# CONSERVATIVE

The next petition is signed by hundreds of Canadians from Alberta, B.C. and Yukon.

These Canadians are concerned that Canada is the only nation in the world without laws that protect preborn children. They note that Canada’s Supreme Court has said it is Parliament’s responsibility to enact legislation and protect fetal interests.

The petitioners call on Parliament to speedily enact legislation that would bring Canada’s abortion regulations into line with those of other developed nations.

The second is a petition on gender-based violence. It highlights that there are some who prefer a boy over a girl, and through the use of sex selection, women and girls are being discriminated against. They are calling upon Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through sex selection.

The first one highlights that gender-based violence against girls begins before they are born. The petition asks Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls through the use of sex selection.

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

If I could give some advice to the government for the future, perhaps it should not try to package these four separate areas together. Issues around sexual assault in particular need their own legislation to be dealt with so members can properly discuss it and look for ways to provide justice both to the accused and to victims going forward. As has been mentioned, this is a criminal offence that has very profound life-changing consequences for those affected by it.

I am particularly interested in a couple of things the government has put together as far as obsolete provisions or provisions that have been found to be unconstitutional or are similar to other provisions that have been found to be unconstitutional. I understand the government’s reason for putting in clause 28, where it repeals the offence to supply or procure a drug or instruments used to cause the miscarriage of a female person. I understand why it is putting that clause in to get rid of that element of the legislation.

Let me express my disappointment with it, because what that is doing is cleaning out what is left of the abortion legislation that we have in Canada. I know with the Morgentaler rulings and so forth it was struck down, so I can understand the government’s legal reasoning on this makes sense. If I shared its philosophical perspective I would do this as a matter of housecleaning, but it does bring to the notice of the House that Canada is the only democratic country in the whole world that does not have legislation dealing with abortion. I, and I know other members of the House find that to be an absolute disgrace. This is really the last housecleaning aspect to get rid of what is left of legislation in our Criminal Code dealing with abortion.

Members of the House, particularly members who agree with me that this is a disgrace, should contemplate on this final bit of housecleaning to get rid of what is left of legislation that protected the life of the unborn and should actually think about possibly opposing this legislation on the final vote to send a message that we think something needs to be done to defend the life of the unborn. Again, I understand the government’s legal reasoning behind it. I am not questioning it. However, I think the duty of the House is not just to always rubber-stamp what the courts have said. It also needs to send a message about what we feel is right and moral, even when the courts, in my view, usurp the role of the House.

I have three different petitions to present today.

The first one is on behalf of constituents who are very concerned about sex-selected abortion. A CBC documentary revealed that ultrasounds are being used in Canada to tell the sex of an unborn child so that the expecting parents can choose to terminate the pregnancy if the unborn child is a girl. An Environics poll found that 92% of Canadians believe sex-selected pregnancy termination should be illegal. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the Canadian Association of Radiologists strongly oppose the non-medical use of fetal ultrasounds. There are over 200 million girls missing worldwide, and the three deadliest words in the world are “It’s a girl.”

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Canadian Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through sex-selected pregnancy termination.

, I am honoured to present a petition on sex selection.

The petitioners highlight that the three most dangerous words in the world are, “It’s a girl”. The petitioners point out that, tragically, gender-based violence against girls begins even before they are born. They also point out that ending a pregnancy based on gender is discrimination.

The petitioners are calling on Parliament to condemn the practice of discriminating against girls by the use of sex selection.

, I am going to go down a different rabbit hole right now.

The Liberal member who spoke prior to both of my colleagues claimed that this Liberal budget was not spending tax dollars; it was investing in Canadians’ futures. However, we know that they are rescinding over $2 billion in infrastructure investment, while spending Canadian tax dollars on substantially growing government bureaucracy and spending on overseas ideological colonialism, such as tying foreign aid to abortion access in Africa, where even in cases of rape, which is used as a weapon of war, women do not blame the conceived children for the horrific crimes they faced and have no desire to abort the children they conceive.

Can the member please speak to how inappropriate it is that the Liberals are funding their own political ideology with this budget, with hard-earned Canadian taxpayers’ money, rather than improving the lives, and the freedom to self-directed prosperity, of Canadians and their families?

, I want to respond to the member across the way and give my final answer by taking an excerpt out of a four-page letter written by a pastor to his Liberal MP:

A person’s, or church’s, religious beliefs and practices are not subject to governmental approval. Pro-life religious organizations have a Charter guaranteed right to speak and act according to their conscience. Period. Personally, and as a church, we do not always agree with the means of action against injustices like abortion which some Christians may espouse. We get it.... But the right for others to follow their own conscience in that matter is sacrosanct, and it is the government’s difficult job to protect that liberty—because that liberty, like it or not, is the law. Government officials and staff do not need to like or approve of it, but they must protect it. I’m not sure I understand how a Canadian government has fallen to such levels of intolerance. Is Canada no longer proud of its diversity? To ask people to attest to a set of beliefs or practices not their own is an obscene violation of personal liberty, not to mention privacy, and it is an inherently threatening act towards people and communities of faith. And that’s how we feel by all this...threatened.

There is no space in Canada for attestations of this kind, for any purpose, ever. Canada is a diverse place where people disagree, especially over issues like abortion and traditional marriage; political leaders need to make peace with that diversity.

, I have no hesitation talking about what this attestation says, which includes a core mandate respecting reproductive rights. In a free and democratic society, there can be no religious or values test, and that is precisely what the government is trying to impose upon churches and faith-based organizations. The hon. member knows full well that many churches and faith-based organizations cannot, in good conscience, sign on to that, because at the end of the day, that is not part of their core mandate.

The first one is on gender-based violence. It highlights the fact that discrimination against girls begins even before they are born, that people are using ultrasounds to determine the sex of the preborn child and if it is a girl the pregnancy is often ended. In the world right now there are over 200 million missing girls. The petitioners are calling on Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through the use of sex selection.

The second petition, , highlights the issue of sex selection. Gender-based violence against girls begins before they are born. A CBC documentary revealed that ultrasound is being used to determine the sex of the unborn child, and if it is a girl the pregnancy is tragically ended. The petitioners are calling on Parliament to condemn the practice of sex selection discrimination against girls.

the second petition is with respect to sex selection. It highlights the importance of Parliament condemning the practice of sex selection.

The petitioners point out that all forms of gender-based violence should be condemned, including sex selection.

Ninety-two percent of Canadians call for this to be made illegal.

The petitioners call on Parliament to condemn the practice of sex selection discrimination against girls.

, I am honoured to present three petitions today. The first is with regard to gender-based violence against women and girls. The petitioners highlight that the worst form of discrimination against females begins before they are born due to the practice of sex selection. They call on Parliament to condemn sex selective pregnancy termination.

, the second petition deals with people’s disdain for the fact that once the gender of a baby in the womb is known, abortions are still allowed to be performed. The petitioners are calling on the government to end the practice of sex-selection abortions.

, I would like to go a little different direction. The member across has been very proud of his feminist PM and suggests that the impact of our actions has not been positive. I would like to suggest that his feminist PM has lost touch with what is important to women overall and has become quite selective in that feminism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Significant volumes of Canadian taxpayer dollars are being spent outside of our country by the government to build the Prime Minister’s good will with the United Nations. On top of that, as of yesterday’s announcement, it is making an ideological shift in the reorientation of Canada’s foreign aid strategy, committing $650 million on sexual and reproductive health rights worldwide

In plain speak, this means the Liberals are intending to legally challenge 125 countries worldwide, mostly in Africa, Latin America, Southern Asia, and the Middle East, where abortion is illegal, where women, their cultures, and the governments do not want it to be part of their maternal health plans. The government will be funding advocacy groups that will work to remove judicial and legal barriers, including the anti- abortion laws in many of these countries.

, I am honoured to present three petitions today. The first is with regard to gender-based violence against women and girls. The petitioners highlight that the worst form of discrimination against females begins before they are born due to the practice of sex selection. They call on Parliament to condemn sex selective pregnancy termination.

, the second petition has to do with sex selection. It highlights that ultrasounds are used to identify the sex of a child, and if it is a girl, the pregnancy is ended. There are over 200 million missing girls in the world right now, and it makes it very dangerous for girls around the world. The petitioners are calling on Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through sex selection.

