate the carbon tax. We are never going to take the money out of the pockets of taxpayers in the first place. That is what Conservatives do. We believe that the tax system should be managed in such a way that Canadians can continue to have affordability in their lives, and that the tax burden should not be one that makes it more and more difficult for Canadian families to survive. We know that about half of Canadians today are about $200 away from insolvency. The current Liberal government, and of course the NDP, want to keep taxing them to death. That is their solution for climate change.

Our plan is going to be a responsible plan that does not undermine affordability for Canadians and at the same time makes measurable reductions in our greenhouse gas emissions. By the way, our environment plan, more broadly, will be a comprehensive plan that is much better than what the Liberals across the way have delivered for Canadians.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I probably have a sum total of about seven minutes. I know that my colleague who has fought with me for many decades on environmental and climate issues would be deeply disappointed that I will not have more time to speak and that she will not have an opportunity to speak.

I am appalled at the dialogue that has gone on here today, particularly from the Liberals. I am sick and tired of the line “We are all in this together”, and then the Liberals stand to speak and they do nothing but insult us. I am sorry, but there are a good number of people in this place who have spent more than just the past four years, more than this afternoon, more than four decades fighting for stronger federal, provincial, territorial and municipal environmental protection and climate change laws and programs.

I am hoping that the next Parliament will actually believe in "Let us work together." I do not have much time, but I want to share what those of us in this place should know and wake up to. The youth of this country and this planet are fed up. They do not believe that the previous Conservative government or the current Liberal government is doing enough to address the crisis of climate change. They are leaving their schools and taking to the streets. They want action, and they want it now.

A number of speakers here today made fun of us because we are calling for an end to fossil fuel subsidies now. Gosh darn it, back in 2008, the Conservatives promised to move on it right now. Now we are 10 years later and the Liberals twice promised it. They say we are demanding action now. How about an action plan that says that 10 years from now they have to have removed their perverse subsidies? Yes, we do need action now, a compliance plan.

I would like to share the words of one of the most incredible spokespeople on this planet today for action on climate, and that is Greta Thunberg, the 15-year-old from Sweden. These are her words: "Our house is on fire. I am here to say, our house is on fire.... I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is."

She also said:

> [H]ardly anyone speaks about the fact that we are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction [backed up by the UN report just issued].... Nor does hardly anyone ever speak about the aspect of equity or climate justice, clearly stated everywhere in the Paris Agreement, which is absolutely necessary to make it work on a global scale.... What we do or don't do right now, me and my generation can't undo in the future.... We already have all the facts and solutions. All we have to do is to wake up and change.... Everything needs to change—and it has to start today.

That is our mission today in this motion. We have to have action today. That does not mean we do not give time to comply, but for heaven's sake, the government is coming up with policies written on the back of a napkin. At one point in time someone in the United States said to reduce methane by 40%, so we said we would reduce methane by 40%.

The Liberals criticize those of us on this side for not bothering to get the facts. I attended the detailed technical briefing on what is possible with existing technology to reduce methane and make a profit. I call on the government to step up and actually apply the technology. Yes, we need more investment in better technology, but where is the regulatory agenda?

I brought forward a motion calling on the government to enact a law modelled on the United Kingdom law. The Liberals have been briefed on that, just as I have. That law puts binding targets, which are required to be updated every five years, and there is an independent commission that gives advice, audits and reports publicly. Why are we not getting real measures like that? They talk about accountability; it is in all the mandate letters. Let us see some real accountability. Let us see real measures set in stone, in law.

I do not have the time to list all the measures that are possible. The technologies are there. What we need are the regulatory measures and the removal of the perverse subsidies so that we can have a level playing field, so that the clean energy future can happen now.

● (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is an issue in that the leader of the New Democratic Party seems to be changing his position on LNG. On the one hand, the provincial government of B.C., a New Democratic government, has been very clear about assisting in the future of LNG, which seems to contradict what is in the NDP motion before us.

Canadians have a right to know if the NDP at the national level supports LNG today or is it just the British Columbia NDP?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, let me talk about leaders who break their promises. How many times during the last election did the Prime Minister say that no energy project would ever be approved under the Liberal government until he enacted strengthened environmental assessment laws and environmental protection laws? I think he said that a thousand times, but it depended if he was in Alberta speaking to oil field workers or if he was in British Columbia talking to environmentalists.

My leader is reaching out and talking to people in British Columbia about whether we can move ahead. Gas may be cleaner than coal, but if we are processing gas and are going to give perverse subsidies, we have to give it a second look. We have promised as a country to get rid of perverse subsidies and so it has to happen.

● (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Thursday, May 16, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

OFFICERS OF PARLIAMENT

The House resumed from October 23, 2018, consideration of the motion.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say hello to the many constituents of Beauport—Limoilou who are watching. Today, it is my pleasure to debate Motion No. 170, which reads as follows:

> That, in the opinion of the House, a special committee, chaired by the Speaker of the House, should be established at the beginning of each new Parliament, in order to select all Officers of Parliament.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize with all due respect that the motion was moved by the member for Hamilton Centre, who is with the NDP and has been in Parliament for quite a while, but will not seek re-election. If he is listening right now, I would like to acknowledge him and thank him for his work and decades of public service. The member for Hamilton Centre was once an MPP in Ontario, as well, and worked hard on all sorts of causes that were important to his constituents. I would like to congratulate him on his service.

Moreover, he is more than just a good parliamentarian. I remember hearing one of his speeches at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, if I remember correctly. I took note of his delivery, because he is a fine public speaker with good rhetorical skills. I have always had a great deal of respect for my colleagues with vast parliamentary experience. I try to learn from the best.

I am sure the member for Hamilton Centre wants to leave his mark on Canadian democracy. I too want to improve Canada's Westminster-style parliamentary democracy. Our role as MPs is the cornerstone of parliamentary democracy. It is fundamental. MPs must play a leading role in the workings of Canadian democracy, which includes the selection and appointment of officers of Parliament. That is what this motion is about.

Officers of Parliament are individuals jointly appointed by the House of Commons and the Senate to look into matters on our behalf and help us carry out our duties and responsibilities. For example, Canada has a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, a position created by Mr. Harper and the Conservative Party.

There is also the Information Commissioner, who ensures that Canadians are able to have access to all government information so that they can get to the bottom of things. Then, there is the Commissioner of Lobbying. We heard a lot about her because of the Prime Minister's trip to the Aga Khan's island. Then there is the Commissioner of Official Languages. I am the official languages critic and I worked on the appointment of the new commissioner, Mr. Théberge. There is also the Auditor General. That position is currently vacant because the former auditor general passed away just a few months ago. God rest his soul. I send my best wishes to his family. Finally, there is the Chief Electoral Officer and the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner.

There are other officers of Parliament, but the ones I mentioned are the main commissioners who have been mandated by Parliament to conduct investigations in order to ensure proper accountability in the Canadian democratic process.

The member for Hamilton Centre wants to improve and strengthen parliamentary democracy with respect to the process for appointing commissioners and other officers of Parliament. Here is why.

During the last election campaign, the Prime Minister made some promises that he mostly did not keep. He promised to make the process for appointing commissioners more democratic. Under the Conservative government, from 2006 to 2015, the process for appointing commissioners was much more democratic from the perspective of a Westminster-style parliamentary system. It was also much more transparent than what we have seen over the past few years with the Prime Minister and the Liberal government.

When the Prime Minister chose the Official Languages Commissioner a year and a half ago, I am sure that the member for Hamilton Centre noticed, as we all did, that the process for appointing officers of Parliament was anything but open and transparent. Note that I am not in any way trying to target the individual who was selected and who currently holds that position.

● (1720)

This was done differently before 2015. For example, the Standing Committee on Official Languages used to send the Prime Minister of Canada a list of potential candidates for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages. The Prime Minister, with help from his advisors and cabinet, selected one of the candidates suggested. That is far more transparent and democratic than what the Prime Minister and member for Papineau is doing.

What has the Prime Minister done these past few years? Instead of having committees with oversight and the necessary skills for selecting commissioners, such as the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics or the Standing Committee on Official Languages, the Prime Minister is no longer relying on committees to send him a list of names of people or experts in the field. They are no longer able to send a list to the Prime Minister. He said to trust him, that he had set up a system involving people in his own office who send him lists of candidates with absolutely no partisan connections or any connections whatsoever to the Liberal list, candidates who were found by virtue of their expertise.

What actually happened? We saw one clearly terrible case with Ms. Meilleur. Far be it from me to badmouth her, but unfortunately, she was part of this undemocratic process. Ms. Meilleur had been a Liberal MPP in Ontario. She donated money to the Liberal Party of Canada, and less than a year later, she was nominated for the position of official languages commissioner. The Prime Minister did not send a list of candidates' names to the opposition parties. He did not start a discussion with the other party leaders to ask who they thought the best candidate was. He sent a single name to the leader of the official opposition and to the then NDP leader, saying that this was his pick and asking if they agreed.

Not only did the committees have no input under the current Liberal Prime Minister, but the Prime Minister actually only sent one name to the opposition leader.

What the member for Hamilton Centre wants to do is set up a process whereby candidates are selected by a committee, which would be chaired by you, Mr. Speaker, amazingly enough. First off, the idea suggested by my colleague, the member for Hamilton Centre, could not be implemented before the session ends. We have only a few weeks left, and I gather that an NDP member will be proposing an amendment to the motion in a few minutes. We will see what happens then.

Personally, I would say we need to go even further than the motion moved by the member for Hamilton Centre. I will speak to my colleagues about this once we are in government, as of October.

Why not be even bolder and give parliamentary committees not just the power to refer candidates to the Prime Minister for him to decide, but also the power to appoint officers of Parliament? I want to point out that I am speaking only for myself here. I began reflecting on this a year and a half ago, after what happened with Ms. Meilleur and the current commissioner.

I have been a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages for two years now, and I humbly believe that I have learned a lot about official languages issues. I am familiar with the key players on the ground and I am beginning to understand who the real experts are, who the stakeholders are and who might make a good commissioner. I have to wonder why we would not go even further than what my colleague from Hamilton Centre is proposing, and perhaps even give the real power to the committees.

Imagine the legitimacy the process would have if parliamentary committees could one day choose officers of Parliament. These appointments should still be confirmed by both chambers, as is always the case.

Careful reflection is still needed. What is certain is that we are too close to the end of the current parliamentary session for the motion moved by the member for Hamilton Centre to become a reality. This is even less likely to happen under the current Liberal government, which made many promises to please the Canadian left, including a promise for democratic emancipation. All those promises have been broken.

I wish the hon. member for Hamilton Centre continued success.

● (1725)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an immense pleasure to speak to the motion moved by the member for Hamilton Centre, whom I have admired immensely since arriving here in 2011.

I will quickly remind members of the motion, which states:

> That, in the opinion of the House, a special committee, chaired by the Speaker of the House, should be established at the beginning of each new Parliament, in order to select all Officers of Parliament.

On October 21, Canadians and Quebeckers will vote in the next Parliament. The first and perhaps most important distinction to make is that, when people go to the polls, they will not only elect a government, they will elect 338 men and women who will represent them in the House and form the next Parliament.

Naturally, every member of every party works hard to ensure that theirs has the largest number of seats and forms the government because that is the system we have. However, we could very well find ourselves in a situation where, to keep the government going, several parties could be called on to collaborate if the people, in their infinite wisdom, decided to elect a minority government.

That speaks to the primordial importance of parliamentarians. First and foremost, Canadians will elect a Parliament; then, there will be a government, which will form a cabinet. We all know how it works. I just want to make it clear, because we hear so much nonsense about the role of opposition members. By the way, for anyone that follows my podcasts, that will be the subject of my next one.

The role of opposition members is different, but just as important as the role of government members. Again, in their infinite wisdom, Canadians want their government, regardless of political stripe, to be responsible and to allow all different perspectives to be expressed in the House.

When we talk about officers of the House, we are talking about parliamentarians' staff. For those who do not really know what is meant by “officers of Parliament”, I will give a few examples that should sound familiar.

First there is the Auditor General. If there is one report that people look forward to every year, it is the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General has the team and resources needed to keep tabs on the government's actions. He or she raises any issues of concern.

The Chief Electoral Officer is another example. Thank God we have a Chief Electoral Officer who ensures that our voting system is impartial, neutral and functional and that it operates without interference from foreign countries.

We could talk about the Commissioner of Official Languages. We could talk about the Privacy Commissioner, especially now, when personal information is such a sensitive topic. We could also talk about the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

I would like to make one very important point. We have been saying this all along, but it is still just as true, that in all situations, these officers of Parliament must not be associated with a conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict of interest, so that they can do their jobs and also be perceived as having no ties to the executive.

What is happening right now with the appointment process? The whole process, or nearly all of it, falls entirely to the executive. It is all very well to say that the process is legitimate and fine, that there is no influence, that it is truly a coincidence that appointees are also on the Liberal Party donor list and that no one saw that coming. There is, at the very least, an appearance of conflict of interest there, which undermines the very credibility of these officers of Parliament, whose work is generally impeccable.

Before they can get to work, however, we need to make sure the appointment is impeccable. The existing process only requires the executive branch to consult the opposition parties. The word “consult” is open to interpretation. We recently saw that consulting can be as simple as sending the opposition party leaders a letter stating the name of the proposed candidate, not even a short list.

● (1730)

There is already a problem here, and there is an even bigger problem with the voting system, which needs to change. As we saw with the Conservatives, and again with the Liberals, a government is getting elected with 39% of the popular vote. That, however, is 39% of a total turnout of about 50%. That government suddenly ends up with 100% of the power and the responsibility of appointing 100% of the officers of Parliament. This is a clear procedural flaw that needs to be addressed.

Thank God we have this extremely simple proposal. Notwithstanding the member for Hamilton Centre's indisputable talent, his motion does not reinvent the wheel. We are not the first to notice this problem with potential conflicts of interest or apparent lack of neutrality. New Zealand and other parliaments have already taken steps toward what the member for Hamilton Centre is proposing, in order to give full authority back to elected officials via a multi-party committee.

We got a taste of how this could look when a committee made up of members from all parties was created to study electoral reform. Thanks to the NDP, this bill went a bit further to allow members of political parties that are not officially recognized in the House to serve on this committee. This brings all parliamentarians together and ensures that a single party is never making the final decision, which is instead based on a broader consensus among parliamentarians. This is, after all, about their employees.

These are our employees. When the government introduces a bill at 3 p.m. and I have to comment to the media at 3:45 p.m., it is difficult for me to analyze a 200-page document. Fortunately, the Parliamentary Budget Officer works full time, 365 days a year, minus vacation, on this and many other budget issues, to give us credible, objective and partisan-free information. We want more emphasis on ensuring that this information is free from any appearance of political involvement. This is truly a step in the right direction.

The member, in his infinite wisdom, particularly thanks to his experience in parliamentary procedure, and because time is running out as the session comes to an end, was not sure what the outcome of the motion would be, even if we all voted in favour of it. I have a hard time understanding why anyone would think this is not a good idea. I tried to find a reason, just to play devil's advocate. Perhaps someone would want to yield power to the executive in the hope of winning the election and getting that power to make choices. This would be a bad idea, since it would undermine nearly all of the principles I have been talking about today.

We could say that this is how it has always been, that it must be a British tradition and that we will not rock the boat. Well, no, we must move things along and go further. I believe that this motion is a step in the right direction. We could tell ourselves that we do not have the structure to do it. That is exactly what this motion does: it gives us the structure to do it, and it is up to us to find the means to move forward. I would like to point out that this costs nothing. All it takes is an ounce of common sense to recognize the merits of the proposal we are debating.

In my research, I could find no reason for voting against this motion. I look forward to hearing different points of view. What I am hearing so far already suggests that we seem to be headed for a broad consensus. However, I would like to present an amendment to the motion moved by the member for Hamilton Centre, who saw that time was passing and thought that perhaps we should move beyond the issue of principle and set up a pilot project that would take us further.

● (1735)

This is what the amendment says:

> That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the words "in the opinion of the House," and substituting the following: "during this Parliament, a special joint committee co-chaired by the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament should be created as a pilot project to begin undertaking the selection process for the vacant Auditor General of Canada position".

Note the term "Parliament" rather than "government".

This is a golden opportunity to take the first steps towards this new arrangement and open the door wide for the next legislature.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must inform the hon. members that, pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), amendments to private members' motions and to the motion for the second reading of a private member's bill may only be moved with the consent of the sponsor of the item.

[*English*]

Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Hamilton Centre if he consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, the wording reflects the wording that I would like to have, and therefore, I formally accept the proposed amendment, with thanks.

[*Translation*]

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

● (1740)

[*English*]

With that, we will resume debate. The hon. member for Sackville —Preston—Chezzetcook

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion moved by the member for Hamilton Centre and the important work done by our government to ensure a more rigorous approach to Governor in Council appointments.

The motion calls into question the important role that ministers play in recommending candidates to the Governor in Council, as well as our government's commitment to openness and transparency, which are critical elements of our approach to Governor in Council appointments.

As members know, in February 2016, the government announced a more rigorous approach to Governor in Council appointments. This new approach applies to the majority of full-time and part-time positions on commissions, boards, Crown corporations, agencies and tribunals across the country, including officers of Parliament.

As with all selection processes for all positions appointed by the Governor in Council, we ensure that the most qualified people are put forward for consideration. This is made possible by the hard work our government has already done to improve the selection process for Governor in Council appointments.

What sets this new approach apart is that the positions are open to Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Now all Canadians who are interested can apply for a position posted on the Governor in Council appointments website. This is a departure from the old way of doing things.

For example, in 2017, the position of Information Commissioner, which is an officer of Parliament position, was posted on the Governor in Council appointments website for all Canadians who might want to apply. The notice of appointment opportunity clearly stated the level of education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities required for this senior position.

For this position and other officer of Parliament positions, a selection committee reviews applications and then screens the applicants for further evaluation against the publicly stated criteria. The candidates who are deemed to be the most qualified by the committee go through an interview, a formal reference check, an official languages proficiency evaluation and other evaluations, including an assessment of their personal suitability for the position. The selection committee then submits its formal opinion on the most qualified candidates to the relevant minister for review.

When selecting a new Information Commissioner, the Governor in Council appoints a person only after consultation with the leaders of every recognized party in the Senate and House of Commons and approval of the appointment by resolution of the Senate and House of Commons.

As we can see, there is already a parliamentary procedure for appointing officers of Parliament. The motion moved by my colleague, the member for Hamilton Centre, would add another procedure to a system that is already working openly and, of course, transparently.

The motion would actually impinge on the Governor in Council's ability to appoint highly qualified candidates in a timely manner to fill positions that are essential to the functioning of our democratic institutions. This motion could seriously delay the appointment of an officer of Parliament.

● (1745)

I can assure the House that our government takes this issue very seriously and is determined to ensure that highly qualified candidates are appointed to these important positions. Our government has also pledged to ensure that Governor in Council appointments reflect Canada's diversity and that the appointment process takes regional, linguistic and employment equity representation into account.

Since launching this new open, transparent, merit-based selection process, our government has made over 1,070 appointments, of which 53% have been women, 13% have been people who identify as members of a visible minority, and 9% have been people who identify as members of an indigenous group. Just over 50% of the appointees are bilingual, to be sure.

With respect to officers of Parliament, I would add that, in less than two years, eight of the 11 positions have been filled by means of the new open, transparent, merit-based selection process.

I want to take a few minutes to stress the important role played by the officers of Parliament in making the government run properly and providing important services to Canadians. The officers of Parliament have accountability and oversight functions over government and Parliament. They operate independently from the government, fulfill their statutory duties and report to the Senate, the House of Commons or both. The people appointed to these positions work for Parliament and report to both chambers, usually through the Speakers.

This motion would slow down the appointment process for the officers of Parliament, which is already working quite well. Parliamentarians are already asked to participate in the appointment process by law. Each legislative measure provides for slightly different processes, but the appointment process for officers of Parliament requires that the leaders of the House of Commons and the Senate, or both chambers, be consulted.

What is more, Standing Order 111 provides for the appropriate standing committee to examine the qualifications and competence of all those appointed to a Governor in Council appointed position. That is what we should be focusing on, the qualifications of those who have been selected. That is what is important. We have already implemented a process to ensure that these people are qualified. As I already mentioned, the criteria associated with the Governor in Council appointed positions are posted on the Governor in Council appointments website. Candidates are carefully assessed against those criteria through a number of formal evaluations.

I would also like to remind members that, when it comes to the appointment of officers of Parliament, this government informs the party leaders of both chambers of the process and publishes the appointments for each position. The government also asks the leaders for their opinions and for the names of people who, in their view, have the qualifications and experience necessary to do the job. The government is not required by law to contact the leaders that early in the process, but it does so in a spirit of openness.

Our government's approach to Governor in Council appointments guarantees that public institutions are open, transparent and accountable, which enables us to focus our efforts on the people we are supposed to represent.

I will close by—

● (1750)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member's time is up.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre has five minutes for his right of reply.

[*English*]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking colleagues both in the first hour and specifically today.

My friend for Beauport—Limoilou was very generous in his remarks. He was very kind with regard to my time here. I am reminded that there is an axiom in politics that I am finding to be absolutely accurate, which is that one is never more loved than when one first gets here and when one leaves. It is the stuff in between that tends to be a little rocky.

I want to thank my good friend and caucus colleague for Trois-Rivières for his remarks and also for taking the time to care enough about this issue to work with me to ensure that we have wording that, quite frankly, stands the best chance of passing.

Finally, I want to thank my colleague from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook for his remarks. I appreciate his taking the time to make those remarks.

Here is where I am on this. I originally had a motion that sort of spoke to the principle. My goal, if it carried, was that it would lay the groundwork for the next parliament to pick up that torch and run with it. We then went through the tragedy of the untimely death of Michael Ferguson, who was a phenomenal Canadian and an amazing agent of Parliament. I thought this could be in his memory, because he was one of those, as far as I know, along with all the other agents of Parliament, who signed a document recommending this change. The government likes to brag about the quality of appointments, but these very appointments recommended the very change that is in front of us right now. We cannot say that they are high-quality people with great advice and then ignore them.

There has been a movement in the last few months in particular and over the last year, especially among new members, which I am not. The new members who came in wanted to reform this place. In large part, they wanted to make sure of the relevance of ordinary MPs, meaning those who are not in a leadership capacity or ministers of the Crown. They would become more meaningful, and being here would have a purpose.

