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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past Monday was International Holocaust Remembrance Day, when we remembered the murder of over six million Jews during World War II.

This year also marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

On Monday, at Auschwitz-Birkenau, I joined the Governor General, a multi-partisan group of MPs and over 200 Holocaust survivors to mark this solemn day. The memory of the over one million Jews murdered there, relived on Monday through the testimony of those who survived, must never be forgotten.

On Monday, survivor Marian Turski urged the world to adopt an 11th commandment, “Thou shalt not be indifferent.”

For their legacy and ours, we must fight against a resurgence of anti-Semitism and xenophobia and ensure that our vow of “never again” is matched by our commitment to combat anti-Semitism and hatred in all its forms wherever it rears its ugly head.

Let us each pledge, this day and every day, to never be indifferent.

UKRAINE INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES FLIGHT PS752

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commemorate the victims of Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752.

One hundred and seventy-six innocent people lost their lives when this plane was shot down by the Iranian military. Fifty-seven were Canadians; of those, 13 were Edmontonians.

Loved ones of these victims deserve immediate answers. However, their grief has been compounded because they are not getting those answers. Instead, they have suffered through a cover-up since day one.

Iranian authorities must be transparent and fully co-operate with independent agencies investigating this horrific event. Families also deserve that the remains of their loved ones are allowed to be repatriated to Canada as soon as possible. Anything less is completely unacceptable. These loved ones have suffered enough.

* * *

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, four years ago, the House unanimously approved Motion No. 24, designating January as Tamil Heritage Month.

Tamil Canadians have had a significant impact on the fabric of our society. Canada has been strengthened by the contributions of over 300,000 Tamil Canadians living in every province and territory across the country.

In my community, organizations like the Durham Tamil Association and the Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham advocate tirelessly on behalf of the Tamil community with its continued fight for justice, accountability and reconciliation.

January is also the month Tamil Canadians celebrate the harvest festival, Thai Pongal, a time for friends and family to gather and celebrate a generous harvest.

I would like to thank my friend, the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park, for introducing Motion No. 24 and advocating this important recognition.

Happy Tamil Heritage Month.

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

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, three years ago today, on January 29, 2017, everyone in our national capital and across Quebec was shaken by an unforgettable tragedy. We were shocked to learn that a man had opened fire at the Quebec City mosque. Six people were killed. Eight others were injured, and countless loved ones and witnesses are still living with the aftermath of this unspeakable attack. Three years later, we continue to stand in solidarity with our friends in the Muslim community.

On behalf of the Bloc Qu b cois, I want the families and loved ones of the victims, as well as the entire Muslim community in Quebec, to know that we are here to support them, listen to them and work with them. Every single one of us must be free to practise our religion with security and dignity.

* * *

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all remember this day three years ago when a man walked into the great mosque in Quebec City and took the lives of six people, injured 19 others, and forever changed the lives of numerous families simply because they were Muslim. Today we commemorate the lives of the victims of this terrorist attack, including Azzedine Soufiane, who is seen as a hero by his community for having saved many lives by running at the shooter and trying to stop him.

[English]

What hurts the most about this attack is that it hit so close to home, that it happened in my home province of Quebec, that it happened to Canadians. An attack on one Canadian is an attack on all Canadians.

[Translation]

Each of these victims chose Canada for the opportunities available in this country to live a better, peaceful life. We must work together to build a better world where everyone feels safe, regardless of their race, religion or origin. Islamophobia and hate crimes of any kind have no place in Canada.

* * *

● (1410)

PATRICE CARDIN AND JEAN-PHILIPPE PAYER

Mr. G rard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud to represent the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent here in the House of Commons. I would like to draw the attention of the House to two of those people who distinguished themselves recently.

On November 25, I presented the Sacrifice Medal to Patrice Cardin. Mr. Cardin served in the Canadian Armed Forces with honour and dignity for many years. He also volunteers with the cadet movement and is involved in causes that support CF members with post-traumatic stress disorder.

A week ago, Jean-Philippe Payer, a teacher at  cole l'Odyssee de Val-B lair, received the prestigious Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. Mr. Payer uses new technologies to capture the attention of his students. He set up a travelling exhibit project with the support of the Huron-Wendat Nation. The award was presented at Rideau Hall by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette.

The people of Louis-Saint-Laurent give me a lot to be proud of.

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*[English]***MAYA ZIBAIE**

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 8, travelling back to Canada after spending time with her family in Iran, Maya Zibaie tragically died, along with 175 others, when flight PS752 was shot down out of the skies over Tehran.

Maya was a grade 10 student at Northern Secondary School in Don Valley West.

[Translation]

Maya was brilliant, ambitious and always ready to help her friends.

[English]

She was an eager learner who quickly moved from ESL classes to grade 10 English, while helping her friends with their academic work.

[Translation]

Maya was looking forward to going to university in a few years and often discussed her future with everyone. Her teachers and friends described her as a kind, happy and caring person who always had a smile on her face.

[English]

Don Valley West and Northern Secondary School have lost a wonderful neighbour, friend and student. This tragedy has gripped all of us in our entire country.

Our thoughts are with Maya, her family and friends, and Northern Secondary School. She will be greatly missed.

* * *

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, I was at an Ismaili Muslim mosque with my two sons. As I struggled to keep my restless sons focused, I realized actually how lucky I was that my biggest challenge that day was quieting my kids.

Three years ago, Muslim parents in Quebec City were not so lucky.

[Translation]

On January 29, 2017, parents at the Centre culturel islamique did not have the chance to discipline their children because they were trying to protect them from a terrorist who was so consumed by hate that he fired on Muslims who were praying. While trying to protect their children, six innocent men lost their lives simply because they were Muslims.

[English]

Recognizing this as a murderous Islamophobic act is critical. However, equally critical is ensuring that Muslim Canadians, indeed every Canadian, can feel safe in their place of worship.

Those six heroes will have died in vain if we do not as parliamentarians redouble our efforts to combat the hatred that spawned this act of terror. That is the work I am committed to do, and I invite every member of the House to join me.

* * *

BELL LET'S TALK

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to mental health, we need to reduce the stigma and raise awareness.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast struggle with mental health issues, and the Bell Let's Talk campaign has done and continues to do incredible work addressing the stigma surrounding it.

Talking openly about mental health can be difficult, yet many Canadians from all walks of life are affected. One of the main goals of Bell Let's Talk Day is to open up that conversation without judgment or stigma, while also raising funds for Canadian mental health organizations.

The theme of the 2020 campaign is "Mental Health: Every Action Counts". Not only is Bell focused on removing the stigma associated with mental health, it also expands its strategy to include supporting world-class research, improving access to care and leading by example in workplace mental health.

With 5¢ being donated to Canadian mental health organizations for every view, I encourage all Canadians to share the Bell Let's Talk Day video on their social media channels or by sending a message through their Bell carrier.

Let us join the conversation and help create positive change now and into the future.

* * *

● (1415)

SPORT IN MILTON

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I got to show off Milton's amazing velodrome facility to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. This was a great reminder that Milton has such a strong culture of active living, something I hope to highlight as the parliamentary secretary for sport.

Recently the Sherwood Community Centre also opened its doors to the public in Milton. With an amazing library, pool, fitness studio and two rinks, this new community centre is exactly the sort of

Statements by Members

space that will allow for families and young people to learn, grow and play.

Just this month two young athletes, Maddie Schizas and Lia Pereira, who trained at the Milton Skating Club, finished on the podium at the Canadian Tire National Skating Championships.

In the spirit of my riding's commitment to active living, I am happy to announce that on February 2, between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., I will be hosting a free skate at that Sherwood Community Centre. I have heard there is a little football game going on that night, but those who would rather participate in a sport than watch it are welcome to come and join us at Sherwood.

* * *

DARREN MCCLELLAND

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to the late Darren McClelland, fire chief of my hometown of Swift Current, who passed away on January 20 at the young age of 48, following a three-year battle with cancer. Darren is survived by his loving wife Nicole, his daughters Ashley and Hayley, as well as by his parents Jim and Brenda, brother Derek and sister Kimbrin.

All of us in Swift Current have been incredibly blessed to have had Darren's many years of service. We are grateful for all he has contributed to our community in his roles as firefighter, deputy and chief. I would also like to thank the firefighters who voluntarily travelled from Saskatoon and Regina to relieve our crews from their duty so that every member of the Swift Current Fire Department was able to put their work aside and join with Darren's loved ones in grieving his loss.

I thank Darren for his faithful service to our community. I have no doubt that his legacy will live on in Swift Current and beyond for years to come.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Bell Let's Talk Day, a day when we are all encouraged to talk about mental health. Mental health affects us all. Two out of three people suffer in silence, fearing judgment and rejection, and far too often this leads to suicide. It is on all of us as leaders to break this silence, to build an environment of acceptance and understanding, where those who are suffering silently can come out of the shadows and know they will be believed and they are not weak.

Statements by Members

My best friend committed suicide when I was 14. Since that time, I have attended far too many funerals and sat with far too many families who are left behind to pick up the pieces because of suicide. Therefore, on this day, my message to those who are suffering is this. They are not weak; they are loved. It is okay not to be okay. Our world is a better place because they are in it.

I urge my colleagues in the House to talk about mental health not just today but every day. I ask them to take a moment to ask these three words of a friend, a loved one, a colleague or even a neighbour: "Are you okay?" I ask them to take a moment to listen as they may just save a life.

* * *

[Translation]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, the Centre culturel islamique de Québec was the site of a tragic crime motivated by Islamophobia.

An armed man became so mired in hate that he walked into a mosque, in the middle of peaceful prayers, and killed six men while wounding many others. This tragedy, which became known as the Quebec City mosque massacre, was no accident. It was the consequence of a frightening rise in extremism, white supremacy and anti-Muslim views in Canada.

[English]

Since that tragic moment three years ago, we have seen hatred continue to rise. Families of the victims continue to struggle, and political leaders across the globe endorse messages of hate directed toward Muslims.

[Translation]

We know that if we do not confront hate, it spreads like wildfire. When one of us gets hurt, we all get hurt. We are all connected.

That is why I am wearing this green square today. I wear it for the six widows and the 17 fatherless children, and for the courage shown by the community. In our schools, in our streets and online, we need to send the clear message that racism and Islamophobia are not welcome here.

* * *

● (1420)

INSTITUT MARITIME DU QUÉBEC

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the Institut maritime du Québec in Rimouski, which celebrated its 75th anniversary by hosting a dinner that I had the privilege of attending.

The Institut maritime du Québec is the largest francophone marine training institute in Canada. It is well known for its facilities, which are unique in North America, its innovation and its participation in the development of marine technology.

The Institut maritime du Québec trains a highly skilled workforce in the areas of naval architecture, navigation, marine engineering, professional diving and transportation logistics.

I am therefore proud to acknowledge and congratulate the Institut maritime du Québec, its staff, its partners and all those who make this institution an enviable source of regional pride.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, January 29, is a sad day. It marks the third anniversary of a terrorist act so horrendous that it serves as a metaphor for every act of hate against any religious group across the country. I am talking about the attack on the Centre culturel islamique de Québec in Sainte-Foy. Three years ago today, six of our fellow citizens were killed simply because of their Islamic faith.

[English]

January 29 is a day that will live in infamy. This act of terror was a betrayal of every one of our country's most sacred values: freedom of religion; welcoming newcomers and making them our friends, neighbours and equals; and treating others as we hope we would be treated by them.

To those who feel a pain that can never be healed except by the infinite compassion of the Almighty, I say today that we all, all of us on all sides of this House, stand with them.

* * *

[Translation]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three years ago today, thousands of Quebecers mourned together after six men were murdered and 19 others were injured.

[English]

Six men were gunned down at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec in Sainte-Foy, only because they were Muslim: Azzedine Soufiane, Ibrahim Barry, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, and Abdelkrim Hassane.

This happened three years ago, but their families still live without their fathers, brothers and sons every single day. I am a father of two young girls who sometimes accompany me to mosque, and the fact that I and others have to look behind our backs means we have a lot more work to do.

In this House, we wear the green square today in memory of the lives lost. We owe it to the victims to confront hate and Islamophobia clearly, unequivocally and together, wherever we see it.

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand that there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the attack on the Centre culturel islamique de Québec that happened three years ago today.

[Translation]

I invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that his government is not going to worry about economic data points like GDP. Instead, it is going to focus on people's feelings.

The Prime Minister has a track record of making wealthy CEOs of profitable companies very happy. We remember when he gave BlackBerry a grant that its CEO said it did not even need. There was \$12 million for Loblaws, and now we find out that he has given \$50 million of taxpayers' money to Mastercard.

Why did the Prime Minister make taxpayers so sad by giving \$50 million to a company that made \$16 billion off the backs of hard-working Canadians who cannot afford to pay their full balances?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past five years we have been focused on growing the middle class and supporting those working hard to join it. That is exactly what we have done.

We have seen over a million new jobs created over the past years. We have seen almost a million Canadians lifted out of poverty. We have seen investments that have led to better jobs and outcomes for Canadians right across the country.

We are going to keep looking at investing in a better future for Canadians, while Conservatives continue to talk about cuts and austerity.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Prime Minister is having trouble defining who qualifies to be in the middle class. I can assure him that the CEO and wealthy executives of Mastercard do not fall into that category.

The government's press release says that the company that got this money is a wholly owned subsidiary of Mastercard Incorporated. Mastercard is a credit card company that makes money off of people who cannot afford to pay their full balances.

Why did the Prime Minister think that they needed a handout?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in things that are going to create jobs for Canadians and support hard-working families right across the country.

We recognize that investing in different sectors of the economy allows us to move forward in a positive way for Canadians. Everything this government does is focused on growing the middle class and helping people working hard to join it, like the tax cut we are moving forward with. It is putting more money in the pockets of 20

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million Canadians and lifting close to a million people off of the federal tax roll.

These are the kinds of things that make a difference in people's lives.

The Speaker: I just want to remind the hon. members that the Leader of the Opposition asked a question of the Prime Minister and he wants to hear an answer. I just want to make sure that he does get something back and he can hear what is being said.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, having a wasteful government that believes in corporate welfare may not be priceless. It turns out it is worth \$50 million.

If the Prime Minister really wanted to worry about the feelings of Canadians, he could make out-of-work Canadians in the energy sector happy by approving the Teck Frontier mine. This project has gone through all the approvals and now there are signals that the Prime Minister is waffling on it.

Will he show Canadians that he believes in Canada's energy sector and side with those who have lost their jobs, not with the activists and celebrities?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 10 years of Conservatives railing against activists, celebrities or ordinary Canadians with concerns did not help the energy sector.

What has helped the energy sector is a responsible approach that recognizes environmental stewardship, partnership with indigenous peoples and moving forward in a thoughtful way toward a lower-carbon future is the right path for Canadians. The way we do that needs to be in partnership with all sectors in this country. That is why we are focusing on making the right decisions for all Canadians and that is what we will continue to do.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Marylène Levesque was murdered by a convicted killer on day parole. Her death was both shocking and avoidable.

According to the media, parole officers encouraged this murderer to meet a woman for sexual services, and he killed her. That is unacceptable, and an internal investigation is not good enough.

What is the Prime Minister going to do about this horrible case?

Are Canadians to conclude that this is standard practice on the part of parole officers?

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Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we extend our deepest and sincerest condolences to Marylène Levesque's family and loved ones. Such a loss under these circumstances would be tragic for any family. The individual has been arrested and is facing charges. The Parole Board operates at arm's length from the government. Nevertheless, the Parole Board of Canada is launching an inquiry into the circumstances that led to this tragic situation.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is this individual was convicted of the violent murder of his wife. The Prime Minister has opposed mandatory prison sentences for convicted murderers in the past. However, the individual should never have been released or encouraged to seek the services of a sex worker by government officials. Marylène Levesque deserved better than this failure. Public Safety sets guidelines for parole officers and people involved in parole decisions. Will the Prime Minister confirm that this is not the type of encouragement that is standard practice for individuals released on parole?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, this was a tragedy and we offer our support to the family and friends of Marylène Levesque.

Obviously, decisions of a parole board are independent from government. However, we are pleased to see that the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board are launching a board of investigation into the circumstances that led to this tragic case. I assure the House that all Canadians want answers to this.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think it is relatively well known by now that the Bloc Québécois has announced and presented to the government a number of things to consider with a view to finding an upstream solution to the problem of Quebec aluminum in relation to the CUSMA.

Parliament has a golden opportunity to do the right thing, make the right choice. To do that, we must first understand each other and establish a common basis for communication.

I will start with this: Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that the new agreement treats aluminum differently from steel?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the new NAFTA, we secured guarantees for steel and aluminum. The new agreement guarantees that 70% of the materials used in the production of automobiles in North America must be steel from North America and aluminum from North America. The Americans will indeed have different concerns and requirements with regard to the aluminum or steel sector. We always stand up for our aluminum and steel sectors.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that. Unfortunately, at this point, the

agreement has already been drafted, but there are indeed possible avenues.

Unfortunately, I am sorry to have to say that, as it stands, the Bloc Québécois cannot vote in favour of the ways and means motion. I hope this is the only time we vote against it and that going forward, we will be able to find reasons to vote with the government on this agreement.

To make that happen, will the Prime Minister acknowledge that this poses a risk to the expansion and modernization projects in Quebec worth \$6.2 billion?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to provide the hon. leader of the Bloc Québécois with many reasons to support this NAFTA agreement, which is good for workers from coast to coast to coast, including farmers, steel and aluminum workers, small and medium-sized businesses, investors who want to expand their businesses and families who depend on trade with the United States. There are many reasons to support this agreement, which provides certainty and opportunities for workers in Quebec and across the country.

* * *

[*English*]

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have learned of a recent announcement by the government, but Canadians are deeply concerned about those who are trapped in the region because of the coronavirus. The U.S. and other countries have negotiated an agreement to secure the evacuation of their citizens. What stage are we at with respect to securing similar negotiations or assurances for Canadians who are trapped in the region?

[*Translation*]

People have serious concerns about the coronavirus.

What is the government's strategy for helping Canadians come home?

[*English*]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all members in the House take the security and safety of Canadians abroad very seriously. That is why I am pleased to say that Canadian officials in Ottawa and in China are working closely with their Chinese counterparts. We continue to liaise closely with our international partners on developing options to ensure the safety and health of Canadians in the affected region.

[Translation]

So far, we have received repatriation requests from 160 Canadians. Every Canadian who has contacted us will receive consular help with this situation. We will keep people apprised of the next steps.

* * *

• (1435)

FINANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is still looking for ways to give huge sums of money to rich corporations. Recently, it was Loblaws, and now it is Mastercard, which made \$9 billion in a single year.

[English]

Now the Liberal government is jumping to give this profitable company \$50 million of public money while they drag their feet to deliver the health care that Canadians need so they can afford their medication.

Why does the Liberal government keep giving money to profitable companies instead of investing in our health care?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the NDP is choosing to share this erroneous perception that we have not taken real action on moving forward on reducing the cost of prescription drugs for Canadians. We have moved forward in significant ways that have lowered the cost for prescription drugs for Canadians. We have continued to move forward on creating a national drug agency and to move forward on the strategy for high-cost rare disease medications. There is much more to do.

We will continue to work with the NDP and everyone in the House to deliver on affordable health care for all Canadians.