First, ultrasounds have been used in Canada to tell the sex of an unborn child so that expectant mothers can choose to terminate the pregnancy if the unborn child is a girl.

Polls have suggested that 92% of Canadians believe that sex selective pregnancy terminations should be illegal.

As we know, there are some 200 millions girls missing worldwide, and gendercide has created a global gender imbalance plus violence against girls and human trafficking of girls.

The undersigned petitioners are asking members of Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through sex selective pregnancy termination.

, today I issued a news release calling on the Liberal government to support my private member's bill, Cassie and Molly's law, as part of the government's broader strategy to address gender-based violence.

In Canada, there are no provisions in the Criminal Code to protect pregnant women, a gap in the law which leaves Canadian women vulnerable. My bill is specific and targeted, adding new charges for crimes against a pregnant woman that harm or end her pregnancy.

Canadians want this bill. In a poll I commissioned from Nano Research, 70% were supportive of Cassie and Molly's law, with support among women even higher at 75%.

I want to be clear. This legislation would not in any way change or impact the law, or limit or undermine abortion in Canada. The leading constitutional law firm, Supreme Advocacy, confirms this in its thorough report on Cassie and Molly's law, of which every member in the House has a copy.

Please join me in supporting common-sense legislation that denounces violence, stands up for victims, and protects pregnant women.

, as tempted as I am to respond to my colleague on the issue of trade, that would not do justice to the important subject in front of us.

I want to again congratulate my colleague for bringing forward this important legislation, what we are calling Cassie and Molly's law, Bill C-225.

For those just joining the debate or watching, it is very important to underline what this bill would do and what it would not do. The bill would create a circumstance under which if a pregnant woman were attacked, killed, or assaulted, and her unborn child was harmed or killed in the process of that assault, then a separate offence would now exist under the criminal law which would punish the person who committed the offence for the attack on the unborn child, as well as on the mother. Punishment is not the core of it. The core of it is a recognition of the impact that this has on not just one, but on multiple people. That is what the bill would do.

It is very important to underline that the bill would only apply that offence in the case where another offence already exists. There is no possible way, under this legislation, and it is very well written and clearly put, in which a person could be charged for an offence against an unborn, preborn child if there were not also an offence against the mother.

I know that any time, in this place or elsewhere, we have this discussion that involves preborn, unborn children, there is a whole other debate that stirs in the minds of some people. However, because this only applies in the case where there is an offence against the mother, there is no possible way in which this bill could be twisted, or honestly there is no way in which it could be reasonably inferred to in any way inform a kind of legal change on an issue like abortion. It just is very clear there in terms of the way this bill operates.

If we were just isolating the question of the bill as it actually exists, I do not think anyone here would disagree with the principle, that when there is an offence against a mother and an unborn child, there is an impact, and two beings are involved. The suggestion by some members that we cannot pass the bill because it somehow, linguistically, indirectly, seems to invoke another controversy, I find unfortunate.

Obviously we know the question, for instance, of abortion is a challenging and divisive one. Can members who disagree on that question not come together on something that I think we should all agree on, which is combatting violence against women and which is the impact that this also has on another life.

I know some people object to the terminology. They do not like the term “unborn child” or “preborn child”. They would rather use the word “fetus” or something else. My understanding is that fetus is just a Latin word for the same thing. I try to avoid Latin ceteris paribus, but it really does not matter what terminology is used.

The point is that we have legislation which is just eminently sensible, which responds to a reality that if a woman loses a child because she is attacked, that she feels that loss in a particular way. To suggest that she does not, to suggest that this, for the person who is attacked, is simply akin to another kind of assault, or to suggest that there is not an added impact or added element calling out for some kind of justice really ignores the lived experience and the testimony of people who have brought forward this issue, and who have said that this is a priority for them.

The bill is named after real people who have real experience with this, who have spoken to my colleague and to other members, who have asked that we respond to it in this way, and who have asked that, hopefully, we come together as a House, across party and ideological lines.

I would encourage my colleagues, if they are hearing different things about this bill from different places, to take the time to have a look at the legislation and decide for themselves.

, I am honoured to rise today in this place and speak to Bill C-225, the protection of pregnant women and their preborn children act, Cassie and Molly's law.

To begin, I want to recognize and thank my friend and colleague, the member for Yorkton—Melville, for the good work she has undertaken in introducing this bill and for the passion she brings to this important debate.

As I have shared in this place before, I am the mother of four wonderful children, three of whom are married. I am also the grandmother of seven beautiful grandchildren, three of whom I have not met yet; one will be arriving next month and the other two just after the new year in January and February. Our entire family is eagerly awaiting their arrival. Nurseries are being prepared and books of the most popular names are being pored over. As grandparents, my husband and I can hardly wait to love them, spoil them, and then return them to their parents.

As my entire family prepares to welcome these three new members, the reality that this bill seeks to address is very near and dear to my heart. Let us talk about what this bill would do.

Bill C-225 would allow for two charges to be laid for causing the death of or injury to a preborn child while attacking a pregnant woman. One charge is for the offence against the woman, like assault or murder, which currently exists in the Criminal Code; and the other charge would be for the new offence that this bill would create for causing the death of or injury to the preborn child from the commission of the offence against the woman.

The bill would also give added protection to pregnant women, even in cases where the preborn child is not harmed or killed, because it would codify pregnancy as an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes. While judges can already treat pregnancy as an aggravating factor in sentencing, codifying it in criminal law would require a judge to always consider this factor in sentencing. Codifying pregnancy in criminal law is another way to more clearly and strongly denounce violence against pregnant women.

I cannot even begin to imagine the range of emotions that I would experience if one of my daughters or daughter-in-law, or my unborn grandchildren were harmed or killed by someone. If a woman has chosen to have a baby, should she not be entitled to justice if her unborn child is harmed or killed?

This bill would provide some justice. How would the bill do this?

Justice is not served when a person does not face any consequences for intentionally causing the death of or injury to a preborn child while attacking a pregnant woman. Bill C-225 is aimed at third parties who knowingly commit criminal offences against pregnant women.

The new offences are not standalone offences. They apply in a narrowly and precisely defined circumstance: only when a third party is committing or attempting to commit an offence against a pregnant woman knowing she is pregnant. The stiff penalties of a minimum of 10 years and maximum of life imprisonment for intentionally harming or causing the death of a preborn child would act as a strong deterrent against the commission of violence against pregnant women, since the offender cannot get to the child without going through the woman. In other words, if the child is protected, the woman is protected.

For the remainder of my time I would like to highlight what the bill could not do, contrary to what some have suggested.

This bill could not change the definition of a human being or create false personhood. The criminal law can be used to protect entities other than what is covered under the Criminal Code's definition of human being. The bill could not be used to criminalize doctors or anybody for performing abortions. Finally, the bill could not be used to criminalize pregnant women for any acts of commission or omission that may cause harm or death to her own fetus.

I want to quote the sponsor of Bill C-225, who was motivated to bring this bill forward after hearing Cassie and Molly Kaake's story. She stated:

The Criminal Code is missing a crucial component to protect Canadian women and their families. The increased penalties under Cassie and Molly's law create a legal mechanism that will enhance the safety of Canadian women and recognize the safety of their families. This approach is specific and robust. It is a common-sense approach designed to fill a gap in the Criminal Code that renders women and their preborn children vulnerable.

I would encourage all members in this place to take the time to read the bill and then support it, as it is clear in its aim, which is to protect the preborn in a very narrowly and precisely defined circumstance, when the woman has not chosen abortion, and a third party causes death or injury to her unborn child against her will.

To conclude, choosing to have a child is one of the most important commitments one will ever make. As a grandmother, I would share in the grief of my daughters and their husbands should anything like this ever happen to them.

Finally, as a member of Parliament, I have always and will always stand up for the rights of victims in the face of horrific crimes, and this bill would do that.

Listening to the debate this evening and following it previously, it is clear that those who oppose this legislation want to make it about opening the abortion debate. This could not be more wrong. This is not about reopening the abortion debate. No part of this legislation could do that. The bill could not be used to criminalize doctors or any physician for providing abortion. Neither does it change the definition of human being nor give fetus personhood.