There are people working in the background now. We now have a democracy caucus. There are cross-party discussions. There are proposals in front of the House and in front of PROC to consider further changes. It is not easy. It is complicated.

The beauty of this motion and this matter is that the power to hire the agents of Parliament is already ours. We do not have to change a single law. All we have to do is follow a different procedure. If a majority of members in the House, never mind government caucuses, ministers or whips, stand up and say yes to this motion, we will have struck the single biggest blow against keeping backbenchers from playing a meaningful role. It is one vote.

Will the process be completed in this term? No, but I would hope that it would at least get started. More importantly, it would send a message to the next parliament and those after it, which is that in this Parliament, we cared enough about our work to stand up to our own leadership and say that we are members of Parliament, and we will oversee the hiring of our own agents. That is what this is about. It is about us standing up in the majority and saying that enough is enough. These are our agents and our process, and we are now standing up and taking ownership of it, and from this day forward, all agents of Parliament will be hired by Parliament and not by the executive.

● (1755)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 29, before the time provided for Private Members' Business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, it took two years for it to sink in, but the Liberals eventually realized that family reunification on the basis of the luck of the draw was fundamentally unfair. Unfortunately, after scrapping that colossal failure, it was right back to the Conservative plan to force families to engage in a race against the clock to submit an application in order to be considered for the parents and grandparents family reunification program.

While the government claims to have streamlined the process by putting it online, it actually added another layer. The Conservatives forced families to race to submit their full applications to sponsor their loved ones. The Liberals are forcing families to race to submit an interest to sponsor form. Then later, if they are lucky enough, they will get to do the actual application. As predicted, this approach was also a giant failure.

After setting an entirely arbitrary cap of 27,000 submissions for the 20,000 sponsorship spots, the government opened up the website to receive the forms. It took less than 10 minutes for the cap to be hit. Eleven minutes after it was opened, IRCC tweeted that the limit had been reached and the application process was shut down.

I cannot truly imagine the heartbreak and frustration for the families that continue to be shut out of the process. First, it was pure luck; now it is a race against the clock. Thousands of families have once again been left out in the cold. I have heard crushing stories from constituents about how this process was not at all fair. Some constituents reported never even being able to open the form before it closed. That is despite, in some cases, taking the day off work to be at home and at the computer the moment the portal opened and even paying to upgrade their Internet speed just for this moment.

I also heard from constituents stories of opening the application, completing it and then, because the form said they had 10 minutes to complete it, going back and double-checking to make sure they filled everything out correctly. While they were double-checking their information, they were booted from the portal, and they lost the race. They were punished because they were trying to make sure their form was correct. How is that fair?

Some of these families have now been trying to sponsor their loved ones for five years or more. Despite their efforts, because of these unfair application systems, they have not even been able to get the process started. Every year, they get shut out. That is wrong.

This process is only made worse by the treatment that my constituents receive when they try to call IRCC to get the information on applications and processes. The Auditor General just released a report stating that 70% of calls to IRCC are blocked from reaching an agent. That is 1.2 million calls per year being denied the ability to speak to an agent. When will the government pick up the phone and listen to Canadians? They are demanding a fair system to reunite with their loved ones. Why will the Liberal government not listen?

● (1800)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a number of years ago, I was the immigration critic for the Liberal Party of Canada. I can tell members that I was at the table when the Conservative Party made the decision to actually cancel the program of being able to sponsor parents and grandparents. They had brought the system to where there were seven- or eight-year waiting periods for someone to be able to sponsor a parent. They actually shut it down. Then when they did decide to reopen it a year and a half or two years later, they put in a cap of 5,000.

This government does not need to be lectured by the New Democrats on the important issue of immigration and how it is that we believe we need to, wherever we can, allow for the reuniting of families, especially parents and grandparents. I am very familiar with the issue.

One of the initiatives we need to recognize is that we increased the number of applicants from 5,000 to 20,000, fourfold in the last three years. That is a significant achievement. Whether the NDP wants to choose to recognize that is completely irrelevant. The fact is that we understand it. This is a program whereby not only have we increased the numbers but we have seen substantial reduction in the amount of time it takes to process the sponsoring of a parent or grandparent.

We continue to reinforce the importance of the super visa, a visa that allows for those individuals who are not able to get their parents into the system, to get that 10-year visa whereby they can come and be here in Canada in blocks of two years at a time.

We do not need to be lectured by Johnny-come-lately New Democrats as to what should be happening on immigration. It is an issue that we follow very closely, and we have a proactive minister who is constantly working with many different stakeholders. Just the other day, in fact, I was approached by the minister, as I know the minister has approached many individuals looking at ways in which we can further advance the way we reunite families through immigration.

As a government, we have hit record numbers of immigrants with a great mix from economic immigrants to businesses to family reunifications, and so forth. This government takes the immigration file to heart, and we are very serious about that file.

We will continue to be diligent. We will continue as a caucus. We have a very proactive caucus. Members of Parliament from all regions of the country in our caucus recognize the true value of immigration, and we will continue to work and strive to improve the system. This is something that, from the Prime Minister to the minister of immigration, constantly not only raises and challenges our members on the government benches but encourages members of the opposition. I am sure they also bring issues to the attention of the department, because we recognize that there are ways we can actually improve. We will strive to make the system even better than we have in the last more than three and a half years.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the Liberal government members can pat themselves on the back all they want. All they need to do is talk to their constituents to know what the problem is.

Guess what. I even have government members phoning me in my office asking us to help them escalate an immigration case. Why? It is because 1.2 million people cannot even get through to IRCC to get an update on what is going on with their files. That is from the Auditor General, who has reported this. People cannot get through to the government to advance the issues about their parents and grandparents.

Members should talk to families who have not been able to get their applications through and see whether they feel as good as this member does about the great job that the government is doing. The government needs to get on with it.

If the member truly believes that the government is doing a good job, then he should listen to Canadians and listen to his constituents.

● (1805)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, again, I will take no lecture or lessons from the member opposite. In my constituency, the caseload is more than 400 files a month dealing with immigration. There is no issue in terms of members of Parliament being able to represent their constituents and make the calls that are necessary to ensure that an individual is, in fact, getting the attention that is necessary for the specific file.

If members are being challenged in terms of making that connection and if they or their office is unable to do so, I highly recommend they get in touch with the ministry of immigration. I am not aware of that. I know that MPs who put their resources into it and are prepared to assist their constituents on the immigration file, do have and are provided the opportunity to make that very important contact with immigration Canada services.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madame Speaker, we are in the dying days of this Parliament. We have talked a lot about immigration policy and the Liberal government's allowing the abuse of Canada's asylum system. That is really the core of Canada's immigration system.

I am going to ask a question of my colleague opposite who ends up answering all the questions at this time of day. For the last two years, instead of addressing a really serious issue with a definitive answer or a definitive position on whether people should be allowed to enter into Canada from the United States through an illegal point of entry and then claim asylum, the Liberals have kind of just allowed this to happen. It has cost Canadian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. There are all sorts of problems with it.

However, what is really egregious to me is that we are in the dying days of this Parliament and, all of a sudden, the Prime Minister woke up, started to look at the polls and thought that maybe he should talk about the issue. Maybe; however, he never apologized for something he did that was really serious. That is cheapening the debate on the term "racism".

I would think that one thing all of us could agree on in this House is that racism is a serious problem in Canada. I am assuming that my colleague opposite, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, will be answering. We both grew up in Winnipeg. Racism is a serious problem in Winnipeg. There are a lot of first nations people who suffer tremendously because of racist attitudes. There are minority communities across Canada for whom we need to do more to prevent racism.

Racism is not questioning the government's policies with regard to how people enter the country and under what circumstances. Instead of doing something about the issue at the border or just even taking a policy position on it one way or the other, first it was "irregular", then it was this and then it was that, and then it was that the safe third country agreement applies but it does not, and on and on. Instead of taking a position that the Liberals could defend either way, they just kind of spent all this money.

More importantly, the Prime Minister stood up, over and over again, and sort of labelled anybody from any political party or any Canadian as racist for asking questions about whether this was the best policy for protecting the world's most vulnerable in Canada. The immigration minister was in our hometown of Winnipeg, and stood up and said people are being "not Canadian" and got really angry and yelled proclamations. I think that is really disappointing. It cheapens the term. It prevents us from looking at issues that we could all be talking about.

It is not racist or un-Canadian to question the government, especially the current Liberal government, on policies related to how we manage the integrity of Canada's border and the potential abuse of Canada's asylum system.

I would just say this. In a hand extended in the spirit of bipartisanship, I wonder if my colleague opposite would say that perhaps that is not the best approach, calling somebody racist or un-Canadian for questioning policy related to whether somebody should be allowed to illegally enter the country and then claim asylum after having already reached the safety of upstate New York.

● (1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, maybe I could take a more holistic approach in responding to my friend's question.

If we look at Canada, every year we have target numbers that are well established with respect to the number of immigrants we would anticipate in the upcoming year. We also have separate categories. For example, there are categories that say we hope to achieve *x* number of provincial nominees coming from different provinces, *x* number of additional economic immigrants coming into our country and *x* number of marriages and family reunifications. I was just talking about parents and grandparents. We also recognize there will be a certain number of sponsored refugees.

These are all part of our immigration system. When we tally it all up, we are talking well over 300,000 net people coming to Canada this year. Canada is well respected around the world. There is a great demand to come to Canada. We are a country that has been built by immigration.

The member talked about racism. Racism is real and it hurts. We need to do things to try to minimize racism through cross-cultural awareness, whether it comes from individuals it should not come from or individuals who purposely intend to hurt people.

When we talk about those who are crossing the border seeking asylum, what we do not necessarily hear from the Conservative Party is this. I was the immigration critic in opposition when Stephen Harper was the prime minister. Even back then we had Americans or individuals from the United States crossing the border into Canada. The only thing that has really changed is the numbers. I suspect if we look at it more recently, some of those numbers have gone down.

Yes, there was a bump. We work with other countries, the Five Eyes countries, countries like Australia and the United States. A system is in place. Canada is held in fairly high esteem with respect to how we process asylum seekers. We have a fair process. That process has been followed the same way it was followed when Stephen Harper was the prime minister, even though at that time the number of people crossing the border was not quite as high.

Therefore, if we try to give a false impression by saying that we have never had people coming from the United States claiming asylum before, that is not true. That has been happening for many years. Yes, the numbers have changed and so forth, but the issue has been there for years. However, the Conservatives, in opposition, try to ramp up the issue, but what is the motivation for doing so?

We have a fair system. We have even seen some changes in the last budget. The budget is very much on top of the file. We have an incredible Minister of Immigration who is doing the diligence necessary to ensure the integrity of the system.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, the problem for the member opposite is that it is not just a little bump. The auditors general themselves have said that this was the highest number in history. In fact, we are close to I think 47,000 people illegally entering Canada from the United States and then claiming asylum. Now we have backlogs in our system. There probably will be a backlog of close to 100,000 caseloads at the Immigration and Refugee Board by the end of this year.

The member did not answer my question, and it is really important. Racism is a serious topic. He glossed over the fact the current government had conflated that term in order to distract from its failures on this issue. I would like to give him an opportunity to acknowledge that was not the best approach. We might have differences on policy and how to manage the asylum system, but we should not cheapen the term racism to distract from what is a significant policy change.

● (1815)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite did not contradict what I said, because it is true. As I pointed out, individuals from the United States have been crossing Canada's borders for many years.

The member is right that at times there are bumps where we will get a huge increase, just like many years ago when Stephen Harper was the prime minister and we had a huge bump in individuals from Roma. They were coming to Canada by the hundreds, if not even by the thousands. That caused very serious issues, delays and so forth. There was another situation with Mexico.

Different times have often led to different situations where individuals come into Canada and the government of the day has had to be consistent and ensure we protect the integrity of the system. That is something this minister—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*Translation*]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have an anniversary to celebrate today. On May 15, 2018, the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously passed the following motion:

> That the National Assembly ask the Quebec government and the federal government to implement a single tax return for Quebec taxpayers, to be filed with Revenu Québec, while preserving Quebec's fiscal autonomy.

We are very lucky to be able to talk about giving Quebeckers, who have just finished filing their taxes, the possibility to file a single tax return just like every other Canadian.

The National Assembly unanimously passed the motion on May 15, 2018, hot on the heels of the Conservative Party's general council in Saint-Hyacinthe, where the members in attendance clearly expressed their willingness to implement a single tax return. In addition, they provided other excellent recommendations, such as exempting producers of Canadian cultural content from paying GST, reviewing the safe third country agreement for tighter border control, giving provinces control over cultural matters and expanding the powers of the federal ombudsman for victims of crime.

During this event, a number of meaningful things were done for Quebec. Why? Because on this side of the House, we care about what Quebeckers want and the time they spend filing their tax returns. We want to make their lives easier, and that is what matters. That is what we intend to do by calling on the government to let Quebeckers file a single tax return.

On February 5, the opposition moved a motion in the House on a single tax return for Quebeckers. The Liberals rejected the motion, obviously. The motion said:

> That, given:
>
> (*a*) the House has great respect for provincial jurisdiction and trust in provincial institutions;

As an aside, that is not the case for the Liberals. When federal ministers make announcements about matters of provincial jurisdiction without their provincial counterparts, we have to wonder if they are really willing to listen to the provinces and establish partnerships with them. During election season, nothing matters anymore for the Liberals.

Continuing with the motion:

> (*b*) the people of Quebec are burdened with completing and submitting two tax returns...
>
> (*c*) the House believes in cutting red tape and reducing unnecessary paperwork to improve the everyday lives of families; therefore,
>
> the House call on the government to work with the Government of Quebec to implement a single tax return in Quebec.

The government was quick to respond. The Prime Minister automatically slammed the door on the idea of the Government of Quebec administering a single tax return. The Premier of Quebec was obviously very disappointed. The Prime Minister stated very clearly that his government is not aligned with the Government of Quebec on the idea of a single provincial tax return.

Since then, conversations, partnerships and discussions with the Government of Quebec have gone from bad to worse. It is completely irresponsible for a federal government to not respect the provinces' jurisdiction. What is truly despicable is the government's unwillingness to respect Quebeckers' desire to file a single tax return, which is what all other Canadians in all the other provinces do.

● (1820)

[*English*]

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is not the first time we have talked about this matter in the House. However, I would like to reiterate it in English.

The minister has made it clear that the transfer of administration from the federal tax system to Revenu Québec would have significant impacts on the human resources of the CRA. We need to think about the people, the people who work day after day at the CRA. Their work is essential to maintaining the integrity and fairness of our Canadian tax system.

We must take into account the potential impacts on more than 5,500 employees of the CRA who work in Quebec. These people work in 14 offices across the province, including the National Verification and Collections Centre in Shawinigan and the Jonquière Tax Centre. Let us not forget the vast majority of these jobs are permanent and well-paying. Jobs like these help stimulate the economy of various regions in Quebec.

Let us say that we would transfer the tax administration from the federal system to Quebec. Could Revenu Québec really absorb all of the people currently employed? I am taking the liberty to cast serious doubt on this. I will elaborate.

The Conservatives claim that there would be no job losses and that Revenu Québec could certainly hire a large number of people, especially all the people whose work relates directly to the administration of the income tax and benefit returns of Quebeckers. However, even a transfer of some personnel to Revenu Québec would leave many people out in the cold.

Premier Legault admitted it himself, that if the Government of Canada transferred its tax administration in Quebec to Revenu Québec, there would certainly be job losses. This would be a headache for these people and their families, which would perhaps have to move to another region or even another province. It would be a logistical headache since a game of musical chairs would have to be orchestrated in the field. As well, it would be a financial headache since all of that would not be without cost.

Also, let us not forget the potential impact it would have for Canadian taxpayers across the country.

Currently, the federal government, nine provinces and three territories have harmonized their definition of income and have a single tax return administrated by the federal government. This is the simplification and the savings for which Quebec is looking. Quebec has different definitions, different rules and different exemptions. For a single tax return in Quebec, a choice has to be made. Either Quebec adopts Canada's definitions or Canada adopts Quebec's definitions.

What are the Conservatives trying to achieve? What are their true intentions?

On May 6, a symposium took place, organized by academics from the Université de Sherbrooke. After a whole day of discussions, invited experts came to a strong conclusion that the issue was far more complex than it had been presented and proposed by the Conservatives. They concluded that if Quebec's aim for this proposal was to save money, then the advantage for Quebeckers would be to have one single tax return administered by the CRA, like in all other provinces in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the fear campaign continues. Instead of putting the interests of Quebeckers first, they are finding all sorts of excuses to justify their refusal to acknowledge the will of the National Assembly.

As for the symposium in Sherbrooke, I will quote the president of the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, who said, "There is a real need to streamline the process. Taxpayers currently have to comply with two tax systems. It is a tremendous waste of time for SMEs and it undermines their competitiveness."

That was said at the symposium my hon. colleague just mentioned.

I will also quote a union that waded into the debate on a single tax return in 2015, the Syndicat de la fonction publique et parapublique du Québec, who said, "This position is not only in the interest of SFPQ members, but of all Quebeckers."

We are not alone. The National Assembly, the Syndicat de la fonction publique et parapublique du Québec and the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec all support a single tax return. It is the right thing to do, and only the Conservative Party will do it.

[*English*]

Mrs. Deborah Schulte: Madam Speaker, let me assure the House that the Government of Canada is firmly committed to working closely with Quebec to reduce the administrative burden on Quebec taxpayers so all Canadians receive the best services. Canadians across the country deserve services that are accessible and fair. This is the work we have been doing, and will continue to do, for Canadians.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn, and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering all votes under Department of National Defence in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

[*English*]

I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2019-20

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Department of National Defence in the main estimates, Mrs. Carol Hughes in the chair)

The Deputy Chair: Tonight's debate is a general one on the votes under Department of National Defence. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

[*Translation*]

Each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time, which may be used for both debate and for posing questions. Members wishing to use this time to make a speech have a maximum of 10 minutes, which leaves at least five minutes for questions to the minister.

When a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used, in other words, how much time will be spent on the speech and how much time will be used for questions and answers. Members should also note that they will need the unanimous consent of the committee to split their time with another member. When the time is to be used for questions and comments, the Chair will expect that the minister's response will reflect approximately the time taken by the question, as that time counts toward the time allocated to the party.

[*English*]

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, comments should be addressed to the Chair. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

We will now begin tonight's session.

The House is in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), consideration in committee of the whole of the votes under Department of National Defence in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

Debate, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

● (1830)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be using my time for questions.

This is the third time in four years that the Minister of National Defence has had to appear at a committee of the whole. That is not because we are fond of him but because we have some concerns about the way he has managed the department.

The most recent report from the Macdonald-Laurier Institute on fighter jets says in the conclusion that the current government has put its own partisan political interests ahead of the interests of the Canadian Armed Forces and the men and women who serve us in uniform and ahead of our national security.

Yesterday, as members know, we passed in this House a unanimous motion to recognize Vice-Admiral Mark Norman for his loyal service to Canada. We expressed regret for the personal and professional hardship he endured from his failed prosecution, and this House apologized to him and his family for what they had experienced.

The minister, in interviews this past weekend, said that he regrets what happened to Vice-Admiral Norman and he regrets the process. Will he apologize now directly to Vice-Admiral Norman on behalf of the Government of Canada?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is nice to be back in committee of the whole. I disagree with the member; I fully believe that he actually just wanted to get together in this beautiful forum here for a discussion. Next time, he can just pick up the phone and I will be happy to have a discussion.

As we saw yesterday, this place unanimously passed a motion to recognize Vice-Admiral Norman for his decades of service to Canada and to express regret for the hardship he has endured over the past few years during this independent process.

Like the rest of the chamber, I support this motion, but I want to assure my colleagues that this was the result of an independent process since the beginning.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, that regret and apology was on behalf of the House. What about an apology on behalf of the Government of Canada, and in particular an apology on behalf of the Department of National Defence, which orchestrated his suspension and the charges that were ultimately brought forward?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I am part of the House, and as I stated, I agreed with the motion that was passed unanimously.

I also want to stress, as I have before, the quote from the prosecution. It said, “No other factors were considered in this decision, nor was there any conduct or influence from outside the PPSC, including political influence in either the initial decision to prosecute Mr. Norman or in the decision to stay the charge.”

In addition to this, when the circumstances changed—

The Deputy Chair: The answers should be approximately the length of the questions. Maybe the minister will be able to add to his comments.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, I guess the minister of defence has the same problem as the Prime Minister in that he has trouble saying sorry when he is personally involved but will apologize for things that are completely unrelated to the administration of his department or the Government of Canada.

As members know, the minister is a former police officer, so I would think he would have some interest in how this investigation was carried out. Why was this issue not dealt with through the military court martial system? What investigation was carried out by military police and the national investigation service concerning Vice-Admiral Mark Norman?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I thank the member for recognizing my military service.

We have to realize that when an investigation is launched by our police forces, including the RCMP, it is independent of the government. We need to make sure that this is respected. That is exactly what we did, including in the investigation, while respecting the independence of the judicial system.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, my question asked what the military police and the national investigation service dug up first in their investigation, before Vice-Admiral Mark Norman was suspended.

● (1835)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, DND does not charge people. As I said, once information was put forward, there was an importance to remain independent in the investigation. This is how we respect the processes within our democracy.

Our police service is independent and our judicial service is independent, and we have respected this all the way through.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, on what date did the minister learn that Vice-Admiral Mark Norman was going to be suspended, and did he sign off on that suspension?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I was notified in the month of January. I do not remember the exact date. I was notified by the chief of the defence staff and the deputy minister at the time, who provided information to me. I supported the decision that the chief of the defence staff made at that time.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, just yesterday in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said during question period, "Measures were brought forward against the vice-admiral at the direction of the chief of the defence staff. That is known by everyone." The Prime Minister then reasserted that statement.

Based on what evidence did the chief of the defence staff order Vice-Admiral Mark Norman to be suspended?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I supported the decision of the chief of the defence staff when it was brought to my attention. As I stated here—and it is very important—the entire process, from the beginning, has been independent. It is the most important way to respect someone's service. I have deep respect for Vice-Admiral Norman's service, as I do with all members here.