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister first ran for office, he said his fiscal anchor was that the deficit would never exceed \$10 billion. Now it has reached \$27 billion. He said the budget would be balanced in 2019. Now the Liberals will not tell us how many decades it will take for that to happen. They said that the debt as a share of GDP would never go up, and this year it is going up.

Given that there are at least three fiscal anchors that have been detached from the government's fiscal ship, are there any anchors left?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the basic approach that the Liberal government has taken is very different from the approach of the Conservatives.

We believe that investing in Canadians is the way to build the economy. Conservatives believe that austerity and cuts are the way to help Canadians. We know that they are wrong, because over the past years we have demonstrated that investing in families and investing in communities has not only seen Canadians create over one million jobs over the past few years but has also reduced pover-

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ty by record amounts, seeing almost one million Canadians lifted out of poverty, including over 300,000 kids.

We are going to continue to invest in Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Only we are not getting any value for the money, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that unemployment in Canada is higher than in at least four G7 countries, higher than in the U.K., the U.S., Japan and Germany. It has been above the G7 average for the Prime Minister's entire term. Growth in the U.S. is 50% faster than here in Canada. These deficits are not buying us growth and they are not buying us any jobs.

Back to my original question. The Prime Minister said the debt-to-GDP ratio would continue to go down. Is he still committed to that or is he just going to put our future on Mastercard?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives continue to talk down the Canadian economy. We can understand that Canadians might wonder where we are going.

I am happy to reassure them that not only is our plan working to lift Canadians out of poverty and see jobs created, but the international bond rating agencies have unanimously given Canada a AAA rating, the top rating, in terms of our fiscal plan for going forward. We are the only other country with Germany in the G7 that has that top, unanimous AAA rating, and it is because international agencies know that our plan is working for Canadians.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity has repeatedly failed to answer basic questions about what "middle class" even means. The Liberals say that they like evidence-based policy, but we know that they like buzzwords even better. Without a definition of the middle class and an estimate of how many Canadians belong to it, nobody can measure their prosperity.

Does the Prime Minister think it is important for his Minister of Middle Class Prosperity to know who the middle class are? Maybe he has his own definition.

• (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have continued to invest in the middle class and have supported them throughout, from the very, very beginning of our coming into office.

The member opposite wants to talk about results. We have seen results in over a million new jobs being created and in almost a million Canadians lifted out of poverty. We have seen investments in public transit, in housing and in approaches that have made a real, material difference in the lives of millions of Canadians. We have chosen to invest in Canadians and their families, unlike the Conservatives, who choose cuts and austerity as their only tool in the fiscal tool box.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian aluminum sector is dealing with competitors who have little concern for labour standards or protecting the environment.

The new NAFTA is not perfect, but improvements that could be quickly incorporated were presented to the government. Aluminum has to be at the heart of a Canadian environmental strategy. Representatives from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean came here today expecting a signal from the government to that effect.

Will the Prime Minister give the signal to fix the flaws in the new NAFTA?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like all Quebeckers and Canadians, I am extremely proud of our aluminum industry.

We have world-class, cutting-edge innovations. Whether we are talking about Elysis or AP60, I have seen with my own eyes what is being done with aluminum in Saguenay. I am extremely proud of that work. I am pleased to support these aluminum workers and show that Canadians are once again leading the way on economic growth and environmental protection.

[English]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the importance of the integrated North American economy is not lost on Conservatives. The aluminum, auto, agriculture and digital sectors have many questions and they remain unanswered. They need to know the upsides and the downsides of this deal.

We have asked the Prime Minister to release all NAFTA-related economic studies and analysis, so that we as parliamentarians can do the job Canadians sent us here to do.

When will the Prime Minister release all of the NAFTA-related documents?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working over the past three years to ensure continued access for Canadian businesses to the North American market and to ensure the jobs of Canadian workers from coast to coast who rely on a tight and strong trading relationship with the United States.

We were pleased that, in an era of unpredictability and protectionism from the United States, we were able to secure a great deal for Canadians that has demonstrated that we will be able to be reassured for generations to come, on NAFTA. We will continue to work with all parliamentarians to ensure that this moves forward the right way.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been 48 days since we asked the Liberal government to provide its economic impact analysis of the new NAFTA. There are clearly concerns from a number of key sectors, including dairy and aluminum. We have asked the Prime Minister to provide these documents so that we can do our job. When will the Prime Minister provide these documents?

Are you trying to hide something?

The Speaker: I just want to remind the hon. members that they are speaking through the Speaker. Honestly, I am not hiding anything.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure the member opposite that the Speaker is certainly not hiding anything.

The reality is that from the very beginning we offered full briefings and information, not just to the leaders of the opposition parties, but to their critics as well. We will ensure that all information that they require to make the right decision for their constituencies and for Canada is given to them.

We know that it is an extremely important achievement for Canada to have secure trade within the North American market. We will continue to work with all members in this House to ensure that we can move forward properly.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the regions of Quebec are right to worry about the lack of protection for aluminum in the new NAFTA. With the consent of the House, a little later we could table an impact assessment that reveals that six major projects are compromised by the lack of protection for Quebec aluminum against dumping by China. Over 10 years, the agreement jeopardizes more than \$6 billion in investments and 60,000 well-paid jobs in my riding and on the North Shore.

I wonder if the government knew that it was sacrificing \$6 billion in economic benefits for Quebec when it signed this agreement, or if it did not do its homework.

● (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a good agreement for all Canadian workers, including aluminum workers.

The aluminum sector has more protection than ever before with this agreement. Auto manufacturers are required to use at least 70% of North American aluminum.

It is a progressive agreement that will benefit Canadian families. However, if the member does not want to take me at my word, he can listen to Jean Simard, president of the Aluminium Association of Canada, who says that the new NAFTA is the right way to go.

If he does not want to listen to Mr. Simard, he can listen to Premier Legault, who says that this agreement must be ratified for Quebec.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Simard also said he was disappointed on December 11, and Mr. Legault said he also thought this agreement was very disappointing for aluminum.

I am sick of hearing “70% of the aluminum”. It is 70% of parts. Enough is enough. That distinction needs to be made.

The impact study is clear. The CUSMA puts 60,000 jobs in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and the North Shore in jeopardy. That is 60,000 jobs, with an average annual salary of \$60,000, at a time when our regions are struggling to retain young people. We are struggling to attract young families.

Today, the Bloc welcomed workers, the mayors of Alma and Saguenay, and the Aluminium Valley Society to Ottawa as our guests. We would have liked to see our colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord there, but he did not show up.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the aluminum workers I went to visit a year ago. I assured them that we were going to lift the punitive tariffs that the U.S. President had imposed on them under section 232.

We were in fact able to lift those tariffs to defend our aluminum sector. I am very glad to have these municipal representatives and aluminum sector leaders here. They were met by the Deputy Prime Minister.

We will always work to defend aluminum workers in Quebec and across Canada.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the man charged with murdering Marylène Levesque had killed his previous partner by beating her with a hammer and stabbing her in 2004. Last March, even though he was a significant risk to violently reoffend against women, the national Parole Board granted his parole and allowed him to have unsupervised contact with women in order to have his “sexual needs” met.

How many other violent criminals have been advised by the Parole Board that their “sexual needs” are more important than the safety of women in our communities?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously this was a terrible tragedy, and I will highlight that the decisions of the Parole Board are, of course, independent from government.

We all have questions about this case, and that is why we are pleased that Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board are launching a board of investigation inquiry into the circumstances that led to this terrible case.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, the Minister of Public Safety said that he had confidence in the members of the Parole Board.

However, how can we trust the decision-making process and members who gave someone who brutally murdered his wife in 2004 permission to obtain sexual services?

Parole Board members demonstrated a serious lack of judgment when they chose to address the needs of a criminal instead of considering the potential consequences.

When will the Prime Minister show them the door?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Parole Board, we use a merit-based process to identify the most qualified candidates to represent our organizations.

This process makes it possible to hire members with a wide range of experience. Previous experience in areas such as social work, psychology, criminology, correctional services and law is often taken into account.

Members of the board are not responsible for making decisions until they have completed their training and they have the full confidence of the vice-chairperson.

We maintain very strict standards in appointing members.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government said that it just had to give Omar Khadr \$10 million to save on legal fees. The government also said that it would not take veterans to court. However, the government is fighting Canadian veteran Sean Bruyey in court, and now we have learned that it has spent over seven times what he is seeking in damages.

Why does the Prime Minister treat captured al Qaeda bomb makers better than he treats Canadian veterans?

• (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past five years, we have reversed the shameful legacy of Conservative attacks on veterans. They cut over 1,000 jobs from veterans' services in Canada and shuttered nine Veterans Affairs offices.

Over the past years, we have invested in supports for our veterans and for their families, making sure they have the tools they need to lead fulfilled and successful lives in Canada after their military service. We thank them deeply for their service and will continue to invest in the things they need, unlike what the Conservative government did before.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a terrible answer.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister's personal political witch hunt against Vice-Admiral Mark Norman cost taxpayers more than \$1.4 million, and that is just for his government's legal fees. The Prime Minister politically interfered in an RCMP investigation by stating twice on TV that the vice-admiral would be charged even before the investigation was complete.

Now that Mark Norman's name is cleared, does the Prime Minister believe that wasting \$1.4 million to smear the vice-admiral was a good use of taxpayer money?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to remember where this file actually started. On the eve of the 2015 election, Conservatives decided to rush through a half-billion-dollar, sole-sourced project. We wanted to ensure that we did our own due diligence on this decision with a newly elected federal cabinet. The decision to suspend Vice-Admiral Norman was taken independently by the chief of the defence staff, and any accusations otherwise are simply absurd.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Volkswagen was caught lying about illegal levels of emissions. It pleaded guilty in the U.S. and paid a \$20-billion fine.

Why did Canada wait years before laying charges? We do not know. What we do know is that Liberal ministers started meeting with Volkswagen lobbyists, and it looks like this corporation that was found guilty of committing environmental fraud got a back-room deal.

We are facing a climate crisis, so why are the Liberals putting corporate profits ahead of Canadians and the planet?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this investigation, all related prosecution matters and the judge's approval of the penalty were made independent of ministers' offices.

The company paid an unprecedented fine in Canada as a result of the investigation. Indeed, it was 23 times greater than the highest federal environmental fine ever imposed. The Public Prosecution Service determines what charges can be sustained, and it has sole jurisdiction to pursue any prosecution. The funds from the fine will go towards projects that protect our environment.

* * *

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Ms. Mumilaq Qaqqaq (Nunavut, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that seven out of 10 children in Nunavut go to school hungry. How shameful is that in a country like Canada?

Since Nutrition North started, food security has actually gotten worse in Nunavut. People in need struggle to get quality food and necessities. Nunavut is the only fly-in, fly-out territory, so in my riding it is even worse.

When will the government step up to make the program transparent and accountable to those in the north and start feeding our children?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the extraordinary difficulties faced around food security in the north, particularly in Nunavut. I have visited many times and heard directly from community members who are challenged and struggling with the issue.

We have made significant improvements to Nutrition North, but we know that there is much more to do. We will continue to work with all partners and everyone in the House to ensure that we are improving affordability for good quality nutrition and food in the north.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through the national housing strategy, our government has made a real investment in Canadian communities in order to help ensure that every Canadian has a place that they call home. This is no small thing, but the cost of rent is going up everywhere. Many Canadians believe there has never been a greater need for the federal government to play a leadership role in the housing sector.

Would the Prime Minister please update us on what the government is doing to invest in affordable housing in Canada?

● (1455)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River for getting elected to represent his constituents in the House of Commons.

We are proud to be introducing the Canada housing benefit as part of our national housing strategy. For the first time in Canadian history, Canadians will be provided with a direct, portable housing benefit that will help them find affordable places to call home. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians will receive an average of \$2,500 a year to support their housing needs. This is good news for all Canadians.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the government's Global Affairs website, economic sanctions can encompass a wide variety of measures. They include financial restrictions, export and import restrictions and shipping bans. They can even apply to specific economic sectors.

Therefore, when is the Liberal Prime Minister going to lift the sanctions he has imposed on Alberta?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that workers in the energy sector in Alberta and Saskatchewan have faced difficult years because of a rise in oil prices. We also know that we all need to work together to support those workers. This is something that Canadians are known for. When folks are facing difficult times in one corner of the country, we all step up for each other. That is what we are going to continue to do.

That is why we are pleased that the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is being built and will be delivering our oil resources to new markets, something Conservatives were unable to do for 10 years in government.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal attack on the energy sector has had a devastating impact on the people, business owners and social agencies in my city of Red Deer. It has gotten so bad that even the CBC has reported on it. Red Deer has worked so hard to contribute to our nation's prosperity.

When will the Prime Minister take his foot off the throats of our oil and gas developers and recognize the harm that his anti-resource-development policies are having on this great Albertan city?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the difficult times families are going through who depend on the Alberta and Saskatchewan oil sector for their livelihood. Indeed, all Canadians know that we need to be there for each other in times of difficulty.

The number one ask for many years from the oil sector has been to access new markets other than the United States for our oil and gas resources. That was something that 10 years of Conservative governments were unable to do. Now, with the approval and construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, we are finally able to help the folks in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, businesses in my riding, like many others across Canada, are already facing recruitment problems of all kinds, particularly in regard to seasonal employment. The problem is being exacerbated by the completely unacceptable delays in the launch of the Canada summer jobs program. Organizations are being told by our offices that it is coming, because that is what our riding offices are being told by bureaucrats.

Can the Prime Minister finally give us a date? When will the program be officially launched?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the program will be launched on January 30.

We understand how important the Canada summer jobs program is for communities, for young people in our ridings and for community organizations. We are pleased to announce that the program will continue and that we have doubled the federal investment after the Conservatives underinvested in our youth. We know how to

help our ridings and the organizations that work so hard for Canadians.

* * *

[*English*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is an environmental disaster in the District of Mission waiting to happen. Local engineers have confirmed that the aging sanitary sewer crossing under the Fraser River is at risk of imminent breach.

Will the Prime Minister take action now to defuse this ticking time bomb and avoid an environmental catastrophe and provide immediate funding to safeguard our wild salmon and the thousands of people who depend on this critical infrastructure?

• (1500)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the grandson of a proud B.C. fisheries minister, I can tell members that the health of our wild salmon stocks on the west coast is extremely important to me.

I can assure members that the fisheries minister as well as our partners in the provincial Government of British Columbia are working closely together to ensure the stability and growth of our salmon stocks that are so important for British Columbians and indeed for people right across the country.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the moment of truth. The government cannot claim to be fighting climate change if it approves the Teck Frontier project. The Frontier project means 260,000 barrels of bitumen a day for 40 years and at least four million tonnes of CO₂ a year. That spells the end of us meeting our greenhouse gas reduction targets and the end of the Paris agreement. The government knows that the Frontier project is the end of any hope of protecting the environment in Canada.

Will the Prime Minister say no once and for all to the Frontier project?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said during the election campaign, Canadians can rest assured that we will reach our greenhouse gas reduction targets set in Paris. We will even exceed those targets. We are also committed to achieving net zero in 2050. That is vital not only for the environment, but also for economic growth. We know that creating good jobs and economic growth for our communities across Canada is an essential part of environmental protection. We will still do both at the same time and find the right balance.

Oral Questions

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, planting billions of trees is not the solution here.

Just yesterday, the government was asking New Brunswick to abandon the Maritime Iron plant project. The government was worried that this project would prevent us from meeting our greenhouse gas reduction targets. My question today is exactly the same, but this time it is about Teck Frontier in Alberta. This company produces even more pollution, with at least four million tonnes of greenhouse gases per year for 40 years. I do not think the Prime Minister needs an environmental assessment to make this decision.

Will he step up and put an end to this project and its pollution?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we would rather look at environmental assessments. We make decisions based on science, unlike the member opposite, who could not care less about environmental assessments. We prefer to base our decisions on facts and science.

I do want to mention that planting two billion trees will make a difference in the fight against climate change. I am sorry that the member does not believe this is an important issue. We know that protecting and preserving our nature and forests is part of protecting our planet.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the first two cases of the coronavirus detected in Canada were on flight CZ311, which had more than 100 passengers.

The question is, and all Canadians deserve an answer, do the Prime Minister and the government know the location of, and have they notified, every passenger who was on that flight?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, because indeed it is something we are absolutely following up on. We recognize that Canada, unlike many countries that Canadians visit, does not ask where someone's final destination is when they board a plane. We are using data that we have collected, like the passenger manifest, to follow up, and I can assure members that we are in the process of ensuring a follow-up on everyone who was on that flight.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now have three confirmed cases of the coronavirus here in Canada. Cases in China have jumped 65% in one day, and health officials have confirmed there will be more cases here in Canada. Other nations are stopping flights in and out of China and introducing more rigorous screening processes.

Is the Prime Minister satisfied with the actions of his government?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously we take this situation very seriously, but I can reassure Canadians that the health risk to Canadians continues to be low. We are taking all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection. The best practices are in place across Canadian hospitals to isolate patients who are experiencing symptoms. Preventa-

tive measures are in place in airports in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, and we continue to coordinate with the WHO, with our international partners, to ensure that we are doing everything necessary to keep Canadians safe.

● (1505)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number of cases of coronavirus is soaring in China and around the world. In Canada there are three confirmed cases, and several Canadians are currently under observation.

According to the experts, this crisis has greatly surpassed the SARS epidemic, and the WHO today convened the emergency committee.

Can the Prime Minister tell us that he is certain that the situation is under control and that he is satisfied with his government's response to this crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our health system is very well prepared to deal with the coronavirus in Canada. We are taking all necessary precautions to prevent it from spreading. We are collaborating with our partners abroad, and Dr. Tam, who is the head of our Public Health Agency, is working as an expert at the WHO to ensure international coordination.

Our best practices are in place at hospitals and we have put preventive measures in place at airports. The risk to Canadians remains low and our health care system is prepared to prevent the virus from spreading.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more and more Quebecers are choosing to reduce their carbon footprint by buying zero-emission vehicles. From 2018 to 2019, the number of electric vehicles on Quebec roads increased by 71%. People in my riding, Alfred-Pellan, have claimed nearly \$1 million under the federal incentive introduced in May of last year.

Would the Prime Minister please tell the House about incentives that encourage Canadians to opt for zero-emission vehicles?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Alfred-Pellan for his work and for bringing this excellent news to our attention.

Last year, we introduced a rebate worth up to \$5,000 for zero-emission vehicle purchases. That incentive is part of our plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change.

We will continue to introduce even more practical and affordable solutions to help all Canadians join the fight against climate change.

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs responded to my Order Paper question on Canada's shocking vote against Israel at the United Nations with boilerplate deflection, which ignores the offensive implications of that vote.

Again, does the Prime Minister actually know? Does the Liberal government, with regard to Canada's vote of yes, actually now consider East Jerusalem, which contains the holiest site in Judaism, the Western Wall, as occupied Palestinian territory?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government remains committed to a goal of comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. That includes the creation of the Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel secure within its own borders.

We recognize the need to renew efforts toward a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We have long maintained that peace can only be achieved through direct negotiation between the parties. We are always ready to support dialogue between the parties toward a negotiated and viable two-state solution.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that under the Prime Minister, Canada has fallen to a 10-year low on the global corruption index. We know that the Prime Minister was found guilty of breaking the Conflict of Interest Act. We know he used his office to circumvent, undermine and discredit the director of public prosecutions and the Attorney General. However, we still do not have the full picture. The Prime Minister is engaged in a cover-up by blocking access to several witnesses.