The bill would protect the preborn child in a very narrowly and precisely defined circumstance when the woman had not chosen to abort and a third party knowingly caused death or harm to the preborn child against the mother's will. As stated earlier, the bill would close a serious gap in the Criminal Code. When two lives full of hope and promise are intentionally and violently ended, it is simply common sense to expect that our laws would send a strong deterrent message, standing against the abuse of women and their preborn children.

Tonight and previously we have heard our Liberal colleagues say, “gender-based violence has no place in society”. If that really is true, if my Liberal colleagues really believe that, I ask them to stand up against gender-based violence and support Bill C-225.

, it is an honour to speak to Cassie and Molly's law, Bill C-225.

Canadians want fairness. Canadians want justice. This is a prime example of an opportunity to provide that justice in Canada.

A piece of legislation called the unborn victims of crime act was presented to a previous Parliament, and that Parliament decided that it was an issue worthy of debate. The bill was about to go to committee at second reading, but unfortunately time ran out and that Parliament ended. That piece of legislation was put forward by former member of Parliament Ken Epp. We now have a new piece of legislation. It is similar, but it has been refined to clarify that this is not about abortion but about justice. I strongly believe that Canadians would like this legislation to at least be sent to justice committee.

This is an issue of conscience. It has been made very clear that this would not reopen the issue of abortion. It is whether the victims should have the right to share their experience, the travesty they went through. Would that be part of a healing process? I hope so. Hopefully this House will not deny justice being done.

Opponents of Cassie and Molly's law claim that the bill could be a back door to limit a woman's access to abortion services. This is untrue and entirely misleading to Canadians. Simply put, Cassie and Molly's law would only add new offences for existing crimes against a pregnant woman that resulted in injury or termination of her pregnancy.

Because this bill would only affect existing crimes, and abortion is not criminal, Cassie and Molly's law would have no impact on abortion services. The bill would not change the legal definition of a human being or create fetal personhood as some critics have tried to claim. The constitutional experts at the leading firm, Supreme Advocacy, which the government highly respects, confirm that Cassie and Molly's law would have no impact on abortion laws. In fact, I would challenge the justice minister or the minister's representative in the House of Commons right now to present legal arguments that refute the expertise of these lawyers. Addressing violence against pregnant women is the strict and sole objective of the bill.

The government promised a strategy to combat gender-based violence. We are still waiting. Right here, right now we have an opportunity for a Liberal government and every member of Parliament to take a step toward reducing gender-based violence in Canada. Members of Parliament are here to serve Canadians, and Canadians have made their voices heard, loud and clear. They support this bill.

The first petition deals with the fact that 92% of Canadians believe that sex-selective pregnancies should be illegal. This gendercide has created a global gender imbalance crisis, resulting in violence and the trafficking of girls. Therefore, the petitioners ask that members of Parliament condemn the discrimination against girls occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

The first petition is from 1,300 Canadians who point out that Canadians are deeply affected by the fate of Mary Wagner, a prisoner of conscience, detained for the belief that unborn children have the right to be born alive, and for merely speaking and praying for that intention.

The petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to amend the Criminal Code to prohibit the detention before trial or custodial sentencing of anyone accused solely of a non-violent offence consisting of the presence or the words of the accused occurring in the course of the free exercise of speech by the accused or the free exercise of conscience by the accused.

# LIBERAL

Importantly the committee also supported Bill C-75’s proposal to repeal the abortion offences that the Supreme Court of Canada struck down as unconstitutional in the Morgentaler decision in 1988. Our government will always protect a woman’s reproductive rights and her right to choose what to do with her own body.

Bill C-75 would also repeal the abortion offence in section 287 of the Criminal Code, which prohibits the procurement of a miscarriage and was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court 30 years ago in the Morgentaler case. The Supreme Court’s guidance was clear. It said forcing a woman, by threat of criminal sanction, to carry a fetus to term, unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations, is a profound interference with a woman’s body and thus a violation of security of the person. It is long overdue that this invalid provision be removed from our Criminal Code.

, September 28 is the internationally designated global day of action for access to safe and legal abortion. According to the World Health Organization, about 25 million unsafe abortions take place every year around the world. An estimated 47,000 women die of complications every year.

Our government supports women’s sexual health and reproductive rights, and we are unequivocally opposed to reproductive coercion in all its forms. We adopted a feminist international assistance policy that defends the rights of women and girls and are working closely with local women’s groups, particularly in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, to ensure that the world’s most vulnerable are protected and treated with the dignity they deserve.

Today, I thank all of the organizations around the world that are working hard to defend and protect women’s reproductive rights.

Bill C-75 would also repeal section 287 of the Criminal Code, the abortion offence, which prohibited the procurement of a miscarriage and was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court almost 30 years ago. It is high time that this invalid provision be removed from our Criminal Code, in part so that women across Canada will not face the additional and unnecessary burden of figuring out what the criminal law currently prohibits at a time when they may be facing one of the most difficult decisions of their lives.

The Supreme Court of Canada’s guidance on this point was clear. It stated, “Forcing a woman, by threat of criminal sanction, to carry a foetus to term unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations, is a profound interference with a woman’s body and thus an infringement of security of the person.” I agree, and wish to applaud the Minister of Justice for proposing the removal of this long-outdated and unenforceable provision from the Criminal Code.

our government will always support a woman’s right to choose, and we believe that a woman should have access to reproductive health options, no matter where she lives in this country. We recognize that access to these services varies across the country.

We have made Mifegymiso less restricted and more available on the Canadian market, and many provinces and territories are now, in fact, reimbursing for that drug. We commit to continue to examine ways to improve access to reproductive services for all Canadian women.

, our Liberal government will always stand up for women’s rights, regardless of what the Conservatives think or say.

Yesterday, in the House of Commons, the Conservative member for Provencher shouted that a woman’s right to choose is not a right. Women and women alone have the right to choose what they do with their bodies. This is the foundation of gender equality.

It has been 30 years since the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed a woman’s right to choose. It is time for the Conservative Party to recognize that right. Our government unequivocally supports women’s rights to decide what to do with their bodies, and we are always going to stand up for that right.

Why will the Conservatives not stand up for the right to choose?

, I thank the member opposite for her hard work in standing up and fighting for women’s rights right across the country. We agree with her. We know that safe and easy access, responsible access, affordable access to reproductive health services, including abortions, is of fundamental importance to all Canadians. That is why we moved forward on ensuring that all provinces are offering that. We continue to work right across the country to ensure that the Canada Health Act is brought in. We will always be unequivocal in standing up for a woman’s right to choose.

An hon. member: It is not a right.

, from the day we took office, we have been working with provinces where access to these services was inconsistent or non-existent and making sure they started offering women reproductive health services and protection and respecting women’s choices. We on this side of the House, along with the NDP, understand that women unequivocally have the right to decide what to do with their bodies, and we are always going to stand up for that right, regardless of what the Conservatives think or say.

, I know this issue raises a lot of concerns. It becomes an issue of passion. It becomes an issue of faith. However, there is a lot of misinformation that has been put out there by the opposition. They call it the “ideological views” of the Liberal Party of Canada. What this gets behind is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. What we are behind is a constitutionally protected right for a woman to access safe abortion services if she chooses.

I was wondering if the hon. member could speak to the part of the charter that requires a government to fund an organization that seeks to undermine someone else’s charter rights.

The leader of the opposition is against our $650 million investment in maternal health so women around the world can have safe access to the abortion health services they require. The leader of the opposition affirmed that he voted against transgender rights in Bill C-16. He believes that Jordan Peterson is correct on his views of gender pronouns. We know the leader is against LGBTQ2 rights. He is against women’s right to choose and against transgender rights, as his own words have confirmed.

The Government of Canada is committed to respecting the fundamental rights of all Canadians, including the LGBTQ2 and women’s rights. We also support the freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There is nothing controversial about that.

An open letter of support was signed by 80 major organizations from across Canada. Let me name a few. There is Oxfam Canada, YMCA Canada, The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, Women’s Human Rights Education Institute, Abortion Support Services Atlantic, Alberta Pro-Choice Coalition, the Network of Black Business & Professional Women, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Canadian Health Coalition. The list of supporting organizations goes on and on. Strong voices across the country are raising in support of this year’s eligibility requirements for CSJ applicants. Who is in a better position than these organizations to speak out on the issue that concerns us today?