In this case here, not only the prosecution but also the defence confirmed the independence of the system.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, the minister keeps referring to the process and that he took the recommendation of General Vance, chief of the defence staff, who ordered the suspension of the vice chief at the time, Vice-Admiral Norman.

Is the vice chief of the defence staff not appointed on the minister's authority? If that is the case, why was he not suspended by the minister's authority?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, as the member knows, since he was parliamentary secretary to the minister of national defence at the time the Conservatives were in government, the chief of the defence staff has the sole responsibility for the administration and command of the Canadian Armed Forces, and that authority is actually under the chief of the defence staff.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, I will ask again. Did the Minister of National Defence personally sign off on the suspension of Vice-Admiral Mark Norman?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, when it comes to the administration of the Canadian Armed Forces, this is the chief of the defence staff's responsibility, something that I respect. When the decision was made, I supported it.

Mr. James Bezan: As you know, Madam Chair, throughout this whole process, the Liberal government has been accused of withholding evidence and dragging its feet in turning over documents that were subpoenaed by the defence team of Vice-Admiral Norman. I would like to know who in the Department of National Defence counselled the minister's staff not to search their private cellphones and emails when instructed to do so by the court.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we take the matter of ATIP requests and subpoenas very seriously. I had a discussion with the deputy minister to make sure that we had the appropriate resources to deliver on this. The department does get a lot of requests, and all the steps within the process were followed.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, we learned through the process that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces tried to hide evidence and skirt around access-to-information laws. We know for a fact that they used code names to get around it. They would go to any lengths, in both the minister's office and within the department, to stifle any dissent, and they would roll over anyone getting in the way of their agenda.

How many times was the code name "Kraken" used to reference Vice-Admiral Norman in documents?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, no code names were used. When it comes to the entire process, it has been independent from the start to the finish. This has been confirmed by the prosecution and the defence, and the witnesses who testified allowed their testimony to stand.

● (1840)

Mr. James Bezan: We know, Madam Chair, that there were code names used. We know that because a whistle-blower within the Department of National Defence testified at the pretrial hearings for Vice-Admiral Norman, and that individual asked to be protected so that there would be no repercussions or reprisals brought against him.

Will the minister personally guarantee that this individual will not be subject to reprisals for speaking out?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, from the start until today, the entire process has been independent. We produced 80,000 documents, and 18,000 documents were reviewed.

Absolutely none of this would happen. We encourage any of our members, if there is any wrongdoing, to come forward, but what is very important is that it has been confirmed by the defence and the prosecution that the process from the beginning until today has been completely independent.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, just because he is using Liberal spin and trying to hide behind a few words about independence does not make it true.

It was reported by David Pugliese on December 20, 2018, as follows:

> one witness Norman's lawyers called revealed that his superior, a Canadian Forces brigadier general, told him Norman's name was deliberately not used in internal files—meaning any search conducted for records about Norman would come up empty....
>
> The witness, a military officer, told the court that he was processing an access-to-information request in 2017 that returned no results. When he sought clarification, [he was] told: "Don't worry, this isn't our first rodeo. Send back the nil return."

I have to say that there is a culture within the minister's office to hide documentation and withhold evidence from attempts to mount a real, true independent defence.

Now I will move on. The minister's former chief of staff, Zita Astravas, was also told and coached by lawyers within the Department of National Defence not to search her personal phones for references to Vice-Admiral Norman.

Why was the minister's former chief of staff counselled to disobey a subpoena issued by a court?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, just because the member says so does not mean it happened. He talked about independence. This is not about news stories; it is about allowing the procedure in court to take its course, which is exactly what has happened. It has been done in an independent way, from the time it started right to the time a decision was made.

Now that the circumstances have changed, the current deputy minister has reviewed the criteria, which have changed, and I have authorized a legal reimbursement. All witnesses have worked through our current process, as it stands.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, based upon what happened to Vice-Admiral Mark Norman and the fact that he was used as an example by the government to start this witch hunt, the government has brought in a culture of fear and intimidation through lifetime gag orders.

Will the Minister of National Defence please explain why he needs to put lifetime gag orders on his staff, who are military members, as well as going across other departments within the Canadian government? Was it all about intimidation? Was it all about a culture of fear and using Mark Norman as the minister's whipping boy?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I completely disagree with the member's assertions. Maybe he is reflecting on the time when he was parliamentary secretary to the minister of national defence.

In the time that I have been the Minister of National Defence, we have opened up defence. There was a time when approval by the Minister of National Defence was required for any politician to visit a base. People were not even allowed to talk to the media. We have changed this, and the commanding officers and base commanders are allowed to make those decisions. We encourage all members to talk about their experiences so that Canadians know what the Canadian Armed Forces are up to.

I am very proud of the work our Canadian Armed Forces has been doing on our behalf.

● (1845)

The Deputy Chair: Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Chair, I see that nothing changes from question period to a committee of the whole, but that is okay. I will continue.

I am pleased to be here alongside the members of our defence team to update everyone on the important work that the Department of National Defence is doing for our women and men in uniform.

Throughout the evening, members will hear about how we are taking care of our people, how we are getting them the equipment they need and how we are supporting a rules-based international order as committed and engaged partners in the world.

Through our yearly departmental funding, we are able to deliver on the commitments we made in our defence policy, strong, secure and engaged, which we launched two years ago. “Strong, Secure, Engaged“ is a rigorously costed and funded transparent vision for the next 20 years of our defence policy.

After the Conservatives spent a decade cutting defence spending, we are increasing it by 70% to ensure that our women and men in uniform have what they need to do the important job we ask of them.

This policy guides how we support our nearly 67,500 regular force members, 29,000 reserve force members and 24,000 civilians. Our Canadian Armed Forces members operate across Canada and around the world. They stand ready to be deployed internationally in the name of Canada's safety and security, and they are always ready to assist Canadians here at home when disaster strikes in their communities, as we have seen this spring. More than 2,500 women and men in uniform answered the call to help those in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick hold back the flood waters and protect their homes. I would ask members to please join me in thanking each and every one of our members, our regular force members and our reserve force members, who help to keep our communities safe.

Our Canadian Armed Forces members contribute so much to our country, and they deserve policies and initiatives that support them through all stages of their careers. Initiatives like seamless Canada, the military spousal employment initiative and tax relief for our members who are deployed on named international operations, will all help to ease the stress on our military families.

Our full-time summer employment for reservists will allow them to gain unique and relevant work experience while learning valuable life and leadership skills that will help them find jobs. ln 2018, 7,200 army reservists from the country participated, and we hope to see that number grow every single year.

Bill C-77 is modernizing the military justice system by expanding the rights of victims to ensure that all voices are heard. I am proud to say that it is being studied at committee in the other chamber. Our sexual assault review program and Operation Honour are two of many efforts to address and eliminate sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces.

We are building a military that looks like Canada and making sure that all members feel safe and welcome as they defend our rights and freedoms at home and around the world. We have launched the Elsie initiative, which aims to increase the number of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We have made recruiting more women into our Canadian Armed Forces a priority, because we want a military that represents Canada. By 2026, we are aiming for 25% of our members to be women. That is not an end goal; it is just a guidepost for us to go to.

We are making progress. ln fact, right now, as part of our air task force in Mali, women make up 14% of Canada's deployed personnel. We will continue these efforts until our Canadian Armed Forces fully reflect Canada's diversity.

Our government is investing in the innovation and procurement that will better equip our women and men in uniform.

Unlike the previous government, which muzzled scientists and cut crucial research funding, we are supporting our people by investing $1.6 billion in innovation through our innovation for defence excellence and security program, or IDEaS, and also the mobilizing insights in defence and security program, which we call MINDS.

Both were created to tap into Canada's best and brightest minds, from individuals and small businesses to those at our world-class colleges and universities. They are helping to support defence innovation, and I am excited to see what comes from them next.

● (1850)

We have also made important progress on many of our capital projects, including our Arctic and offshore patrol ships. The first of our six ships, HMCS *Harry DeWolf*, is scheduled for delivery this summer. Just last month, I was in Halifax to mark the construction of our fourth ship, HMCS *William Hall*.

This winter, we announced the official winning design bidder for the biggest defence procurement project in Canadian history, the purchase of 15 Canadian surface combatants. Our future fighter capability project was also launched. The request for proposals will be issued in the coming months.

When we formed government, we recognized that years of underinvestment by the previous Conservative government meant that our air force could not generate enough aircraft to answer our NATO and NORAD obligations at the same time. We laid out a plan to deal with the shortfall, which included securing interim fighter aircraft to supplement our existing fleet of CF-18s, because we have missions to fly. The first two jets arrived in Cold Lake earlier this year, and they will be proudly flying in the Canadian colours soon.

As we work on each of these projects, we are following through on our commitment to greening defence. Regrettably, we are feeling the impacts of climate change, with an unprecedented number of floods and fires both here in Canada and around the world. While the Conservatives continue to ignore the science on climate change and offer no plan to tackle this global challenge, our government is taking action. That is why we have invested more than $165 million in green infrastructure projects since 2017. This investment will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% over the next decade. With each of these initiatives and projects, we are building a modern military that will be flexible enough to address current and future threats.

We are also stepping up on the world stage and equipping our Canadian Armed Forces with what they need to uphold our international commitments and be a valuable partner to our allies. In collaboration with our international partners, we are leading on efforts to prevent the use and recruitment of child soldiers. We launched the Vancouver principles at the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in 2017, and 84 member states have signed on since.

Right now, there are 250 women and men in uniform deployed in Mali as part of the United Nations' stabilization effort, providing life-saving aeromedical evacuations of injured soldiers and civilians, and critical air transport. Up to 780 of our members are involved in Operation Neon, Canada's contribution to a multinational surveillance initiative to counter North Korea's evasion of maritime sanctions. There are 540 Canadian Armed Forces members in Latvia on Operation Reassurance, where Canada leads a multinational battle group as part of NATO's deterrence and defence measures across central and eastern Europe. Two hundred of our Canadian Armed Forces members are helping to demonstrate our unwavering support to Ukraine through Operation Unifier, and upwards of 850 members are stationed in the Middle East on Operation Impact. They include Major-General Dany Fortin, who is commanding the NATO training mission in Iraq. The funds we are requesting in these main estimates would enable us to carry on this vital work and continue to build on our successes.

Beyond this funding, we are requesting $733 million for the Communications Security Establishment, to keep our institutions and Canadian citizens safe.

The $21.9 billion requested in these estimates is a $1.5-billion increase, or 7.4% over the amount we requested last year. It also includes new measures announced in budget 2019, including $18.9 million to help our Canadian Armed Forces members transition out of the military and into post-service life, and $2 million for National Defence to support our government's effort to counter economics-based national security threats. This funding will allow us to continue to pursue ambitious capital projects to provide our members with the best equipment available, and to make sure our infrastructure serves both their needs and the ongoing efforts to operate in an environmentally conscious way.

Canadians expect us to fulfill our commitments with the same transparency and care we have demonstrated over the last four years. We take that responsibility seriously, as we take seriously our responsibility to support our people as they defend this country.

Before I finish, I would like to thank the women and men of our Canadian Armed Forces. They ensure we are strong at home, secure in North America and engaged in the world.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the minister of defence for his speech. Before I ask my first question, I just want to thank him for doing such a great job as Minister of National Defence. Contrary to what my Conservative colleague said, the Department of National Defence has been doing much better since the minister was appointed and since the Conservatives left government. I also want to thank the officials who are here tonight to lend us a hand. It is important to thank these people, as well as our women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces, for the terrific work they do day after day.

In his speech, the minister mentioned our new defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged". I would like him to tell us more about it. This policy puts our men and women in uniform first. When we visit military bases, we see how happy our military and civilian personnel are with this policy. I would like to hear the minister tell us a bit more about the defence policy we implemented.

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I have had the tremendous opportunity to visit our Canadian Armed Forces members all over the world, including here in Canada, and one of the things I have heard is to not focus just on them in our defence policy but to also focus on their families.

I think all of us in this House and all Canadians can understand that it is difficult to focus on one's work when things are not good at home. Members can imagine the stress our Canadian Armed Forces members go through, not only during operations but also during training. Therefore, we have tax relief during all operations, which is a way to thank the families. Putting in an education benefit for their service also goes a long way.

I would like to stress the seamless Canada initiative, which is for our regular forces members' families, which are constantly posted. It is part of that life. They make it seem like it is normal, but there are challenges. Moving from province to province if there are medical issues means finding a doctor. There is accreditation. Through seamless Canada, we are getting the provincial and territorial representatives together so that we can deal with those challenges. I am happy to say that we have had—

The Deputy Chair: Unfortunately, the time is up for that question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madam Chair, as we can see, our defence policy is welcomed by our men and women in uniform.

The minister also talked about our missions abroad. In 2015, we promised Canadians that we would renew our international commitment, and that is precisely what we are doing. It has been nearly a year now since we restored Canada's historic support for peacekeeping missions, such as the one in Mali. Our air task forces provide medical evacuations that save many lives.

Could the minister tell the House how we are supporting our soldiers abroad, such as those currently deployed in Mali, and how we will ensure their safe return home?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, whenever we ask our Canadian Armed Forces members to step up and carry out a mission, they do us proud. I think that is one thing all of us in this House can agree upon.

Right now, we are leading a battle group in Latvia, which is sending a very strong deterrence message to Russia. We have a ship, persistent, in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. We also conduct sporadic air policing.

We are taking a leadership role in NATO. While the previous government pulled out from NATO, we have invested, not just with investment but also with people. Where the Conservatives pulled out of the AWACS program, we have now reinvested in the AWACS program, including with personnel.

We also have had an impact with Operation Impact and the fight against Daesh. Daesh controlled 90% of the territory. Now it controls zero territory in Iraq. This is the work of the Canadian Armed Forces. As we stated, the plan was to be a responsible coalition partner and provide capacity for the Iraqi security forces with intelligence and capacity-building on the ground, and that is exactly what has happened.

We are doing so many things around the world.

● (1900)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Chair, I will begin with some brief remarks, but I want to spend the majority of my time on questions to the minister.

We all know that we ask the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces to do difficult and dangerous work on our behalf each and every day, at home and abroad. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to make sure that they receive the training, equipment and support they need, both while they are serving and as veterans. Therefore, tonight, whether we are talking about actual dollars of spending, procurement or deployment, we have to make sure that we keep the serving members and their families central to what we are talking about here tonight.

The Canadian Armed Forces faces many challenges, as we all know, with recruitment and retention. Meeting those challenges is essential to make sure that the Canadian Armed Forces reflects the faces of our nation. Certainly the Canadian Armed Forces and DND have much work to do when it comes to dealing with some key issues, such as sexual assault within the military and mental health issues. This is both a matter of justice and a matter of how we are investing in those who serve their country, and it is a necessity if we are ever to meet those diversity goals.

As members will know, one of my concerns has been how the Canadian Armed Forces has been dealing with mental health issues. I acknowledge that there has been some progress made. However, I still have a large concern about death by suicide within the Canadian Armed Forces. We are still losing one serving member a month to death by suicide. That is over 160 members since 2005. It is a tragedy for all those families, and it is a tragedy for our country. That number does not even include reservists, because, unfortunately, we do not even keep good statistics on death by suicide of reservists, and of course, it does not count veterans who may be suffering from PTSD.

While there has been progress in acknowledging that not all injuries within the military are visible, we still have much more to do. We had one very big opportunity to do something in this area earlier this year. When we were talking about Bill C-77, the military justice reform bill, I proposed an amendment to remove self-harm as a disciplinary offence in the Canadian military code of conduct.

We held hearings and we heard from witnesses, such as Sheila Fynes, who lost a son to death by suicide while he was serving. We heard from experts on mental health. We heard from senior members of the Canadian Armed Forces. We had indications from a majority of committee members that they would support my amendment. I want to thank the Conservatives for their early support in trying to remove this barrier to treatment of mental health issues that is both symbolic and practical.

However, 30 minutes before we were to vote in committee on my amendment to remove self-harm as a disciplinary offence, the minister sent an email to every member of the committee asking us not to do this. The Liberals then voted against my amendment, saying it was out of order in a military justice reform bill, which is passing strange, since this is a bill that was already amending the code of conduct in several other places.

I have a very direct question for the minister. Why did the minister ask the committee not to remove this barrier to the treatment of mental health issues and to this very severe problem we have with death by suicide in the military? Why did the minister ask committee members not to remove paragraph 98(c) of the military code of conduct?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his passion and his dedication to our women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces and also for his advocacy when it comes to mental health.

I actually agree with the objective the member is talking about. How do we reduce the stigma? How do we make sure that we reduce the number of suicides? One suicide is too many.

We have a number of initiatives. With regard to this, we want to make sure that people can get the support they need. We want to make sure that we study the issue of self-harm further. I encourage the member, and I am happy to continue to work together on this. I am very proud of the work that has been done on the bill, and I thank the committee members.

I have also spoken with many families. I know far too many people who have suffered those challenges. We have to continue to evolve our support. I have been working very closely with the Minister of Veterans Affairs on the joint suicide prevention strategy. This is something we are going to have to continue to evolve.

I encourage the member. We can work together on this. A lot more work needs to be done. I thank the member again for his efforts.

● (1905)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, I do not understand what the minister wants to study. We already heard the witnesses at committee, including mental health experts. We heard from the families who have lost loved ones to death by suicide. There is nothing to study here.

We know that the existence of this section of the National Defence Act is a barrier to people getting the treatment they need. We know that it is both a symbolic barrier and sometimes a practical barrier, as people are assigned minor discipline for attempts to take their own lives. How is this helpful?

I have rewritten my amendment into a private member's bill, Bill C-426, and I will be asking for the unanimous consent of the House to pass that bill in all its stages.

I ask the minister once again, what is he waiting for, when we all know that this would be a major step forward, both symbolically and practically, in addressing this crisis within the Canadian Armed Forces?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we have taken a number of steps. We want to make sure that our members have the appropriate support. We want to reduce the stigma when it comes to any type of mental health issue. At the end of the day, we both agree on the objective.

It is very important that we work together. I am happy to continue these efforts. As I said, we share the same values in this regard. In preventing suicide, we are making sure that our folks have the right support. We are making sure that they are well supported right from the beginning. We are taking steps. From the time someone is recruited, we are making sure that they are taught to get support. We are making sure that the training system is built and we are making sure that the leadership is also trained so leaders can identify any issues that may come up.

This is something we agree on, and I look forward to working with the member on this further.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, I simply do not understand what it is the minister thinks we need to work on jointly. We have the support of the Conservatives. We have the support of almost all other members in the House. We had the support, apparently, of Liberal members at the committee until the minister intervened.

I will be, as I said, asking for unanimous consent at some point. I hope the minister rethinks his inexplicable opposition to taking this very positive step.

I want to turn to the question of spending, since this is an estimates debate. The minister threw around a number, which I know he likes very much, because I have heard it so many times, and that is that the Liberals are going to increase military spending by 70%. He likes these large numbers, and he likes talking about the future, but when we actually look at this year's estimates, what do we actually find if we look at operating expenses for DND? We find that the Liberals are the same as the Conservatives. They are asking more and more of the Canadian Armed Forces each and every year without a real increase in operating expenditures.

If we look at the increase from the 2017-18 main estimates to 2018-19, the increase was 1%. If we look at it from 2018-19 to 2019-20, there is a big increase of 1.3%. How does the minister think the Canadian military can continue to do the excellent job it does when he is giving it increases below the rate of inflation? How is the military going to continue serving the country so well with less and less money every year?

● (1910)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, within our defence policy, when we put this together, it was rigorously costed. The numbers are on page 43 of our plan. Our defence policy is not only fully costed but is funded, carved out of the fiscal framework, to make sure that the Canadian Armed Forces members have everything they need. Right now, whether it is operating expenses or capital expenses, we are investing. In fact, we have actually increased our budget by $1.5 billion this year. That is a 7.4% increase.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, of course that is not an increase in operating expenditures. That is an increase in capital expenditures and an increase in new projects. Therefore, my point still remains the same, that for the everyday jobs that people in the Canadian military have to do, there is not actually more money there. When it comes to things like the aging infrastructure of bases and the everyday maintenance tasks they have to do, there is less and less money available every year to do those.

I want to turn to the question of Mali, since the minister raised that in his remarks. I was fortunate to be part of the defence committee that visited Mali earlier this year. What we saw was what the minister talked about, the excellent work in medical evacuations that is being done by the Canadian Forces in Mali. However, it became very clear to us that Canada has made a decision to leave before our replacement in medevac services is available, so we are going to leave a gap from August 1 until October 15 when medevac services will not be available to the UN mission in Mali.

What we heard very clearly on the ground is that the work we do supports the MINUSMA forces. It is a stabilization mission. They are defending schools, hospitals, the food aid distribution system, aid workers and places of religious worship. They are trying to stabilize the country and prevent the terrorists from causing the collapse of the state of Mali. Therefore, when we remove our medevac services, what the UN forces told us is that it means that without air medevac they have to reduce the scope of their operations. Right now, they can operate 200 to 300 kilometres from their bases. When there are no medevac services like the ones we are providing, they will have to scale down to 20 to 30 kilometres.

While the minister talked about ISIS forces not occupying territory in Syria, we have had recent reports that they are trying to occupy territory in the Sahel. If we force the UN to draw down its operations, we will be partially responsible if ISIS forces manage to seize territory there.

Why is the minister refusing the UN request to extend the mission by just a few weeks so there is no large gap between us and the Romanians?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I am very happy that the member had an opportunity to go to visit the troops and witness for himself the tremendous work. I had an opportunity to visit twice, once before to learn about the region, and the second time to visit our troops and see the tremendous work they are doing.

Our re-engagement with the United Nations, something that we had stepped back significantly from in the previous government, is not just about our going in and offering things up. Very similar to what we did in Operation Impact, it is about how we can be a responsible partner. We worked with the UN. What are the reforms they need? What is the impact we can have?

One of the things that the United Nations wanted was to support the reforms. One of the reforms the UN is asking for is this concept called "smart pledges". Smart pledges is about high-level capability that only a few nations can provide, and if we can get into a rotation, we will make sure that these missions and the commanders on the ground will have these capabilities. That is what this is. We agreed to go in for one year, and then we worked with our partners and we are very happy to work with Romania to get another partner to come on board.