When will the Prime Minister put the reputation of this country first and end the cover-up?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their Prime Minister to stand up for jobs right across the country. That is what I will do and I will not apologize for that. We will do it in a way that respects the independence of our justice system.

We will continue to ensure that Canadians can prosper and that we are creating jobs. As we have seen over the past five years, over a million new jobs were created. We will stay focused on ensuring a better present and future for all Canadians.

* * *

• (1510)

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a question about Taiwan. The health and safety of Canadians depends on an effective, internationally coordinated response to the coronavirus. Taiwan has identified five such cases.

Oral Questions

Does the government support the inclusion of Taiwan in international discussions about the virus, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes. As we did during the time of the SARS virus, we support Taiwan's meaningful participation in international multilateral forums, especially when its presence provides important contributions to the global public good.

We believe that Taiwan's role as an observer in World Health Assembly meetings is in the best interest of the international health community and Taiwan is also an important partner in the fight—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: If I could just interrupt the hon. Prime Minister for a second, I am having a hard time hearing the answer. I am sure everybody else wants to hear what the right hon. Prime Minister has to say.

I will let him continue, if he has anything else to add.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we welcome participation from the entire international community to promote global health. That is why we have long taken this position.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, agriculture is a dynamic industry ripe with opportunity. Since today is Bell Let's Talk Day, it is important to remember that the agriculture sector is not immune from mental distress. As part of their job, farmers have to cope with increasingly unpredictable weather conditions and global markets, and the uncertainty that this creates can weigh heavily on them.

Many organizations, such as Au coeur des familles agricoles in Quebec and the Farm Stress Line in Saskatchewan, are making outstanding efforts to support our farmers' well-being.

Could the Prime Minister—

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

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brome—Missisquoi for her work and for her question.

Mental health is a societal issue. We care about farmers' well-being. It can be hard for farmers experiencing mental distress to confide in people close to them. We are providing support and a range of mental health awareness initiatives, and we are funding research to gain a better understanding of the situation. We want to make sure that farmers and their families know that there are resources available to help them through tough times.

Government Orders

[English]

PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers in Regina and across the country are fighting corporations for their pensions. They should not have to fight their government too.

In the Minister of Seniors' mandate letter, it says that only people over 75 will get an increase to the old age security pension. The Liberals' wealthy and well-connected friends will be fine, but most seniors between the ages of 65 and 75 will be left behind.

Will the government agree to raise benefits for all seniors or will it continue to leave certain seniors in need behind?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past five years we have made significant investments in our seniors.

One of the first things we did was restore the age of retirement back to 65, from the 67 the Conservatives wanted to send it to. We then increased, by 10%, the guaranteed income supplement for our most vulnerable single seniors that kicks in at 75. We made investments in housing and investments in affordable drug strategies. We continue to move forward in many different ways to support our seniors.

Yes, indeed, we have also committed to raising the OAS for seniors over 75, because we recognize there are greater costs associated with living longer, which is a good thing for Canadians. We will be there to help them.

* * *

OFFICIAL REPORT

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In relation to my voting attendance Monday, I would like to reiterate that I was in the chamber and heard the question but was not in my seat when the vote started, which I now understand is the rule for a recorded vote.

This was obviously an error as a new member of the House. As a result, please remove my vote from Monday's relevant vote count.

• (1515)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for the clarification. Accordingly, I direct the table to modify the results of the recorded division held on Monday and consider the matter now settled.

[Translation]

I would like to take this opportunity to remind hon. members of the importance of recorded divisions. The results of each vote reflect the opinion of the House and the parties. It is therefore imperative that the voting process be conducted with the utmost integrity.

[English]

Therefore, I will take this moment to remind hon. members once again that in order for their votes to count, they must be in the chamber to hear the motion being put to the House by the Chair. They must also be in their seats when the recorded division begins and remain so until the vote is completed and the results announced.

[Translation]

The leader of the Bloc Québécois in the House of Commons is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I am asking for the unanimous consent of the House to table the impact study prepared for the Comité deux villes/deux alumineries and the Société de la Vallée de l'aluminium entitled "Impacts économiques 2020-2029 sur l'économie du Québec des projets compromis par la non-inclusion de l'industrie de l'aluminium à l'amendement de l'ACEUM".

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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 2

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on January 28, 2020, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Motion No. 2 under ways and means.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.) moved that a ways and means motion to introduce an act to implement the agreement between Canada, the United States of America and the United Mexican States be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 10*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Alleslev
Amos
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Bains
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beech
Bennett
Bergen
Bessette
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Bragdon
Bratina
Calkins
Carr
Casey
Champagne
Chong
Cooper
Cumming
Dalton
Dancho
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diotte
Dong
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Erskine-Smith
Fast
Fillmore
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Garneau
Gazan
Genuis
Gould
Gray
Guilbeault
Hallan
Hardie
Hoback
Housefather
Hutchings
Jaczek

Aitchison
Alghabra
Allison
Anand
Angus
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bagnell
Baker
Barlow
Battiste
Bendayan
Benzen
Berthold
Bezan
Bittle
Blair
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Blois
Brassard
Brière
Cannings
Carrie
Chagger
Chiu
Collins
Cormier
Dabrusin
Damoff
Davidson
d'Entremont
Dhillon
Doherty
Dowdall
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Fergus
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gallant
Garrison
Généreux
Gerretsen
Gourde
Green
Hajdu
Harder
Harris
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jansen

Jeneroux
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Kelly
Khalid
Kitchen
Koutrakis
Kurek
Kusmierczyk
Lake
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Liepert
Lobb
Longfield
Lukiwski
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martel
Masse
May (Cambridge)
Mazier
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Melillo
Mencicino
Monsef
Morantz
Morrison
Motz
Nater
O'Connell
O'Regan
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Qaqqaq
Ratansi
Redekopp
Reid
Richards
Rodriguez
Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Schulte
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Shiple
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Soroka
Stanton
Strahl
Sweet
Tassi
Trudeau
Uppal
van Koeverden
Vandal

Government Orders

Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kelloway
Kent
Khera
Kmiec
Kram
Kusie
Kwan
Lalonde
Lametti
Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Leloux
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie
Maguire
Manly
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLean
McPherson
Mendès
Miller
Moore
Morneau
Morrisey
Murray
Ng
Oliphant
Patzner
Petipas Taylor
Powlowski
Qualtrough
Rayes
Regan
Rempel Garner
Robillard
Rogers
Ruff
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Sangha
Saroya
Scheer
Schmale
Seeback
Sgro
Sheehan
Shin
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sikand
Sorbara
Spengemann
Steinley
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tochor
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld

Business of Supply

Vaughan
Vidal
Virani
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williamson
Yip
Yurdiga
Zann

Vecchio
Viersen
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Zahid
Zuberi — 290

NAYS

Members

Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Blanchet
Boudrias
Chabot
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Gill
Lemire
Normandin
Perron
Savard-Tremblay
Ste-Marie
Therrien

Beaulieu
Bérubé
Blanchette-Joncas
Brunelle-Duceppe
Champoux
Desbiens
Fortin
Larouche
Michaud
Pauzé
Plamondon
Simard
Thériault
Trudel — 28

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Hon. Chrystia Freeland moved that Bill C-4, an act to implement the agreement between Canada, the United States of America and the United Mexican States, be read the first time and printed.

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

* * *

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AUDIT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INVESTING IN CANADA PLAN

The House resumed from January 28 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Tuesday, January 28, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable relating to the business of supply.

● (1540)

[*English*]

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

(Division No. 11)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
Albas
Allison

Aitchison
Alleslev
Angus

Arnold
Atwin
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bergen
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchet
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Bragdon
Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings
Chabot
Chiu
Collins
Cumming
Dancho
Davies
d'Entremont
Desilets
Doherty
Dreeshen
Duvall
Erskine-Smith
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Gallant
Gazan
Genius
Gourde
Green
Harder
Hoback
Jeneroux
Julian
Kent
Kmiec
Kurek
Kwan
Larouche
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Manly
Masse
May (Saarnich—Gulf Islands)
McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McLean
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Nater
Patzer
Pauzé
Plamondon
Qaqqaq
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Shiple
Soroka
Steinley
Strahl
Sweet
Therrien

Ashton
Bachrach
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blaikie
Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boudrias
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Champoux
Chong
Cooper
Dalton
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
Desbiens
Diotte
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Fortin
Garrison
Généreux
Gill
Gray
Hallan
Harris
Jansen
Johns
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kusie
Lake
Lawrence
Lemire
Liepert
Lobb
MacGregor
Maguire
Martel
Mathysen
Mazier
McColeman
McPherson
Michaud
Morantz
Mutz
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perron
Poilievre
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Ruff
Saroya
Scheer
Seebach
Shin
Simard
Stanton
Ste-Marie
Stubbs
Thériault
Tochor

Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Wilson-Raybould

Uppal
Vecchio
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williamson
Yurdiga— 166

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Arseneault
Badawey
Bains
Battiste
Bendayan
Bessette
Bittle
Blois
Brière
Casey
Champagne
Dabrusin
Dhaliwal
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Gerretsen
Guilbeault
Hardie
Housefather
Hutchings
Jaczek
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Koutrakis
Lalonde
Lametti
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Monsef
Morrissey
Ng
Oliphant
Petipas Taylor
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arya
Bagnell
Baker
Beech
Bennett
Bibeau
Blair
Bratina
Carr
Chagger
Cormier
Damoff
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclous
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau
Gould
Hajdu
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Levitt
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Miller
Morneau
Murray
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffke

Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Spengemann
Tassi
Turnbull
van Koevorden
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Young
Zann

Privilege

Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sikand
Sorbara
Tabbara
Trudeau
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vaughan
Weiler
Yip
Zahid
Zuberi— 152

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

PROCEDURE FOR VOTES IN CHAMBER

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege, of which I have given notice to the table, regarding the vote that happened on the Speech from the Throne earlier this week. I understand the member for Vimy has indicated she does not want her vote to be counted. You said that would be done. Obviously, we accept that.

However, this is much more serious than that. This raises many more questions, which I will get into here and which I believe you need to give us some direction on, Mr. Speaker. This affects the privileges of every member of the House.

The privileges of all members are affected when there is a question about the conduct of one member. In this case we are in a minority Parliament where every single vote that is a confidence vote will matter.

In this case, while there was a significant spread between the yeas and the nays, one can easily imagine a scenario in which the vote of one member could determine whether the government maintained the confidence of the House. We have a situation where a member was given not one, not two, but three opportunities to talk about what happened.

I say with respect, and I do not wish to overstate this, that it is so important that the voting rights of members be protected here. Maybe when the Standing Orders were written it was simply enough, without cameras in this place, to trust the word of a member.

Mr. Speaker, if you review the tape, which we all have access to, and which is the official record of what happens in the House, you will see that the member in question was not in her seat for five minutes after the vote commenced.

Every time the camera pans past her seat, it is empty. This is not a matter of seconds and a member saying, “I heard it and I rushed in and sat down.” I am sorry. I want to take all members at their word in this place, but the video evidence is crystal clear.

Privilege

For the hon. member to say today, “I now know that I needed to be in the chamber in order to vote”, you told us that on Monday night. You told the House, “To be clear, you must be in the chamber in order to vote”, and she stood and said, “I was here. I heard the question.” That is absolutely false.

Now what do we do? What do we do when there is a situation where it could absolutely have been the difference between the government surviving and the government falling? Do we have a situation where a member can stand in this place and mislead the House and there are no consequences for it? The government survives, the legislation passes, the motion passes and the next day, or two or three days later, they say, “Oh, sorry; what could we do? I made a mistake.”

Mr. Speaker, we need you to protect the rights of all members of Parliament. If some members of Parliament are given the right to vote when they are not in this place, that takes away the rights of every member of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, a misleading statement by a member is listed as an offence against the House. That is on page 82 of Bosc and Gagnon. It is an offence against the House. It is not an offence against a particular party. I would say it is offensive to you, Mr. Speaker, as the guardian and custodian of our privileges, but this is something that could have made all the difference.

In the last Parliament, on Bill C-10, the transport bill, it was a tied vote that the previous Speaker had to break the tie on. We had three members in the lobby. We had three members who knew better than to come in and take their place and vote because to do so would have been dishonourable. It would have broken the rules of the House. What if we had just sent them in? The legislation would have been defeated at second reading. What would the remedy then have been?

Mr. Speaker, we are in this situation now where it is more imperative than ever that you protect the rights of all members and not just the governing party, and I know you would never do that. You are here. You were elected by all of us. You protect the rights of all of us.

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I think you need to review the tape to see if you find the same as we have, time after time. I wanted that member to get up and unequivocally apologize. Instead what she did was to say, “I was here”, three times. The tape does not lie. The tape shows exactly what happened.

● (1545)

I believe that we need this to be found a *prima facie* question of privilege and that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, because we need to know what the path forward is.

What if this is just an instruction that is given to any side of the House where they say, “You know what? Things happen. Just run in and say you heard it. There is nothing the Speaker can do, and the House has no powers. Just be close to the House, come in, and if it comes up before your empty seat is called, just stand up and say that you were here. We'll sort it out in the wash.” That is unacceptable.

Again, I implore you to watch the tape, Mr. Speaker. This is not a matter of that single vote. That single vote has been withdrawn, but when the camera pans across the first row, second row, third row and fourth row before the member is in her seat, I am sorry, but she did not hear the question. She knows she did not hear the question.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you rule in favour of moving this to the procedure and House affairs committee so that we can settle this once and for all.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. whip for his question of privilege.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly understand the point being made by the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope. Had the member for Vimy not apologized, I would certainly have shared in his sense—

Mr. Michael Barrett: She lied.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would like to finish what I was saying.

I think we should, in this place, show some understanding for what it was like the first day we stood in this place. There are such things as rookie mistakes, and a little compassion would not be out of order.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for bringing this to our attention.

The NDP would like to come back on this and have that opportunity if that is possible.

The Speaker: Before we proceed too much further, I believe that the points have been brought up, and it is very clear for us to observe what has gone on. Therefore, rather than have this go on all afternoon, I think hon. members will agree that I agree to go back, take a look at the evidence and then come back to the House with a ruling. I do not want this to go on, because I am starting to hear a repeat of the same arguments over and over again. I think I have enough information.

The opposition House leader.

● (1550)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we would be happy if you would review those tapes. However, I have another perspective. In fact, I have some information such that individuals outside of this place actually saw that member in the elevator while the question was being put, which I would like to speak about.

Given your current ruling, I would be very happy if you would review the tapes, but I think there was only the whip and two other members who spoke. There are a lot of other people who may want to contribute to this. If we would be allowed that opportunity, it would be appreciated.

The Speaker: It will be part of the investigation. We will take it back, we will rule on it and come back to the House. We may be coming back for more information on that.

Before proceeding, I want to remind all members that in the House, the honour of the House really depends on the honour of the individuals in the House, one at a time, and the weakest link can break down everything. Therefore, I encourage all members, regardless of where they sit in the House or what side they are on, to really take their responsibilities seriously.

We will come back to the House shortly with something on that. We are going to close it right now. I have enough information, and we will come back to the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST DOPING IN SPORT

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Amendment to Annex I of the International Convention Against Doping in Sport”.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

BEREAVEMENT CARE

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge honour to table e-petition 2293, which was presented by Joshua Dahling of Port Alberni. He cites that the Canadian government recognizes the need to support families when a life is brought into the world, yet it does little with regard to support when a loved one dies. It is estimated that for every death, five people are impacted severely. Some experience lifelong symptoms including anxiety, chemical dependency, depression, divorce, suicide, homelessness and more. Although most people will experience the loss of a loved one in their lifetime, few have adequate long-term supports or resources to assist through bereavement.

Currently, the Canada Labour Code provides only three consecutive working days for bereavement leave, with strict guidelines regarding pay. Despite the mental health implications associated with loss, there is virtually no government funding designated toward bereavement care. Organizations like the Camp Kerry Society, which provides year-round services to individuals and families coping with illness, grief and loss, must raise funds for every client they serve across the country.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons and the Government of Canada to recognize the long-term implications suffered through bereavement and that there is insufficient support, to provide funding designated toward bereavement care and to increase bereavement leave from three days to an arrangement similar to parental leave.

The petitioners are calling on the government to take a serious look at this, and to help those people, especially those who may have lost a child.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to stand in this place and present a petition. This one reflects an issue that is of burning concern and interest. I have just completed nine rounds of public meetings in my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands, and this issue came up every time.

It is the issue of anchorages that are basically free parking lots for freighters when the Port of Vancouver overflows. We have freighters that drag their anchors and park in places like Plumper Sound off the coast of Gabriola and all through the Salish Sea. There was an interim protocol that was supposed to have covered the issue. Transport Canada was looking at interim solutions and it was extended for a full year.

The constituents and the petitioners on this petition have really had enough of the free parking lots for enormous freighters with their generators running and lights on all night. The petitioners call for the suspension of the use of outside-of-port anchorages in the areas targeted by the interim protocol. They call on the Government of Canada to develop a comprehensive strategy to resolve the inefficiencies created by the anchoring of freighters.

* * *

● (1555)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I hesitate to request a favour, but the member for Fredericton was standing at Petitions and was not noted before we moved on. I wonder if the House would permit the member for Fredericton to present a petition. I know we have moved on from the rubric of Petitions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is there consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***PETITIONS**

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, this petition is about ending animal cruelty in Canada. The petitioners are acknowledging that animals are sentient beings capable of feeling pain, that they are not property. They are requesting additional protections for wild and stray animals. They state that it is imperative that those who abuse animals face conviction and significant penalty, and that loopholes in existing legislation too often allow those who have abused animals to escape penalty.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be tabling a petition that is in support of two bills that were up in the last Parliament: Bill C-350 and Bill S-240. These were bills designed to combat the scourge of forced organ harvesting. Unfortunately, those bills did not pass in time in the last Parliament, but no doubt petitioners hope that similar bills will be brought forward and passed in this Parliament.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise in this House to begin the debate on Bill C-3, concerning an independent review for the Canada Border Services Agency.

The Canada Border Services Agency ensures Canada's security and prosperity by facilitating and overseeing international travel and trade across Canada's borders. On a daily basis, CBSA officers interact with thousands of Canadians and visitors to Canada at airports, land border crossings, ports and other locations. Ensuring the free flow of people and legitimate goods across our border while protecting Canadians requires CBSA officers to have the power to arrest, detain, search and seize, as well as the authority to use reasonable force when it is required.

Currently, complaints about the service provided by the CBSA officers and about the conduct of those officers are handled internally. If an individual is dissatisfied with the results of an internal CBSA investigation, there is no mechanism for the public to request an independent review of these complaints.

The Government of Canada recognizes that a robust accountability mechanism can help ensure public trust that Canada's public safety institutions are responsive to the law and to Canadians. That is why I am honoured today to initiate debate on Bill C-3.

I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the excellent and extraordinary work of two former parliamentarians: former senator Wilfred Moore and my predecessor, former public safety minister

Ralph Goodale, who worked tirelessly to advocate for effective CBSA oversight.

This important piece of legislation that is before us today would establish an independent review and complaints mechanism for the Canada Border Services Agency. This will address the significant accountability and transparency gap among our public safety agencies and departments here in Canada.