For this reason, the CSJ program will not provide funding to organizations whose main activities include partisan political activities or seek to remove or undermine established individual rights for Canadians. To clarify, our government has taken the principled stand that we will not fund groups that distribute graphic pictures of bloody fetuses to school-age children. Any organization whose activities aim to limit women’s existing reproductive rights will not be eligible for this funding. The same goes for a summer camp that would submit an application to hire students as camp councillors at a camp that would not welcome youth from the LGBTQ2 community.

On the other hand, many other faith-based organizations would be eligible for the program. Say, for example, a faith-based organization with anti- abortion beliefs applies for funding to hire students to serve meals to the homeless. The organization provides numerous programs in support of its community. The students would be responsible for meal planning, buying groceries, serving meals, etc. This organization would be eligible to apply.

Say another faith-based organization that embraces the traditional definition of marriage but whose primary activities reduce social isolation among seniors applies for funding to hire students. The students would be responsible for developing and delivering programs for all seniors, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. This organization would be eligible to apply.

Another example would be an organization with anti- abortion beliefs that runs a summer camp for underprivileged youth. It would be eligible to submit an application. This would enable it to offer students summer jobs as camp counsellors.

The other piece of this discussion is with respect to abortion. Once again, individuals are entitled to have different views on this issue. For 10 years, the previous government refused to fund international organizations that performed abortion services overseas. The Conservatives had said that if an organization was involved in abortion, it did not get Government of Canada funding. I remember those days. I do not remember a single member opposite speaking out about it. The members seemed perfectly fine to deny needed medical services to women based on a viewpoint on abortion. However, our government refuses to pay organizations to hire individuals to protest outside of an abortion clinic to scare or abuse women, or pay organizations to hand out grotesque pamphlets on the streets. We have a problem with that.

Again, people are absolutely entitled to their own points of view in our country. They are entitled to hold those views and apply for or receive a summer job grant. However, if they choose to discriminate in their employment or want to hire people for no other job than to turn back the clock on women’s rights, on LGBTQ2 rights, on the rights of persons with disabilities, on indigenous rights, then this government will decline their requests for such a cheque.

Who is supporting us in this matter? Abortion Support Services Atlantic, Alberta Pro-Choice Coalition, Shelter House Thunder Bay, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, as well as the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

Is it too much to ask that a Government of Canada program respect the individual rights and values underlying the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? That all seems reasonable to our government as well as to major stakeholders, including the National Association of Women and the Law. I hope all members in the House will come to the same conclusion.

We are forging ahead with our goal of strengthening the middle class and creating a level playing field where everyone has the chance to succeed. That is our vision. That is our commitment.

, we know that the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Regina—Qu’Appelle, has a long-standing relationship with the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, an organization that fights against a woman’s right to choose. With the support of the Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform having been so critical to his leadership victory, it is not difficult to understand why the Leader of the Opposition has a vested interest in ensuring the centre can continue to rely on taxpayer funds to promote its anti- abortion agenda.

The Leader of the Opposition also gave a statement where he affirmed that he voted against transgender rights in Bill C-16. We know the Leader of the Opposition is against LBGTQ2 rights. He is against a woman’s right to choose, and is against transgender rights.

I would ask the member, should attestation attach itself to the beliefs of the organization or to the belief that individuals who are applying for jobs not be discriminated against?

, I listened to the list of services that the member is worried will not receive Canada summer jobs grants: children’s camps, meals on wheels programs, and support for immigrants and refugees who arrive in this country. Those core jobs, none of which involve violating people’s human rights or basic charter rights, are all eligible under the attestation. Additionally, the core job of a church is not to challenge charter rights in a political fashion but rather to support a moral framework under which one receives one’s human rights.

The attestation does not require churches or organizations to surrender their religious beliefs or violate their moral code. All it says is that the core organizational structure of the applicant cannot be a political one aimed at violating people’s rights.

For example, there was an organization in my riding that was receiving funding effectively to hand out postcards, next to summer camps, of little babies that were being tortured in some grotesque display. It was hideous. That now has been ruled as an illegal practice in the province of Ontario. That organization, whose only goal is to remove a woman’s right to choice, is exactly what should not be funded in the same way that a political party should not be funded through the Canada summer jobs program.

Unfortunately, we have had concerns raised by Canadians about funding going to organizations that actively undermine the rights of Canadians, meaning that we had youth undertaking activities, funded by the government, that worked against the rights of women and LGBTQ2 communities, for example. It is these concerns that spurred our government to take action. That action was to make changes to the Canada summer jobs application process, changes to ensure that a young person in a job funded by the government would work in an environment that respects the rights of all Canadians, including women and the LGBTQ2 community, and that funded organizations realize their responsibility as employers to provide this environment.

In contrast, we know the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Regina—Qu’Appelle, has a long-standing relationship with the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, an organization that fights against a woman’s right to choose. Nine months ago, during his leadership campaign, he spoke with the Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform’s director of communications, Jonathon Van Maren, who said, “Like most of you, I’ve known who my top choices are for months...Scheer actually is pro-life and has a record to prove it.” He knew this because the Leader of the Opposition told the centre, “I have always voted in favour of pro-life legislation. I voted according to my conscience every time. I spoke out when Henry Morgentaler received the Order of Canada.”

With the support of the Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform having been so critical to the leadership victory, it is not difficult to understand why the Leader of the Opposition has a vested interested in continuing to ensure that the centre can continue to rely on taxpayer funds to promote this anti- abortion agenda. This lack of respect for the rights of Canadians is not new, or from just the leader. In fact, in 2005, the former member for Fundy Royal, Rob Moore, put forth a private member’s bill, an act to confirm the definition of marriage. He said:

There is now a great concern in Canada that if same sex marriage is legalized, it will have a profound and long-lasting implication for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, and it will become increasingly difficult for people who do not agree with same sex marriage to participate in public life.

That is not what we stand for.

Our government is not the only one to think that way. Across Canada, people are supporting our approach. We received an open letter from the National Association of Women and the Law. This open letter was signed by over 80 major organizations across Canada. Organizations like Oxfam Canada and YWCA Canada signed the letter. Other signatories include organizations coming from the four corners of Canada. Let me name a few: Abortion Support Services Atlantic, Alberta Pro-Choice Coalition, Shelter House Thunder Bay, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Saskatoon Sexual Health, and Positive Living North, just to name a few.

Organizations helping youth from under-represented groups are supporting us. They include organizations such as the Network of Black Business & Professional Women, the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, as well as the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

Members are probably wondering what this open letter says. It says how supportive they are of this year’s eligibility requirements for CSJ applicants. The association wrote, in black and white:

Significant misinformation has been widely circulated in the media about the nature of the attestation that is now required by organizations that wish to apply for federal government grants for student jobs through the CSJ program. We are confident that the safeguards introduced to the CSJ program are not discriminatory, and do not represent any infringement on freedom of religion, conscience, or any other rights that people in Canada enjoy.

This comes from an organization that promotes equal rights for women in Canada. This is an organization that has played a major role in reaching important milestones towards women’s equality in Canada, such as the inclusion of sections 15 and 28 in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, amendments to sexual assault laws, positive changes to family law and to the Divorce Act, rape shield legislation, and criminal harassment legislation.

, the member really has a misunderstanding of the reality of the situation. It is not about values and beliefs. It is about activities. I can appreciate the concern the Conservatives have, based on some of the previous actions and comments from the leader of the official opposition, who is being held to account in many different ways with respect to what his beliefs are, for example in terms of a woman’s right to choose. It is important for us to recognize how it is that the Conservative opposition is being motivated to say the types of things it is saying.

It is about the activities. I would question any and all members as to whether they have a problem with government dollars being used to hire students, for example, to go door to door handing out abortion leaflets. That is what it is about, the activities.

My question for the member is this. Why does he not encourage the wonderful groups that promote and hire for student camps, many of which the Conservatives seem to want to discourage from entering that process? Why not promote the student program? It is a good program.