Right now, we are working very closely with our partners to look at ways to reduce the gap, just as happened when we came in. Also, let us not forget that the United Nations does have support when it comes to medical evacuation, but right now we are working still in terms of how we can best support the UN and help the Romanian armed forces to come in. A lot more work needs to be done, but one thing is for sure. We are having a tremendous impact.

This is not just about our coming in. This is about our supporting the United Nations reforms, and there is a lot more work that needs to be done, whether it is on the Elsie initiative, the Vancouver principles or some of the other smart pledges that we have proposed as well.

● (1915)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, while the minister says he is responding to the UN request, the UN sent a letter asking Canada to extend its mission to September 31. The UN made a very specific request. Therefore, if he is trying to say what he is doing is what the UN is asking us to do, then the way to do that is to say yes and extend that mission. Everyone we met there, the serving troops, said that if they are allowed or asked to do this, they can make this work. Why is the minister sticking to his very stubborn deadline that will leave a gap in these very important services?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I have spoken with both undersecretaries general regarding this topic. In fact, we worked very closely with them to make sure we have even more nations coming on board.

We have also offered up a working group to look at what the smart pledge concept would be on other missions and to bring in other nations with high-level capabilities so we can support other missions.

We work very closely with the UN on this, and I can assure members that not only have we been a responsible partner but we will continue to be a responsible partner with the United Nations.

The Deputy Chair: I would again like to remind members that they are allotted a certain time for questions and answers. If a question lasts two minutes and 13 seconds, the minister answering it has that same amount of time. We are monitoring the time quite closely.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to say good evening to my esteemed parliamentary colleagues, to the officials who are with us, to all Canadians watching us and to the minister I have the opportunity to work with every day. I am learning a lot about his new portfolio, and I appreciate the advice he gives me every day.

I want to use the 10 minutes I have this evening to expand on what the Minister of National Defence already said about the women and men who wear the Canadian Armed Forces uniform.

Time and again, we have seen these women and men work tirelessly to help people in need, both on dangerous missions around the world and closer to home in the case of a natural disaster. This is what they have been doing these past 10 years, despite the Conservatives' cuts to National Defence, which slowed down the procurement process.

In contrast, over the next 10 years, we will boost the DND annual budget to $32.7 billion, an increase of more than 70%. This will ensure that our women and men in uniform have the resources they need to carry out their important mission at home and abroad.

We again witnessed their courage and dedication over the past three weeks in communities across Ontario, Quebec and my birth province of New Brunswick.

When the provinces ask for help from the Canadian Armed Forces, the forces have a duty to respond. They have been there for Canadians this spring as part of Operation Lentus. The forces belong to all our citizens and its members will always be available in the event of a disaster.

I remember very well when members of the Canadian Armed Forces went door to door two years ago in New Brunswick to help people affected by the ice storm, particularly in my riding, Acadie—Bathurst, and in the Acadian peninsula which was hit very hard. I witnessed the work of the Canadian Armed Forces, these men and women who helped our community get back on its feet after enduring the ice storm for 20 days. Some people had no electricity, water or food for 15 to 20 days.

I thank them from the bottom of my heart for the extraordinary work they did in 2017 and for their efforts during the flooding of the past few weeks.

This spring, 2,500 Canadian Armed Forces members pitched in to help flood victims. They assisted first responders with evacuations, protected homes and supported exhausted volunteers. We are painfully aware of the flood victims' suffering, and our thoughts are with all those who have to deal with the damage these floods have done to their homes and their lives.

As natural disasters become more frequent, the Canadian Armed Forces have to be prepared to jump in and intervene more frequently. That is one reason we are working to increase troop numbers as part of Canada's defence policy, “Strong, Secure, Engaged”. Having the necessary personnel available when duty calls is essential.

I do think it is a real shame the Conservatives have consistently voted against funding the implementation of this important defence policy. The Conservatives repeatedly voted against funding to give our military personnel the equipment they need, and they even voted against funding their participation in operations abroad that help keep us safe here at home.

In spite of these attempts to go back to the days of Stephen Harper's budget cuts, I am happy to highlight two programs that are helping us increase our military personnel and make the forces more diverse.

First, there is the full-time summer employment program that we launched last year. This initiative helps members balance their civilian life with military service by offering full-time employment to reservists in their first four years of service. Many of the reservists who are training and developing their skills will later go on deployments, as part of national operations to protect their communities from natural disasters, for example.

Second, we expanded our summer training programs for indigenous people living in Canada. Five of these programs are offered in Canada, including the Grey Wolf program and a new bilingual program, the Carcajou program, which we launched this year.

Increasing our personnel is essential for conducting effective operations both in Canada, like Operation Lentus, and abroad.

I salute the 250 Canadian Armed Forces members who worked in close collaboration with emergency services in my province, New Brunswick, to help people protect homes along the Saint John River. The minister also travelled to New Brunswick for a first-hand look at how the Canadian Armed Forces were helping with the flood response. Along with other MPs from New Brunswick, I am tremendously grateful to him for being there.

● (1920)

The Canadian Armed Forces are able to help our neighbours who are affected by the flooding and support our allies in various missions around the world because we give them the tools they need to do their work no matter where they are.

We are making progress on capital procurement projects, such as the new fleet of Arctic and offshore patrol ships and the 18 interim fighter jets we purchased from Australia to supplement our fighter aircraft fleet.

We are also ensuring that Canada is a reliable and valuable partner for our allies by participating in missions around the world. Right now, 250 members of the Canadian Armed Forces are in Mali, providing essential, life-saving aeromedical evacuations of UN forces and civilians. In addition, 200 members of our armed forces are participating in Operation Unifier in Ukraine, and over 850 are stationed in the Middle East on Operation Impact.

We strongly support our Ukrainian friends in their efforts to protect their sovereignty and bring security and stability to their country, while respecting the rules-based international order. Canada is playing a leading role in the international community's response to Russian aggression in Ukraine. What is more, as we announced in March, this mission will continue until March 2022.

[*English*]

I know that both ministers are extremely proud of Canada's role in Ukraine. All Canadians can be proud of our contributions there. It is unfortunate, however, that throughout our years in government, the Conservatives have voted repeatedly against funding for this critical mission.

I understand their leader made a speech last week that touched on Canada's involvement in Ukraine. It will not come as a surprise from a member of Harper's team that he was not transparent about the position his Conservative Party had taken in the House on this military mission.

[*Translation*]

Our people are at the core of everything we do, whether it is deployed operations abroad or service on bases, wings or reserve units here at home. We must support them at every stage of their careers. That is why the Minister of National Defence has presented the main estimates for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces for the 2019-20 fiscal year. This funding will enable us to meet the objectives set out in our defence policy and meet the needs of our personnel.

[*English*]

The minister requested $21.9 billion in funding to carry on the vital work we do for the Canadian Armed Forces and to build on our successes. With these funds, which the Conservatives, based on their previous votes on the matter, are almost certain to oppose, we can continue to pursue ambitious capital projects that provide Canadian Armed Forces members with the best equipment available and ensure our infrastructure serves their needs in an environmentally conscious way.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

Thanks to this funding, Canada will be able to continue to conduct Canadian missions abroad in collaboration with our international partners. Canadians rightly expect us to meet our commitments with the same level of transparency and concern that we have demonstrated over the past four years. We take this responsibility very seriously, and it is just as important as the responsibility we take for supporting the Canadian Armed Forces who defend our country.

[*English*]

I appreciate the opportunity to tell the committee of the whole and all Canadians about the great work of the Canadian Armed Forces and how this government will continue to support them.

[*Translation*]

Again, I want to thank the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces for the excellent work they do every day for Canadians and for our communities, including their help with the floods we are currently experiencing in Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick. I thank them for their exceptional work. We want to continue to support them in their work. That is why we are investing in the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and in our Department of National Defence.

The Deputy Chair: The parliamentary secretary must now ask questions.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madam Chair, earlier this winter, I had the opportunity to travel to Montreal with the minister. We visited the Fusiliers Mont-Royal regiment to announce the summer employment program for reservists. The announcement was very well received by the Canadian Armed Forces and by reservists.

We know that reservists are very important. The North Shore Regiment in my riding does excellent work. I would like the minister to tell us how initiatives like the summer employment program for reservists are useful, especially when it comes to recruiting. As members know, we want to increase recruitment in the Canadian Armed Forces. We also want to increase diversity in the Canadian Armed Forces. We want to make sure that everyone who wants to join the armed forces can take advantage of these programs while keeping their jobs.

I would like the minister to tell us a little more about this program, which is very popular among reservists and members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, a number of years ago, the Auditor General talked about how the reserves had not been supported because of the neglect by the previous government, cutting the recruiting and funding. We take recruiting and retention very seriously. This four years of guaranteed summer employment is having a tremendous impact, something I hear quite regularly across Canada about the reserves. It is not only being able to recruit more, but it is about retention as well.

I talk to reservists directly. We are giving them the certainty that the reserves are going to be well looked after, not just as a sideshow because they did not have the proper resources in the past. We are actually utilizing the reserve. We have seen a direct impact on domestic operations. When a dike broke in Montreal, members of the reserve helped evacuate families, in 50 minutes. If it were not for them, things would have been much worse.

We can all be proud of the great work our reserve members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for his answer. It is clearly a very interesting program for reservists.

I am going to say something that the Conservatives are definitely not going to like: climate change is real. As we know, Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick are currently experiencing flooding. There have been forest fires and many more destructive storms in recent years. As I mentioned in my speech, this year, in my home province of New Brunswick, we have had major flooding. In 2017, there was even a devastating ice storm in my region. It lasted almost 20 days.

I thank the minister for coming to New Brunswick to survey the damage for himself, as well as to see the work being done by members of our Canadian Armed Forces and to support them.

I would like the Minister to tell us a little more about Canadian Armed Forces operations, such as Operation Lentus. We know that the Canadian Armed Forces are always ready to help in such situations.

● (1930)

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, climate change is real and we are seeing the impacts of it year after year, with floods and forest fires. Our Canadian Armed Forces are serving us extremely well, but we need to ensure we are ready. Canadian Armed Forces members will always be there in Canadians' time of need. Operation Lentus is how we respond to disasters.

In fact, I work very closely with the Minister of Public Safety. When it comes to our response, as members know, I need the request from the Minister of Public Safety for us to deploy personnel.

One thing I want to make very clear is that our Canadian Armed Forces members work quite regularly with the provincial emergency responsible so we can get an early idea of what is happening. By the time the request comes in, we are already ready to go, making sure we can respond to the needs of Canadians. We have been able to do this. However, we need to take climate change seriously, not only in Canada but around the world. Climate security is also a real thing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madam Chair, our relationship with first nations is very important and our Canadian Armed Forces have a number of programs available to them.

Could the minister speak briefly about the programs provided by the Canadian Armed Forces for first nations?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I am very proud of the work our Canadian Armed Forces are doing to increase recruitment of our indigenous youth. We have Bold Eagle, Raven and a number of other programs. I am going to be visiting one tomorrow at the Royal Military College as well. We want to reflect the diversity of Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Madam Chair, it is my pleasure to be here today. It is a first for me.

Most of our allies have successfully chosen new fighter jets within a year. The Liberals have been in power for three and a half years and have yet to hold a competition, which they have postponed once again, until July. I would like to know why it has taken so long.

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I welcome the member to the committee of the whole. He also represents CFB Bagotville, one of our air force bases, where we respond to NORAD missions. I know he understands this extremely well. These planes should have been replaced by the previous government over 10 years ago, but they were not.

I am happy to hear that the Leader of the Opposition announced in his speech in Montreal that he would conduct an open and transparent competition to replace the fighters, something we have already started. I am very happy that this has been done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, our F-18 fleet is aging. Everyone agrees that it is in the national interest to get a new fleet very soon . The longer the government extends the use of our F-18s, the more thousands of brave Canadians in uniform are risking their lives. It is no surprise that we have a shortage of pilots.

Does the minister realize that it is in the national interest to acquire a new fighter fleet?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I could not agree more. These planes should have been replaced a long time ago. We now have the RFP for the requirements for future fighter competition, which will go ahead shortly.

We are committed to ensuring we get the aircraft that meets our requirements. We also have a number of initiatives to recruit pilots and mechanics as well. As I stated, this should have been done over 10 years ago by the previous government, but it was not. We are going to get it done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, the Canadian government's policy on technological and industrial benefits recently caused some problems in the competition for new fighter jets.

The government knew full well that it could not expect Lockheed Martin to provide these benefits since Canada is a partner in the joint strike fighter program and signed a memorandum of understanding allowing Canadian companies to participate in manufacturing F-35s.

In light of the naive and reckless election promise not to buy the F-35, does the minister believe that this competition was fair, open and transparent?

● (1935)

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we are committed to having an open, fair and transparent competition. I am glad the Leader of the Opposition agrees with this. He said so in his speech last week.

We conducted a thorough analysis, talking to our allies, in defence of North America. When we looked at the number 65 that the previous government selected, we realized it was too low. It did not actually meet our requirements. This is one of the reasons why we increased the future fighters to 88.

The other thing is that even with the 65 number, the Conservatives did not even leave enough money for them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, what does the minister think is the best fighter jet for the Royal Canadian Air Force?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, it is very important to have an open and transparent competition. Our department builds the requirements for this and then we allow the competition to determine which aircraft will meet our needs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, if we were to ask Lieutenant-General Yvan Blondin for his opinion, does the minister know what he would say?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we are committed to ensuring we have an open and transparent competition, something I am very happy the Leader of the Opposition agrees with.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, if we were to ask Lieutenant-General Michael Hood for his opinion, does the minister know what he would say?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, when it comes to open and transparent competition, our department builds the requirements and through those requirements, we will have a competition. We are committed to ensuring we have this competition. The RFP will be out shortly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, I am asking these questions because some criticisms have been raised. People are saying that the Minister of National Defence is not listening to the very experts who have to work with the equipment he choses for them.

Why was Lieutenant-General Michael Hood, the former air force commander, not consulted about the main policy changes that led to the creation of a fake capability gap to justify the purchase of 18 Super Hornets?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, our government takes its military advice from the military. The military advice we get comes directly from the chief of the defence staff, who represents our Canadian Armed Forces.

Through our government process with respect to national defence, we create the requirements we want. Through those requirements, we pass off the process for the competition to the minister of procurement. That is exactly what is happening, and I am very proud of that work.

We will have an open competition to select the best aircraft for our air force.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, on February 23, 2017, 13 retired generals signed a letter to let the Prime Minister know that buying Super Hornets was a very bad idea.

Why did the minister ignore these 13 generals?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, as I said, these planes should have been replaced a long time ago.

We committed to an open and transparent competition. That is the way we wanted to do this. Unfortunately, we also have missions to fly, and the gaps that the previous government left us forced us to make sure we invest in our current fleet. That is exactly what we are doing right now, because, as I said, we have missions to fly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute found that 67.5% of national defence experts think there is no capability gap.

Will the government finally admit that it invented this capability gap as a political ploy to cover up its own failings in defence procurement?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, right now we do not have enough aircraft to meet our NORAD and NATO commitments simultaneously. The 65 aircraft the previous government wanted were not enough.

We took a very thorough approach in our defence policy review to have a good understanding of the threats. That is why we actually increased the number to 88. It is a real number based on our commitments.

We are committed to an open competition so that we can pick the best aircraft for our air force.

● (1940)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, did the government originally propose to buy 18 new F-18s because it knew this would give Boeing an advantage in a future bidding process?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I did not catch the question. I heard it but did not hear a question in that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, I will repeat my question. Did the government originally propose to buy 18 new F-18s because it knew this would give Boeing an advantage in a future bidding process?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we were faced with a capability gap, and we did not want to wait until the future fighters competition. We wanted to invest in our air force now.

This is one of the reasons we are filling this interim capability gap with aircraft from Australia. Currently, we are in the process of making sure that we modernize our legacy fleet while we have the open competition going on for the future fleet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, the current Liberal government has an abysmal track record when it comes to negotiating with our key partners, especially the United States. The negotiations on the new free trade agreement were a total disaster. Then, the U.S. President called Canada a freeloader for not meeting the NATO target of spending 2% of GDP on defence. Now the Americans are threatening to kick us out of the joint strike fighter program.

What is the minister going to do to improve relations with our main ally?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, that could not be further from the truth. In fact, right now at NATO we are leading a battle group in Latvia, alongside our other partners, such as the U.S. We are leading the NATO training mission in Iraq right now. We have sporadic air policing. We are actually shoulder to shoulder with our partners in monitoring the sanctions against North Korea. We are conducting counter-terrorism operations, such as Operation Artemis. We are also supporting the work of the United Nations. The list goes on.

We are doing a lot of work, and we are very proud of the way Canada has stepped up with the U.S.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, Canadian aerospace companies have the extensive knowledge and experience needed to participate in F-35 development.

Can the minister tell us how many jobs will be lost if Canada gets kicked out of the joint strike fighter program?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I did not catch the full question. I think it is about the F-18. Could I have the question repeated?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, I was talking about the F-35s.

Canada has aerospace companies. Can the minister tell us how many jobs will be lost if Canada gets kicked out of the joint strike fighter program?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, I apologize. The translation came out in my ear as F-18. I understand the question now.

When it comes to any government procurement, there are benefits to the Canadian industry, and we are committed to that. Our defence policy has also emphasized the focus of working with our defence industry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, at stake are 10,000 jobs, 110 Canadian firms and over $1.5 billion in spinoffs.

If the United States were to boot Canada from the joint strike fighter program, what would the minister say to families affected by job losses?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we are committed to making sure that the Canadian Armed Forces has all the tools necessary, including the fighter fleet. We are also committed to making sure that through our defence procurement Canadian companies benefit, whether it is from our fighter fleet or from our shipbuilding program.

Through the defence industry, our Canadian companies are benefiting.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, considering the government's ongoing problems with this file, will the minister acknowledge that the Prime Minister's 2015 promise to scrap the F-35s and hold an open competition was ill-advised defence policy that ran contrary to Canada's interests?

● (1945)

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we are committed to an open competition, which is exactly what we are doing. We are on track for that. We are making investments in the air force.

In fact, it was stated by the leader of the Conservative Party as well in a speech that he would conduct an open competition to replace our fighters. I am glad that the leader of that party is agreeing with us on this. There might have been a bit of disagreement between the members and their leader. I am not sure about that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, considering ongoing concerns about maintenance and training and retaining pilots and technicians, is it true that purchasing Australian F-18s would have little or no effect on reducing the capability gap that your government made up for political reasons in the first place?

The Deputy Chair: The member must address the chair, not the minister.

The hon. minister has the floor.

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we are committed to making sure that we have not only the aircraft but also the pilots. Maybe the previous government, because it wanted fewer planes, slowed down recruitment for that reason.

However, we have started recruiting, not only pilots and mechanics but also recruiting from some of the key trades, and things are going extremely well with the recruiting.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, is there a cancellation clause for the purchase of the Australian F-18s?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we are committed to making sure our Canadian Armed Forces members have all the tools they need for what we ask them to do, whether it is flying our missions currently or into the future. We are also committed to the open competition. I am very proud of the work of our officials.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, I will repeat my question because I think it is really important.

Can the minister tell us whether there is a cancellation clause for the purchase of the Australian F-18s?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, we are committed to making sure we put the right investments into our air force, making sure it has not only the right number of aircraft but also the additional capability. With the interim aircraft arriving, the first two are going to have—

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member can ask one last question.

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Chair, I asked the minister if there is a cancellation clause for the purchase of the Australian F-18s.

Is that the case, yes or no?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Chair, when it comes to the work we do, there are always various clauses making sure we are protected. When it comes to—

The Deputy Chair: Unfortunately, time is up.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to use my time today to tell you and the committee more about what the defence team is doing to support Canada's return to the world stage.

[*Translation*]

Our country is taking on new leadership roles and promoting the values that Canadians hold dear, such as peace, human rights and democracy.

[*English*]

Canadians have told us they want Canada to continue to be a leader in supporting peace and security around the world. They want Canada to contribute in concrete ways that have a direct and positive impact on the lives of people in conflict zones. They want Canada to do its part as a responsible international actor, with strong alliances and friendships around the world. That is exactly what Canada is doing.

ln our defence policy, “Strong, Secure, Engaged”, Canada affirmed its steadfast dedication to these long-standing alliances and partnerships.

[*Translation*]

Through our renewed commitments to peacekeeping, international operations and the United Nations' multilateral efforts, we are showing the world that Canada is committed and demonstrating leadership. We are showing that we are a reliable and valuable partner to our allies and that we will defend democratic principles and a rules-based international order.

[*English*]

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to see for myself how Canada is contributing to international peace and security in Mali. Through Operation Presence, Air Task Force Mali delivers vital airlift capabilities in support of the United Nations assistance mission in Mali. Last month, it transported members of the Dutch Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol Task Group, enabling safe and efficient patrol far beyond their normal range.

● (1950)

[*Translation*]

That is an example of how our airlift capabilities are enhancing the safety of the local population. On April 24, this capability saved lives.

[*English*]

After a passenger bus struck an IED, Task Force Mali members conducted an aeromedical evacuation, getting critically injured civilians to life-saving medical care as quickly as possible.

[*Translation*]

Our 250 women and men in uniform will remain in Mali until the end of July in order to fulfill the one-year rotation that Canada promised in March 2018. As part of our joint commitment approach, Canada is working with Romania, the United Nations and Germany to ensure the successful transition of this essential capability.

[*English*]

As I mentioned, I had the opportunity to travel to Senegal and Mali earlier this year, with the House Standing Committee on National Defence. My colleagues and I witnessed first-hand the professionalism, commitment and excellence of the Canadian Armed Forces members deployed to Task Force Mali. We owe them and all current and former members of our armed forces a profound debt of gratitude for their courage and exemplary service at home and abroad.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize peacekeepers from other nations who are serving or have served under the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, MINUSMA: the women and men in uniform, as well as the UN civilian staff, led by the special representative of the Secretary-General for Mali, Mr. Mahamat Annadif, and the deputy special representatives of the Secretary-General, Ms. Joanne Adamson and Ms. Mbaranga Gasarabwe.

[*Translation*]

The United Nations team is working very hard to achieve peace and a stable future for Mali and the Sahel region in west Africa. The region is dealing with complex, ever-changing problems, such as drought, poverty, limited access to education, civil society's exclusion from politics, violent crime, drug trafficking, armed conflict and terrorism.