Among our allies, Canada is alone in not having a dedicated review body for complaints regarding its border agency. The CBSA is also the only organization within the public safety portfolio without its own independent review body.

The resolution of conduct complaints is critically important to maintaining public trust. We already know that many CBSA activities, such as customs and immigration decisions, are subject to independent review. Unfortunately, as of yet, there is no such mechanism for public complaints related to CBSA employee conduct and service.

I will provide some context for my colleagues and for Canadians. The agency deals with an extraordinary and staggering number of people and a huge volume of transactions each and every year. For example, in 2018-19, CBSA employees interacted with over 96 million travellers to and from Canada and collected on behalf of Canadians \$32 billion in taxes and duties. Behind these extraordinary numbers is the story of all of us, Canadians in all walks of life and in all parts of our country who rely on the services of our border services agencies. Together, we expect that in the majority of cases we will receive, and do receive, a high degree of professionalism when travelling abroad for work and for leisure. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many members of the Canada Border Services Agency for their service to Canadians and for their professionalism they give their duties.

It is a fact that when dealing with that many travellers it is inevitable that some complaints may arise. That is why, in order to maintain the public trust in our system and to strengthen accountability for the important role that the border service officers perform for us, it is imperative that we have an independent review body to ensure that any negative experience is thoroughly investigated and quickly and transparently resolved.

Government Orders

● (1600)

Currently, if there are complaints from the public regarding the level of service provided by CBSA or the conduct of CBSA officials, they are handled through an internal process within the agency. Our government has taken action in recent years to rectify gaps with respect to the independent review of national security activities.

We have passed legislation to create the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians which recently published its first annual report. With the passage of Bill C-59, our government has also established the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. With these two initiatives under way, now is the time to close a significant gap in Canada's public safety and national security accountability framework. This is exactly where Bill C-3 comes in.

The existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, or CRCC as it is commonly known, is at the heart of this proposed legislation. The CRCC currently functions as the independent review and complaints body for the RCMP. Under Bill C-3, its responsibilities would be strengthened and it would be renamed the public complaints and review commission, or PCRC. The new PCRC would be responsible for the handling of complaints and conducting reviews for the CBSA in addition to its current responsibilities with respect to the RCMP.

When the PCRC receives a complaint from the public, it would notify the CBSA immediately which would undertake the initial investigation. This is an efficient approach that has proven to lead to a resolution of the overwhelming majority of complaints. In fact, in the case of the RCMP, some 90% of complaints against the conduct or service of the RCMP are resolved in this way.

The PCRC would also be able to conduct its own investigation to the complaint if, in the opinion of the chairperson, it is in the public interest to do so. In those cases, the CBSA would not initiate an investigation into the complaint. In other cases where the complainant may not be satisfied with the CBSA's initial handling of the complaint, the complainant could ask the PCRC directly to begin a review of it. When the PCRC receives such a request for review over a CBSA complaint decision, the commission could review the complaint and all relevant information, sharing its conclusions regarding the CBSA's initial decision. It could conclude that the CBSA decision was appropriate. It may instead ask that the CBSA investigate further or it can initiate its own independent investigation of the complaint.

The commission also would have the authority to hold a public hearing as part of its work. At the conclusion of a PCRC investigation, the review body would be able to report on its findings and make such recommendations as it sees fit. The CBSA would be required to provide a response in writing to the PCRC's findings and its recommendations.

In addition to the complaints function, the PCRC would be able to review on its own initiative or at the request of me or any minister any activity of the CBSA except for national security activities. These, of course, are reviewed by the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency which is now in force.

PCRC reports would include findings and recommendations on the adequacy, appropriateness and clarity of CBSA policies, procedures and guidelines; the CBSA's compliance with the law and all ministerial directions; and finally, the reasonableness and necessity of CBSA's use of its authorities and powers.

With respect to both its complaint and review functions, the PCRC would have the power to summon and enforce the appearance of persons before it. It would have the authority to compel them to give oral or written evidence under oath. It would have the commensurate authority to administer oaths, to receive and accept oral and written evidence, whether or not that evidence would be admissible in a court of law.

The PCRC would also have the power to examine any records or make any inquiries that it considers necessary. It would have access to the same information that the CBSA possesses when a chairman's complaint is initiated.

Beyond its review and complaint functions, Bill C-3 would also create an obligation to the CBSA to notify local police and the PCRC of any serious incident involving CBSA employees or its officers. That includes giving the PCRC the responsibility to track and publicly report on all serious incidents such as death, serious injury, or Criminal Code violations involving members of the CBSA.

Operationally, the bill is worded in such a way as to give the PCRC flexibility to organize its internal structure as it sees fit to carry out its mandate under both the CBSA Act and the RCMP Act. The PCRC could designate members of its staff as belonging either to an RCMP unit or a CBSA unit. Common services such as corporate support could be shared between both units which would make them more efficient, but there are also several benefits to be realized by separating staff in the fashion that I have described.

● (1605)

For example, staff could develop a certain expertise on matters involving these two agencies, their operational procedures and other matters. Clearly identifying which staff members are responsible for which agency may also help with the clear management of information.

Bill C-3 would also make mandatory the appointment of a vice-chair for the PCRC. This would ensure that there would always be two individuals at the top, a chairperson and a vice-chair, capable of exercising key decision-making powers. Under Bill C-3, the PCRC would publish an annual report covering each of its business lines, the CBSA and the RCMP, and the resources that it has devoted to each.

Government Orders

The report would summarize its operations throughout the year and would include such things as the number and type of complaints, and any review activities providing information on the number, type and outcome of all serious incidents. To further promote transparency and accountability, the annual report would be tabled in Parliament.

The new public complaints and review commission proposed in Bill C-3 would close a significant gap in Canada's public safety accountability regime.

Parliamentarians, non-government organizations and stakeholders have all been calling upon successive governments to initiate such a reform for many years. For example, in June 2015, in the other place, the committee on national security and defence tabled a report which advocated for the establishment of an independent civilian review and complaints body with a mandate to conduct investigations for all CBSA activities. More recently, Amnesty International, in Canada's 2018 report card, noted that the CBSA remains the most notable agency with law enforcement and detention powers in Canada that is not subject to independent review and oversight.

National security expert and law professor Craig Forcese is quoted as saying that CBSA oversight is "the right decision". Government expert Mel Cappe said that it is "filling the gap". I would importantly note that the proposed legislation before the House benefited from invaluable advice proposed to the government by Mr. Cappe.

To support this legislation, we have allocated \$24 million to expand the CRCC to become an independent review body for the CBSA. With the introduction of Bill C-3, proper oversight is on track to becoming a reality.

In the last Parliament, this bill received all-party support in the House in recognition of its practical contents that seek to maintain the integrity of our border services and to instill confidence in Canadians that their complaints will be heard independently and transparently. Though the bill was supported unanimously at third reading, it unfortunately did not receive royal assent by the time the last Parliament ended.

We have heard concerns from many members in this House about the date of tabling, and we are now reintroducing this bill at our very first opportunity as part of the 43rd Parliament. This will be the third consecutive Parliament to consider legislation to create an oversight body for the CBSA. It is overdue.

For all of these reasons, I proudly introduce Bill C-3. I am happy to take any questions my colleagues may have.

● (1610)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two quick questions.

In the last Parliament, the bill was presented in mostly the same form. At that point in time, the National Police Federation, as well as the CBSA union indicated that they had not been consulted on this.

In the time between June when this was presented and now, who has the government consulted with and when and where did that consultation occur?

Hon. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity to review the testimony at committee in the previous Parliament that addressed the bill. I took very particular note of comments made by a number of witnesses, including those representing the union in this case. They have been taken into full consideration in the preparation of this bill.

We look forward to the work of our parliamentary committee should this bill receive the support of the House to move forward. I think it is very important. In my experience, officers who do the important job of keeping our communities safe actually benefit from the transparency and accountability that is built into our oversight and review systems for complaints, both the service and in conduct. Articulating clear rules and a clear understanding for those officers so that they know what to expect and how the system works could be critically important to the success of their work.

It is our intent to do the work necessary to make sure Canadians can and will trust the excellent work being done by CBSA officers, and that there is an appropriate mechanism in place to resolve complaints of conduct or service when they arise.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the early presentation of the bill has not given a lot of time to study it in detail as a newly elected member, but I am looking forward to further discussion and debate.

I note that when the Senate was dealing with this issue of oversight of the CBSA, it proposed a different piece of legislation, which was not supported by the government. That legislation called for an oversight body using an independent investigator, which would provide oversight to the agency, not just the complaint side. This was rejected by the government implicitly.

Further, there was concern that in the RCMP complaints commission, there was already a backlog of over 2,000 cases. Now we have, instead of creating a separate board, a combined board with two functions and possibly two investigative teams.

Are we going to end up with a situation where we are just having reviews of internal investigations or are there going to be separate independent hearings? What kind of oversight can this body actually provide in the absence of an oversight body of the organization?

● (1615)

Hon. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, I have also reviewed previous Senate bills. As I have indicated, this is also a matter that has been considered over a number of years and the CBSA is the last of the public safety agencies to receive this type of oversight.

There has been quite a significant discussion about the most efficient way to provide that transparency and accountability inherent in a complaints review process. We have learned many lessons from what has worked well for the RCMP, for example, and we are taking advantage of that.

The member has a legitimate concern about making sure we adequately resource this agency to do the work that we are tasking it with. We have budgeted an additional \$24 million to make sure that it has those resources.

About 90% of the complaints received by the RCMP are investigated by the RCMP and reviewed by the existing agency. This has been adequate or satisfactory to the people who made the complaints. About 10% are taken for additional investigation or review or comment and are then turned back to the RCMP by the review agency. That is an appropriate balance of work. The real test is in how satisfied and trusting Canadians are that the authorities that we vest in our public safety departments and agencies are being used appropriately.

There are real opportunities to identify deficiencies in the services that we deliver so that they might be improved to the benefit of all Canadians.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see this legislation back in the House. I also want to thank former minister Ralph Goodale.

It has been a concern for a very long time that the Canada Border Services Agency has no oversight body. I agree with the member for St. John's East that it would be better to have a more comprehensive overview body, but a complaints commission would certainly be an improvement.

I am concerned about the number of exemptions. The minister said in his remarks that any negative experience should be investigated and resolved. I agree, but this legislation would exempt conduct of CBSA agents when they are under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and are operating under their statutory authority, or, and this is rather discretionary, matters that could be more appropriately dealt with by other bodies, or the conduct of employees at detention facilities where CBSA detainees are housed, or, and this is an additional exemption in this version of the bill, which is different from the last Parliament, national security. The concern here is that we really need an oversight body that would review what Canada Border Services agents do.

Most of them are exemplary, but I have heard stories that would curl the minister's hair. One was an indigenous man who came to our office for help a number of years ago. He was taken from his home on Penelakut Island just before Christmas, put in leg irons, and driven from Vancouver Island to a detention facility at Vancouver Airport. I do not think under this law we would have any room to complain of the treatment of an indigenous man being put in leg irons and driven to sure and certain deportation if we had not been able to intervene.

Is the minister open to amendments?

Hon. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, I do not mean to not take as seriously as it should be taken the story that the member for

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Saanich—Gulf Islands told. However, if we are going to curl my hair, we had better start early. I am losing it quickly.

Let me assure the member that it is our intent to establish an open and transparent complaints review system that Canadians can trust. In the circumstances that she described, and I do not have any information on the particulars of that, in my opinion, that would be captured under a number of different aspects of this legislation.

I very much value the important work of committee and look forward to this report going to committee. I believe that, through the important work of committees and even the other place, there is an opportunity to ensure that the legislation we pass on behalf of Canadians and this very important new oversight body will be effective in maintaining the trust of all Canadians. It will also serve the best interests of the officers of the Canada Border Services Agency.

I look forward to the work of the committees and working through the parliamentary process to ensure that we develop the best possible legislation to serve all Canadians.

• (1620)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the minister's comments and the questions of others. I want to reinforce the important role and work that border control officers perform day in and day out. I suspect if we were to do some sort of a time test over the last number of years, we would see the demand is going to continue to grow for these types of services. It is one of the reasons it is important for us to establish this oversight committee. There is perception and then there is reality and bringing the two of them together is a good thing. I believe the timing is right.

There was reference to the former member for Wascana, Ralph Goodale, and the fine work he did on this. Civil servants and different stakeholders have had the opportunity to get engaged on this legislation. I am wondering if the minister could provide his thoughts and reinforce the fine work that these individuals do day in and day out.

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Hon. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, I would acknowledge that CBSA officers have a tough job. There are 95 million travellers crossing our borders each and every year and \$32 billion in duties and taxes are collected. They have a difficult task. Unfortunately, there may be some circumstances where, in the performance of their duties, someone is not happy with the services provided or the conduct of a member, so we need to make sure we support all Canadians and people using those services with a transparent and open system of review, but at the same time, ensure CBSA members are treated fairly and according to the rules, are well understood and are supported by those who represent them.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always it is a privilege to rise in the House and speak to an important issue, the protection of Canadians in our communities. That is the top priority of this House, something I have said for several years, and I am happy to hear the new public safety minister beginning to echo those same sentiments.

Bill C-98 from the previous Parliament session, renamed Bill C-3 in this session, proposes to repurpose and rename the RCMP's civilian complaints commission to the "public complaints and review commission" and expand its mandate to review both the RCMP and the CBSA.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the RCMP and CBSA members for the incredible work and service they provide to Canadians.

I am privileged to be the first to rise on behalf of the official opposition and say that our team is cautiously optimistic of this legislation. Our Conservative team supports that all governments, employees and elected officials should be accountable to the people and the taxpayer. Public servants across the country must be held to the standards expected of Canadians, which is to uphold the integrity of people who are visiting or passing through our country, while ensuring our laws and international laws are upheld. For those reasons, a properly implemented oversight agency, as is used by police services across the country, including the RCMP, seems to be a sound policy and certainly long overdue.

In 2016, Ralph Goodale, the previous public safety minister, testified he was already working on the issue and prevented legislation from others to proceed.

In 2017, Mel Cappe provided his advice, which is captured in this bill, to create a civilian oversight body. Unfortunately, it took until the last days of the previous Parliament session for the Liberals to move ahead. Hopefully, the retabling of the bill three months into this new session suggests the Liberals are certainly taking this issue seriously.

Canadians expect federal law enforcement to act to uphold our laws and to be held accountable if it does not. This bill will align well with the values of many Canadians and the values of the Conservative team. However, it would not have been my top priority. Rather, I would have liked to talk about issues that at this time are of top priority to Canadians, such as the 134,000 people from across this country who have signed e-petition 2341. Currently, it is the largest e-petition in Canadian history and is the third largest in all of Canadian petition history, only behind the 1949, 625,000 hard-copy petition for the Canadian Bill of Rights and the 1975 pe-

tion on not proceeding with the abortion law. Of course, I am thrilled to be the sponsor of that petition. It highlights the flaws in the Liberal plan to target law-abiding Canadian gun owners for the actions of criminals and gangs.

I would have also liked to talk about the issue of rural crime and how it impacts all rural communities, especially those where the RCMP are left short-handed, and about the lack of a Liberal plan to deal with the skyrocketing opioid crisis in our communities, all the deaths that are occurring and the public safety concerns of gangs, shootings and illegal firearms. We should be talking about the erosion of our border security under the current Liberal government, not just with respect to the crisis of illegal border crossers, but also with drugs, handgun smuggling, human trafficking by many of the gangs running drugs, and the massive backlogs in the monitoring and deportation of known terrorists, criminals and national security risks.

However, we are here today to talk about Bill C-3, an oversight bill. Oversight is good. It ensures that people know that there is someone who will look into actions that are not in keeping with our laws. This bill should provide investigative powers, an ability to review situations, provide feedback and determine the course of action on scope and scale with anyone who violates our laws and principles.

Bill C-3 proposes to repurpose and rename the RCMP civilian complaints commission to the "public complaints and review commission" and expand its mandate to both the RCMP and the CBSA.

Since coming into government, the Liberals have added numerous layers of oversight, bureaucracy and process into national security and public safety with very little action that actually protects Canadians.

● (1625)

The Liberals have added the parliamentary National Security and Intelligence oversight committee, the new National Security and Intelligence review committee, the expanded Intelligence Commissioner and now the expanded role of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP.

This is on top of the existing reviews that include the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the national security advisor and now the newly appointed Deputy Prime Minister.

I certainly hope we do not have investigations by seven or eight federal agencies with respect to this one complaint and what this act is supposed to do.

Over the last five years, the Liberals have committed \$150 million on boosting oversight. In contrast, between 2015 and 2019, they promised \$400 million to policing and gangs, but delivered next to nothing.

Members will stand and say that oversight is the right way to go and that this bill, with some edits, as has already been mentioned in a previous question, could actually benefit Canadians. It will be important to ensure the right amendments are in place.

The bill would create a mechanism to complain about inappropriate actions by border officers. Police agencies have had civilian oversight and review for decades, and it is common practice around the world for law enforcement. It seems logical that a large enforcement agency, like CBSA, should have the same checks and balances. This will help officers who are wrongly accused to show that they acted appropriately, if they did, and it will remind officers that they are not above the law, which is something we all need.

However, the bill is silent on holding people accountable. The public complaints and review committee can examine evidence, call witnesses and write a report, but the bill seems silent on how officers who violate the law, code or principle can be held accountable.

I have not been in Parliament as long as some, but anyone who has paid attention to the Auditor General or other parliamentary officers can see a pattern: programs, services and reviews designed to look like they address issues, but lack any kind of accountability or powers to hold people accountable.

The Liberals are repeating the same thing over and over again. They gave us a new agency, a new commission, a new committee or another new bureaucracy, but refuse to put in place any measures that would take steps to correct the problems the commission or committee was there to deal with in the first place.

Let me use Vice-Admiral Norman as an example. The Prime Minister personally pointed the finger at Vice-Admiral Norman. The vice-admiral was fired and charged with serious offences. The Prime Minister said that he supported the RCMP in its investigations, but made no effort to provide full evidence to support its investigations or refute that investigation. It is only when Vice-Admiral Norman's attorney interviewed former Conservative ministers from the Harper administration that suddenly the case fell apart and the vice-admiral was completely exonerated.

A report into this civilian oversight committee, and I can only speculate since the Prime Minister continues to use cabinet confidence to cover up his trail, would probably reveal a use of select evidence, a plan to railroad and to blame a decorated officer in an attempt by the Prime Minister to hold the truth from Canadians.

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Under this model, it should stop there. There would be no actions or recourse to address the issue to stop it from happening again, as is the case with Vice-Admiral Norman. There is no punishment for a corrupt politician to attack and railroad an honoured and decorated officer in the Canadian Armed Forces.

The House and the committee can and should give this bill proper scrutiny. While the idea seems sound and the model certainly better than in other legislation, I am very wary of anything the government does on borders. It has not managed our borders well and have not been upfront with the House of Commons or Canadians about those issues.

In 2017, the Liberals told us there was nothing to worry about with the tens of thousands of people crossing illegally into Canada. They told us they did not need new resources, security was going well and everything was just fine.

In reality, security was being cut in other areas to deal with the volumes of illegal border crossers, provinces and cities were drowning in costs and overflowed shelters, border and RCMP agencies were stretched and refugee screenings were backing up. According to the ministers at the time, everything was fine.