, I would like to share an experience. I worked as a high school chaplain for 20 years. There was more than one occasion when I went to school that there was a group of demonstrators outside the school holding pictures of aborted fetuses. As students went into the school, they had to look at those pictures. They had no choice. As a chaplain in the school, I then had a number of those students come to me. They were devastated at what they saw.

I go back to this. The attestation is not about values and beliefs. I am a big believer in charitable work. The attestation is about activities. Our government is trying to get at the activity I just mentioned. Does the hon. member believe activities of holding pictures of aborted fetuses for young girls to see as they enter their high schools is an activity a government should fund?

Our government knows that taxpayers’ money should never be used to support organizations that seek to undermine the rights of Canadians.

We know that the opposition leader, the member for Regina—Qu’Appelle, has a long-standing friendship with the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, an organization that actively opposes the right of women to choose what to do with their own bodies. Nine months ago, during the leadership campaign, he spoke with the centre’s communications director, Jonathon Van Maren. Mr. Van Maren said that, like many of us, he knew for a long time who his top choices would be. The member for Regina—Qu’Appelle was pro-life and had the record to prove it.

The opposition leader said that he had always voted in favour of pro-life legislation, that he had always voted according to his conscience, and that he had spoken out against the fact that Henry Morgentaler was awarded the Order of Canada.

The support of the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform was key to the opposition leader’s victory in the leadership race. As a result, it is easy to see why the opposition leader has a direct interest in ensuring that the centre continues to use Canadian taxpayers’ dollars to promote its anti- abortion agenda.

However, the government side is determined to continue to help our young people continue their education and acquire the experience they need to succeed in life.

The opposition would rather see these funds used to undermine the hard-earned charter rights of Canadians. That is completely unacceptable. The Conservatives continue to speak about religious rights and freedom of speech, which are not impacted by the attestation, yet they seem to forget about the rights guaranteed to women under section 15. The equality rights guaranteed under section 15 protect the rights of women should they choose to access safe abortion services.

We have already heard one member of the opposition rise today and liken the LGBTQ2 community to a lifestyle choice. We have heard the opposition House leader comparing the government’s protection of charter rights in this attestation to the horrible oppression and prosecution of the LGBTQ2 community during the sixties, seventies, and eighties. It is clear that the opposition does not get it, and it is clear that the government needs to stand up for these hard-earned charter rights.

, it is really distressing to hear the hon. member across the way continue to confuse and inflame the situation by the constant reference to “values”. In the attestation, the word used is “mandate”. In conversations I have had with churches in my riding, I made it very clear that if there is nothing in their mission statements and vision statements that says they are deliberately in business to work against certain rights and freedoms that women and the LGBTQ2 community enjoy, they should have no problem ticking off the attestation, because that is not the business they are in. I also had a conversation with a Baptist minister and said that the chance of abortion or gay rights coming up at a soccer camp or a cooking class is zero.

Will the member start to take responsibility for using the word “values” incorrectly, when it is not mentioned in the attestation? Will he take responsibility for the fact that a lot of churches will not go ahead and run their summer camp programs because of the way he has deliberately misinterpreted what the attestation says?

The Conservatives have tried to score political points with their so-called support for free speech at post-secondary institutions, yet there has not been a word from the Leader of the Opposition after a group was prevented last week from showing a pro-choice documentary on a university campus. It seems like he is only in favour of free speech when it is an opinion he agrees with.

Could the Minister of Science please tell the House what our government’s position is on this important issue?

our government is committed to creating open spaces for Canadians to debate and express their views. We also firmly support a woman’s right to choose. In a free society, we may disagree with a person’s views but we must defend the right to hold them unless those views promote hate.

The opposition leader’s silence suggests he will only stand up for free speech if it is politically convenient. We cannot cherry-pick on free speech.

Today is International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. I was very pleased to announce earlier today that Canada will seek to co-chair the Equal Rights Coalition, a group of 33 governments committed to promoting and protecting the rights of LGBTQ2 people around the world. One of the coalition’s recent priorities is addressing the deplorable human rights violations against gay and bisexual men in Chechnya. Canada has led on this issue since we spoke out publicly on April 15, and I want to assure hon. members that our government continues to be very deeply engaged in this specific issue, and I am personally very involved.

Abroad, we have taken a feminist approach to our foreign policy and international assistance, providing significant support for sexual and reproductive health rights, including abortion, which I know my beloved colleague will discuss this evening at greater length. Our leadership on key international issues has also been evident on the environment. Together with my colleagues, Canada has been implementing significant contributions to the Paris agreement, and I want to note that at the recent meeting of the Arctic Council, which I attended, I personally was glad to see that the Paris agreement was mentioned in that shared declaration. That was important, as was climate change.

I would like to point out a few of our recent achievements that illustrate this shift. First of all, we ensured that our efforts in the area of maternal, newborn, and child health are evidence- and outcome-driven. That is why I asked our partners to include a full range of sexual and reproductive health services in their programming. This includes contraception, family planning, and safe and legal abortion services as well as post- abortion care.

In order to bridge the gaps that prevent women and girls from accessing these services, on March 8, the Prime Minister and I announced an investment of $650 million over three years. The programs that will benefit from this funding will help prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. They will also help support women’s right to choose safe and legal abortions and access to post- abortion care.

Mr. Chair, I would like to start by thanking my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for her contribution to our effort to refocus international assistance. I also thank her for the question, which is very important to both of us.

Indeed, we recognize the importance of the initiative on maternal, newborn, and child health that we are pursuing. We have decided to broaden our commitment with an additional $650-million contribution for the three remaining years of this initiative to ensure that our partners can truly provide the entire range of sexual and reproductive health services, which includes sexual education for girls and boys, family planning, provision of birth control methods, legal and safe abortion, and post- abortion care. It is really important to us to continue with this initiative and provide the entire broad range of sexual and reproductive health services to this population.

Mr. Chair, currently, 225 million women worldwide have an unmet need for modern contraception, and there are more than four million unintended pregnancies every year. Twenty-two million women and girls put their lives at risk annually by undergoing unsafe abortions. The SRHR investment will contribute to the attainment of SDG target 3.7, which is ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services.

We also want to help enable 120 million more women and adolescent girls to access contraception by 2020. Canada will also join the Ouagadougou Partnership, which aims to accelerate progress in the use of family planning services.

, the member for Thornhill has asked what it means for our government to be a feminist government and have a feminist foreign policy. Let me say what it means. I was so proud of the Prime Minister and the Minister of International Development on March 8, International Women’s Day, when we announced $650 million for women’s and girls’ sexual and reproductive health, including access to safe abortions. That is feminism in the world.

, on March 2, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie said, “Sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights. All women have the right to choose whether and when they want to have children, and how many.”

Since today is the 40th International Women’s Day, can the minister tell the House about the commitment the government made today to promote gender equality and advance an international feminist agenda?

, I thank my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for the opportunity to inform the House that the Prime Minister and I made a very important announcement this morning: we will invest $650 million over three years in sexual and reproductive health in developing countries and fragile states.

This investment will support the sexuality education of girls and boys, family planning, access to contraceptives, access to legal abortion, and the defence of women’s rights because women’s rights are human rights.

, abortion is about rights, health, and development. Women have the right to choose, and young women should be in school. We must put an end to violence against women, child marriage, teen pregnancy, and dangerous abortions.

I can assure the House that women and girls will be at the heart of our priorities and that sexual and reproductive health will be a major component in the new international development policy. It will include sex education for girls and boys, contraception, family planning, and safe abortions.

, I have been going through consultations for the last year, and I can assure members that it is a profound consensus here in Canada and globally that sexual health and reproductive rights are a priority. I can assure the member that it will be a major element in our new international assistance policy and that yes, we will support sexual education, contraceptive supplies, family planning, safe abortion, and obviously, maternal health and the health of newborns.

# NEW DEMOCRAT

A universal pharmacare program would create equal access to life-saving and life-enhancing medications for all Canadians as well. I see nothing in this legislation that addresses that need. In fact, we continue with a patchwork system of access to abortion and birth control that creates inequality and forces Canadians who require those services to either pay exorbitant out-of-pocket costs or travel unreasonable hours to access these services. Monday was International Birth Control Day. It is the federal government’s responsibility to ensure equal access for all Canadians needing birth control, but the government has failed. Access is neither universal, equal, nor affordable across this country.