[*English*]

They also face significant personal risk. In fact, MINUSMA is currently the United Nations' most dangerous mission. I would like to thank them for their service and commitment to our shared values, as embodied in the United Nations charter.

Canada is also working hard to support peace and stability in the Middle East. The main estimates include funds to support the two-year extension of Operation Impact, until March 2021. This military contribution is a vital component of Canada's whole-of-government Middle East strategy, a strategy that includes security and stabilization, humanitarian aid and diplomatic engagement in Iraq, Syria and the region. That is because we need sustained, multi-pronged efforts to address the root causes of conflict and set the stage for long-term stability. The Middle East strategy supports the global coalition to ensure the lasting defeat of Daesh.

[*Translation*]

Extending Operation Impact includes the authority to send up to 850 members of our Canadian Armed Forces to support the global coalition, the NATO mission in Iraq, and enhancement activities with the Jordanian and Lebanese armies.

[*English*]

Canada is proud to have Major-General Dany Fortin leading NATO's training mission to strengthen the defence and security institutions in Iraq.

Across the globe, our Canadian Forces members are known and respected as highly trained and skilled professionals and leaders. They are being called upon to share this expertise through operations like Operation Unifier in Ukraine, where our women and men in uniform have trained more than 11,400 Ukrainian soldiers.

Roughly 200 Canadian Armed Forces members are helping to develop Ukraine's defence and security forces through combined arms training, military engineering, logistics, military policing and medical training. That training supports Ukraine by enhancing the ability on the part of Ukrainians to defend themselves and to contribute to regional and international stability.

ln fact, our Canadian Armed Forces have been supporting Ukraine through training efforts since Russia illegally annexed Crimea in 2014. By extending Operation Unifier for another three years, Canada will continue to demonstrate our unwavering support for Ukraine and continue to be a leader in securing the international community's support for the Ukrainian people. This capacity-building also strengthens global security, as it supports Ukrainian aspirations to become a NATO ally.

[*Translation*]

This is a good reminder of Canada's close ties to NATO. We were a founding member 70 years ago and today our commitment is stronger than ever.

[*English*]

At any given time, we have up to 915 members deployed on Operation Reassurance to support NATO's defence and deterrence measures in central and eastern Europe. That makes Operation Reassurance Canada's largest international military operation at the present time.

On the water, HMCS *Toronto* is deployed to Operation Reassurance as part of Standing NATO Maritime Group Two. The crew strengthens international and regional stability through surveillance and monitoring, capacity-building, regional defence and diplomatic engagement.

On land, Canada is a framework nation in NATO's mission to deter potential Russian aggression in the Baltics, and we are leading the enhanced forward presence battle group in Latvia.

● (1955)

[*Translation*]

This multinational battle group is sending a strong message of allied solidarity.

[*English*]

The honour and courage of every soldier cannot be overstated, each risking personal harm to help make the world safer and more secure, and sometimes making the ultimate sacrifice.

Canada joins Battle Group Latvia allies in mourning the loss of Major Klodian Tanushi and Corporal Zarife Hasanaj, two Albanian soldiers who recently lost their lives following a demining incident.

In our defence policy, “Strong, Secure, Engaged”, Canada reiterated its commitment to the principle of collective defence, which is at the heart of NATO's founding treaty. Our Canadian Armed Forces' participation in NATO's enhanced air policing missions as part of Operation Reassurance is another testament to that commitment.

Since 2014, Canada has joined in four air policing missions, and our most recent participation ran from September to December of last year.

Air Task Force Romania includes approximately 135 women and men in uniform and six CF-18 Hornets that are helping to deter aggression by potential adversaries in the region. Last October they intercepted and escorted a Russian SU-27 Flanker out of Romanian airspace. That is only one example of how our people help safeguard the integrity of the alliance's airspace. The next ATF Romania will deploy in September for another four months.

[*Translation*]

Canada is also showing leadership and commitment to maritime security in Middle Eastern and East African waters.

[*English*]

From December 2018 to April 2019, Canada was proud to command Combined Task Force 150. About 40 Canadian Armed Forces members served in the CTF 150 headquarters on Operation Artemis, our mission being to stop terrorism and make the Middle East waters more secure.

[*Translation*]

In April alone, the HMCS *Regina* made three narcotics seizures, intercepting and destroying more than 7,000 kilograms of hashish and more than 1,500 kilograms of heroin.

[*English*]

Canada is proud of its role in advancing global peace and security. We believe in democracy and in protecting a rules-based international order. Our government will continue to work across borders, across disciplines and across party lines, taking a whole-of-government, multilateral approach to advance our cherished and critical Canadian values.

We continue to live in turbulent times, but through all of it, our deployed women and men represent Canada with professionalism, leadership and excellence. For that, we owe them again our unwavering support and our most profound gratitude.

Again, a very happy birthday, Mr. Chair.

I would now like to ask a few questions of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Chair, over a year ago, our government launched the innovation for defence excellence and security program, also known as IDEaS, which is helping to spur new research to solve important challenges, thanks to an investment of $1.6 billion into our innovation community over the next 20 years.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence update the House on the progress made over the course of the last year?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mississauga—Lakeshore for his excellent work at the Standing Committee on National Defence. It is an honour and a pleasure to work with him.

The IDEaS Program opened a number of doors to industries, universities, and innovators when it comes to research and development into the defence capabilities that we need. Over the past year, we received more than 600 proposals from across Canada. As a result, we invested $27 million in 160 contracts that are already paying off.

I had the chance to be in Montreal during the forum run by Aero Montreal, which brings together several businesses and companies that are already benefiting from these contracts. I was very impressed with their work. They are very happy with the investments we are making to help them grow in this field.

● (2000)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, mental health issues are challenging, and much has been done to improve access to services and eliminate the stigma experienced by those suffering from operational or post-traumatic stress injuries.

Can the parliamentary secretary inform the House of what National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have done to improve their mental health services for our women and men in uniform?

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, our men and women are definitely our absolute priority. We want to help them when they go through difficult times, especially when they experience mental health issues and other trauma.

In budget 2017, we invested $17.5 million in a centre focused on the prevention, assessment and treatment of PTSD and mental health issues among military members and veterans. We are also working closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs on the joint suicide prevention strategy, for example. Every family resource centre that I had the opportunity to visit, such as the one in Gagetown, New Brunswick, is doing an excellent job of supporting the everyday needs of our military members. These centres provide help if they are having family or health problems. As we know, our men and women in uniform often face dangerous and difficult situations. We will always be there to ensure their well-being and to support them as they go through difficult times during their years in the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*English*]

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, last fall another Auditor General's report confirmed what Canadians already knew, which is that the Harper Conservatives mismanaged the jets file and misled Canadians for more than a decade. The report confirms the existence of a capability gap, which started under the Harper Conservatives.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence inform this House how, unlike the Conservatives, we will not compromise our ability to meet our NATO and our NORAD commitments?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, that is precisely why we launched an open and transparent process to replace the fighter jets, as the minister said earlier.

I will add that when the Conservatives were in power, they kept two sets of books when it came to the new fighter jets. They had one set of books for the Canadian public and one for themselves, for their government. Talk about transparency. We have just one set of rules, and an open and transparent process that we will follow to the letter.

[*English*]

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, could the parliamentary secretary comment briefly on the courage of our women and men in assisting in Canada with the flood situation that we are currently facing?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, as I said, we are grateful to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are currently assisting those affected by the flooding in Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick. That is part of their duties, and they are always there to help the affected communities. As the minister has said repeatedly, the Canadian Armed Forces belong to the communities. I know that Canadian Armed Forces members care deeply about communities, because I saw it first-hand during the ice storm that lasted nearly 20 days in 2017. They were on the ground every single day to help the community get through that difficult time.

[*English*]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Chair, who does the vice-chief of the defence staff report to?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the vice-chief of the defence staff reports to the chief of the defence staff, who would be responsible for the administration and command of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I want to remind hon. members that the question and the answer have to take up the same amount of time, so we will make sure everybody follows the same rules.

The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, who does the chief of the defence staff report to?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the chief of the defence staff reports to me.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, who approves the senior military appointments, particularly the chief of the air staff, maritime staff, land staff and the vice-chief of the defence staff?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the appointments are approved by the chief of the defence staff.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, is it the responsibility of all members of the Canadian Forces who serve in uniform to be free from real or perceived partisanship and political engagement?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to everything in the Canadian Armed Forces, they always work in a very professional manner and they serve us very well.

● (2005)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, who does the deputy minister of the Department of National Defence report to?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the deputy minister reports to the Minister of National Defence. That is me.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, what authority does the deputy minister have over senior military personnel, specifically generals and admirals?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the chief of the defence staff has the sole responsibility for the administration and command of the Canadian Armed Forces and all the personnel below that position.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, the question was about the deputy minister, not the chief of the defence staff. It was about the authority of the deputy minister over military personnel.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am trying to answer the question. She is talking about military personnel, and that comes under the command of the chief of the defence staff. The deputy minister is in charge of the Department of National Defence and all civilian personnel.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, would the minister consider an issue that ultimately results in a three-star general being removed from duty in the Canadian Forces and charged by the RCMP for breach of trust a serious issue, yes or no?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the process, as we talked about, it has been completely independent from the beginning to this time. As we stated, it has been confirmed by the prosecution and defence as well.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, when the chief of the defence staff was briefed by the RCMP on their investigation into Vice-Admiral Norman, under what authority was he briefed about a supposedly independent ongoing investigation?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I believe those questions were answered by the chief of the defence staff when he was a witness at the trial.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, the minister said that the chief of the defence staff reports to him, and therefore he should be able to answer the questions about the chief of the defence staff.

On January 9, 2017, did the chief of the defence staff brief you, Katie Telford and Gerry Butts on the RCMP investigation?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I was made aware of the investigation. A decision was made by the chief of the defence staff, and I supported that decision.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Before we go any further, I want to remind the hon. member to address her questions through the Chair, not directly to the minister.

The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, did the minister take notes, and is it customary for a chief of the defence staff, the Minister of National Defence and the two most senior staff of the Prime Minister's Office not to take notes at a meeting to discuss a serious issue?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to important things like this, I want to make it absolutely clear, as has been stated, that the process has been completely independent from the investigation all the way through the judicial process, and that is exactly what has happened here.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, the question was this. Since the minister was briefed, did he take notes at that briefing with the chief of the defence staff, Katie Telford and Gerry Butts on the RCMP investigation?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I was briefed on this while I was in Vancouver, through a phone call with the deputy minister at the time and the chief of the defence staff. I was made aware of the investigation, and I supported the chief of the defence staff's decision.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, under what authority were two unelected, partisan staffers, who are not in the chain of command, briefed on this matter?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I do not understand the question that the member is asking.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, the minister said that all military personnel must be free from real or perceived partisanship. Therefore, my question is this. How, on the matter of Vice-Admiral Norman's RCMP investigation, were two unelected, partisan staffers from the Prime Minister's Office, who are not in the chain of command, involved in this conversation?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, when it came to the investigation, I was briefed through a phone call while I was in Vancouver by the chief of the defence staff and the deputy minister at the time. I can only talk about what my actions were in this case. I believe the member is asking when I was briefed, and I have answered that question.

● (2010)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, the minister, I believe, is indicating that he has no responsibility for the other people and the authority with which other people are engaged in a call of this nature of a serious matter. I would like to ask him one more time. If a random person from the street or someone from some other country were involved on this call, would it not be his responsibility to ensure why they were?

The question is this. Under what authority were two unelected, partisan staff members on a call about Vice-Admiral Norman's RCMP investigation?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, first of all, the entire process has been independent. As I stated, I was on a call with the chief of the defence staff and the deputy minister directly to me while I was in Vancouver. Those were the three people who were actually on that call.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, on January 9, 2017, the chief of the defence staff spoke with the Prime Minister on the matter of Vice-Admiral Norman's investigation. Was the minister also on this call?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I was not on that call.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, as the chief of the defence staff reports to the minister, did the chief of the defence staff brief the minister after the call with the Prime Minister?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I was informed, as I stated, through a phone call, of the investigation that had started. The decision was made by the chief of the defence staff at that time, which I supported, and the deputy minister was on that same call.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, in what capacity was the deputy minister on that call, recognizing that the minister has already told us that the deputy minister does not have administrative control over military personnel?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the former deputy minister was on that call. In national defence, we work together. I, as the minister, work very closely with the deputy minister and the chief of the defence staff. That is how we work, and we have been working extremely well together in making sure that we serve the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, again, under what authority was the former deputy minister involved, considering that this was a disciplinary matter around the senior military official, for which the former deputy minister had no administrative control?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, in national defence, the minister of national defence works very closely with the deputy minister and with the chief of the defence staff. When it comes to the decisions that need to be made, we work together.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, did the minister or the CDS consult the judge advocate general prior to the suspension of Admiral Norman on January 13, 2017?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, if the member wants to play it like a lawyer, she will have to talk to the other person whom she is asking the question about. I am happy to answer the question about me. As I stated, I received a phone call while I was in Vancouver from the deputy minister and the chief of the defence staff to inform me of the investigation and the decision.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, was it the minister's decision to deny financial legal assistance to Admiral Norman on this matter?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated before, the decision for this was made by the former deputy minister, as the criteria were not met. Now the criteria have changed, and I have authorized the reimbursement.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, did the reason given, stating that Admiral Norman was guilty and that is why he was not entitled to financial assistance, not prejudice his presumption of innocence before his day in court?

● (2015)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, it is very important to note here that when an investigation by police is launched, we make sure that we maintain independence. That is exactly what has happened here, confirmed by the prosecution and by defence, including through the judicial process.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, when will the minister publicly acknowledge the former vice-chief of the defence staff's innocence and reinstate him as the vice-chief of the defence staff?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, in our democracy it is our courts that make the decision. The minister of national defence has the responsibility so that the women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces have all the tools necessary.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, in actual fact, QR&O number 101.09(6) states that once the reason for the suspension of the military member is no longer valid, he or she will be reinstated to his or her former position. Therefore, I would like a comment from the minister on why the former vice-chief of the defence staff has not been reinstated to his position.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I have stated many times before, the chief of the defence staff is responsible for all the personnel in the Canadian Armed Forces. The chief of the defence staff will meet with Admiral Norman to talk about the next steps, and the decision will be made.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, if the chief of the defence staff reports to the Minister of National Defence, is the Minister of National Defence not accountable to every citizen and every member in uniform to ensure that he carries out his duties in accordance with the Queen's Regulations and Orders?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, in accordance with the National Defence Act, we respect the chief of the defence staff's authority that has been given to this position. The chief of the defence staff has the responsibility for administration and command of the Canadian Armed Forces. That is what I respect, and that military advice on how our system works is very important to making sure we function as a government and as a country so that we can respect our Canadian Armed Forces. Doing anything less is not wise.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, this is probably the most fundamental point of this entire conversation.

Our democracy is based on the fact that a standing army is accountable to the elected official so that Canadians can trust that our military is not running rogue and is totally accountable to what the will of citizens has decided. That is why the National Defence Act has the chief of the defence staff reporting directly to the minister of national defence.

If the Minister of National Defence is not going to assume his responsibility for ensuring that the chief of the defence staff behaves in accordance with the National Defence Act, then I would like to understand from the minister what precisely he thinks his role is.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I completely disagree with the insinuations that the member is making.

Our Canadian Armed Forces is extremely professional. I have respect for the chief of the defence staff position as the authority that has been given by the National Defence Act for the chief of the defence staff. No, our military does not run rogue. Our chief of the defence staff and all the personnel work in the highest professional manner. We see it in domestic operations; we see it in international operations. I have faith in the chief of the defence staff to carry out his duties.

I will be honest; it is hurtful to hear this type of talk and insinuation that the military is running rogue, considering the tremendous work our women and men do for us not only in Canada but around the world.

● (2020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to contribute to today's debate by spending 10 minutes talking about what our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces do on behalf of Canadians here at home.

The government's primary obligation is to ensure the safety of Canadians. Whether that means helping communities during natural disasters, conducting search and rescue operations, or asserting Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic, the Canadian Armed Forces is ready to help. Throughout these operations, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are responsible stewards of the environment.

Earlier this month, we saw how the Canadian Armed Forces help communities from one end of the country to the other. When Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick were hit by floods and the rising waters put people's homes at risk and threatened essential infrastructure, the provinces asked the Canadian Armed Forces for help. More than 2,000 sailors, soldiers, and airmen and airwomen answered the call, as they have done so many times.

In 2018 alone, the Canadian Armed Forces helped their provincial partners handle six natural disasters, including flooding, forest fires and winter storms. Over the past decade, the role of the Armed Forces in national responses to disasters has grown considerably.

If they are to continue helping Canadians in need, they must have the right funding, the right personnel and the right equipment. As we have seen on multiple occasions, the Conservatives would sooner play petty politics and repeatedly vote against funding for our department and our operations, which protect Canadians in times of crisis.

Military involvement during the recent flooding attracted a lot of media attention, and rightly so. The search and rescue operations that take place from coast to coast to coast are not so well known. Search and rescue teams are ready to respond 24/7. They cover over 18 million square kilometres of land and sea.

This year alone, the Canadian Armed Forces has deployed search and rescue resources in response to 222 emergencies. The armed forces have worked with the Canadian Coast Guard to coordinate over 1,600 operations. That should give everyone some idea of the large-scale partnerships that help keep Canadians safe.

The armed forces, the Coast Guard, the RCMP, local police, first responders and hundreds of volunteer organizations all have an important role to play. Canadians can be proud of how well they work together.

Our men and women in uniform are ready to offer their help in times of crisis. They work hard to prevent disasters, when possible, and to reduce the impact on Canadians.

Every winter, artillery members of the Canadian Armed Forces work with Parks Canada to release avalanches in a controlled manner along Rogers Pass in British Columbia. Before this operation was put in place, avalanches caused a lot of death and destruction. Rogers Pass has more than 130 avalanche paths that cross the Trans-Canada Highway. It has the highest avalanche rating of any major road in North America.

For decades, the Canadian Armed Forces and Parks Canada have been working together to keep the pass and the Trans-Canada Highway open and safe. Every year, the Canadian Armed Forces train with municipal, provincial and territorial partners so that everyone can respond quickly and effectively in case of an emergency.

For example, last year, as part of Operation Nanook, approximately 270 members of the Canadian Armed Forces participated in a major air disaster exercise in Yellowknife. They worked with the government, NGOs and public sector partners to ensure that everyone learned how to work together in case of an emergency in the Arctic.

● (2025)

The exercises, patrols and community activities that take place all year long as part of Operation Nanook are also part of how we affirm Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic. The Canadian Rangers support many of these activities, as the eyes and ears of the armed forces in the North.

All these operations, including disaster response, search and rescue and sovereignty operations, are affected to varying degrees by a common factor: climate change.

As weather conditions change, Canada will experience more violent storms and natural catastrophes. As the polar ice cap recedes, the Arctic is more accessible to navigation, tourism and scientific research. This means that there are more people, ships and planes passing through the Arctic than in the past.

Members can rest assured that military planners are diligently analyzing these trends. Proactive, detailed and exhaustive planning is an integral part of the work ethic of the Canadian Armed Forces. That is how they operate.

As set out in Canada's defence policy, Strong, Secure, Engaged, concerns related to climate change have an impact on planning, procurement and operations. The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are helping minimize their environmental impact. Since 2017, the Department of National Defence has invested more than $165 million in Canadian Armed Forces infrastructure projects designed to reduce its carbon footprint.

Canadian Armed Forces members need modern, environmentally friendly facilities where they can work and train. Last year alone, the department built and restored armouries in Halifax, Saint-Hubert and Sainte-Foy.

All new construction projects and major repair projects must meet industry standards for high-performance buildings, such as LEED silver certification or the equivalent.

These types of investments have a significant impact. The Department of National Defence reduced greenhouse gas emissions from its buildings and commercial fleet by 30% compared to 2005 levels. The department is on track to reduce its emissions by 40% by 2030 and meeting a target of 80% by 2050.

Since 2018, the Department of National Defence has also been using energy-performance contracts to improve energy efficiency and grant four new contracts to bases and wings across Canada.

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have been making progress on reducing their defence activities' ecological impact and they will continue to act as stewards of Canada's land, air and sea resources.

Every day Canadian sailors, soldiers and air personnel do exemplary work in this country. We count on their professionalism to protect our territory and keep our country safe. When mother nature wreaks havoc on Canadian communities, we know they will be there, ready to help and willing to face whatever may come their way. It is their duty to defend us, and it is our duty to ensure they have the resources they need to do their job right, despite the Conservatives' attempts to cut defence funding through their votes and despite their decade of budget cuts.

● (2030)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member has five minutes to ask questions.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Chair, the Canadian Armed Forces offers people unique opportunities to challenge themselves and develop skills that will serve them well their whole lives.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence inform the House how the government is partnering with communities to support our reservists and allow them to serve at home and abroad without the stress of repercussions in their full-time civilian roles?

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his excellent work on the Standing Committee on National Defence. It is a pleasure to work with him.

We do indeed care about the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, which is why we passed new legislation to safeguard their jobs and training leave.

This year I had the opportunity to go to New Brunswick to support reservists and acknowledge the work of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council. The council helps businesses and reservists work together and helps our reservists continue to serve their country in the Canadian Armed Forces all while retaining their job security. It is an excellent program. The council is doing good work to support reservists and members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Chair, military families are the strength behind the uniform and are crucial to the success of our military. As members of Parliament, we often hear about the challenges of living in a military family. We hear stories and know that deployments and postings within the country are difficult.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell us about what our government is doing as part of the seamless Canada initiative and about the support we provide to military families?

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, we have a clear objective when it comes to members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and that is to help the transition of military members' families. It is not always easy to move when assigned to another military base. Therefore, we must ensure that families have the support they need. We have been investing $6 million a year to better support these families when a member is deployed or has to spend time away.

We also invested $147 million to expand access to military family resource centres, which support families of veterans who are released for medical reasons. I had the opportunity to visit these family resource centres. They do a great job of helping with this transition, in particular by helping families find a doctor, day care or school in their new community.

It is very important to support our military members and their families in this transition so that their time working in the Canadian Armed Forces is as painless as possible.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Chair, can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell us about national defence spending or operations?