● (1630)

Then, three budgets delivered new funding and changes and a promise to deal with issues facing our border. Billions were spent on this issue, another example of mismanagement for the taxpayer to clean up, and things are no better. However, we still continue to pay millions to deal with the issue without any reduction in the problem.

What should we scrutinize?

First, we should ensure we hear from those people impacted by the decision, such as groups like front-line RCMP and CBSA officers who would be subjected to the evaluations this oversight committee would have. We were shocked in the last session that neither the RCMP or the CBSA unions were involved. However, again, that is not necessarily new in the consultation policies of the government.

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A news article stated, “The union representing border officers has heard little about the proposal and was not consulted on the bill”, that being the former Bill C-98, a bill nearly identical to this one. It went on to say, “Jean-Pierre Fortin, national president of the Customs and Immigration Union (CIU), said the president of the CBSA also was left in the dark and could not inform the union of any details of the legislation.”

My hope is that this has been taken care of, or will be taken of. However, in speaking with those two bodies, with the National Police Federation, on the previous bill, I am left with the impression that the Liberals did not consult them either.

As members heard earlier, I had asked the minister if the government had corrected it this time. I guess we will find out once it gets to committee, and my colleagues will hear from those individuals who I just mentioned.

We will want to hear from impacted Canadians on this matter. There should not be a need to get high-priced lobbyists involved to get the minister's attention.

We should also ensure that Canadians do not need to hire lawyers to get access to the Complaints Commission and its processes, which is critical for those who might be impacted by any impropriety during a border crossing.

Further, we need to ensure that the minister and his staff, and other leaders across the public safety spectrum, cannot get their hands on the processes and decisions of these oversight bodies.

Finally, I want to mention the issue of the Liberals using their majority to ram things through despite serious issues in the last Parliament.

I call on and expect all members of the public safety and emergency preparedness committee to abide by their own judgment of the testimony of experts and witnesses and not the will of the minister's staff or demands of the political arm of the PMO. Also, timelines are constructed by the committee not the Minister of Public Safety or his staff. Knowing that the current and the former chair of the public safety committee is a scrupulous and honoured individual, I trust he will not suggest that legislation needs to be finished by a certain deadline to make a minister or staff happy before members can hear appropriate testimony.

There is a lot of trust and faith needed, obviously, for the House to work well together on any legislation, and certainly this one is no exception. Trust is built through honest answers and legitimate questions. Trust is reinforced by following integrity and the need to get it right rather than just to be right.

I hope the minister will be clear with committee members on spending, resources, his proposed plans and the areas where we can all improve, or certainly the government can improve on the track record from the past. Perhaps with new legislation in this new session, we can see the government try to broker such trust, starting with Bill C-3. We will wait to see if that to happen.

● (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam

Speaker, I was encouraged by the member's comments. Again, we will go back to Bill C-98, and take ideas from it. I believe the member was the critic of his party for Ralph Goodale. I do appreciate the concerns he has raised.

However, I would ask the member if the Conservative Party has some amendments to the bill they would specifically like to bring forward and if he is able to share that with us well in advance of the bill going to committee. Could he provide his thoughts on any suggestions the Conservatives might have, given that we have had the legislation now for quite a while if we factor in Bill C-98?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I put my earpiece in, but I should have realized that I do not need it to hear the hon. member when he speaks in the House, as he is usually very vocal.

The spirit and intent of the legislation speaks for itself. As the official opposition, we are prepared to consider the legislation seriously and support it, with the opportunity given at committee to look at some of the amendments that are necessary.

We will work with the opposition and the government to ensure the true intent of the legislation is met, and that is to ensure that a very large organization, which has a huge front-line impact on many Canadians and foreigners who travel through and into our country, has an oversight mechanism, just like in all matters of enforcement, to provide credibility to the organization. We certainly want to be part of ensuring the process is done well, such as how that committee goes about its business and how the oversight is managed in a way in which we can all be proud.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was interested in the comments of the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner on this issue, particularly on the issue of the management of committees. I do not think he was here then, but during the years of 2008 to 2015 when I was here, the management of committees was particularly egregious, with things called one day and demanded to be passed on a particular evening. I am glad to hear there is a bit of change of heart on the other side about how committees should conduct their business.

I understand that the hon. member welcomes the legislation. However, it was resisted by parliamentarians in two former Parliaments, when the NDP Party called upon this type of oversight to be brought forward. The British Columbia Civil Liberties Federation, the Canadian Bar Association and other groups were calling on the need for independent oversight.

Why did the former Conservative government resist this?

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• (1640)

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, my colleague is correct. I was not in the former Parliament during the years to which he referred. I have no way of responding as to why things were done the way they were at that time. What I can say is that it is absolutely critical.

I am just guessing at this stage, but is it possible that sometimes in a desire to have oversight on some of these bodies, people get involved in the operational aspects of oversight, rather than the behavioural aspects and the process in which members conduct themselves when they interact with the public?

I am pleased with what I see in the legislation compared to what I have been told had existed in previous proposals, where the focus was more on the members, their conduct and interactions with the public as opposed to conducting an investigation, or getting into the operational aspects of agencies as opposed to the acts, behaviours or omissions of members of those organizations.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a Yiddish proverb that says, “Ask and you won't get lost.” I had a great love for Yiddish proverbs in the last Parliament, so I will use them again in this Parliament. Someday I will learn enough Yiddish to be able to say it in that language, so fair warning to the interpreters.

However, I want to ask the hon. member this since he had a very long police career in his past life, prior to becoming a parliamentarian, and is a returning parliamentarian. What kinds of things would he like to see change at the committee level with this legislation? He went into it in his speech. As a professional and former law enforcement official, what kinds of changes would he like to see or what kinds of changes have other members of Parliament told him they would like to see in the law?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I am glad my colleague did not give us a Yiddish proverb, or maybe I did not hear it.

I want to focus on one aspect of the question the member asked. Quite honestly, I came to Parliament a bit naive. I came to Parliament thinking that when we go to committee and have these conversations, there is a genuine understanding that we are all here for one purpose, and that is to make life better, and in this case safer and more appropriate, for all Canadians. It was evident from many of the committees I was involved in that the agenda of a majority government sometimes supersedes the common sense of what Canadians expect from us as parliamentarians.

Therefore, what I am excited about in this minority Parliament is that the minority government has to ensure that all aspects of legislation are taken into consideration and all witnesses and amendments are considered, because in this case no committee has a majority of government members but the opposition does. That really opens up an opportunity for Canadians to have their voices heard better than in a majority government, in some cases. In this circumstance, I am looking forward to that being the case with this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my col-

league from Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner for his speech and his suggestions.

I would like to learn more about what he just proposed. He said that we need better oversight of CBSA officers.

Could the member tell me what he envisions? I am interested in hearing his suggestions.

• (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, there are a couple of things we need to look at. First, as I see the bill, there are really no clear mechanisms allowing valid complaints. We can hear a valid complaint and the committee can see it, but what actions are then going to take place? Who directs them? The current act as written might be void in some of those areas.

There are questions that many people have. Where is the line between who can complain about what? Is there a clear delineation for the CBSA? Can an asylum claimant who is ordered to be deported make a complaint through this? Obviously I would say no, because it is an operational issue, but there is not necessarily clarity.

For the committee itself, what assurances do we have that it is properly prepared to expand into CBSA issues? Will members receive additional training? Will they receive an orientation? Will they add to the number of people there? How many complaints are they expected to hear, and how will they manage that in addition to what they have already? We would like some clarity around some of those things, but again, that is just the beginning.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Bow River, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, Natural Resources.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is very happy that this bill has been introduced. We were taken for a ride in the previous Parliament. Bill C-98 was introduced too late and unfortunately died on the Order Paper. I hope that we will have time to pass Bill C-3 before the next election, which is looming over our heads like the sword of Damocles.

The Bloc Québécois plans to vote in favour of Bill C-3, as it did with Bill C-98. There is no surprise there.

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The current situation is untenable. The statistics are alarming. From 2016 to 2018, there were 1,200 complaints, including 59 allegations of harassment, 38 allegations of criminal association and five allegations of sexual assault. Those are striking figures. The Canada Border Services Agency is short-staffed. Complaints may not always be given the attention they deserve. We think that an independent commissioner should be appointed.

It is also not right that the CBSA itself hears complaints about its own services. That obviously does not meet the minimum legal requirements, whether under natural law or in accordance with the rights set out in our charters regarding an impartial hearing before those concerned. Since the commissioner would be a third party, we believe that he could deal with any complaints filed with his office in a serious, impartial, fair and independent manner—at least that is what we hope. We believe that creating the commissioner's office would make this possible.

This is nothing new. I looked at the statistics on the various complaints that were filed. In 2017-18 alone, just two years ago, there were reports of racist and rude comments. Officers allegedly searched cellphones without putting them in airplane mode, which is illegal. Searches can be conducted legally if the phone is in airplane mode, but not otherwise. In some situations, officers allegedly took photos of the information contained in cellphones. They also allegedly forced someone to open their banking app. All of these things are unacceptable.

Some people complained about rude treatment. Apparently an officer shouted and insulted travellers. In another case, people who had dealings with the CBSA were told there was no interpretation service available, which meant that they were unable to communicate with the officer. One officer was racist and told a client he was ugly. That is unconscionable. This is not a banana republic.

We think complaints should be treated with respect, as should all CBSA clients, whether they are right or wrong, which is a different story. At a bare minimum, these requests should be handled respectfully and attentively.

Last year, the member for Vancouver East quoted something Justice O'Connor said over 10 years ago. He recommended introducing a CBSA oversight mechanism. More recently, an immigration lawyer named Joel Sandaluk said this on CBC: "CBSA, for many years, has been a law unto itself. It's hard to imagine an organization with the size and the complexity and the amount of responsibility and authority of an agency like this would be completely without any kind of oversight."

• (1650)

He added that the statistics may have been skewed, but temporary residents of or visitors to Canada were in fact not here long enough to file a complaint. Obviously, he did not even mention those who do not file complaints out of fear of reprisal. It is a troubling situation and according to Mr. Sandaluk, this is likely only the tip of the iceberg.

CBC mentioned the case of a woman deported to Guatemala who was allegedly pushed to the ground by an officer, who is alleged to have kicked her and dug his knee into her back. That is outrageous. When we read these reports, these statistics, we do not get the im-

pression that this is a professional border services agency that serves a country like Canada and serves the people and the visitors of Quebec who have to deal with them.

More recently, just a few weeks ago, the Canadian Press reported some statistics. The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group of Toronto said that the definition of a founded complaint in the CBSA reports was too vague to allow adequate changes or adjustments to be made. This is just another situation that does not help to improve the services provided by the agency.

The Privacy Commissioner of Canada, Daniel Therrien, told Radio-Canada that the agency and its customs officers had not followed acceptable practices for handling the personal information of Canadian citizens re-entering the country. It is not your ordinary Joe saying it, it is the commissioner himself. He added that the line had been crossed.

It is ridiculous. It is about time that we acknowledge and address this issue.

According to other information made public by Radio Canada, a CBSA officer apparently shredded his handwritten notes three days after receiving a call from one of the commissioner's investigators.

For all these reasons, we believe that Bill C-3 must be implemented as quickly as possible. Once again, they must not play the same trick on us that they did with Bill C-98, which was introduced before this bill. We believe that Bill C-3 should be referred to a committee right away.

In closing, I want to make it clear that the Bloc Québécois is not blaming the officers or the agency. That is up to the commissioner, if warranted, and if designated.

We believe that the Canada Border Services Agency has not had the benefit of adequate oversight, which it should have received from the proper authorities. Respectfully, the responsibility lies with the current Liberal government and its predecessor, the Conservative government. We believe that the time has come to address this issue and we are grateful for Bill C-3.

I would also like to add that the union representing the CBSA officers should appear before the committee when it studies the bill. We hope that the bill will be referred to a committee as soon as possible. The committee should make every effort to hear from experts, immigration lawyers who have worked with the CBSA and the officers' union. I am convinced that the union has important things to tell the committee about this issue.

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● (1655)

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Rivière-du-Nord for his conditional support of the bill. I am very gratified to hear his acknowledgement that the legislation would improve the situation of accountability and trust for those who serve us at our borders. I also want to acknowledge the many anecdotes he shared with us about people who have made allegations of misconduct against CBSA officers or questioned the services provided.

Does the member for Rivière-du-Nord think this legislation would give all Canadians, including of course Canadians from Quebec, confidence that the CBSA is an accountable organization and that its members are there to serve them? I hope he does.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, obviously I cannot be sure whether the process that will be put in place will be completely satisfactory to everyone, but I hope it will. That is what the Bloc Québécois hopes. We want to trust in the goodwill of the people across the way. It is time to establish this commission and put it to work. Should it ever fail to do its job, we will be the first to inform the House.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, would the member agree, in looking at the nature of the oversight being provided by this bill, that as the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association suggests, two separate accountability mechanisms should be available? One would provide real-time oversight of the policies and practices of the Canada Border Services Agency and the other an accountability mechanism for conducting investigations and resolving specific complaints, as we are talking about, such as specific incidents of potential misbehaviour.

One mechanism would look at the policies and practices, while the other would deal with individual complaints related to a particular incident. Would the member's party support the notion that there really is a need for two kinds of oversight, even though this arrangement may not be contained in the bill?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I will not be able to comment on the specific mechanisms today.

The idea mentioned by my colleague across the way is an interesting one. It might be worth studying in committee. Would the solution be to have two different methods of handling investigations? Maybe yes, maybe no.

I would love to attend a commission meeting and hear the experts and their proposals. Every member in the House has an opinion on this issue, as well as on many other issues underlying the passage of Bill C-3. I would love for us to hear from the experts and then adopt the most efficient procedure.

● (1700)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, like the minister, I do recognize that the Bloc Québécois is supporting the legislation. I see that as very encouraging.

The member made reference to the number of complaints and cited some specific examples of the numbers. Again, I want to look at the overall numbers. Earlier the minister made reference to the millions of clientele, if I can put it that way, going through and being served by Canada Border Services Agency officers.

Upon reflection, it is safe to say that the work these officers are doing for us as a whole should be applauded, recognizing that of course there are going to be complaints. All in all, it is a relatively small number of complaints compared to the overall numbers that come through, but they are important complaints that need to be addressed, and that is what this legislation will assist with. Would the member agree?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, at the end of my remarks, I do not think we should be blaming the officers. As for the agency, we will have to see. The commissioner will deal with that.

There have been a good number of complaints, as I said. Many of them have been found to be valid, others not, but these are just the tip of the iceberg. That is how things are across all government services. The people who file complaints are just a fraction of those who could.

Many people are frustrated because their rights are being violated or because they are being mistreated by all types of government officials. However, those people will not necessarily file a complaint. It does not really matter whether half, three-quarters or one-quarter of CBSA officers have done something wrong. I am just saying that there have been many complaints and those complaints are just the tip of the iceberg.

This is therefore a glaring problem that Parliament needs to address. We must find a solution. Bill C-3 gives us that opportunity, which is great. I do not have here at my fingertips the figures or the percentage of clients being well served and poorly served. We do not need to count them to be able to bring in effective provisions that uphold everyone's rights.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill C-3, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts. I appreciate the introduction by the minister responsible.

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I would like to say, first of all, that the Canada Border Services Agency carries on very important work for the safety of Canada and its citizens, and it enforces some 70 different regulations and pieces of legislation that have been passed by Parliament or enacted through proper processes. It is an important piece of work that the agency does. There are at least 7,000 agents, and they operate at 130 different border points, so the work they do is very important.

They also, in conducting this work, have pretty extraordinary powers, probably greater than many police and law enforcement agencies. They can arrest and detain people who they believe are in Canada illegally. They can arrest with or without warrant. They can arrest people who they suspect are in violation of the act and detain them for, in some cases, indefinite periods.

As has been pointed out, with 96 million travellers in and out of the country, we do not have 96 million complaints, obviously, so it is pretty clear that the work that they are doing is, for the most part, not subject to complaint.

I appreciate that when we talk about the complaints that are made, we are talking about exceptions to proper behaviour, potentially. The complaints may not end up being found to be valid in some cases, but we know that there are sufficient numbers of valid complaints to have a cause for concern that this enforcement agency is not immune to bad behaviour and improper conduct. We know that this has happened, because complaints have been founded by investigations conducted by the CBSA itself.

There has, for a long period of time, been cause for concern that there was a lack of oversight of this body. Justice O'Connor in 2010 recommended that this oversight take place, but it did not take place. We raised this issue as a party in the Conservative years, in 2010, after Justice O'Connor and before, and up until we joined the last Parliament as well. I was not here, but I know my colleagues have done so, and they were not the only ones. Recognized and respected public bodies, such as the Canadian Bar Association, Amnesty International, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association and others, have recognized and pointed out significant deficiencies in the activities and behaviour of the CBSA in the enforcement of its legislation.

It is kind of a given that this should happen. "Long overdue" are the words that have been used by the minister himself, recognizing that this legislation, or something like it, should have been brought forward a lot sooner than it was. It is unfortunate that this gap has not been addressed before this date, but we are heartened by the fact that it is here today.

I must say it was a half-hearted attempt by the Liberal government in the last Parliament to bring this legislation forward in the dying days of Parliament, several weeks before Parliament was to rise. It was passed over to the Senate on the 19th of June, the day before they were to rise, with no hope of any particular consideration there. The Liberal government deserves some blame for not bringing this legislation forward earlier to provide an opportunity for full discussion and debate.

There are some changes that have now been made. I did not get the sense from the minister's remarks, when he was asked about consultations, that any significant consultation has taken place with

the union that was involved. Its members appeared before the committee. The customs and immigration union does have something to say about this. I think the union is generally supportive of the idea that there ought to be accountability, because it also provides an opportunity for officers who may be the subject of a complaint to be exonerated if the complaint is not founded, and it can be done in a public way.

• (1705)

All that being said, we do have to look carefully at some of the provisions of this legislation. Is it going to simply be a review of internal complaints or internal investigations that have been made? To what extent is it going to provide for an independent investigation? The power exists there. The practice is something that we have to be concerned about.

Are we going to be in a backlog situation, as we have seen with the RCMP civilian review system? Additional monies have been provided, and I see provisions for standards of performance in terms of dealing with complaints. Whether those standards can be met by just establishing standards of performance and whether the government is committed to being responsive to requests by the agency for sufficient funds or more staff as needed to meet those standards is the problem sometimes with agencies that have this kind of oversight. We want to have a good look at that to see what is going on when these things take place.

The NDP supports this legislation in principle and we will certainly be supporting it at second reading. We will look to see whether the minister is willing to consider amendments during consideration in committee. I am not proposing any here today, but I do want to see that the minister is prepared to consider arguments that may be made to bring about changes that would enhance the legislation and make it more effective.

We have heard specific concerns as well from the legal community in terms of how the practices of the agency have affected solicitor-client privilege, and there are concerns about solicitor-client privilege. We want to make sure that these concerns are addressed if they have not been addressed already, and I am not sure they have been addressed.

We would also want to see the opportunity, and I raised this with the member for Saint-Jean, to be involved in the policy and practices side of it. I note that in the legislation there is an opportunity for the committee itself to initiate reviews of specific practices. Whether it is going to be a robust effort on the part of the committee interests me. I suspect it may depend on who the committee members are.