I give the following by way of example: the NuvaRing is available on public formularies in five provinces and one territory, but not the others; IUDs are available in three provinces, but not everywhere; emergency contraceptives are covered only in Alberta; and Quebec covers the patch, but no other province or territory does.

Canada has a human rights obligation to ensure that everyone in every province or territory has the same access to the highest quality medications. Why then does a woman in Manitoba and Quebec have access to more birth control methods than a woman in Saskatchewan? Making all birth control and all sexual and reproductive medications free for all of us is about fairness and gender equality. That is the reason I introduced M-65 to continue the push for equal access to birth control for all Canadians.

Based on the comments we heard from some members of the House earlier this week, it is clear that the fight for women’s rights is not over. It is not enough for the government to say that it believes in women’s right to choose when there are still Canadian women who do not have access to abortion. Women should not be used as a political tool.

When will the government walk the talk and ensure that every Canadian woman can exercise her right to choose?

, whether it is comments in this House or messages we hear outside, it is clear that the fight for women’s equality is far from over. It is not enough to hear the Liberals say they believe in choice; the reality is that many Canadian women, because of where they live, do not have access to abortion services.

It is 2018. We have to stop playing politics on the backs of women in this country. When will the Liberal government step up, enact the Canada Health Act, and ensure that women, no matter where they live, can have access to their reproductive rights?

Canada can and must be willing to use the Canada Health Act to ensure safe and equal abortion access for all people in Canada. The government must do its duty and embrace a recommendation to use the Canada Health Act as a mechanism to ensure safe and equal access to abortion for all.

, this Friday, Canada will be held accountable for its human rights record at our third periodic review at the UN. Safe and equal access to abortion is the right of all Canadians, yet this access remains shockingly inconsistent. Women living in rural areas often travel unacceptable distances to access an abortion clinic. It is unconscionable.

When will the government use the Canada Health Act to grant all Canadians their right to safe and equal access to abortion?

, this is a right, and everyone needs to understand that. The UN is about to embark on its periodic review of Canada’s human rights performance. Safe and equal access to abortion is one of those rights.

While the Prime Minister boasts about being a feminist at five-star receptions with the rich and famous, many Canadian women are struggling to access treatments they are entitled to. That is unacceptable.

What concrete steps is the Prime Minister going to take to ensure that every woman has access to safe abortion?

, I think we can all agree that the Liberals’ criteria were confusing from the outset. It was so confusing that we received many phone calls and emails in our ridings from religious groups and others asking what was going on. We had to clarify and explain the situation. It raised some controversy.

I would like to know whether my colleague agrees that we should act in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and comply with it. The question of women’s rights is not up for debate. The Supreme Court has ruled that restricting access to abortion is unconstitutional. I would like to know whether my colleague agrees that we must uphold the charter, women’s rights, and the Supreme Court ruling.

In the wake of this controversy all our offices received many calls. I think that the Liberals are still getting calls because this is still so confusing. Religious groups, who say that their work helps the community and that young people join them in helping the least fortunate in the community, are asking whether they have the right to submit an application. We had to explain that the nature of their activities did not go against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that they could indeed submit their application.

It bears repeating that the NDP finds it unacceptable to provide funding, taxpayer money, to groups whose work is based on fighting against women’s rights, against access to abortion, and against defending the rights of the LBGTQ2 community.

As we all have been saying for years, the question of women’s rights is absolutely not up for debate. As I said earlier, even the Supreme Court has ruled that restricting the right to abortion is unconstitutional. Based on that, I think that clarifications were made and continue to be made.

, I will start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Salaberry—Suroît. I rise today to speak against the Conservative motion. The NDP believes, as does the government, that it is unacceptable to provide public money to groups whose work focuses on undermining women’s rights, access to abortion, or the rights of the LGBTQ community. The new attestation for the Canada summer jobs program requires groups to state that they respect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is a foundational document that has governed us for more than 35 years.

For our party, the issue of women’s rights is not up for debate. The Supreme Court has already ruled on the fact that restricting access to abortion is unconstitutional. However, the government must clarify its position for the various groups. The wording is so vague that organizations in my riding and all other ridings believe that they are excluded from the program when that is not the case. We are here today debating the wording because, from the very beginning, the government should simply have made it clear that the new attestation refers to activities that fail to comply with the charter and not to a group’s beliefs or lack of a position. It is really quite simple. This is not about saying that a group is or is not doing good work, but rather ensuring that the nature of the jobs to be done by youth under the Canada summer jobs program does not contravene the charter and our laws.

I want to be clear. We recognize that many organizations, including religious groups, are doing a lot of incredible work to support people in need, and even if they do not support abortion, the nature of their work does not violate the values of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is why we believe that these groups and organizations should have the right to apply for the Canada summer jobs program. It is up to the government to clarify with these groups.

Again, I want to say that the NDP agrees with the government that it is fundamentally unacceptable to use taxpayer dollars to fund groups whose work focuses on restricting women’s rights and access to abortion.

This is an incredible program. What I find very unfortunate in this debate is the undermining of that program, by both the Liberals and the Conservatives, and the undermining of people of religious faith who believe that they can access this program.

At the outset, for me the issue of a woman’s right to choose is non-negotiable. It is a fundamental principle, but it is not the issue we tend to deal with when we are hiring for Canada summer jobs. However, there have been abuses, and I am glad to see that the Liberal government recognized that there were abuses.

In my riding, every year a group I never heard of before, called Priests for Life, got on the list to get Canada summer jobs. I had never heard of Priests for Life, so I checked them out on their website. They have an American flag. They have the White House. It is a militant, right-wing, anti- abortion organization. It should not be getting money for young people in my region. I looked it up to see what kind of work young people do. They actually have on their page a special link to Real Estate for Life. It is promoting real estate agents for life. Talk about the money changers in the temple. That is an organization that should never have gotten the money.

An abuse like that could have been easily fixed by the Liberal government stating that if an organization uses the funds to promote an extremist agenda, it will not be eligible. However, the Liberals, being Liberals, came up with a very ham-fisted response.

Call me cynical, but the Liberals love culture wars. They made a values test that was unnecessary for all the organizations that sign up. Now they are trying to do damage control by saying that they did not really mean that. The Conservatives, of course, love this kind of culture war and are jumping on it.

What is really concerning to me is that all the good religious groups that apply year after year are being given the impression that they are no longer eligible because of the abuse of the process by one, two, or three extremists groups across Canada that should never have been eligible in the first place.

The first is from a number of Canadians asking the Parliament of Canada to consider the availability of the abortion pill, Mifegymiso. This particular medication is available but at a horrendous cost. It is $450 for a treatment, which makes it exorbitantly expensive, and therefore, unavailable. The petitioners ask that the Parliament of Canada converse with the provinces and territories to ensure that the cost is acceptable, that the government promptly implement universal cost coverage for this drug, that programs be put in place, and that the pharmaceutical be rolled out in the most timely and inclusive way possible.

, the Prime Minister claims to be a feminist, but on International Women’s Day, he is content to merely re-announce old promises. If equality truly matters to the government, it should fund women’s reproductive health. The best way is to ensure all women have access to birth control. Such access reduces unintended pregnancy, abortion, is cost saving, and a cornerstone to women’s human rights.

Will the government take a stand for women and support my motion to make birth control free for women in Canada?

, despite the Prime Minister’s feminist words at the United Nations, he has failed to act, and the United Nations is calling him on it. The UN Committee to End Discrimination Against Women told Canada to get to work on pay equity, legal aid, abortion access, child care, and indigenous women’s safety. It is a big list, and this is a big deal.

The government says it cares about the UN and it cares about women’s rights, yet the UN says the government is failing to act. This morning, hundreds of women’s labour and justice organizations called on the Prime Minister to heed the UN demand, and step up for women’s equality.

Last month, thousands of women marched for women’s rights. New Democrats stand with them. We want the government to get to work, uphold human rights, and make equality a reality for all women.

, the United States has just blocked funding for any international organization that even mentions abortion. The consequences of this decision are monumental for women’s health. Will Canada reiterate its support for women’s access to reproductive health care at home and abroad? Will Canada condemn Trump’s attack on women’s rights?