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, as we have said over and over this evening, our defence policy is at the core of everything we do, as are our men and women in uniform. That is why we made a commitment to increase spending by more than 70% over the next 10 years through our policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged". That translates to an increase of $32 billion.

We are not ashamed of these investments. After years of cuts under the former Conservative government, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces deserve these investments. We are going to give them everything they need to do their jobs here and abroad, on all the missions we carry out around the world. We will never compromise their safety either. We will support them throughout their careers in the Canadian Armed Forces.

● (2035)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chair, was the minister involved in the process of reviewing and editing, intimidating the Auditor General's fall 2018 report on fighter jets?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I completely disagree with the member's insinuation. The Auditor General is completely independent of us.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did the minister approve of the suggested changes to the Auditor General's report on fighter jets?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, no.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did anyone in the minister's office approve the request to the Office of the Auditor General to remove the recommendation that Canada not purchase the used Australian F-18s?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I and my office are completely independent of the Auditor General.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, was any direction from the PMO given to the minister or his staff regarding the deletion of the recommendation not to purchase the Australian F-18s?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, the Auditor General is completely independent of us.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did the minister authorize the CDS to meet with the partisan political advisers to the Prime Minister, Telford and Butts, before initiating the decision to suspend Vice-Admiral Norman?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated a number of times before, the entire process for this case has been completely independent. This has been confirmed by the prosecution and defence as well.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, is it normal for the CDS to bypass the minister to brief the PMO staff, accompanied by the now disgraced national security adviser, about Vice-Admiral Norman?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, the entire process has been completely independent. I am happy to read the quote, but I am probably going to get cut off, "No other factors were considered in this decision, nor was there any contact or influence from outside—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, does the minister believe that Vice-Admiral Norman was subjected to biased treatment by his department between November 2015 and today?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, in our process, it is very important to remain independent, and that is exactly what we have done. It was confirmed by the prosecution and by the defence. When the circumstances have changed, we have reviewed the requirements, and now the legal fees—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, could the minister explain why he hired CBC reporter James Cudmore?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, all my staff are hired on their merits, and I thank them for their tremendous work.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, who recommended him?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, all my staff are hired on their merits.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, how many other interviews had the minister conducted before giving the job to this select reporter from the CBC, who had reported on the contract interference by the former president of the Treasury Board?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, everyone who gets hired by my office is hired on his or her merits.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, when was the minister made aware of the arrival of the August 31, 2018, letter to André Fillion regarding the U.S. defense department's concerns over Canada's future participation in the joint strike fighter program?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am not aware of what the member is referring to. One thing I can say is that we are committed to ensuring we deliver the right aircraft for our Canadian Armed Forces through an open and fair competition.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, I was referring to the letter to Mr. Fillion that was included in the Macdonald-Laurier report, added as an appendix. How did the minister respond to that letter or did he?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am very proud to stand and say that we are committed to ensuring our Canadian Armed Forces will get all the tools they need. Through our defence policy, it has been costed. More important, it is fully funded.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did the minister or his office have any part in the development of that response letter?

● (2040)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, all the questions the member is asking, I have stated that as the Minister of National Defence, my responsibility is to ensure the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces have all the tools necessary, and that is what we are committed to doing.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, was any direction given from the PMO in the development of that response letter?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to ensuring we have an open and transparent competition in the procurement and to ensuring we put a focus on the delivery. Our number one focus is the people in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did the minister authorize the use of code words and phrases to bypass ATIP requests in the Norman case?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I have answered that question many times. As I have stated before, the entire process has been completely independent, and we have been co-operative throughout the entire process.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, was the minister aware of the decision to use code phrases?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, the entire process we have gone through in this case has been completely independent, which has been verified and confirmed by the prosecution and defence.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, when was the minister first made aware of the use of code words?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to any type of judicial process, it is important to remain independent. That is exactly what we have done, and it has been confirmed by the prosecution and defence.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, does the minister approve of the decision to use code words?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we do not use code words in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Another thing I want to say is that the entire process we have gone through has been completely independent. This has been explained by the many witnesses in the trial.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, has the minister authorized code words or phrases in any other ATIP inquiries?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I have hard time keeping up with the acronyms in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, were any code words used to bypass ATIPs regarding the national shipbuilding strategy?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the entire ATIP process is completely independent of my office.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, were any code words used to bypass ATIPs regarding the purchase of Australian F-18s?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, the entire ATIP process is completely independent. If the member wants to talk more about how we are working with the Canadian Armed Forces, I will be happy to do so.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, were any code words used to bypass ATIPs regarding the proposed purchase of Super Hornets?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to ensuring the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces have all the tools necessary for the air force. I have a list of things I would love to talk about regarding the work we are doing at the base in Petawawa.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, were any code words used to bypass ATIPs regarding the upcoming competition to replace the CF-18s?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, the entire ATIP process is independent of my office.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, were any code words used to bypass ATIPs regarding the infamous 2017 Team Canada "booze and abuse" flight?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to ensuring we create an environment for our women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces that is inclusive to all. That is exactly what we are going to be focused on.

The Conservatives focused on other things, and maybe that is why they did not deliver for the Canadian Armed Forces and kept cutting. They will continue on the same road.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did Mr. Finn write a memo claiming that the shipyard chosen to build the temporary supply ship was incapable of doing so?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, could I have the question repeated, please?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did Mr. Finn write a memo claiming that the shipyard chosen to build the temporary supply ship was incapable of doing so?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to ensuring our navy has all the tools it needs, including the two joint supply ships.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: If this is so important, how can they laugh at it? We do not have joint supply ships. We are focused on delivering for our Canadian Armed Forces—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did Mr. Finn meet with the RCMP during its investigation of the Norman case?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, if the member wants to ask further questions regarding the main estimates or the Canadian Armed Forces, I am happy to answer them. The folks within our system are all—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did the deputy approve Mr. Finn's legal costs?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am happy to answer further questions on how we will be supporting the Canadian Armed Forces. This is the type of distraction the Conservatives continually want, trying to take focus—

● (2045)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, the minister said that he regretted what happened to Vice-Admiral Norman, but he would not use the word "apologize". Yet, he has to meet with Vice-Admiral Norman. Why is that?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, it is so important to ensure we keep these processes independent. When the circumstances changed, the criteria were met and I immediately authorized the reimbursement of the legal fees. Yes, I absolutely—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, is the minister personally holding a grudge against Vice-Admiral Norman?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I respect Vice-Admiral Norman's service to our country, as I do with all members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Yes, I just stated that I respect his—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, is he being vindictive, just like the Prime Minister, against this decorated soldier?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I respect the tremendous service by Vice-Admiral Norman. That is why it is so important to remain completely independent of the process. Immediately, when the circumstances changed—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, what steps and specific actions has the minister taken to ensure Vice-Admiral Norman will be able to return to the Canadian Armed Forces?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated before, the chief of the defence staff is responsible for the administration and command of the Canadian Armed Forces and all its personnel. They will have a discussion. I asked him to give—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, will Vice-Admiral Norman rejoin free of bias, hatred and vindictiveness, starting with the minister's office, the CDS and all others?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I completely disagree with the member's insinuations. When it comes to the entire process, it has been independent. That is exactly how we are going to be carrying on from here.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, has the minister or his staff received any direction from the PMO regarding which fighter jets will be eligible for the upcoming request for proposals?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am so happy to get a question regarding how we will serve our Canadian Armed Forces members. This entire process is based on a process of open and fair competition. The RFP will be out shortly.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, will the F-35 be eligible for consideration as a replacement for the CF-18s?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, any company that wants to bid on the competition can.

The leader of the member's party stated that he wanted an open competition, but the Conservatives are also now pointing to it. Therefore, I am a little confused. Are they in charge or is the leader in charge?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, in terms of interoperability with the U.S. Air Force and our commitments through NORAD, is the F-35 the best fit?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the interoperability as part of our NORAD mission is absolutely important, and this is one of the requirements. Through this competition, the right aircraft will be selected.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, is the F-35 the best suited to fulfill the Five Eyes interoperability commitments?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we will find out through the competition which aircraft will be selected, based on our requirements.

Does the member disagree with the Leader of the Opposition when he states that he wants an open competition to replace our fighter fleet?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, were any code words used to bypass ATIPs regarding Operation Honour?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the ATIP process is completely independent. We are absolutely committed to ensuring the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces have the environment to succeed in the Canadian Armed Forces through Operation Honour.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, will the minister instruct the department to investigate whether any code words or phrases were used on other files to avoid ATIPs?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the ATIP process is completely independent of our process. I expect all members of the Canadian Armed Forces to act in a professional manner, as they do. The previous member who asked those questions obviously disagreed. My question for the member is whether she agrees with her?

● (2050)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, did the minister ever receive instruction from the PMO to use code words on ATIPs?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, no.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, will the minister release any and all documents in which code words or phrases were used to bypass ATIPs that are already being fulfilled?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the ATIP process, it is completely independent of my office.

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening about the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. Tonight I would like to discuss how our government is caring for our women and men in uniform.

The main estimates presented today represent funding that will directly support the people of our Canadian Armed Forces. Supporting them is the number one priority of the Minister of National Defence, and it is shared by all members of this government. Every single defence activity we undertake comes back to this important objective, because we know that when the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces are well cared for, properly equipped and fully supported, our country is better defended, our values are upheld and Canadians are more secure. With our full support, they can answer the call of duty any time, anywhere.

Recently, when natural disasters unexpectedly placed so many of our communities in distress, we saw just how quickly and efficiently our Canadian Armed Forces members can provide aid. They are also key in defending our values around the globe, contributing to missions in Latvia, Iraq, Ukraine and Mali.

Long before the First World War, members of our military stepped up to defend our nation with courage and honour. Time and time again, they answered the call and defended our people and our way of life. We relied on them in times of great conflict in the past, and we will do so just as much in the future. We must ensure that they are well taken care of today so that they can face tomorrow's challenges.

Caring for our people is at the very core of Canada's defence policy: strong, secure and engaged. This is not rhetoric. In the two years since we launched this policy, concrete action is improving care and support for military members and their families.

We recognize that the complexities of military life affect the entire family, not just the member. We know that military family members are the strength behind the uniform. That is why our government is offering enhanced tax relief for our women and men in uniform deployed on international operations. We have done this to show appreciation for their efforts and to ease some of the stress for them and their families.

It is also why we are delivering $6 million in new annual funding for the military family resource centres and why we have implemented virtual counselling services for families and deployed staff overseas to provide support wherever and whenever it is needed.

The defence team has begun important work on the seamless Canada initiative. This program brings together federal, provincial and private sector agencies and organizations to stabilize life for military families, which are frequently required to move. It is about easing the burden every time we post a member of our military to a different wing or base around the country, often in a different province or territory. I am pleased to say that as a result of the seamless Canada initiative, a number of our pilot projects are under way in different provinces.

Moving from province to province can also mean a change or loss of employment for many military spouses. Therefore, this past fall, we announced the military spousal employment network. This network of over a dozen national employers in the private and public sectors has made local or virtual employment opportunities available to military spouses. This new network complements National Defence's recently launched military spousal employment initiative, which offers military spouses access to flexible, meaningful employment opportunities with DND on bases and wings. It also provides National Defence hiring managers with a pool of experienced candidates who wish to maintain their skills and continue their careers.

All these new initiatives are easing pressures on military families, but we also know that the unique challenges members and their families face do not always end when they leave the military. Our commitment to their well-being follows them beyond their service.

Our government recognizes the complex challenges of transitioning out of the military. Our defence team is overhauling the transition process to put a stronger focus on retaining our skilled personnel when possible and on all seven domains of well-being that are key to a successful transition to post-military life.

In December, we officially launched the Canadian Armed Forces transition group, which has the important task of improving the transition experience for all Canadian Armed Forces members, veterans and their families and of providing support to our ill or injured members.

The transition group provides professional and personalized support to better meet the needs of our members in the regular and reserve forces. The group will ensure that all Canadian Armed Forces members, veterans and their families receive the full range of supports, compensation and benefits available to them. This is one way the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs are closing gaps between the work of both departments.

Our two departments are also working together to implement other initiatives to support the transition of our military members. This past September, we re-introduced the veterans service card, a tangible symbol of a member's service to our country.

We also launched a joint suicide prevention strategy, which recognizes that no single program or service can address this issue alone or eliminate all the risks. Last year, the strategy released the "Canadian Armed Forces Clinician Handbook on Suicide Prevention". It continues its work to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

● (2055)

Furthermore, our defence team is addressing the needs of our women and men in uniform through a total health and wellness approach. The team is making sure that those who need mental, physical or emotional care have access to comprehensive, compassionate and dependable services.

We often ask our women and men in uniform to operate in challenging and dangerous parts of the world, and they do so knowing that they may experience loss or trauma or that they could come home with an invisible injury. We know that operational stress injuries are real. With 26 mental health clinics and seven specialized operational trauma stress support centres located at military bases across the country, we are ensuring that our members have the programs and services in place to help them recover and heal.

Overall, our government is most proud of the women and men of our Canadian Armed Forces. From the day they put on the uniform to the day they take it off, and beyond, the care we offer them shows that we are there for them and their families. Investing in the well-being of our people is the most important commitment we can make. They deserve our care as much as they do our respect, and our defence investments ensure that our government delivers on both.

Time permitting, I would now like to ask a few questions of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Unlike the Conservatives, who cut billions from defence, we are providing the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces with the equipment they need to keep Canadians safe and with the support they deserve. Can the parliamentary secretary tell this House how the women and men of our Canadian Armed Forces are at the core of everything we do?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague from Bay of Quinte for his great work and his unwavering support for the base located in his riding, CFB Trenton.

I am always happy to talk about the Conservative government's budget cuts, as well as the investments we are making for our men and women. We are offering tax-free income for members deployed on international operations. We are investing $155 million to safeguard the digital privacy and security of Canadians. We are allocating $198 million to improve access to health care and implement a joint suicide prevention strategy. We are also providing $6 million per year in new funding to military family resource centres, which means more child care hours. Lastly, our defence policy contains a great investment for our men and women.

I wonder how the previous Conservative government could have afforded these investments after all the cuts it made during its 10 years in power.

[*English*]

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Chair, we are providing the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces with the equipment they need to keep Canada safe. I would take our record over that of the Conservatives any day on defence procurement. Can the parliamentary secretary tell us more about the new fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft that will help keep Canadians safe?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, that is another example that shows how our investments compare to the previous government's. I am wondering how it could have made these investments.

Our government gave a $2.4-billion contract to Airbus Defence and Space for a new fleet of 16 fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft and five years of in-service support.

These aircraft will replace the old ones, and the first of the 16 is expected to be available by the end of the year.

This is another example of the investments that we, on this side of the House, are making, as opposed to the cuts made under the Harper government.

[*English*]

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Chair, my riding is home to CFB Trenton, Canada's largest air force base, and many Canadian Armed Forces members are constituents. Our government is continuing to show its unwavering support for Ukraine. Can the parliamentary secretary talk to us again about recent developments regarding our mission in Ukraine and the role of our Canadian Armed Forces?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, I would like to once again reiterate our unwavering support for Ukraine. As members know, that is why our government renewed Canada's training and military co-operation mission in Ukraine for a period of three years, until March 2022.

This renewed mandate will enable approximately 200 members of the Canadian Armed Forces to successfully pursue their tactical training of Ukrainian security forces. This mission is a key component of the Canadian government's approach to helping Ukraine strengthen its own security, stability and sovereignty.

We will always stand with Ukraine.

● (2100)

[*English*]

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Chair, can the hon. parliamentary secretary talk to us about budget 2019 and its funding for DND initiatives?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, budget 2019 includes important measure to support the Canadian Armed Forces, including renewing our missions in Ukraine, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. In addition, it allocates nearly $19 million in support of Canadian Armed Forces members transitioning over to civilian life.

Once again, unlike the previous government, we are investing in the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces, specifically through our defence policy and the investments we are making to provide them with the necessary equipment and training. That is what they need, and they are very pleased that our government is investing in them every day.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Chair, as the proud representative of 19 Wing Comox, I am incredibly proud to be here to represent the amazing work the people at that base do.

The amount of work that is currently being done on the search and rescue training facility has been wonderful to watch. At this time in the world, having training for search and rescue is needed, and Comox is a great place to do it.

However, in the Comox Valley, the rental vacancy rate has been under 1% for a very long time. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to remind the minister that I wrote a letter several months ago asking about this issue. The reality is that there is not a lot of housing on the base, either. With more people coming to the region for training, and the challenges so many of the women and men in uniform are facing in terms of housing, can the minister please let me know, and let the House know, if any resources will be funnelled to 19 Wing Comox to address this important housing issue?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for her advocacy and support for 19 Wing and her knowledge of search and rescue. The fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft will be coming to Comox.

The challenge of making sure that our women and men have the right facilities to work and live is extremely important to us. We are currently investing $2.2 million, and we are seeing the implementation phase of military housing at Comox. In addition, we are focusing on health services. Roads and utilities will also be upgraded. However, a lot more work needs to be done, not just at Comox but across the country.

When we stop investing in our bases, they will require some critical infrastructure investment. That is exactly what we are doing. We have a lot more work to do. This is something our defence policy will be addressing directly, because looking after our personnel and their families is our number one priority.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for his answer. We will certainly be waiting for that. However, the concern I have is that a lot of this will be short-term housing for people who are receiving training rather than housing for people who actually live on the base, which is a huge need. I will certainly be watching for that to be dealt with.

Across this country, one of the major challenges for the military, as the minister just spoke to, is infrastructure. It is well known that much of our military infrastructure is either coming to the end of its life or is very well past it. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the men and women in uniform for their diligence in caring for that infrastructure, sometimes after a long time waiting and under very hard circumstances, to the best of their ability. However, it certainly needs to be updated. For example, many barracks were built in the 1950s, and they need to be updated urgently.

At this point, the minister really has no comprehensive infrastructure plan. When will it be developed? As the operational budget continues to remain largely flat, these needs must be addressed. The people around this country deserve to be served much better. I would like a comprehensive response to this.

● (2105)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, if you would allow me, I am happy to give a very comprehensive response to this.

Taking care of our women and men, including their families, is extremely important. We have actually increased the operational budget. When I visit all our bases and wings, we look at the military family resource centres, we look at the health services centres and we look at their housing. A priority is making sure where our people need it most.

Across Canada, we have been investing, whether it is in Comox or whether it is in Cold Lake. We have 8,900 housing units that will be built for the Canadian Armed Forces. However, let us not forget that our Canadian Armed Forces members live not only in military housing but also outside, and we make sure that the preferential living differential is also updated. We are doing reviews on that to make sure we ease that burden.

Plus, we are looking at other things. When people move from province to province, we are easing the burden for military families as they move. That is what seamless Canada is about. When they move, we make sure they get the best practices; we make sure they get their driver's licences more easily—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, the operational budget has remained largely flat. A small increase is not in any way meeting the massive needs of infrastructure deficits across this country.

I would also remind the minister that the housing situation in Comox is increasing dramatically and people are having to move farther and farther away. I agree that my riding is the most beautiful riding across the country, but when people are having to move an hour or an hour and a half away from where they work, that is a huge commute, and that is what is happening in my region. It is very important that we do not get lost in some of these discussions of big numbers. Action on the ground is desperately needed.

I have also shared with the minister my concern about purchasing second-hand F-18s from Australia. The Parliamentary Budget Officer examined the cost of buying and upgrading 18 used Australian F-18s and flying them until 2032. His report that was released earlier this year puts the financial price tag at between $1.09 billion and $1.15 billion, considerably more than the estimate of just under $900 million from DND. In 2018, we also saw in the Auditor General's report, "In our opinion, purchasing interim aircraft does not bring National Defence closer to consistently meeting the new operational requirement introduced in 2016."

The other part that is interesting to me in the research that I have done is that Denmark, a country that has a comparably sized air force to Canada's, created an open and transparent competition. A fighter jet has been chosen and delivery is expected in 2022, which seems like a fairly reasonable process to me.

I am curious about why the government has chosen to move forward with second-hand fighter jets rather than holding an open and transparent competition in a timely manner—and here we are almost at the end of the Liberals' period of governance—to meet the domestic and international requirements of the Royal Canadian Air Force, be operable with Canada's vast and unique geography, including the Arctic, and be interoperable with our allies, including our commitments to NORAD and NATO.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, just in case the member has not been tracking our defence policy or the discussions we have been having here with the official opposition, we actually have right now an open and transparent competition to replace all the fighters. In fact, we are buying more aircraft than what the previous government wanted, 88, so that we can actually meet our NORAD and NATO commitments simultaneously.

We have budgeted for this. We actually have the money to be able to purchase these jets. That is what we have committed to in our defence policy. The RFP will be out. A lot of good work has been done on this, making sure that we actually have the right requirements so that, when the competition goes through, the best jet is going to be selected.

When it comes to the interim fleet, our legacy fleet, we do still have missions to fly. Our air force is conducting air policing in Romania and Iceland as well as our NORAD mission. Our sovereignty is important, so we are investing in the legacy fleet. This is one of the reasons we have to purchase interim jets. I am very happy that we were able to move on this very quickly with Australia.

We have investments that will be going into the legacy fleet. We will be upgrading them. With those investments that we will be making, then it will be in line with the PBO's report. That work is ongoing to make sure the current fleet is upgraded for the appropriate equipment, whether it is on the radar systems or the weapons. We want to make sure we invest in our legacy fleet because we do have missions to fly.

I want to stress the fact that all of the fighter aircraft will be replaced in an open and transparent competition that is already ongoing, and the RFP will be out shortly.

● (2110)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, I think it is absolutely disappointing that the government waited. To have the process happening now is just disappointing. We could have already, like Denmark, been to that place where we were actually moving forward with what we need, rather than buying second-hand planes that are not going to meet what we desperately need right now. It is disappointing, to say the least. Waiting and waiting is not what the military needs after many years of going back and forth between Conservative and Liberal governments where the budgets have been cut and the needs are not being met.

The government promised on multiple occasions to send up to 600 troops and 150 police to UN peacekeeping missions. How many do we have deployed on peacekeeping missions now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to making sure that we do our part, but there is one aspect to the member's question that we were just talking about.