I would want to see an opportunity for those kinds of reviews to take place through the initiative of someone else. For example, the Canadian Bar Association might want to see a review of a particular practice as it might affect a problem area, whether having to do with solicitor-client privilege or having to do with incidents that have come forward on a number of occasions. Other outside bodies as well might come to this body and ask it to conduct a review. I note that reviews can be done at the direction of the minister as well. That is something that may answer some of the concerns.

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I am pretty sure this is not a perfect instrument, and I do not think it has been suggested that it is. It is a way forward, though, and NDP members supported it in the last Parliament because it was a step forward from what was in existence up until right now. There is no form of civilian oversight of this organization, and the lack of that kind of oversight has been noted for many years.

Enforcement officers have enormous powers, and they are a necessity. Officers deal in many cases with people in vulnerable circumstances, people who are refugees. Forty-one thousand refugees crossed into Canada during the last Parliament. These people are vulnerable. They are susceptible to being unable to complain or to feeling that complaining would potentially cause them problems, so vigorous oversight is needed there. It is important for us to ensure that this oversight takes place. There may be a need for third parties to approach the committee to make sure that the policies and practices that are in place adequately meet the required standards when enforcement officers are dealing with civilians whom they are entrusted to look after while also ensuring that the law is enforced.

• (1710)

Those are some of the concerns that New Democrats will be looking at carefully in committee. I am disturbed to hear that the examination of what happens in detention is excluded from this bill, but I am going to be looking very carefully at that. We do note, as was noted before in one of the speeches, that since the year 2000 there have been at least 14 deaths of people while in detention. I am not suggesting that these deaths were the result of negligence or improper behaviour, but the question remains. These were not able to be investigated by any outside agency specifically in relation to the behaviour toward and treatment of individuals who may have had ill-treatment in custody. Whether or not there was in these individual cases, I am obviously not in a position to say.

However, the public must have confidence, ultimately, that there is a sufficient degree of transparency and oversight in order to believe that CBSA officers are acting not only in the public interest and for the safety of Canada, but also in a proper way when they are dealing with individuals, and that they are not abusing their position of power and trust. People must know they have recourse with a proper, independent, robust and accessible process that will make sure justice is done following any violation of proper and appropriate behaviour.

As was mentioned earlier, this is not something the union of the employees involved rejects. This is something it regards as proper and appropriate as well.

Having said all of that, New Democrats support this legislation being brought forward at second reading. We look forward to having an appropriate period of time to consider it and bring forward witnesses who can help with the analysis of it and offer their recommendations and opinions.

• (1715)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have more of a comment than a question. I want to respond to some of the things my friend from St. John's East mentioned in his remarks and thank him for his support for this bill at this point.

I want to assure him and other members of the House that the perspective and opinions of the union representing the members of the CBSA are important to this discussion. I value and respect those very much. I have made arrangements to meet with union leadership and that will take place in the coming weeks. This legislation will certainly be canvassed extensively in that conversation. I also took very careful note of comments that they made in previous committee appearances and in previous discussions with my predecessor in the public safety portfolio. Those opinions are important and valued.

I also want to assure the member that although I would never presume to make suggestions or interfere in any way with the decisions of the committee as to what witnesses it will call, I am very open to considering the important work that the committee will undertake and give appropriate consideration to any recommendations it may bring forward.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the minister's expression of willingness to meet with the representatives of the workers and not only hear from them in committee but also meet with them in person to hear what they have to say. That is encouraging.

There is also the openness to hear what is said in committee. We had a situation in the previous Conservative government. My experience then was that there was a resistance to amendments of any kind, even ones that the Conservatives finally had to make themselves when they realized that if they did not make them, the legislation would not work. I hope we will see a spirit of co-operation in committee when we have recommendations from good sources so we can see some changes.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the major concerns that is often raised with me regarding the existing RCMP complaints process is that even when complaints are made, it takes too long to investigate and measures are not taken right away to address some very serious concerns with the conduct of an officer or a detachment. I am wondering if my colleague could speak to the importance of not just oversight but swift action and adequate measures being taken when people, whether they are RCMP officers or those working at the CBSA, are seen to be out of line.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is an important one because there was a significant backlog in the RCMP complaints procedure. There was a backlog of 2,000 complaints, which is awful. If someone makes a complaint and it takes two, three or more years to deal with it, that is totally inadequate.

There were some performance standards mentioned in the bill, and we will have to look carefully at them to see whether they are talking about what the board does when it has a complaint finished, or whether there is actually a timeline that says that when someone makes a complaint there has to be a response to that individual. We should look into that carefully, and I plan to do that. I am looking forward to seeing what can be done to make sure that complainants have a response time that is adequate and reasonable.

I want to thank the hon. member for bringing that to the attention of the House.

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● (1720)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Oakville North—Burlington.

I rise today to speak to the important debate about Bill C-3, which would entrench civilian oversight of the Canada Border Services Agency.

In following the debate thus far, I am very encouraged by the comments I have heard from the other side with respect to the importance of this kind of legislation, and its connection to the previous legislation that came forward in the last Parliament, notably Bill C-98.

Canadians know that the CBSA is an entity and an agency that ensures Canada's security and Canadians' prosperity by facilitating and overseeing international travel and trade across our border. What is important is that it ensures the free flow of goods and people across that border.

What is critical to understand is how vast the CBSA is in its scope. It has a staff of approximately 14,000 individuals operating a wide range of integrated border services. It operates in 1,000 locations at 117 land border crossings and 13 international airports, as well as in 39 international offices. It interacts with literally thousands of Canadians daily and millions of people yearly. In 2017-18, the statistics are quite staggering: 96 million travellers were processed in total during that one calendar year. That gives us a sense of the size and scope of the CBSA.

I am rising here today on behalf of my constituents in Parkdale—High Park, because there are extensive powers granted to CBSA officials, and that is for good reason. The agency needs extensive powers in order to operate and function effectively and carry out these important functions, but with extensive powers has to come extensive accountability.

This is what we would call a *sine qua non*, a critical component of what is required for any law enforcement agency in the country. What was lacking up until the introduction of this bill and eventual, hopefully, passage of the bill is that accountability piece.

Let us talk about those extensive powers. When they are protecting Canadians, CBSA officials have the authority to arrest, detain, search and seize, as well as the authority to use reasonable force when required. At the border, as many Canadians know, officers have the power to stop travellers for questioning, to take breath and blood samples, and to search, detain and arrest non-citizens without a warrant. These are very critical powers. These are very broad powers.

The list of powers I have just provided to the chamber underscores the critical need for oversight. The powers of detention, search and seizure and the use of force are important to the work that CBSA does. However, that work, which we want to ensure is successful, would be jeopardized if the Canadian public does not have the confidence that those extensive powers are being used legitimately and appropriately in conformity with the rights that are protected in this country.

There is a simple way to ensure that public confidence. In legal parlance, we talk about the administration of justice, or the administration of the regime, being held up to wide repute. That is to ensure that there is a transparent public oversight mechanism done by a civilian body.

That is what I hear about from my constituents in Parkdale—High Park. That is what I hear about in my role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. People believe in entrenching law enforcement with certain powers because they understand the necessity of it, but there needs to be a counterbalance, which is a check on the illegitimate or inappropriate use of such powers which may occur in any policing body.

There is a cliché that applies to virtually everything that is done in law enforcement: The police should not be policing themselves. The investigators should not be investigating themselves. A body needs to be seen to be overseen by an external third party in order to ensure a measure of independence and a measure of neutrality. That is what we have critically with other law enforcement agencies in this country. That is what makes it so puzzling that we do not have it yet with the CBSA.

Let us turn to the RCMP, CSIS and Correctional Service Canada. They all have this independent form of review for their activities. It is critical. They have public trust in their institutions because of that oversight.

It is important that this bill would entrench that type of oversight, but is also important to think about who is supporting this kind of initiative. The B.C. Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Council for Refugees and the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers have pointed out in numerous situations the need for independent investigation. They have cited examples. They are few but they are important, because of the scope of that work. They interact with 96 million travellers within a given year. That is staggering in terms of numbers.

● (1725)

Nevertheless, incidents have arisen over the last 10 to 15 years which bear dramatic scrutiny and highlight the need for this kind of civilian oversight.

In 2010, Kevon Philip was beaten to death in Toronto's Don Jail while being held in immigration detention. In 2013, Lucia Vega Jimenez was taken into custody at the Vancouver International Airport. She was found hanging in a shower stall at the airport's immigration holding centre. Abdurahman Ibrahim Hassan, a 39-year-old Toronto man, was granted refugee status in Canada after coming from Somalia in 1993. He died in June 2015 in a Peterborough hospital where he had been taken under police escort. He had spent four years at the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay after serving a jail term for a criminal conviction and was issued a deportation order in 2005.

All told, since 2000, at least 15 people have died while in CBSA custody, including a 50-year-old woman who died in a maximum security prison in 2017. That track record has prompted Amnesty International, a well-known organization that all of us respect in this chamber, to call for an independent review body. That call has been echoed by my constituents and others that I have interacted with, not just in Parkdale—High Park but throughout the country. The call is simple: Let us pull back the curtain. Let us assure Canadians that the significant powers that have, of necessity, been granted to the CBSA to do its important work are at all times exercised appropriately, in accordance with the charter and with Canadians' fundamental rights.

Let us look at some comparisons with other law enforcement agencies in Canada. Independent civilian oversight ensures public confidence. Let us look at border services agencies in other allied countries that we want to compare ourselves to.

In the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and France, the border services agencies are all subject to civilian external oversight. In fact, Canada is one of the few developed countries that does not have an independent review body for complaints made about the conduct of border agency staff. When we look at the Five Eyes allies, the United States, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, again, Canada is the only member right now without an independent review body.

The rationale is simple: Given the extraordinary powers granted to CBSA officers compared to all of the other public safety portfolio agencies as well as the Five Eyes international border agencies, there is currently a significant gap. It is a gap we had committed to close in the 2019 election after our previous attempts to do so in the last Parliament, as has been articulated by previous speakers, under Bill C-98, as it then was, were unsuccessful. However, the bill did receive widespread support in this House in the last Parliament, and I am very hopeful that it will continue to receive widespread support, because the simplicity of the rationale of this bill is there for everyone to recognize, understand and to get behind. It is a gap that needs to be closed, and a gap that we would close today.

I would like to outline how this is a user-friendly mechanism. This mechanism would ensure oversight in a manner that addresses things like the recommendations that were made by Justice Dennis O'Connor in 2006 under the Maher Arar inquiry, when he called for independent oversight of border services agencies, including the CBSA and the RCMP. It would have the ability to investigate complaints received from both the public and public interest bodies and have the power to self-initiate reviews, which is something that Justice O'Connor mentioned specifically in his Arar inquiry report.

Currently, people's complaints about the CBSA are handled entirely internally. We know that, all told, about 2,500 complaints are received by the CBSA on an annual basis, which is a significant number. However, the fundamental point to understand in this chamber for today's debate is that handling those complaints internally is one mechanism, but it is not the most robust mechanism, and it is certainly not the mechanism that is applied to other law enforcement agencies in this country.

It is critical that members of the public be able to take complaints to an external body. However, this external body, this new public

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complaints mechanism, should be able to initiate reviews of its own volition. Therefore, it would not require a complaint to be filed in order to pursue a matter.

Regarding the examples I listed at the start of my comments, it is critical that there be a serious incident protocol or a serious incident definition entrenched in this proposed legislation. This would include the actions of a CBSA officer that constitute an assault as well as serious injury or death, including death of a person in detention.

• (1730)

When we are dealing with those grave circumstances, it obviously goes without saying that the Canadian public and we, as parliamentarians, require a measure of accountability to be put in place.

That is the measure of accountability that is forthcoming with this legislation. That is why I am standing in support of it. I hope all of my parliamentary colleagues will do the same.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his speech the parliamentary secretary indicated, and very rightly, that the police should not be policing the police. I am curious to know, if that is the position of the government, how Bill C-71 happened in the last Parliament. The member voted for it, where Bill C-71 allows the RCMP to classify firearms without any oversight, and allows it to reclassify firearms without any oversight.

I am curious to know the parliamentary secretary's perspective on police not policing the police.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, while I am thankful for the question, I do not think it is particularly germane to this bill. There is no contradiction whatsoever.

That initiative was put in place to avoid the politicization of a specific issue about the classification of firearms. Removing it from political consideration and entrenching it with a neutral civil service is entirely appropriate in that context.

What we are dealing with here is a situation where someone lodges a complaint about police action, and whether that police action should be handled by other police officials who may not be perceived to be, or actually be, neutral.

The two are entirely disconnected and not at all analogous.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I noted a previous speaker indicated there had been 1,200 complaints related to the CBSA between 2016 and 2018. The parliamentary secretary mentioned 2,500 complaints annually.

I am wondering about past complaints and how those would be handled by the commission once it has expanded and is operational. Would there be a statute of limitations?

Admittedly, I have not scrutinized the legislation. How does the parliamentary secretary see the expanded commission dealing with past complaints? Should those complainants have the ability to have an independent external review of their situation?

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Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, the prospectivity or retroactivity of any piece of legislation or new guideline is critical in terms of understanding how it is operationalized.

To be candid, I do not know the answer to that question. I will endeavour to inquire with him. It is something that perhaps would merit some scrutiny at committee where this bill would eventually be scrutinized further, in terms of clarifying the notion of whether the complaints currently in the system would actually have some application to the new regime or whether they would be grandfathered under the old regime, potentially necessitating a reinitiation of the complaint to the new body.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke eloquently about the need for this agency. We have 14,000 people working at CBSA, men and women who are doing a tremendous job keeping our country safe and keeping our borders safe.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could talk a little about the good work that CBSA does.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that the work that the CBSA does is of tremendous volume and tremendous impact. Right now we are living through the new coronavirus that is affecting our borders. The work of CBSA officials, including public health officials and the Public Health Agency of Canada, has been incredible. It is a particularly stressful time, understandably. Those people are courageously putting themselves in the middle of this situation, calming Canadians and, most importantly, keeping Canadians safe.

That is the work they do all the time. That is why they have significant powers. This bill is simply about ensuring that public confidence is maintained at all times. It goes without saying that the CBSA's important work is lauded and valued in this country.

• (1735)

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I am curious to know, based on the parliamentary secretary's understanding of this legislation, if the commission undertakes an investigation and learns of a civil or legal action, or a criminal action, does this mechanism allow them to cease that investigation and hand over the information to police of jurisdiction or to the courts with respect to another legal matter?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. It will obviously have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. However, what this legislation does speak to is whether there is a contemporary process that is ongoing, such as, for example, a complaint filed with the Human Rights Commission or a complaint in some other civilian body. If there is a proper police investigation and Criminal Code matter that is being pursued, that would have to be addressed in terms of whether this new mechanism is triggered or whether it waits in abeyance until the Criminal Code matter is sorted out. That is something that the legislation turns its mind to. It would have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-3, which seeks to establish a new, independent public complaints and review body for the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA. This represents another step forward in the

government's commitment to ensuring that all of its agencies and departments are accountable to Canadians.

As a member of the public safety committee during the last Parliament, I am quite proud to have participated in legislation that made remarkable change and took the number of measures we took to ensure greater accountability of our security agencies and departments.

Two years ago, our Bill C-22 received royal assent, establishing the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. That addressed a long-standing need for parliamentarians to review the Government of Canada's activities and operations in regard to national security and intelligence. It has been in operation for some time now and is a strong addition to our system of national security review and accountability. As members will know, the committee has the power to review activities across government, including the CBSA.

To complement that, our committee studied our national security framework, as well as Bill C-59, which allowed for the creation of the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA. NSIRA is also authorized to conduct reviews of any national security or intelligence activity carried out by federal departments and agencies, including the CBSA. All of this is on top of existing review and oversight mechanisms in the public safety portfolio.

The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP investigates complaints from the public about the conduct of members in the RCMP, for example, and does so in an open, independent and objective manner. The Office of the Correctional Investigator conducts independent, thorough and timely investigations about issues related to Correctional Service Canada.

Bill C-3 would fill a gap in the review of the activities of our public safety agencies. The existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, which is responsible for complaints against members of the RCMP, would see its name change to the public complaints and review commission and its mandate expanded to include the CBSA. It would be able to consider complaints against CBSA employee conduct or service, from foreign nationals, permanent residents and Canadian citizens, regardless of whether they are within or outside of Canada. Reviews of national security activities would be carried out by NSIRA.

Here is how it would work in practice. If an individual has a complaint unrelated to national security, she or he would be able to direct it either to the commission or to the CBSA. Both bodies would notify the other of any complaint made. The CBSA would be required to investigate any complaint, except those disposed of informally. The commission would be able to conduct its own investigation of the complaint in situations where the chairperson is of the opinion that doing so would be in the public interest. If an individual is not satisfied with the CBSA's response, the commission would be able to follow up as it sees fit.

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The new PCRC would also be able to produce findings on the CBSA's policies, procedures and guidelines. It would also be able to review CBSA's activities, including making findings on CBSA's compliance with the law and the reasonableness and necessity of the exercise of its powers. Indeed, the commission's findings on each review would be published in a mandatory annual public report.

Bill C-3 not only fills a gap in our review system. It answers calls from the public and Parliament for independent review of CBSA. Most significantly, the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence, in its 2015 report, encouraged the creation of an oversight body. I would like to acknowledge Bill S-205 from our last Parliament, introduced in the other place not long after the government took office, which proposed a CBSA review body as well.

Certainly we have heard from academics, experts and other stakeholders of the need to create a body with the authority to review CBSA. During testimony at the public safety committee on December 5, 2017, Alex Neve, secretary general of Amnesty International, said, "how crucial it is for the government to move rapidly to institute full, independent review of CBSA." This was reflective of much of the testimony we heard, and I am pleased the government is acting on this advice. I would also like to acknowledge my colleague from Toronto—Danforth for her efforts and advocacy for the establishment of a CBSA review body.

● (1740)

The CBSA has a long and rich history of providing border services in an exemplary fashion. It does so through the collective contribution of over 14,000 dedicated professional women and men, women like Tamara Lopez from my community, who is a role model for young women looking for a career in the CBSA.

The CBSA already has robust internal and external mechanisms in place to address many of its activities. For example, certain immigration-related decisions are subject to review by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, and its customs role can be appealed all the way up to the Federal Court.

That said, when it comes to the public, the CBSA should not be the only body receiving and following up on complaints about its own activities. Indeed, some Canadians might not be inclined to say a word if they do not have the confidence that their complaint will be treated independently, objectively and thoroughly. Bill C-3 would inspire that confidence.

The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that all of its agencies and departments are accountable to Canadians. Bill C-3 would move the yardstick forward on that commitment. It would bring Canada more closely in line with the accountability bodies of border agencies in other countries, including those of our Five Eyes allies.

The accountability and transparency of our national security framework has improved greatly since we were elected in 2015. This bill would continue these efforts by providing border services that keep Canadians safe and by improving public trust and confidence. Bill C-3 would ensure that the public continues to expect consistent, fair and equal treatment by CBSA employees. That is why I am proud to stand behind Bill C-3 today.

In the last Parliament, the House of Commons unanimously passed Bill C-98, which was a bill to bring oversight to CBSA. Although that bill died in the Senate, it is my hope that all parties will again come together to pass this bill.

I listened to the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner speak earlier in this debate. He spoke at length about firearms and his petition opposing our promise to make Canadians safer by enhancing gun control. I would remind him that almost 80% of Canadians support a ban on military-style assault rifles according to an independent Angus Reid survey.