, President Trump has decided to eliminate funding for organizations that provide family planning services, including abortion. This will jeopardize women’s reproductive health and their right to control their own bodies. The Netherlands has called on Canada to create an international fund to compensate for President Trump’s order.

The Minister of International Development and La Francophonie has said that she is open to the idea. She must now show leadership. What is her plan? How much and when does she plan to contribute to this international fund?

Mr. Speaker, the United States has just blocked funding for any international organization that even mentions abortion. The consequences of this decision are monumental for women's health. Will Canada reiterate its support for women's access to reproductive health care at home and abroad? Will Canada condemn Trump's attack on women's rights?

In Calgary, the Copeman private health clinic has been giving preferential treatment to fee-paying patients and raising questions about double billing the Alberta medical plan. People in British Columbia have witnessed the Cambie medical clinic openly flaunting the Canada Health Act by selling preferential access to surgeries and charging user fees prohibited by law.

In New Brunswick, draconian regulations force women to get two doctors to declare an abortion medically necessary before it is publicly funded at one of the province's two hospitals. If a woman seeks an abortion in a private facility in New Brunswick, she has to pay for it herself.

The Canada Health Act exists to guarantee universal and equal access to essential health care services for all Canadians. New Democrats believe that it is the federal government's responsibility to enforce it all across the country.

My question is this. Will the Liberal government put an immediate stop to these unacceptable violations of the Canada Health Act or will we just see more ignoring of the principles of the Canada Health Act, as with the previous Harper government?

Mr. Speaker, that is probably one of the more absurd comments I have heard on the decisions.

The Supreme Court did not require the House of Commons to legislate. It said that existing law, both for Bill C-14 and Bill C-7, was unconstitutional, and if the House of Commons would like to legislate something else, this was the deadline by which it must do it. The Supreme Court suspended its judgment to a date to allow the House of Commons, if it so chose, to pass legislation, very much the same as what happened with the abortion legislation in Canada. When the Supreme Court ruled that abortion violated the security of the person, it gave a period of time for Parliament to act. Parliament tried twice to act and failed to pass any legislation. The world did not end, but the Supreme Court decision was implemented.

That is exactly what would happen on Bill C-14 and Bill C-7. The Supreme Court does not instruct Parliament to do anything. It gave us the opportunity to say that if we felt there were regimes or restrictions that would meet the constitution that we would like to put it place, we had this much time to do it.

I do agree with the member that the Conservatives wasted a lot of that time. However, the present government has wasted a lot of time calling all different kinds of bills instead of dealing expeditiously with those on which it feels it has a deadline.

Although I did not actually look this up, when the abortion provisions were removed from the Criminal Code, the House of Commons tried twice to create new law regulating abortions. I am sure these same arguments were made at that time, saying that practitioners would not want to perform abortions because there was no legal framework. In fact, we went with the court decision. We still exist with the court decision on abortion as our legal framework and we have not had chaos in the medical community on that; not that in any way I wish to compare abortion to medical assistance in dying, but only on this issue of whether there is a legal framework that will apply on June 6.

The bill would, for the first time and in defiance of multiple rulings by the Supreme Court of Canada, legally separate a fetus from its mother. The inescapable effect of that separation would be to reopen the debate on the reproductive rights of women, which has rightly and definitively been resolved by Canadians. It has been the object of more than 40 bills or motions in this House since 1987.

The member for Yorkton—Melville has said that it will not reopen the debate on the reproductive rights of women. She has said that abortion is explicitly excluded from the ambit of this bill. However, even if that is not the intention of the bill, its effect would be to lay the groundwork for the reopening of this contentious debate on the reproductive rights of women.

Mr. Speaker, I first want to acknowledge the terrible tragedy that gave rise to this bill. Our hearts go out to Jeff Durham, his family, and his community for such a terrible loss.

Despite the good intentions of the bill's sponsor, this bill has the unintended consequence of reopening Canada's debate on abortion, and New Democrats will not risk jeopardizing a woman's right to choose. There are 36 pro-choice groups across Canada—and if I had time, I would read the really long list—all opposing the passage of this bill, describing it as an interference with a woman's constitutional right to choose.

To make the most women and children safe, my proposal is that the kind of legislation Canada needs is much more broad. The best way to protect the most women and children is to take action on gender-based domestic violence against women. Cassie was killed by a stranger, and she is an exception. Nine in 10 women victims are murdered by someone they knew. Therefore, to have the most impact, let us take action to prevent women from being killed by their partners and acquaintances.

First, Canada needs a national plan to end violence against women. Most other western countries have this. Canada is falling behind. New Democrats have led on this issue over the past sessions of Parliament. NGOs and labour organizations have developed a very strong blueprint that charts the way forward. We urge the government across the aisle to take action early on this, and we will stand together on that.

Mr. Speaker, access to safe abortion services is fundamental to a woman's right to choose. It must be equally available to all Canadian women. However, women in places like PEI do not have access to abortion services and they should.

A commitment to women's rights must be more than talk and promises; it must mean concrete action. Therefore, will the minister commit today to guaranteeing that every woman in every region of the country has access to abortion services?

Mr. Speaker, unsafe abortions account for 13% of maternal mortality in the world. If we really want to save lives then we must do something about this.

Why is the Minister of International Development upholding the Conservative policy and refusing to fund abortion services abroad where it is permitted? It is legal in several countries.

Why is she refusing to defend the rights of women around the world?

Mr. Speaker, unsafe abortion is responsible for 13% of all maternal deaths worldwide, but Canada will not help women in developing countries access safe abortion services, even though it is permitted in the majority of Canada's countries of focus for development assistance and in Canada itself.

Why is the minister refusing to save the lives of women and girls in developing countries by refusing to offer the full range of reproductive health services?

The title of this bill is the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. I have a big problem with this title. The parliamentary secretary stood here, wrung her hands, implored us to think of the children, and asked if this was not a barbaric cultural practice. We all agree that these are terrible practices. However, when we have this kind of provocative title it is not about working together to eliminate this kind of behaviour or these practices. What this title does is fuel racist stereotypes. It creates xenophobia toward very particular groups in Canada. We are targeting particular groups with this title.

I think about the other barbaric cultural practices happening in this country. Why are the Conservatives not standing up against other barbaric cultural practices? I happen to think it is a barbaric cultural practice that a woman who is raped and becomes pregnant is forced to carry that baby to term because she cannot access abortion services in this country. I happen to think it is a barbaric cultural practice, yet I do not see the Conservatives standing up and fighting for that.

I happen to think it is a barbaric cultural practice to force a woman to bring a baby to term if she does not want to have that baby, but we do not see the Conservatives crusading to change the fact that only 16% of hospitals in Canada offer abortion services. They are not champions on the lack of access to abortion services in Canada.

I think it is a barbaric cultural act that we have created a culture that puts such shame on women. It shames them to the point that they will do anything to terminate a pregnancy without having to tell someone, like throwing themselves down the stairs, taking drugs to self-abort, and using coat hangers. I happen to think this is a barbaric cultural practice, yet I hear silence in the House about putting an end to that.

In Prince Edward Island, a woman took medication to induce an abortion and had a complication. She went to the ER. She was bleeding. She did not know if she was bleeding to death. She had no idea. She waited for five hours in the ER. When someone actually came in to talk to her about what was going on, the attending health care provider told her that he was not comfortable treating her and that she should go to Halifax. Halifax is not down the street. Halifax is 300 kilometres away. I happen to think it is a barbaric cultural practice to have left that woman in that ER for five hours, not knowing about the health or the state of her fetus, not knowing about her own health, and not knowing if she was going to bleed to death and then having the doctor say that he was not comfortable treating her.

I happen to think that was a barbaric cultural practice, yet I do not see the Conservatives standing up to enforce the Canada Health Act to ensure that we have equal access to health services across this country. Come to think of it, I do not see any of the Liberals standing up to talk about this either. It is a Liberal government in P.E.I. There are three Liberal MPs here in the House of Commons, and we have a whole lot of silence when it comes to standing up for women's rights and their ability to access abortion services.

Moving on, let us get back to unintended consequences.