We are investing. We have actually increased our investments. Our investments have increased by 70%. In fact, when we released our defence policy and we talked about the increased investments that we were putting into our defence, $63 billion in addition to what the Conservatives were doing, the comment that was made by the leader of their party, who was not the leader at that time, was that this money could have been better spent in other places.

My question is for all of them. We have people saying that they want to invest. Actually, not only do we have a plan but it is costed and it is fully funded for the next 20 years, so that the Canadian Armed Forces can have all the tools necessary. Why? It is because we have a responsibility not just inside of Canada but also internationally as well. I am very proud of the work we are doing internationally—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for North Island —Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, I am a very proud person to have members from my region from 19 Wing who worked so hard in Mali, and I just want to take this opportunity to recognize the work they have done in the name of this country.

Romania has been tasked with taking over for Canada in Mali on July 31 of this year, but Romania has been very clear that it cannot be operational until October 15. Why did the government not follow the UN request to extend the mission at least until October? It is a matter of keeping people safe and respecting the hard work that our people are doing in that country.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am very proud of the commitment our government has made when it comes to the United Nations peacekeeping operations to support the reforms they wanted. This commitment we made to Mali in terms of our air medevac helicopters is what the UN called a "smart pledge". A smart pledge is about coming into rotation for a year and then having other nations come on board.

We worked with Romania on this. I visited. I spoke with the minister of national defence of that country to have its commitment, worked with the United Nations and, in fact, spoke with the under-secretaries-general on how we are going to be moving forward and getting other nations.

Therefore, we are actually assisting Romania right now, and we look forward to helping them to reduce this gap. We are committed to making sure the United Nations missions have all the support they require.

● (2115)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Chair, it seems to me that, when we are asked to step up, I know that our men and women in uniform are ready to do that work. Unfortunately, Romania cannot fulfill that commitment, and that period of time will have a huge impact. It is responsible for us to look at that.

Will the government announce another peacekeeping mission? This is something that Canadians are very proud of, and our military has very high respect across the world. I would like to hear what the government's commitment is.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the commitment we have made as a government is a whole-of-government one to the United Nations, which includes the military. As part of the smart pledge concept, we have now air medevac helicopters in Mali. We have also offered a tactical airlift that will start in Entebbe. We also have offered up the quick reaction force. We are going to be doing training using our experience from Iraq and Afghanistan to support the work that is happening on the ground.

We are working with the United Nations and its leadership to make sure we help them move the mission forward, because we need to do peacekeeping differently. We have spent the time to understand what the issues and concerns are, and we are committed to making sure we help the United Nations with the reforms, and when the opportunity and the time are right we will be announcing the additional missions.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it gives me great pleasure to stand in the House this evening as the member of Parliament for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, the riding that has the highest percentage of military members and veterans in Nova Scotia, and of course Nova Scotia has the highest percentage of military members and veterans in Canada.

This is a great opportunity to share the great work the Department of National Defence is doing to support our Canadian Armed Forces through ambitious and responsible procurement. Our men and women in uniform are at the heart of every decision the department makes.

Key to this support is making sure they have the right equipment to do their jobs in any environment, equipment that helps to ensure their safety and operational effectiveness, now and in the future.

Unlike the previous Conservative government, which cut billions of dollars in defence spending and mismanaged procurement projects, we are providing our men and women in uniform with what they need in a way that is efficient and responsible.

In our defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", we set out to streamline the procurement process and develop a new funding model for how we make procurement decisions. It continues to inform how our government conducts procurement almost three years later.

In this model, each of our capital projects is fully costed, meaning that Canadians have a clearer picture of the costs over the entire life cycle. This model is also flexible. It is able to adjust to the rapidly evolving defence environment, and to other changes that might affect our investments in equipment and other capital projects.

With the defence investment plan and the defence capabilities blueprint, our government is achieving a higher standard of accountability when it comes to planned capital investments, and progress in delivering on those capital investments. These two documents set out key funding for equipment, information technology, infrastructure and services the department needs to deliver on the commitments made in our defence policy. They are available online for Canadians, industry and other stakeholders.

Thanks to these changes, we are able to move projects along more quickly, with the care, high standards and transparency Canadians deserve. We are already seeing these results in action. Of the 333 capital projects identified in "Strong, Secure, Engaged", two-thirds are in the implementation or close-out phase. We have delivered 90% of completed projects within their planned scope and budget.

Together, we are building Canadian Armed Forces that are agile and capable of adapting to tomorrow's global threats. We are doing this with respect for Canadian taxpayers and a clear and public plan on how we spend public funds. The government's procurement projects are a testament to the unwavering support for our women and men in uniform, on land, sea and in the air.

I would like to talk more about some of these great projects.

While the former Conservative government spent a decade under-investing in the Royal Canadian Air Force, our government is stepping up to ensure that we can meet our NORAD and NATO commitments at the same time.

In December 2017, we launched the competition to replace the current fleet of CF-18 fighter jets with 88 future fighters. This is one of the most significant investments in the Royal Canadian Air Force in more than 30 years. It is essential for protecting Canadians, while also meeting our international obligations.

Our government has identified a list of supplier teams, and it anticipates that the final request for proposals will be released in the coming months. In the interim, Canada has purchased 18 CF-18 fighter jets from Australia. We have already begun to receive these interim jets, and we will integrate the first two into the fleet shortly.

● (2120)

We are also working on several major projects for our Royal Canadian Navy. As part of the largest and most complex procurement project in Canadian history, we have acquired 15 new surface combatants to replace our Halifax class frigates and our former destroyers. These ships will allow the navy to deploy anywhere in the world on short notice and allow Canada to maintain its position as a maritime power. Together with the surface combatants, our new joint support ships will form the core of Canada's future navy fleet.

In 2023, Canada will take ownership of the first of these new Protecteur class ships. These vessels will resupply deployed warships, extending the amount of time the ships can remain at sea and eliminating the need to return to port.

Closer to home, Canada's efforts to patrol our coastline and safeguard Canada's sovereignty will be supported by our new Arctic offshore patrol ships. We are proud that these will be the first Canadian-made ships in 20 years. The first is the HMCS *Harry DeWolf*, which is expected to be delivered this summer. In total, we will have six ships that will assist in humanitarian and disaster relief, support maritime security and help with search and rescue efforts and anti-smuggling operations.

The minister recently travelled to Halifax to help mark the construction of the fourth AOPS, the future HMCS *William Hall*, named after the first Nova Scotian and first black Canadian to be awarded the Victoria Cross.

We are in the process of acquiring new logistic support vehicles for our Canadian Army through the medium support vehicle system project. These vehicles, including the standard military pattern trucks, are a replacement for the logistics trucks that the Canadian army has been using in some cases since the 1980s. With these trucks, the Canadian army will be able to better provide lift and logistical support on the ground to transport people, equipment and supplies where they are needed.

Likewise, Canada recently celebrated the delivery of our 500th and final tactical armoured patrol vehicle. When deployed, these combat vehicles will fulfill a number of roles on the battlefield, including reconnaissance and surveillance, security, command and control, and armoured transport of personnel. We have seen these vehicles in action during the recent flooding, and they have performed extremely well. They contributed to the operational effectiveness of our men and women in uniform as they provided much-needed flood relief for communities.

The safety of Canadians is our government's top priority, which is why we delivered on our promise of modern search and rescue capabilities through the purchase of our fixed-wing search and rescue fleet.

Our government is also replacing the Lee-Enfield rifles that the Canadian Rangers have used since the 1940s, believe it or not. The new C-19 rifles have been developed to support the vital work our Rangers do in Canada's north. They perform very well in freezing temperatures and will assist in the Rangers' efforts to provide surveillance and patrol across remote areas.

This is some of our major procurement process work. We are giving our Canadian Armed Forces members the tools they need, with the care, high standards and transparency Canadians expect and deserve, while building a military that is prepared for tomorrow's global threats and ready to defend Canada and assist our partners around the world.

I would like to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence a few questions.

Our government is delivering on important capabilities for the Canadian Armed Forces, unlike the previous government, which cut spending on defence. Shipbuilding is an important part of many communities across Canada, as well as in my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, and it is providing them great middle-class jobs.

Over the past few months, our government has had the pleasure of launching the first Canadian-built ship in 20 years, the *Harry DeWolf*, as well as announcing that we would be purchasing a sixth offshore Arctic patrol ship. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence please update the House on the progress of these important defence projects?

● (2125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook for the incredible work he does in the House of Commons and for his straight talk. His passion is unmistakable. We are very grateful for his work.

Yes, as he said, our government has made historic investments in the Canadian Armed Forces. As previously mentioned, we are increasing spending by 70%, and we also plan to significantly strengthen the capabilities of the Royal Canadian Navy. As the member indicated, the Minister of National Defence was in Halifax earlier this month to help mark the beginning of construction of the fourth Arctic offshore patrol ship, HMCS *William Hall*. I know my colleague is also very proud of the work being done by the employees at the Irving shipyard.

I also want to take a moment to thank the workers at the Seaspan and Davie shipyards for the excellent work they do. We are proud to have them as partners. We are proud that they have been awarded these contracts and that they are helping to provide the Royal Canadian Navy with the equipment needed for Canadian Armed Forces personnel to do their jobs. We are very grateful to them.

[*English*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Chair, I am very proud of the work happening in the shipyard in Halifax, as 21% of the workforce is from my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

Unlike the Harper Conservative government, our government is ensuring that our men and women in the Royal Canadian Navy have the equipment they need for the work that is required.

Can the parliamentary secretary please tell the House what steps our government has taken to ensure that the Canadian navy has the replacement tools and equipment it needs for the Halifax-class combat ships?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, again, it is critical that we give our women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces the equipment they need.

As my colleague just said, we will be purchasing 15 surface combatants. The investment is fully funded in our new defence policy. We know that the Conservatives were planning on procuring only nine ships, and so only left enough money for nine ships.

We are determined to be fair and transparent in our procurement process and get the best value for Canadians.

Our defence policy allows us to have the investments and equipment we need to ensure that our men and women in the CAF can do their job. We are very proud of that. We will keep investing in the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*English*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Chair, the Harper Conservatives sole-sourced almost every major military procurement, and yet still failed to deliver for the military.

Let us look at their record. The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported almost double the government's estimate for the modern fighter purchase, and a previous Auditor General report found that the Conservatives, believe it or not, kept two sets of numbers, one internal and one for Canadians, and a decade later, still no fighter jets for the air force.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence please tell the House how our government is providing the Royal Canadian Air Force with the critical equipment that is needed to be fully operational, today and into the future?

● (2130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for the question.

We have always been clear that we need a modern fleet of fighter jets. It is essential to the defence of Canada. That is why we have an open and transparent process.

As my colleague said, the former government had two sets of numbers: one for the public and another for the government. That is totally unacceptable. We have just one set of rules and we will respect them with an open and transparent process. That is what Canadians expect from us.

I am surprised to hear the Conservatives speak of transparency and openness. I did not think those words were part of their vocabulary.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to start by thanking the defence minister. We do not see eye to eye on a lot of things, but I appreciate his good humour and his service to our country.

We have heard that Canada sent pilots down to the U.S. to be trained on the Super Hornet before the debacle with Boeing and the subsequent decision not to buy the Super Hornet. How many pilots and techs were sent down to the U.S.?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the compliment and for his commitment to the Canadian Armed Forces.

One of the things we are focused on is making sure that we have enough pilots. We had started, even while we were conducting the defence policy review, recruiting enough pilots and making sure we had enough trained. We always make sure that we look at opportunities where we can.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, how many pilots did we send to the U.S. to train on the Super Hornet, which we did not end up purchasing?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are constantly training our pilots for various aircraft. We are also in the process of recruiting more pilots, because we are buying more aircraft.

The previous government only wanted 65, and because of our defence policy, we are purchasing 88 through an open and transparent competition. Through that, we will ensure we have enough pilots and mechanics.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, how much did it cost Canadian taxpayers for the military to train Canadian pilots in the U.S. on a plane that we were not buying?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are focused on recruiting, training and retaining pilots for our air force, ensuring we have enough pilots for our F-18s. We do have pilots who go on exchange, but we are committed to ensuring we have enough pilots. We have started that process.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, the government has changed its construction order at Seaspan and is now going with a joint supply ship first, ahead of the offshore science vessels. Could the minister explain why there is a change in the construction order?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to procurement, we committed to ensuring we would make changes to move procurement along quickly, such as changes in scheduling. In addition, with respect to the surface combatant in Halifax, we made the decision to pick the design. We saved two years regarding that procurement. We are committed to ensuring our people have the tools they need.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, who ordered the change?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to working with our industry partners to ensure we can move the procurement process forward quickly. Our folks need this equipment and this capability.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, what is the added charge going to be to taxpayers from this change in priority?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to ensuring we have this capability. The capability regarding our joint supply ships was lost. We will ensure we have this capability. We will also ensure we have the appropriate investments and that they are delivered.

● (2135)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I will repeat the question. What is the added cost to taxpayers for this change in priority to build the supply ship first?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I can understand why Conservatives are talking about costs, because the previous government cut them.

We are committed to investing in our capability and moving the procurement process forward as quickly as possible so we can have this permanent capability for our navy.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, in committee, the procurement people said that to get that answer, we would have to go to defence. Now we see its answer. When will the first joint supply ship be finished?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are making changes to the process. In fact, we started cutting the early blocks on that ship. We will find every opportunity to move that process along as quickly as possible so this capability can be delivered for our navy, something that was lost under the previous government.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, the minister stated previously that changing the order would move up the ship two years. When will this first ship be ready? Obviously, if he knows that it is moved up by two years, he must know the date the ship will be ready. When will it be ready?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I was talking about the surface combatant. The decision we made to purchase its design saved us two years on its procurement. We have also made changes to the joint supply ship procurement regarding the early blocks. We expect it to be delivered by 2022.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, interestingly, procurement said that it would be 2023-24.

When will the second JSS be ready?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I do not have on hand the date the second ship will be built. The most important piece is that this project is fully funded and it is being built. We will finally have this capability back in the navy.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, how in the world does the defence minister not know when this vital second ship will be ready for our armed forces?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we have been working very diligently with the Minister of Procurement to ensure we can make the changes to the procurement process to move things forward. We are committed to ensuring we move this forward as quickly as possible. The most important piece is that this capability will be coming back to the navy.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, will the *Asterix* be kept in service after the first ship and the second ship delivery?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the interim capability is providing good service for us now. The decision will be made in the future.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, how many supply ships does the Royal Canadian Navy require?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, two permanent joint supply ships are what the navy requires.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, how can we maintain a two-coast navy if one is in retrofit and we only have two ships?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to military procurement, I take advice on the needs from the chief of the defence staff. Two permanent joint supply ships is what are needed, and that is exactly what we are delivering. This is what we had. The most important thing is making sure that we do not lose this capability, and that is what we are focused on.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, when will the first combat ship be delivered?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am very proud to say that we cut steel on the fourth Arctic and offshore patrol vessel two weeks ago, and the first AOPS will be delivered this summer.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I will repeat my question. When will the first combat ship be ready?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, the Arctic and offshore patrol vessel is a combat ship. It will be delivered by this summer.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, when will the Type 26 new frigates being built at Irving after the AOPS be ready?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are very proud to have signed the contract for the surface combatant, the largest procurement project in Canadian history. The most important part of it is that we have all the funds to procure all 15 ships, not nine ships, as the previous government left it.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I find it remarkable the Minister of National Defence does not have an answer for that.

The Liberal government has announced plans to rehabilitate our Victoria class submarines to keep them going until 2040, which will make them about 50 years old.

A retired navy commander stated, “You can modernize most things, but you can't modernize the hull, unless you build a new hull.” Why is the government endangering the lives of our submariners, when the subs themselves are at increased risk of failure?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our submarines play a very important role in our Arctic sovereignty and our security. Based on advice from the Canadian Armed Forces through the chief of the defence staff, that is the reason we are modernizing our submarines. I am very proud of the work they are doing. In fact, we had two of our submarines, one deployed in the Pacific Ocean and one in the Atlantic. That is the first time that has been done. I do not even know the last time it was actually deployed.

● (2140)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, the minister does not know a lot of things, apparently.

Did the minister look at perhaps buying any used, rusty subs from Australia before committing to rehabilitate our subs?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, unlike the previous government, which cut $2 billion from defence every single year, running our military at a deficit, we are actually investing $63 billion in addition to what the Conservatives had committed to. We have a plan that is fully funded and costed. I would like to see what they and their leader are going to be costing out in their defence plan.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, will we be installing interoperability platforms in the Canadian surface combatants, much like Australia, Japan, South Korea and the U.S. have done, so we can have co-operative engagements with our allies?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we work very closely with our allies, and interoperability is very important. We are already in discussions with our allies when it comes to the interoperability of our surface combatants.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, it is a yes or no question. Will we be installing the interoperability platform into our CSCs?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, interoperability is not just about a yes or no. It is a whole bunch of capabilities. When we look at our requirements, and interoperability is part of it, it is far more complex than that. Maybe that is one of the reasons the Conservatives never got anything done or any procurement project moving forward.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, is the intent to install the interoperability package before or after the building of the ships in the design?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to interoperability, it is a requirement we have, for example for our radar systems and our weapons systems. There are many aspects to this when it comes to interoperability. The answer is yes. Interoperability is very important.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, would the minister confirm that the interoperability package preferred by the U.S. navy and our allies was suggested to our navy but withdrawn under pressure from Irving Shipbuilding, because it argued that it would create more delays in the program?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, interoperability with our allies is very important. We are actually conducting missions all over the world with our navy. We are already discussing with allies what our interoperability will be and, more importantly, how to look at future threats. It is something we will get done.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, the government has announced that Irving will build a sixth AOPS at $800 million, double the cost of the first five, when the cost should be dropping as production gets more efficient. As per the RAND Corp. statement, there should be about a 20% drop. Why is the price tag for the sixth ship going from $400 million to $800 million?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we should be celebrating the fact that we are buying a sixth AOPS. Unlike the Conservatives, who wanted five, we are actually purchasing a sixth. This is about providing good, well-paying jobs for middle-class Canadians and making sure that our navy has greater capability so it can protect our sovereignty.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, the government is looking at purchasing two additional AOPS on top of the sixth one announced because of a production gap at Irving. Would the minister advise whether there is still a production gap at Irving, despite the addition of a sixth AOPS?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, at National Defence, we are focused on making sure that we have the capabilities for our needs. I am very happy that we have signed for a sixth AOPS. I was proud to cut steel on the fourth AOPS about two weeks ago, and I met some of the workers there. I also want to state the tremendous work that they do in recruiting women, indigenous people and African Canadians into the program.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, what are the costs of the seventh and eighth proposed AOPS that the government is considering?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are purchasing a sixth AOPS. I am very proud of having an additional AOPS, and we look forward to the 15 surface combatants as well.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, according to the numbers used by the PBO and RAND Corp., the sixth AOPS should drop in cost to $320 million. Why is the government paying $800 million for the sixth one?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are very proud that when it comes to the funding of this project, it is fully funded. This is something that the previous government was not able to do. When we have the money, we give certainty to the Canadian Armed Forces that they are going to be looked after, and certainty to the employees as well.

● (2145)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, what is the justification for the plan behind the proposed seventh and eighth AOPS that had not been considered before, when we only needed five?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am very proud that we have signed for a sixth AOPS. I am very proud that we have money for 15 surface combatants as well. I want to highlight the fact that the previous government left enough money only for nine surface combatants, and we have fully funded that project through our defence policy.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, when journalists have contacted the minister's department with questions on Irving, the minister's department has repeatedly shared the question and the journalist's private information with Irving. Why?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, with regard to that issue, that has been rectified and the people have been spoken to.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, the minister says "issue". It has happened three times. Why is he referring to only one issue? Why is this a repeated problem within his ministry?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our department will make sure that we are open and transparent to Canadians. It is one of the reasons we work directly with industry. In fact, we opened up our bases not only to the media but also to members of Parliament. Under the previous government, the Minister of National Defence's approval was needed to visit a base. As soon as I took office, that was delegated down to the base commanders and commanding officers.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to rise and speak to the important subject of diversity and inclusion in our Canadian Armed Forces. I will take the next 10 minutes to address how the Canadian Armed Forces fosters and encourages diversity so that our forces remain strong, serve our whole society and will endure in the future.

Unlike the previous government, which repeatedly cut support to the Canadian Armed Forces, we are ensuring that the Canadian Armed Forces has the right mix of people, equipment and training to meet the important demands placed upon it.

We recognize that diversity is an essential factor in overall mission success, and that is why we are committed to making progress on that issue. I personally know that the work done around an inclusive and collaborative decision-making table is improved by the diversity of its members. Whether that diversity is gender, identity, expression, orientation, ethnicity, language, experience, heritage or religion, each brings different perspectives that when added together will support better decisions, better plans and better strategies.

A diverse and inclusive force is more operationally effective. It improves how we understand the human dimension of conflict zones, affording greater access to communities.

In Afghanistan, for example, some of our women in uniform worked closely with local women to gather crucial intelligence, situational awareness and build relationships with local communities. Men could not have accessed that intelligence.

These are just some of the reasons that our defence policy of "Strong, Secure, Engaged" makes diverse perspectives a critical component in our decision-making. Our commitment to diversity includes growing the representation of women in the Canadian military to at least 25% of the total force by 2026.

Our government is committed to gender equality and to providing a work environment where women are welcomed, supported and respected. Increasing enrolment is a critical part of that commitment, and that is why we have announced initiatives that will draw on Canada's diversity, including increasing enrolment of women.

Knowing the operational and cultural value that women bring to our forces, Canada launched the second national action plan on women, peace and security in November 2017, with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces as major partners. The plan prioritizes women's involvement in all of Canada's military activities.

We know that women and men, boys and girls all experience conflict differently. The action plan has bold objectives to advance gender equality and the leadership role of women and girls in all stages of conflict resolution and to protect their human rights throughout.

Canada is also expanding its influence and values on the world stage. In 2017, we hosted the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial conference in Vancouver, where we launched the Vancouver principles to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers and the Elsie initiative to increase the participation of women in peacekeeping. Through the Elsie initiative for Women in Peace Operations, Canada works with the UN to integrate women's perspectives into peace processes, from conflict prevention and conflict resolution to reconciliation and economic recovery post-conflict. We are making sure that women's voices and different lived experiences are represented for meaningful participation in peace operations.