I know he and his party supported oversight of the CBSA in the last Parliament. I hope he and all members will join me in supporting oversight in this Parliament under Bill C-3 and assure the bill's passage this session.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her re-election to this place.

I want to pick up specifically on her comments about firearms. Of course, the Conservatives believe in the importance of enhancing public safety, and we think the government needs to do more to target the issue of illegal guns, as a vast majority of gun crime in this country involves illegal guns.

However, one issue that is provoked by her comments about military-style weapons is the question of classification. Firearms owners in my riding have identified the reality that for some politicians classification has less to do with the actual attributes of a firearm and more to do with its appearance. One of the other frustrations they often mention is the arbitrary reclassification of firearms, when firearms in one category are quickly moved to another category without proper discussion or oversight.

Why is the government not moving forward aggressively on the issue of illegal imported guns? We know that the overwhelming majority of violent crimes in this country involving guns involve illegal guns.

● (1745)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the hon. member. Over 75% of deaths by firearms in Canada are suicides.

Government Orders

When there is a firearm in the home, women are less likely to come forward to report issues of domestic violence and are less likely to seek help in a shelter. In a survey done in Atlantic Canada, 80% of women said they would be less likely to come forward. I think sometimes we get wrapped up in the guns and gangs discussion.

Having said that, our government is moving forward by investing in youth to prevent them from joining gangs. We invested \$500 million in the last Parliament in border services to replace the cuts made by the Conservative government under Stephen Harper so that we would have a robust border system to stop guns from coming across the border.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's comments raise one question in my mind. I have listened to all of the speakers, and it seems that there is strong support and agreement that this oversight body is needed. However, my colleague mentioned earlier that Justice O'Connor called for this type of oversight in 2010. As a new member to this House, I am a little befuddled as to why it has taken this long to get to the point we are at today.

Could the parliamentary secretary comment on that matter?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to welcome the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to this place.

It is true that this legislation has been called for for a long time. After we were elected in 2015, we brought a robust number of bills to the public safety committee. The public safety minister at the time, Ralph Goodale, was introducing more legislation than was coming from any other department. He was fixing the previous national security framework in Bill C-59. We brought in Bill C-22 and we did introduce Bill C-98 to deal with the CBSA review agency. Unfortunately, the bill ran out of time in the Senate before it could be passed.

It is my hope that we can do this quickly and get it sent to committee and the Senate and finally get this review body in place.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss to not comment back and ask a question about the parliamentary secretary's parting shot over the bow on military-style assault rifles, a term that has no definition in this country. If she is referring to military-grade firearms that are already prohibited in this country, and have been for decades, I do not understand the use of that term, other than to confuse the public on the issue. They may not otherwise understand the laws we currently have in this country.

Can the parliamentary secretary describe what a military-style assault rifle is? In addition, can she tell us what legislation is being proposed to target gangs and gun violence perpetrated by criminals in this country, rather than targeting law-abiding gun owners?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I will leave it to the Minister of Public Safety to bring forward any legislation. I am not going to presuppose what he will bring forward. I would echo what my colleague from Parkdale—High Park said about moving the ability to classify rifles away from politicians and to the RCMP.

I would challenge the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner that guns and gangs are taken very seriously by government. We are investing in law enforcement and youth, preventing youth from joining gangs and giving law enforcement the funding and tools they need to carry out and enforce laws, and we are investing in border services.

We have also ensured that when a criminal is convicted, firearms are forfeited to the Crown. That was in Bill C-71, and that measure was opposed by the Conservative Party. Rather than those guns going to a friend or relative, they are now forfeited to the Crown.

That said, the question has nothing to do with Bill C-3. I would call on my colleague from Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner and other members in this House to support Bill C-3.

• (1750)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand today in this chamber and am pleased to speak for the first time as a re-elected member of Parliament for Yorkton—Melville. I and my fellow Saskatchewan caucus colleagues thank all our constituents for painting the province of Saskatchewan completely blue.

Bill C-3 actually mirrors Bill C-98, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts. As we all know, the bill took so long to introduce that it was not passed prior to the 2019 federal election.

This legislation proposes to repurpose and rename the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to the “public complaints and review commission”. Under its new name, the commission will also be responsible for reviewing civilian complaints against the Canadian Border Services Agency. The bill would ensure that all Canadians law enforcement agencies would have an oversight body.

Canadians expect effective oversight of federal law enforcement agencies. The Liberals made a promise to do this in 2015.

During its previous mandate, the Liberal government took so long to act on this issue that Bill C-98 failed to be passed prior to the 2019 election.

Government Orders

The former Privy Council Office chief, Mel Cappe, had been hired to conduct an independent report and provide his recommendations in June 2017, which he did. However, it was only because of an access to information request by CBC News that Parliament even became aware of this report. For two years, the government and the then, and now no longer, public safety minister from Saskatchewan sat on that report.

We, who served in the previous Parliament, were counting down the days and nights until the session came to a close. Then, at the last possible moment, this rather straightforward and simple but essential legislation was finally introduced. Why did it take the previous majority Liberal government three and a half years to draft and introduce Bill C-98 to the House? In the eleventh hour, it was too late to deal with such a critical promise that impacted public safety.

The Liberals' poor management and bad decision-making impacted RCMP officers, who had to be deployed and dedicated to dealing with illegal border crossings. They were pulled from other details, from monitoring returned ISIS fighters, tackling organized crime. They were pulled from rural detachments, where the RCMP is already short-staffed and dealing with an increase in rural crime. The claim that there are more police available in rural Canada is not true, a statement made and not followed through on.

When the Liberal majority government was ineptly unable to keep an election promise at the eleventh hour, so as to not appear to have broken even more promises, it meant an even longer wait, through the whole election process, through the weeks of delay before the House was finally called back by the Prime Minister to sit just before Christmas for a short time only to go into the winter break. Here we finally are today in a second attempt to get the job done of Bill C-3.

The government has been plagued by inefficiency and lack of foresight since the beginning of its first mandate, further hamstrung by one ethical breach after another, through brazen attitudes of entitlement, to the foolish boldness of demanding and coercing our independent justice system and principled people to bow to executive power.

Just this past week we have seen the frightening fallout of the government putting their friends ahead of good governance: A violent man sentenced to life in prison in 2006 for viciously murdering his wife was granted day parole in the fall of 2019. His case manager indicated a moderate risk of reoffending and he was to avoid relationships but could have encounters with women, as long as it was strictly sexual. As a result, a young woman lost her life.

Who in their right mind would create the environment for any woman to be put in harm's way like this? Ex-Parole Board commissioner Dave Blackburn stated that such a condition is "unbelievable".

The Liberal government has to take responsibility for a foolish decision it made in 2015 to not renew any Parole Board appointees, purely a political decision that removed all historical experience from the board and replaced them all, through the Privy Council, with Liberal appointees.

I believe the desk will be pleased, Mr. Speaker, to hear I will be splitting my time with the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

• (1755)

Since then, there has been a more than 25% increase in the awarding of day parole in Canada. This is ridiculous. Canadians have no faith that an internal inquiry will get to the bottom of the incompetence that falls on the Liberal government. An external inquiry of the national Parole Board must take place. The government does not have credibility when it comes to dealing with its own self-serving, intentional mistakes.

As well, we know the delay in bringing forward this legislation was not due in any way to so many consultations. As a matter of fact, again and again, we have heard from stakeholders that they were not consulted. From what I have heard today on the floor, that has not changed.

This legislation proposes changes to the Canada Border Services Agency, yet the Customs and Immigration Union was never contacted. This is another blatant inconsistency by the government. On one end, there was no consultation. On the other, there was the virtue signalling of setting up advisory councils for our veterans but doing nothing other than giving a platform for photo ops and the appearance of consultation before the reveal.

The fact that the Liberal government could not be bothered to consult the biggest stakeholders, the union representatives of the CBSA front-line workers, says it is not about the workers. It appears the Liberals feel they can pick and choose which unions they are going to give special treatment to while others are totally ignored.

Conservative members will work with the government in the interests of the principles of the bill, but rest assured we want to make sure that the people impacted are part of the committee review process. We want to ensure that proper committee time is taken to look at the changes to the RCMP Act and the CBSA Act, and make sure we are doing a service to the people who will be impacted by them, whether it is on a public complaints process or other elements.

As good as this policy is, it needs good government to implement it, not a government consistently mired in scandal that loses track of its responsibilities and then, concerned about its re-election, attempts to rush this legislation through irresponsibly. It does not need a government that is so out of touch that it fails to consult with the Canadians who would be impacted.

Government Orders

The government's approach demonstrates a complete lack of accountability, care and respect for Canadians. There is unrest across western Canada that must not be ignored. I would warn that we must no longer be fuelled by intentional actions that encourage that unrest instead of building consensus and recognizing and celebrating healthy interdependence across our amazing country.

Our nation, and all people of Canada, deserve a government that legislates responsibly, respectfully and with the best interests of all Canadians in mind. I look forward to the day we form that government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remember, and I am sure the member will recall, that when we came back in 2015, legislation had been carried over from when Stephen Harper was the prime minister. He had his legislative agenda, but toward the end of that Parliament he was not able to get a number of bills through because of when they were introduced. Liberal ministers reviewed that legislation and on occasion brought some of it forward.

Would the member not agree that, when a parliamentary session comes to an end, there is some benefit in terms of having legislation be debated all the way to the end of that session? That provides the opportunity, whether it is the same party in government or a new party in government, to continue on with that legislation.

That is how I see this particular piece of legislation. I suspect, given the comments from all members of the House, that it is a good piece of legislation, it is a good starting point, and we owe today's starting point to when it was brought in during the last Parliament.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, we have agreed around this table that this is good legislation and it needs to come forward. The Liberals made a promise in 2015 that this would happen, but it did not even hit the floor of this place until we were going out the door. Studies were being done that were hidden. We would not have found out about what was going on unless the CBC made a request for information to know what was happening.

If we are working on this as a House and suddenly legislation is brought forward at the end of a session, I question the motives behind why that was done. I agree that there are times when a government gets legislation out so at least it is in the eyes of the House. However, we know no consultation was done and that came through loud and clear from the people who would be impacted by this legislation.

Unfortunately that still has not happened, and here we are discussing it again in the House. It is unfortunate that the people this legislation would impact did not have the opportunity to speak to it.

• (1800)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I beg your forgiveness, but as a new member of Parliament, and I am very proud to be a member of Parliament for the NDP in Alberta, what I do not understand is why it has taken so long for this legislation to come forward. As everyone knows, the NDP has been asking for this legislation for many years, certainly

back to when Stephen Harper was prime minister. I am wondering how the member can talk about the delays when the delays began under a Conservative government.

I will read a quote, which states, "It is a basic principle of good human rights practice that agencies that have detention and police powers should be subject to independent oversight and the CBSA has both. It is time that the CBSA is held accountable through an independent and impartial process."

In addition to why it took so long and knowing that this is important and that Canadians want this legislation, will the Conservative Party support this legislation?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member to the House. I ran in a nomination in her riding many years ago.

I agree that we should come to a consensus on this. I am very much sensing in the House that it is something we need to move forward on. Canadians expect it and it needs to be done. I look forward to the bill going to committee and getting the proper oversight there going forward.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I rise in the House this session and I want to thank the good constituents of my riding of Provencher for re-electing me and showing their confidence in me for the third time.

I want to recognize the world-class officers we have in both the CBSA and the RCMP. I am confused as to why the Liberal government would increase their workload by allowing the illegal migrants to come across the border in my riding, but also in Quebec at Roxham Road and in British Columbia. Does the member have any idea why the Liberals would want to do that and tax our good officers any more than they have been?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, this is definitely an issue that was raised right across our country as the illegal immigrants were coming into Canada. The very fact that it was allowed in the first place is questionable. I will be very polite there.

The second thing is that, yes, it caused a great deal of dissension within the ranks of border services individuals, as well as the RCMP. The expectation is that they take this on when they are already pretty limited in their ability to succeed in the jobs they have. It creates more stress, quite honestly, for them in the workplace. For me, as a person who goes across that border and deals with people, we want people who are prepared and ready to do their jobs and not stretched to the nth degree.

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first speech, I want to take the opportunity to thank the great people in the Kootenay—Columbia riding for putting their trust and faith in me to represent them in Ottawa. The support from my family and friends was incredible and from my wife, Heather and our five children, Ryan, Rob, Cassidy, Chelsea and Kendall.

With 80,000 square kilometres, it was very challenging to travel and meet residents from all corners of the riding. The campaign team and volunteers did an outstanding job, working long hours every day.

I listened to the concerns, the priorities for softwood lumber and priorities with the firearms legislation. I also want to talk about supporting the mining industry, tourism, the energy sector, Alberta, as it is neighbouring our riding, and health.

I am pleased to speak to Bill C-3, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act. I do so today on behalf of many border officials in ports of Kingsgate, Nelway, Porthill, Roosville and Rykerts, all within the riding of Kootenay—Columbia.

I thank them for their service and I thank the CBSA Kootenay area chief of operations for leadership and dedication in ensuring the safety and security of our area. I also support the RCMP, which provides municipal, rural, provincial and federal policing throughout the Kootenay—Columbia riding.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all the men and women who serve to protect this great nation from coast to coast.

One issue I heard when travelling throughout the riding was the word “accountability”, which is really interesting because that is exactly what we are talking about today.

I support internal investigations. In fact, I have been involved in many internal investigations in the RCMP in a 35-year career. I support independence. I believe we need independent investigations. It would be great to hear how this is going to work. I have not heard yet, with the delays in investigations. I know right now with the RCMP, which has an independent review, it is two, three or four years at least. We have some members on the old RCMP act and some members on the new act, and now we are going to change it again to have a new accountability process with this review committee.

I have heard some concerns about the consultation of CBSA with its union. I am also wondering about the consultation with the RCMP, as they are now working toward a union as well. Have we looked at the consultation there and have people come in? I look forward to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security having people come in so we can talk to them and see how they feel about what is happening.

One of the most important things that has not been brought up is training and service standards. What are the service standards of CBSA? What are the service standards of the RCMP? What exactly is the role of an RCMP member? The review committee can then understand what that person is going to do, what they should be doing and what they should not be doing, so they do not, because they have no experience in law enforcement, for example, think that behaviour is inappropriate when maybe it is or vice versa.

Developing service standards is a requirement before we can move forward with the bill, so that the review committee has a clear understanding of the role for CBSA and the role for the RCMP.

Government Orders

One thing that came up at one of the last meetings of the public safety committee was administrative issues that were not expected. I would be interested to hear from the government what those administrative issues were. Was it the hiring of new people? Was it the service standards or was it a union? I do not understand what administrative issues would have popped up in December.

The RCMP and CBSA are very reputable organizations. I want to be up front. They would welcome a well-thought-out, well-trained independent review, but not something where someone is appointed and we would run into the same issues we are having right now with the Parole Board.

● (1805)

I request that the government and the public safety minister answer some of these questions so that we can move forward in supporting this bill and the changes proposed in it.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament, as a rookie MP, I made the mistake of asking a question from someone else's seat. Thankfully the Chair was not aware of that, but I learned my lesson.

I thank the member for his speech and for the wisdom he brings to the position of deputy shadow critic for public safety, as well as for being on the public safety committee.

He mentioned service standards. I wonder if the member could provide an explanation or a better understanding of the type of service standards the public could expect in the role of a CBSA or RCMP officer and what that would actually look like. What would the member's recommendation be to the committee to consider as a parameter to be put into an amendment?

● (1810)

Mr. Rob Morrison: Mr. Speaker, on the service standards, law enforcement officers are trained in Regina. They have six months of training and go through a whole process of what they can do legally when they are arresting someone and how much force they can use. This is really sensitive in that in most cases, they do not need to use force and they would not. They would arrest someone, and it would be very calm. The person would go to jail and there would be no other issues. However, if there was violence involved, how much violence could the RCMP officer use to protect themselves and others?

It is really important that the people selected for this independent review committee specifically understand the powers of members of the RCMP and the CBSA, for example, in searching vehicles at the border and asking to look at what is in the trunk of a car. What are the powers? If they overextend those powers, what did they do to overextend them?

Government Orders

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the new member on his election to Parliament and on his first speech in the House. I am encouraged by his support for oversight of this law enforcement agency.

However, I wonder if the member shares the concerns expressed here today about the exclusion of consideration of complaints about the detention of people. Border agents have the power to arrest and detain people, with or without warrants. That seems to be excluded from the oversight.

Does the member have any concerns about that, since the border agents could arrest and hold children as well as adults without the possibility of complaints being dealt with?

Mr. Rob Morrison: Mr. Speaker, at this time, no, I do not have any concerns. I would like to see a review of the entire bill, which will happen when we sit in our committee meetings.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated listening to my colleague, the member for Kootenay—Columbia, in the sense of his long record in the RCMP.

I would believe that probably from his experience and understanding of input when policy that will affect a new agency that does similar types of work is being developed, he might understand the value of input as the new policy and procedures are developed.

Could that member respond and tell us how he feels the value of the input from speaking to those people may have been missed and why it is so important?

Mr. Rob Morrison: Mr. Speaker, now that I am on the public safety committee, I will have an opportunity to call in witnesses so that we get a full understanding of the concerns from the unions and the RCMP union or whatever it ends up being. As well, I will have some input on the selection of the oversight committee and exactly what skills they will need to fulfill their duties.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by saying that I will be sharing my time today with the member for Bonaville—Burin—Trinity.

I am grateful for the opportunity to add my voice to today's debate on Bill C-3, which proposes to establish an arm's-length review body for the Canada Border Services Agency.

The CBSA is already reviewed by several different independent boards, tribunals and courts. They scrutinize such things as the agency's customs and immigration decisions. However, there is no existing external review body for some of its other functions and activities.

For example, there is a gap when it comes to public complaints related to CBSA employee conduct and service. With the way things currently stand, there is also no independent review mechanism for the CBSA's non-national security activities. That makes the CBSA something of an outlier, both at home and abroad.

Other public safety organizations in Canada are subject to independent review, as are border agencies in a number of peer countries including the U.K., Australia, New Zealand and France. Addressing these accountability gaps through Bill C-3 would improve the CBSA's strength and would strengthen public confidence in the agency. It would ensure that the public could continue to expect

consistent, fair and equal treatment by CBSA employees, and it would lead to opportunities for ongoing improvement in the CBSA's interactions and service delivery.

For an organization that deals with tens of millions of people each year, that is extremely important. Public complaints about the conduct of, and the service provided by, CBSA employees are currently dealt with only internally at the agency. I am sure all of my hon. colleagues would agree that this is no longer a tenable situation.

Under Bill C-3, these complaints would instead be handled by a new arm's-length public complaints and review commission, or PCRC. The new PCRC would build on and strengthen the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, CRCC for short, which is currently the review agency for the RCMP. The CRCC would thus be given an expanded role under this bill and a new name to go along with its new responsibilities for the CBSA.

The PCRC would be able to receive and investigate complaints from the public regarding the conduct of the CBSA officials and the service provided by the CBSA. Service-related complaints could be about a number of issues. They could include border wait times and processing delays; lost or damaged postal items; the level of service provided; the examination process, including damage to goods or electronic devices during a search or examination; and CBSA infrastructure, including sufficient space, poor signage or the lack of available parking.