Notably, Canada is already a world leader in terms of the proportion of women in its military. For example, the number of women in senior leadership roles has almost doubled since 2015.

All Canadian Armed Forces occupations and environments are open to people of any gender, who are selected for training, promotions, postings, and career opportunities based on rank, qualifications, and merit.

The Canadian Armed Forces actively recruits qualified women for challenging career opportunities. Applicants interested in joining an under-strength occupation and applicants who help meet diversity objectives are processed in priority.

Of course, the forces will always have room for talented, motivated and qualified Canadians who meet requirements and standards for personnel selection, and all applicants' files are addressed with due diligence.

● (2150)

In addition to recruiting a more diverse workforce, Canadian Armed Forces members must all be properly equipped and cared for through the duration of their careers. That is why gender-based analysis-plus, GBA+, integration is now part of all defence team activities.

For example, the new Arctic and offshore patrol ships coming later this year will have single or double occupancy crew cabins and individual washroom facilities. This will allow for greater comfort, easier distribution of a mixed gender crew and accommodation of other specific needs. Additionally, the equipment is designed to be operated by a very broad range of physical body characteristics to accommodate members' size, strength and weight.

On a more sombre note, allow me to state the obvious. In our armed forces and everywhere else, every person deserves a professional environment in which he or she is treated with respect and dignity. Inappropriate sexual behaviour of any kind is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Our government takes all allegations of sexual misconduct very seriously.

Our military faces well-known challenges that it is working hard to address, so it can recruit and retain more diverse members by fostering a culture based on trust, respect and dignity for everyone. The Canadian Armed Forces has taken significant steps to address all forms of sexual misconduct in its rank, but there is still much work to do.

Military leadership continues to press forward, understanding that people are at the heart of everything it does and that the military must exemplify the beliefs and values of the Canadians they serve.

It has also been important to address the anti-LGBTQ2 practices and policies of the past.

In March 2018, the Government of Canada signed the final settlement of the LGBT purge class action suit, providing up to $110 million dollars to compensate those federal public servants, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP directly impacted by anti-LGBTQ2 practices. The Prime Minister formally apologized to those Canadians harmed by federally sanctioned practices.

We must also act to ensure a harassment and discrimination-free work environment at all times. That is why in January 2018, National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces launched the positive space initiative to promote a safe and inclusive work environment for all employees regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

As part of the government's commitment to inclusion, National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are enhancing relationships with indigenous communities. As the Prime Minister has said, no relationship is more important to our government than our relationship with first nations.

One way the Canadian Armed Forces makes important contributions to Canada's reconciliation with indigenous people is through occupational and leadership training and experience, all of which contributes to a renewed relationship.

The Canadian Forces aboriginal entry program provides indigenous people with an opportunity to get hands-on experience with military training, careers and the military lifestyle, with no obligation to join the forces. With the skills they develop, indigenous members and veterans can assist with economic governance and other priorities when they refocus these skills in their communities once they complete the programs or they can choose to continue serving in the regular or reserve force.

My time is limited and therefore I can only touch on some examples, but I would invite members to look at the good work the defence team has been doing when it comes to the Kapyong Barracks or how, in Canada's north, rangers work diligently to protect our sovereignty, perform search and rescue operations and carry out operations and patrols.

We know we need a Canadian solution that works for our unique country and our specific values. We can be confident that the leadership of the Canadian Armed Forces is fostering an inclusive, diverse and harassment-free work environment for all those who serve our country.

● (2155)

I would like to use the remainder of my time to ask questions of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

We know the Conservatives do not mind being associated with the likes of Faith Goldy and the Rebel, until they are caught that is.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I have pictures.

As the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said, “The only tweet that the Conservatives will not change is their affiliation with Faith Goldy. They seem to be very proud when it comes to those actions.” It is out there for Canadians to see whether they like it or not.

When it comes to association with far right movements, personalities and ideas, could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence inform the House how racist—

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order. We are talking about the Department of National Defence and the main estimates in committee of the whole. I believe the member is completely off base here. I would ask her to come back to actually talk about things that are important to the brave men and women in uniform who serve our country.

The Chair: I thank the hon. member for his point of order. Certainly relevance is an issue. I am mindful of the fact that in debate, even in committee of the whole on issues pertaining to the budgetary expenses, in this case, of the Department of National Defence, there is a broad range of liberty given to members. However, the debate should be centred on the expenses and the nature of programming as it relates to the department in question that is before us. I would ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to keep that in mind in the course of her remarks and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, I thank my Kanata—Carleton colleague for her 31 years of service with the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*English*]

Our government and the entire leadership of the Canadian Armed Forces are committed to building a defence team with values of diversity, respect and inclusion. As members know, racist attitudes are totally unacceptable and incompatible with our military, with us and with every military service. We have measures in place to ensure that conduct reflecting such attitudes will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Chair, maybe my hon. colleagues will like this question better.

In 2013, defence spending was $15.6 billion, dropping below 1% GDP under the previous government. In 2018, defence spending was $21.3 billion. The Leader of the Opposition's plan for defence has no specifics, and that means perhaps more cuts for our men and women in uniform all over again. They will not even have their electoral platform costed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Could the parliamentary secretary compare that lack of vision and transparency with our own defence policy?

● (2200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her question.

We have reinvested massive amounts in the Department of National Defence, partly through our national defence policy. The former government withdrew from the world stage, but we brought Canada back.

Our defence policy includes $32.5 billion in spending and a 70% increase over the next 10 years. We will keep working hand in hand with our NORAD and NATO allies.

We will keep making crucial investments in key areas of our department for our men and women in uniform.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Chair, the government understands that diversity is our strength and an essential factor in mission success. Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell us how we are working to meet our objective to increase the representation of women by 1% every year over the next 10 years to 25% of the overall force?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, we do indeed want to increase personnel. We also want to increase the number of women in the Canadian Armed Forces. That is why we have made some changes. For example, female candidates will be moved to the top of the waiting list when they apply for military college. We will also give former female soldiers the opportunity to re-enlist. We launched the women in force program to show women the benefits of a military career. We want to increase diversity and the number of women. That is exactly what Canadians expect of us.

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Chair, it has been an interesting night so far.

I want to go back to the Minister of National Defence on a number of issues that were raised.

As we know, in the Vice-Admiral Norman case, the minister has said publicly, and in here tonight, that he regrets the fact that Vice-Admiral Norman had to go through this legal process.

Let us be clear. Did the minister say that Vice-Admiral Norman had to go through this? Exactly how does the minister feel about the vice-admiral having to be subjected to the RCMP investigation? Does he regret that the RCMP did a search and seizure of Vice-Admiral Norman's home; that he lost his position, for two years, as the vice-chief of the defence staff; that there were over two years of uncertainty and disruption of his great career; that there was stigma associated with the powers of state being brought to bear against him and that his reputation was besmirched?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I have stated before, I regret that Vice-Admiral Norman had to go through this. I can understand how difficult it must have been for him and his family, but it is also important to note that the entire process has been completely independent, as I stated and as has been verified by the prosecution and the defence. We needed to make sure that we respected his service and that we respected the actual process within Canada.

When the situation changed, the criteria were met, and I have authorized the reimbursement of the legal fees.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, he regrets it. Now that Vice-Admiral Norman has been exonerated, will the minister apologize on behalf of the Department of National Defence?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated when we started the committee of the whole, I completely agreed with the unanimous consent with regard to the motion.

The best way to respect someone, and I respect Vice-Admiral Norman's service in this country, is to respect the process. We have respected the process, as confirmed by the prosecution and the defence.

● (2205)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, through this process, documents were withheld that would have exonerated Vice-Admiral Norman a long time ago. Will the minister publicly table in this House those documents that were withheld from Vice-Admiral Norman?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, it is extremely important to give someone the full opportunity and show respect for someone's service and the actual process.

That process has been completely independent. Our department worked to make sure that all the requirements were met. In fact, I spoke to the deputy minister to make sure that we had the appropriate resources in place to support that process.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, in the minister's mandate letter, it said that they were going to increase accountability and transparency and that when his department, or he himself, messed up, they were going to come clean and be fully transparent.

Canadians deserve some answers here. Will the Minister of National Defence provide those answers and table the documents Canadians want to see?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, through this entire process, independence has been respected. That has been verified by the prosecution in terms of the case. I am happy to quote the prosecution:

> No other factors were considered in this decision, nor was there any contact or influence from outside the PPSC.

That is the best way to respect someone's service to this country.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, that is actually taking a quote out of context, because what the prosecution said, as well as what the defence lawyer said, was that in the staying of the proceedings and the dropping of the court case, there was no political interference. However, as Marie Henein pointed out, the government was trying to put its fingers on the scales of justice to tip them in the government's favour.

Obstruction of information, withholding of documents and coaching of witnesses is what we got from the government.

We already know that the Prime Minister, publicly, on two occasions, said, before the charges were laid against Vice-Admiral Norman, that he was going to be charged. Why did the Prime Minister think that? Did the Minister of National Defence or his department provide information to the PMO to suggest that they were going to be charging Vice-Admiral Norman, even before charges were laid?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, just because the member opposite makes an accusation does not make it true. In this case, we have the appropriate judicial process within Canada, and that is what we have respected in making sure of the independence. We have been fully co-operative. No DND documents were withheld. Through this entire process, it has been completely independent, and nothing was taken out of context. I am actually quoting the statement directly.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, one of the major fundamentals in our independent judicial system is that people are innocent until proven guilty. When these charges were brought against Vice-Admiral Norman, he went to the Department of National Defence for legal funding assistance. Who in the Department of National Defence made the decision to withhold those funds, essentially saying one is guilty until one proves one is innocent?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the entire judicial process has been respected all the way through. When it came to the legal fees, the former deputy minister at that time made the decision that the criteria were not met. When the situation changed, the criteria were met and I immediately authorized the reimbursement of the legal fees.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, who made the decision to withhold legal assistance? When everybody else in the PMO and within departmental staff were allowed to lawyer up on this case, including members of Parliament, were allowed to get their legal fees covered by the Government of Canada, who in the minister's office or in the Department of National Defence made the decision that Vice-Admiral Norman was not worthy to have legal assistance?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, the criteria were not met, as decided by the former deputy minister. Once the circumstances had changed, it was reviewed, the criteria were met and I immediately authorized reimbursement of the legal fees.

● (2210)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, the minister is not answering the questions. He said on TV this weekend that the criteria have changed. Who changed the criteria that made it possible for Vice-Admiral Norman to finally have his legal fees paid after the government almost bankrupted him?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I said the criteria were met. Because the situation had changed, the criteria were met, and based on that new information and that change, I immediately authorized the reimbursement of the legal fees.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I want to change gears a little. I want to get back to a previous question about the Auditor General's report 3, from the fall of 2018, and the Macdonald-Laurier Institute report on Canada's future fighter replacement, "The Catastrophe: Assessing the Damage from Canada's Fighter Replacement Fiasco". I recommend that the minister actually read this report. It is a condemnation of the government's management of the Department of National Defence and procurement in general.

In that report it clearly stated that the Auditor General, in a draft report, recommended in paragraph 59 that "National Defence should not purchase interim aircraft until it implements a plan to recruit and train pilots and technicians."

Who in the department would intimidate the independent office of the Auditor General to remove that recommendation?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, my office and I respect the independence of the Auditor General, and in fact we take the recommendations very, very seriously. The only fiasco that was created was by the previous government in bungling the replacement of the fighters a long time ago. These jets should have been replaced, but the Conservatives did not get it done.

Recruiting of our pilots was very important even before we actually made the decision in our defence policy to increase the number of fighter jets so that we can meet our NORAD and NATO commitments simultaneously. We had decided that we needed our pilots and we started recruiting immediately, including mechanics as well.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, will the minister at least admit that the whole reason they came up with this so-called interim capability gap was that they fabricated it because the Prime Minister made a campaign promise in 2015 that he would not buy the F-35, and that the government has done everything in its power since that day to make sure the F-35 was not going to be competitive in what they call an open competition? It may be open, but my question is why it is not being fair.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to having an open and transparent competition to replace all the jets. We based it on the requirements of our Canadian Armed Forces.

I also know that the Leader of the Opposition made a statement in Montreal regarding an open and transparent competition as well. Does the member disagree with his own leader?

At the same time, what is the Conservatives' plan to cost their program? The reason I ask is that even when they wanted 65 aircraft, they only left enough money for 29.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, the condemnation in the Macdonald-Laurier Institute's report on fighter jets goes into great detail on how everything the government has done in trying to procure new aircraft has been done to fit its political narrative. The government is covering a silly, asinine promise made in a campaign by the Prime Minister by applying partisan political interests as a way to buy fighter jets.

Liberals bought F-18 jets from Australia that are as old as our F-18 jets. That is not fixing the capability gap, especially when we do not have pilots to fly them.

The question was asked, and I want an answer this time from the minister. Is that contract with the Government of Australia not a cancellation clause to get rid of the Aussie jets, which the Auditor General said are a waste of money?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our plan in our defence policy, as stated, is to have an open and transparent competition to replace an entire fighter fleet and buy 88 new jets.

The Leader of the Opposition has also said that he wants to have an open and transparent competition. If he thinks our plan is asinine, which is the same as the Leader of the Opposition's, does he believe his own leader's plan is asinine?

● (2215)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, buying used Australian fighter jets is not a sound way of making our air force stronger. The minister often talks about how we need pilots to fly them, but under his watch, over 20% of our pilots have left the air force because of the mismanagement of the Liberal government.

We have Boeing and Lockheed Martin. Both U.S. companies are not happy about the new RFP. Letters have been sent by United States departmental officials such as Ellen Lord, and they were published in the Macdonald-Laurier report. Officials are incredibly upset with how the Liberal government has handled our relationship with the United States under the NORAD construct.

Has anyone in the minister's office or his department met with Pentagon or White House officials in the last couple of weeks to talk about the new request for proposals for our fighter jet competition?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the previous government, which the member was a part of as parliamentary secretary for national defence, had 10 years to replace the fighter fleet, and it should have, but it did not get it done.

This time, not only do we have a policy that states we need more aircraft than the Conservatives wanted, but we have the money to do it. We have started the open and transparent competition. I am very proud of the work. We are meeting those milestones. We are committed to making sure that the RFP gets out as soon as possible.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I really encourage the minister to read the correspondence coming from the Pentagon and the joint project office for the Joint Strike Fighter, talk to representatives from Boeing and Lockheed Martin and talk to Ellen Lord, who is the Under Secretary of Defense in the U.S. administration.

If we want to start looking at something, we need to look at what the RFP is. One of the things is that we need to have a two-eyed capability, which is Canada and the United States. Right now, we have a dismal relationship because of the Liberals' mismanagement on the fighter jet file.

How can the minister guarantee two-eyed capability in Canada's next fighter jet when he has ruined our relationship with the Americans as a result of Liberal partisan policies?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our relationship with the U.S. is even further enhanced because we are doing things around the world together. We are engaging with them on operations. I had many opportunities to go to the Pentagon and had many opportunities for myself and officials to discuss many things with them.

One report that is also very important is the Auditor General's report on the previous government's handling of the future fighter program. That report shows how important it was for us to take those recommendations so that we can have an open and transparent competition that is going to work. The previous government had 10 years to replace the fighter jets and it did not. We will.

The Chair: I will let the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek know that there are only about 11 or 12 minutes remaining in the time provided. Normally it would be 15 minutes. He has up to 10 minutes for his speech, and then maybe there will be time for one question, if he takes his full 10 minutes.

The hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today.

I am pleased to spend the time allotted to me discussing the Communications Security Establishment, also known as CSE, and the important work it does in cyber-defence and cyber-protection, as well as the cyber-work performed by the Canadian Armed Forces.

CSE is one of Canada's critical security and intelligence organizations within the national defence portfolio. It is Canada's national signals intelligence agency and serves the national interest by providing foreign intelligence to inform government decision-making. CSE also has the mandate to provide technical and operational assistance to federal law enforcement and security agencies in performing their lawful duties.

However, I am here today to focus on the second part of CSE's current mandate: cyber-defence and cyber-protection.

CSE has more than 70 years of history providing advice and guidance, including more than a decade of operational experience in defending cyber-systems of importance to the Government of Canada.

We know that good cybersecurity is critical to Canada's competitiveness, economic stability and long-term prosperity. That is why we launched the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, as promised in budget 2018. This new centre will provide Canadian citizens and businesses with a trusted place for cybersecurity advice.

Through the newly established Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, we are provided with sophisticated technical expertise to help identify, prepare for and respond to the most severe cyber-threats and attacks against computer networks and systems and the important information they contain. It also provides advice and guidance so Canadians can better protect themselves.

In the short time since its launch last fall, the cyber centre has improved operational coordination, providing better cyber-protection and more efficient responses in cases of cyber-attacks. This has improved Canada's cybersecurity overall. It has also made strides in increasing public and industry awareness and engagement on all matters of cybersecurity.

Canadians can rest assured that their government is prepared to meet the cybersecurity challenges of today and tomorrow. Reliable, secure cyber-systems are vital to Canadians' daily lives. That is why, in our last two budgets, we have taken action to strengthen Canada's cybersecurity.

In budget 2018, we committed $507.7 million over five years, starting in 2018-19, and $108.8 million per year ongoing to support Canada's first comprehensive national cyber security strategy, which includes establishing the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security.

Budget 2019 builds on these investments, proposing $144.9 million over five years, starting in 2019-20, to help better protect Canada's critical cyber-systems. For the cyber centre, this funding will support its advice and guidance to critical infrastructure owners and operators on how to better prevent and address cyber-attacks, no matter where they might originate.

Since October 1, CSE and the cyber centre have published key public reports to inform Canadians about the threats we face, including the first-ever unclassified "National Cyber Threat Assessment 2018" and the "2019 Update on Cyber Threats to Canada's Democratic Process".

In today's dynamic security environment, CSE's efforts to educate, protect and defend Canada and Canadians against cyber-threats are more critical than ever.

Protecting Canadians includes protecting our democratic processes from threats of foreign interference. This is why the Government of Canada has created a security and intelligence threats to elections task force, in which CSE plays an integral role. This task force also includes the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Global Affairs Canada.

The security and intelligence threats to elections task force works to counter covert, clandestine or criminal activities from influencing or interfering with the electoral process in Canada. It aims to prepare the government to assess and respond to threats to our elections.

However, CSE's work is not limited to the security and intelligence threats to elections task force. It is also working closely with Elections Canada to protect its infrastructure.

CSE, through the cyber centre, has offered cybersecurity advice and guidance to all 16 recognized federal political parties. It has also published companion resource documents for both Canadians and political campaigns on its website.

● (2220)

Pending the passage of Bill C-59, which is currently being studied in the other chamber, CSE would be able to provide more targeted advice, guidance and services to designated critical infrastructure owners upon their request. If passed, Bill C-59 would give CSE the mandate to conduct online operations to disrupt foreign threat attacks against Canadian systems. The same sophisticated cyber capabilities that CSE would employ could also be leveraged by the Canadian Armed Forces in support of military operations.

Cyberspace is becoming ever-more contested, and our adversaries are becoming more sophisticated. At the same time, our reliance on cyber is increasing. National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces recognize the importance of staying ahead of our adversaries in this environment. Cyber considerations must be built into everything the defence team does. Our government is ensuring that the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces have the tools and equipment they need to accomplish their important missions at home and abroad.

That is why "Strong, Secure, Engaged" includes several important initiatives to strengthen Canada's cyber capabilities, notably the new cyber mission assurance program and the creation of a new cyber operator trade within the Canadian Armed Forces.

As the nature of technological threats is evolving, using Canada's cyber talent is essential to face future challenges. We are determined to maintain a modern and agile force capable of responding to the technological challenges of today and tomorrow.

With the cyber mission assurance program, National Defence is considering cyber defence on all new equipment and technologies. That means identifying and addressing cyber-associated risks to military networks and equipment before buying. Cybersecurity is top of mind when the defence team assesses its current capabilities, fleets and infrastructure. It is deliberate and attentive in safeguarding computer networks, platforms and weapons systems, and networked equipment in key infrastructure.

I want to stress that cyber mission assurance takes place at every level, from the largest procurement projects outlined in SSE to the logistics officer overseas procuring goods for deployed personnel, to individual defence team members sitting at their computers. This is a coherent and enduring program that manages cyber-threats to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces is always in control of its actions. All of this helps to ensure that cyber-related disruptions do not interrupt military operations or the important business of security and defence.

As I mentioned, creating the cyber operator trade within the military was another important initiative in the defence policy. That includes new cyber operator roles within the reserve force that support the newly created cyber force, a specialized team of both military and civilian personnel.

This, combined with the changes that Bill C-59 proposes, would allow CSE to support cyber operations in Canadian Armed Forces missions when required and to deploy cybersecurity tools to defend Canada's critical infrastructure upon request.

CSE is proud to play a critical role in protecting Canada and Canadians from cyber-threats. Our top priorities are to protect, defend and educate in order to secure our networks from adversaries. As the reliance of Canada and Canadians on connected technology increases, so will the need for CSE and the Canadian Armed Forces and their cyber mandate.

Those are my remarks. I will use the remainder of my time, if I may, to put some questions to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

● (2225)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I thought I would take the question because the CSE was not talked about. I want to give justice to the tremendous work that the CSE has been doing behind the scenes, especially when it comes to protecting Canadians for decades. In this new sphere of cyber, the CSE has done tremendous work when it comes to the creation of the cyber centre. It has also been working with the Minister of Democratic Institutions to protect our democracy. The CSE folks have the right expertise to take on this new threat and challenge.

I also want to thank the folks at the cyber centre.

I want to speak of one particular person, the chief of CSE, Shelly Bruce, who is one of the topmost operational persons. People will not know about her tremendous work, but I do. I want to thank her. I want her to take this up and thank all the officials at the CSE because they do not get the same recognition other people do.

I also want to take an opportunity to thank all the officials here and in the lobby for supporting me. I also want to thank all the members in the House who took part.

I especially want to thank my parliamentary secretary. It has been a privilege to work with him. He has the same heart and desire to help our women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces. He has also supported me in my third committee of the whole, which just gives me an opportunity to talk more about the great work we are doing for the Canadian Armed Forces.

● (2230)

The Chair: It being 10:29 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:30 p.m.)

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