Service-related complaints do not include enforcement actions, such as fines for failing to pay duties, nor do they include trade decisions, such as tariff classification. Those types of decisions can already be considered by existing review mechanisms.

In addition to its complaints function, the PCRC would also review non-national security activities conducted by the RCMP and the CBSA. The PCRC reports would include findings and recommendations on the adequacy, appropriateness, sufficiency or clarity of CBSA policies, procedures and guidelines; the CBSA's compliance with the law and ministerial directions; and the reasonableness and necessity of the CBSA's use of its powers. The CBSA would be required to provide a response to those findings and recommendations for all complaints.

The creation of the PCRC is overdue. It would answer longstanding calls for an independent review of public complaints involving the CBSA.

Government Orders

According to former parliamentarian and chair of the NATO Association of Canada at Massey College, Hugh Segal, the lack of oversight for the CBSA is not appropriate and is unacceptable.

Former CBSA president Luc Portelance also said that when a Canadian citizen or a foreign national engages with a border officer and has a negative interaction, the entire review mechanism is not public. It is internal, and it is not seen as independent. In Mr. Portelance's view, that creates a significant problem in terms of public trust.

• (1815)

The Government of Canada has committed to rectifying this situation by addressing gaps in the CBSA's framework for external accountability.

With the introduction of Bill C-3, the government is delivering on that commitment. It builds on recent action taken by the government to strengthen accountability on national security matters. That includes passing legislation to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. It also includes the creation, through Bill C-59, of the new expert review body, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. These two bodies are now in operation and they are doing extremely important work in terms of reviewing the national security activities of all departments and agencies, including the CBSA.

Bill C-3 would go further by establishing a review and complaints function for CBSA's other activities. In doing so, it would fill the gap in the architecture of public safety accountability in this country. It would allow for independent review of public complaints related to CBSA employee conduct, issues regarding CBSA services, and the conditions and treatment of immigration detainees. With respect to these detainees specifically, Bill C-3 would offer additional safeguards to ensure that they are treated humanely and are provided with necessary resources and services while detained.

The introduction of this bill demonstrates a commitment to keeping Canadians safe and secure while treating people fairly and respecting human rights. It is a major step forward in ensuring that Canadians are confident in the accountability system for the agencies that work so hard to keep them safe.

For all the reasons I have outlined today, I will be voting in favour of Bill C-3 at second reading. I urge all of my hon. colleagues to join me in supporting the bill.

• (1820)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last session my friend across the way and I had the privilege to serve together on the public safety committee and I appreciate her perspective on many things. I am wondering whether my colleague could answer two questions for me.

First, the minister spoke about \$25 million being allocated over five years for this expansion. What accountability measures would be in place to ensure that this new review body has the appropriate people and the appropriate resources to do the job?

Second, what recourse would Canadians have should the commission decide to not hear a complaint, and what accountability

would the commission have when that happens? How would that mechanism work? If the member could describe that for me, it would be great.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's sentiments. I enjoyed my time working with him on the public safety committee last term.

In terms of accountability, this review body is a way to create more accountability. Currently with the process we have in place, nothing is made public. Any complaints that are made are handled internally, and that is unacceptable at this point.

We have had review agencies for the RCMP; my colleague and I worked on that in committee. I understand his concern about accountability, but we also have to understand that this in itself would be another layer of accountability. All the determinations that would be made by this commission would be made public, and I believe if something were to seem distasteful or incorrect, the public would then have the right to know about it and could then raise the issues with the government in public.

I definitely share my colleague's concerns, but this is a step toward accountability.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do have a concern, as has been mentioned earlier, that there are exemptions in this legislation for the ability to make complaints.

One is the action of CBSA agents in trying to identify suspected illegal immigrants in public. There have been allegations of agents identifying people based on profiling and asking them to prove that they are Canadian citizens.

The second exemption that was raised here today is the power to detain, sometimes indefinitely, children and their families without the oversight that this legislation would provide.

Does the member for Brampton North have any concerns that these types of activities, which are part of the enforcement provisions of agents of the CBSA, will be unregulated, in the sense that such complaints will not be considered by this complaint committee?

These are very serious matters that do need oversight, because complaints have been made about them.

• (1825)

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, when things like that occur and are brought to our attention, they are alarming and disturbing. However, this body would be able to hear complaints when it came to the treatment of detainees. Therefore, I do not believe that to be an exception. This body would be able to handle complaints of that nature. It is the decisions of the officers that would not be brought to this agency. There are other mechanisms in place before the tribunal that could review those matters.

Adjournment Proceedings

According to my understanding, the conduct and treatment of people at the border or detainees would fall within this body.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to rise in this House and add my voice to the debate on Bill C-3 which proposes to establish an arm's-length review and complaints function for the CBSA.

The bill before us builds on an action that our government had recently taken to strengthen accountability and transparency in the public safety and national security sphere. As members know, we passed legislation to create the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, and that committee has now been established. Following the passage of Bill C-59, we also created a new National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. The goal of both of these bodies is to provide accountability for the national security work of all Government of Canada departments and agencies, including the CBSA.

Strong internal and external mechanisms are in place to address many of the CBSA's other activities. For example, certain decisions in the immigration context are subject to review by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Its customs decisions can be appealed to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal as well as to the Federal Court. However, the glaring gap that remains has to do with the public complaints related to the conduct of, and service provided by, CBSA employees.

There is simply no independent place to which people can turn when they have a grievance about the way they were treated by someone representing the CBSA. Without an independent body specifically tasked to hear complaints, it is easy to see how people can feel uncomfortable voicing any concerns. Bill C-3 would change that by establishing an independent review and complaints function for the CBSA. That new tool would be incorporated into, and benefit from the expertise and experience of, the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, or CRCC, for the RCMP.

To reflect its new CBSA responsibilities, the CRCC would be renamed the "public complaints and review commission", or PCRC. Members of the public who deal with the CBSA would be able to submit a complaint to any officer or employee of the agency or to the PCRC. The CBSA would conduct the initial investigation into a complaint, whether it is submitted to the CBSA or to the PCRC. However, the PCRC would have the ability to investigate any complaint that is considered to be in the public interest. It could also initiate a complaint proactively. In the event that a complainant was not satisfied with the CBSA's response to a complaint, he or she could ask the PCRC to review the CBSA's response. The PCRC would also have a mandate to conduct overarching reviews of specified activities of the CBSA. All of this would bring the CBSA in line with Canada's other public safety organizations, which are currently subject to independent review, and it would allow Canada to join the ranks of peer countries with respect to adding accountability functions for their border agencies.

Recourse through the PCRC would be available to anyone who interacts with CBSA or RCMP employees. This includes Canadian citizens, permanent residents and foreign nationals, including immigration detainees. Most of these detainees are held in CBSA-managed immigration holding centres. When that is not possible,

CBSA detainees are placed in other facilities, including provincial correctional facilities. The CBSA has established agreements with B.C., Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia for detention purposes.

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Bonavista—Burin—Trinity will have about five minutes remaining in his time, should he wish to take it, when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand in this House. It is always a privilege to speak in this place and it is a great place for Canadians to see us represent them.

In my community the resource sector is a huge and critically important industry. Many businesses have closed. Many businesses have gone out of business. It is horrendous to think what the government has done to my riding by shutting down the fossil fuel industry.

A week ago we had some of the coldest temperatures in Canada for a solid week. As the energy for Alberta was reported, there was 0.000 coming in from solar. We have hundreds and hundreds of acres of solar. We also have thousands of big windmills and that energy came in at 0.004% to the grid. For a solid week the only way we survived in Alberta was with fossil fuels. We live in a northern climate and without those fossil fuels, we will not survive. It is a critical industry in this country and it needs to be valued as an ethical and economically produced resource.

The government reacted quickly, which was great, with the Iranian missile crisis when a plane was shot down and Canadians were killed. However, months ago there was a plane that crashed where 18 Canadians were killed. What has the government done in following up with those families? Sometimes the government responds and sometimes it does not.

Adjournment Proceedings

Another area in which the government needs to respond is cystic fibrosis. Over 4,300 Canadians are living with cystic fibrosis. The median age of people with cystic fibrosis is 22. The median age of survival is 52. They need access to medicine. They need a real, effective national rare disease policy. We talked about this for months. We need drug approval for rare diseases like CF and we need it streamlined. We need the government to take leadership to work with the province to make these drugs available to Canadians that desperately need them.

I want to read a letter I received a couple days ago:

“We are writing to you on behalf of our dear son...who is as you know, suffering from the fatal genetic disease, Cystic Fibrosis. In October, the US released a gene-modifying drug, Trikafta. This drug could save his life.”

He is an engineer, well educated and a very intelligent man.

“Marten is currently living with reduced lung function and doesn’t have years to wait for this drug to come to Canada. I can’t imagine the struggle he has on a daily basis knowing that drugs are available which could improve their quality of life but are just out of reach. We were shocked to learn that Canada is one of the only developed nations in the world that has failed to provide access to life sustaining CFTR modulator drugs.

“Australia, Denmark, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Greece, Spain, Luxembourg and the United States are all providing public access to gene modulators for CF, while Canadian patients suffer needlessly. This disheartens me and makes me ashamed of my province and country.

“Why should our son suffer when the rest of the world is celebrating. This is just incomprehensible.

“With hope and anticipation,

“Henk and Janny...”

We need this drug approved. The federal government can take the lead on this. We need it approved so it can work with the provinces to make this drug available for 4,300 Canadians. It needs to be done and it needs to be done quickly.

• (1835)

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for sharing with us the importance of the energy sector for the prosperity of people living in his riding.

I would like to reassure him and all members of the House that we have been at the table with our support for this job-creating industry, including through a \$275-million investment to support the largest private sector investment in Canadian history, the LNG Canada project.

Let us remember that this is a project that, when completed, will be not only the cleanest of its kind in the world, but will also allow sustainably produced Canadian natural gas to displace dirtier sources of energy currently in use around the world. The project

will also create up to 10,000 good, well-paying jobs at the height of its construction. This is a clear win-win for growing the economy and protecting the environment.

Our government has also participated in recent trade missions to places such as Japan and the United Kingdom, and we did so to promote Canadian LNG as a reliable and competitively priced source of energy. This reflects what Canadians told us through Generation Energy, the largest national discussion on our energy in our country's history.

We invited Canadians to imagine their energy future, to think about what the world might look like when their kids and grandkids were grown and what we should do now to get there. More than 380,000 Canadians shared their vision with us and we listened.

What emerged from Generation Energy was a compelling and inspiring vision. Canadians told us they wanted a thriving, low-carbon economy. They wanted us to be leaders in Canada's transition to a low-carbon economy by investing in innovation and delivering economic growth, competitive industries and clean jobs, while protecting the environment.

Canada's LNG industry will help us tackle global greenhouse gas emissions, while helping to ensure energy remains affordable for Canadians, create good, well-paying jobs and build a stronger, more sustainable economy.

It is also why we are providing support where it is needed most. That is why we are working with our provincial partners to develop Canadian LNG in a sustainable way.

We have signed a new memorandum of understanding to affirm our joint commitment to power British Columbia's natural gas production and liquefied natural gas sectors with clean energy. By moving to clean power, a process referred to as electrification, we will avoid emissions and position Canada as a supplier of the world's cleanest natural gas. We will also help British Columbia achieve its climate change commitments and support projects that will create jobs and opportunities in rural and indigenous communities across the province.

Because of the potential and how tremendous it could be for communities such as my hon. colleague's, the opportunities are there and we are taking them.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, there is another issue in my community that is getting worse, and it is called rural crime.

Adjournment Proceedings

In the community of Carseland, the post office was broken into twice and the little store in the community was broken into as well. What is really sad is that Canada Post has closed that building. It is now a half an hour to 45 minutes for people to get their mail, and Canada Post says there will not be a temporary post office for another two months. Because of rural crime, seniors cannot get their mail and have to go another community at least a half hour away during business hours to get their mail, along with everybody else.

Rural crime is growing in my constituency. People are angry. The post office, a business that needs to be open and people need to access, is closed and will not be open for two months. Think of seniors who are not mobile, cannot go to other communities and other people cannot get their mail for them. Think of the anger in the community about rural crime. It needs to be solved now.

• (1840)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I cannot speak this evening to the particulars of the crime taking place in my hon. colleague's community. What I would like to touch upon, though, is our government's actions with regard to supporting the LNG sector.

Actions speak louder than words, and we have taken strong action to make this sector competitive and more sustainable, to create jobs and cut emissions.

By working with B.C. to electrify the industry, by investing in clean technology and innovation and by putting the conditions in place to attract investment, including the largest private sector investment in Canadian history with the LNG Canada project, we are making it happen.

These recent investments and the LNG Canada project show Canadians that our plan is working.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to the next round of debate, I would remind hon. members that when we are in adjournment debate, much like when we are in committee of the whole, the rules are slightly more relaxed and members will be recognized from the seat of their choice throughout the three interventions that can take place in adjournment debate in the 30 minutes we have available. I know members are, in many ways, creatures of habit and will always go to their usual seats in the chamber, but they should know that, should they wish, they can choose another seat and make the debate a little less formal.

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, it is an honour for me to rise in the House to give some remarks with respect to how the constituents of Regina—Lewvan are feeling. These debates are an opportunity to ask further questions to the conversation we had in question period. Therefore, I would like to start by reiterating the question I had in question period.

I asked the hon. Minister of Environment or the Prime Minister to answer this question.

There are families across western Canada suffering. Throughout my campaign, many constituents told me their stories about losing their jobs and how many of their homes had for sale signs on the lawns. I asked the Prime Minister what he would say to these men

and women who are out of work because of Bill C-69. How will he ensure these hard-working families across our country can get back to work in our world-class oil and gas sector?

This is an issue that faces people throughout western Canada. I heard the member opposite talk about the B.C. LNG project and other projects. That does not help the 150,000 people who have been out of work in the oil and gas sector in Alberta and Saskatchewan. We were sent here to be their voice and to talk about what options they have going forward. I have not heard any members opposite bringing forward ideas of how to get some of those western Canadian hard-working men and women back to work, many of whom are my family and friends. Friends that I grew up with have been out of work for a very long time. I ask the members opposite this: Are there ways we can work together?

There were 187 amendments brought forward to Bill C-69 from the Senate. The members opposite did not want to listen to any of those amendments. There are nine provincial premiers. Every territorial leader has issues with Bill C-69. We have not seen the government move at all with respect to its stubbornness and not listening to western Canadians.

I remember very well what the Prime Minister said on election night, which I hope was heartfelt. He said that he was listening to western Canadians, that he heard their frustration and that he heard their anger. He said we would work together to make things better in provinces like ours, in Saskatchewan and Alberta. However, I have seen nothing, no action whatsoever, to back up those words. Therefore, tonight I would like to have a couple of solid recommendations on how we can work together to get the hard-working men and women in Saskatchewan back to work.

I just came back from an opportunity to talk with some of the leaders of the United Steelworkers, the USW, who are here tonight. They are very concerned as to whether the LNG projects will use Canadian steel instead of steel that comes from other countries that is not as high a quality. I hear about the environment all the time from the members opposite. I can tell them, without a doubt in my mind, that the steel made from recycled materials at Evraz Steel is the most environmentally safe and meets the highest environmental standards of any steel in the world.

Therefore, if the Liberals are worried about the environment and emissions, I have the solution. We have the best steel in the world made in this country. I would like to work together to ensure those hard-working men and women at Evraz have jobs now and going into the future, so that we can get pipelines built in this country and the expansion of the TMX. We can use Canadian steel and the hard-working men and women across western Canada and put them back to work.

I am looking forward to hearing from my hon. colleague across the aisle. Hopefully, we will get a better answer than we received when I first asked this question.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1845)

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Regina—Lewvan for not only sharing his personal stories, but also sharing the concerns of his constituents and sharing some ideas on how he thinks we can move forward together.

I am pleased today to respond to his question to reiterate our government's commitment to work together with the provinces and territories in implementing the Impact Assessment Act in the best possible way.

The Government of Canada recognizes that the provinces are an integral part of the impact assessment and regulatory process. It is committed to ensuring that the implementation of the Impact Assessment Act is done as effectively as possible, and to working closely with the province to ensure that good projects continue to move forward in a timely and environmentally responsible way.

I would like to acknowledge the time and resources that have been put in place by the provinces and how they have invested in the development of Canada's federal impact assessment regime. Provincial and territorial contributions throughout the review of the federal environmental assessment process were integral in the success of the development of the new Impact Assessment Act.

Developing the Impact Assessment Act and its regulation was a collective effort. The government has been diligent to balance the many viewpoints it has heard over the course of the past three years, including those of the provinces and territories. This is why the implementation of the legislation would also be a collective effort.

I acknowledge the concerns raised by the provinces and reassure my hon. colleague and all members of the House that the Government of Canada shares the goals of an efficient and predictable system that balances environmental protection and economic development and respects provincial jurisdiction.

While I recognize that there are still outstanding concerns from the provinces about the Impact Assessment Act, it is very important to note that during Parliament's consideration of this legislation, the government supported numerous amendments to limit ministerial discretion, including providing the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada authorities to align timelines with those of the provinces in support of one project, one assessment. These were done in response to concerns raised by the provinces and other stakeholders.

Our government continues to assess and work to address any outstanding concerns related to the implementation of the act. As the Prime Minister has recently indicated, the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring the implementation of the act is done as effectively as possible. The government welcomes any advice on the implementation of the legislation and will work together to address provincial concerns.

Building on existing relationships and co-operation practices, the Government of Canada is confident that by working together we can ensure a smooth transition to the new federal impact assessment system, providing a more predictable and timely process, in-

creased efficiency and certainty, and quality assessments that draw on the best available expertise.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for those remarks, but there were not many answers there. My problem is that what he calls the environmental impact assessment act is what we call the no-more-pipelines bill because it is virtually going to kill pipelines being built in this country. That is one of the problems that I have.

Liberals talk about having meetings and collaborating with provincial and territorial leaders, but not once have they had a good conversation with the premiers in Alberta and Saskatchewan and listened to some of their suggestions moving forward.

Liberals are talking about ensuring resource development is done moving forward. Could we have a firm commitment that Teck's frontier project will be moving forward? That project will help people get back to work in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

We are looking forward to having resource development continue and we do a better job of this than anyone else in the world. We have great environmental standards and great labour laws in place where employees are treated fairly. Is the government going to approve the Teck frontier development? Hopefully it will be in a timely manner, so people can get back to work and have good paying jobs to ensure that their families are looked after.

• (1850)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, the one thing I want to make clear tonight is that Canadians told us loud and clear they want a system that protects the environment, the health of our communities, and supports economic opportunities and growth. The Impact Assessment Act does just that.

It creates a new, fairer and more balanced system for reviewing and approving major projects. That is vitally important for growing the economy in Alberta, Saskatchewan and all across the country, for protecting the environment and for improving the quality of life for Canadians.

While our intention is not to reopen the legislation for amendments, we are open to constructive suggestions and discussions moving forward as we look to implement the new law.

I would like to add that if my hon. colleague would like to meet with me and have a frank discussion, I would very much welcome that. His passion came through tonight. I know that people in his riding and in the entire province are having a hard time, and it would be a pleasure to sit down at a time of my hon. colleague's choosing to discuss that further and figure out how we can do better.

Adjournment Proceedings

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

(The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.)

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