If we are serious about putting an end to these practices, then let us look at how we do it. Let us draft some legislation and think about what the consequences are, both intended and unintended. Unfortunately, there are a lot of unintended consequences here.

We have heard several of my colleagues talk about these unintended consequences. I think they are really serious. I think they are so serious that we cannot support the bill.

There is something as simple as the definition of polygamy. There is no real definition of polygamy here. We might think we all know what polygamy is, so what is the big deal? Well, it is a big deal. We are playing with people's lives here. We need a definition.

We heard testimony at committee about what would happen if there was a legally sanctioned marriage and one that was not legally sanctioned. For example, a person is married, the partners split up, and the person gets into a common-law relationship. If that first relationship has not been legally terminated and that person is in a new common-law relationship, is that polygamy? We do not know. What may be perceived as a small detail could have serious consequences for all kinds of people in Canada who might not know that they are in a polygamous relationship.

However, this is a small detail that I can maybe even wrap my head around, but there are other unintended consequences that are beyond the pale.

If we are trying to help marginalized and disadvantaged women, then we cannot put them in situations where they are so fearful that they cannot come forward. We heard tons of expert testimony about this. It is actually shocking when we look at the transcripts from committee how passionate some of these witnesses were about the fact that this legislation would drive those women deeper underground. If we want to help these women and children, we cannot have them be fearful that they will be deported.

Imagine if this deportation happened. It would not be just for the big bad guy we are always talking about, the one who is forcing a little girl into marriage. I heard the minister talk about forced rape for the rest of her life. If that little girl does not know she can get protection from our government, why would she come forward? If there are laws that say that everyone involved in a polygamous marriage will be deported, that will include that little girl. How does it help that little girl to send her to another country where there are no protections, where there probably are not even opportunities for her to go to school?

How about we put an end to that kind of barbaric cultural practice? Imagine sending a little girl out of the country when all she wants is protection. That is an unintended consequence I cannot get past. The legislation before us is full of these unintended consequences.

I will skip to how we can work together. We had some really good testimony at committee about how we need to have institutional support for these victims. We can have that kind of support without alienating and harming the women who are involved in forced marriage and gender-based violence. We need to have those institutional supports for them.

UNICEF talks a lot about the fact that if we are going to protect children from human trafficking, we have to recognize the failures in the system that allow those women and children to be trafficked. We have to recognize that they often come from low-income families without access to community support, without access to settlement services, and without access to people in the community they can turn to about their situation to ask for help.

If we were serious, we could get together, sit down, scrap Bill S-7, and start over. We would come to the table and talk about what would help these women and children and what kinds of supports we could give them. I do not think deporting them is exactly what we had in mind when we thought we wanted to put an end polygamy, underage marriage, and forced marriage in this country. I do not think that is the right solution. I think if we took our partisan hats off for a minute, many of us would come to that conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, that was a great synopsis of what we are dealing with. The Conservative policy visa Canadian women ranges from the era of the 1950s, and frankly the 1850s some days, especially when we talk about their regressive views on access to abortions and reproductive services.

However, let me bring it back to the debate today. We are talking about a very simple step of moving the categorization from luxury items, which we have all made the case that they are not, to essential items. With some simple steps, this change could be brought into effect. The Conservatives could follow the lead of numerous provinces that have done this very same thing.

As for waiting, I would like to remind the government that young people in Canada have had enough of these kinds of antics. If there is one demographic that is solidly opposed to the kinds of policies coming from the government, it is young Canadians. What better way to show some sense of listening, or reflection of the kinds of priorities that young people, particularly young women, are putting forward, then saying, “No tax on tampons. We're going to take this action”. Yet, once again, the Conservatives are willing to put it off; once again they avoid listening to the voices of Canadian women, and once again they are stuck in the 1950s, or maybe the 1850s.

Since they have been in power, the Conservatives have been blatantly attacking the equality of women in Canada. They did away with the court challenges program. They cut the budget of Status of Women Canada by 70% and also took the word “equality” out of its mandate. They banned research and advocacy in the programs funded by that organization. They introduced a number of bills and motions against abortion. They passed regressive legislative measures with regard to income equality, measures that even went against the recommendations of experts. They refuse to allocate sufficient funding to combat violence against aboriginal women and conduct a national public inquiry, when everyone in Canada is calling for them to do so. They are blocking the NDP's bill on transgendered rights. They are refusing to allocate funding to development assistance and to abortion and family planning services, even in cases of forced marriage and rape committed as an act of war. They are constantly reducing funding for social programs, which harms all women. They are attacking the unions that protect good paying jobs for women and proposing programs, such as income splitting, that will reduce the number of working women, at the expense of a national child care program that would ensure the financial security of women.

This erosion of equality makes women more vulnerable to violence. Violence against women is systemic and widespread in Canada. It is a sociological phenomenon. The number of violent crimes is decreasing, but the number of rapes and sexual assaults remains stable. Women are 10 times more likely to be victims of sexual crimes and three times more likely to be victims of criminal harassment.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, I will celebrate the 85th anniversary of the Persons Case with fellow feminists at a breakfast in Halifax for LEAF, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund.

Professor Jula Hughes will speak on the history of legal disputes for abortion access in New Brunswick, which is timely, as its Morgentaler clinic closed this summer. This was the only facility in the province where women could get an abortion free of restrictions, and it served women in New Brunswick and P.E.I.

Why do women in the Maritimes still have to fight for a right that was granted 26 years ago to all Canadian women?

It was 85 years ago that we became persons in the eyes of the law in our country, and 85 years later, women in the Maritimes still face inequalities regarding access to abortion facilities.

Today, I stand in solidarity with women in New Brunswick and P.E.l. who say, “my body, my choice”.

Happy Persons Day, Mr Speaker, the day in 1929 when women were declared persons under the law. It is now 85 years later and we still stand committed to confronting all forms of discrimination to achieve equality for women and girls.

Mr. Speaker, I find this debate somewhat uninspiring. In saying that it has created an exemption, the government is avoiding saying what it cannot legally say. It cannot legally say that prostitution is illegal in Canada. That is what I believe based on information that I myself received from some of this country's leading constitutional experts. Before I began my speech, the minister talked about how all people have the right to do what they want with their body. We subscribe to that principle with respect to abortion, the right to choose and so on. We have to apply that logic to everything, like it or not. It does not matter if it is not the way I am raising my girls. Our Constitution and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms dictate the kind of society we want. It is not up to me to tell people what to do.

When we asked them to clearly state the basis of their intent to make prostitution illegal, they objected to that kind of amendment.

If they want to know what we intend to do, I can say that we will show them when we take power in 2015.

When Bill C-6 was debated in June 2013 as Bill S-10, Canada was in the process of sabotaging the UN Human Rights Committee's negotiations on sexual violence in conflict zones. The government refused to adopt a motion or make amendments to a motion about sexual violence against women and children in conflict zones. Why? Believe it or not, it was just because the negotiations and the discussions included a section about abortion, reproductive choices and women who are victims of rape.

Clearly the Conservatives have gotten stuck in an ideological rut since becoming a majority government. Their ideologies are right-wing. Whether we are talking about weapons, sexual violence, or the arms trade, Canada opposes those principles. This is about saving lives, not about…

# BLOC QUEBECOIS

You are getting ready to move to the most open and peaceful nation in North America. You are moving to a nation whose women are among the most assertive and equality-seeking in the western world, a nation that is allergic to the mere mention of the religious right, a nation where the right to abortion is non-negotiable, where men have the right to parental leave, where marriage is no longer a sacred institution and one in two couples divorce when their marriage stops working, where teenagers are allowed to kiss and date, where gays and lesbians are able to clearly express their identity and have the right to marry.

I think you will find unanimous consent in the House to adopt the following motion: that this House support the right to abortion as recognized in 1988 by Supreme Court jurisprudence on the decriminalization of abortion in the Morgentaler decision, and in several subsequent rulings, in particular the Daigle decision in 1989, the Winnipeg Child and Family Services decision in 1997, and the Dobson decision in 1999, regarding a woman’s right to equality, autonomy, and security.

Conservatives will definitely not defend Quebeckers’ interests. At this very moment, they are sponsoring a petition to reopen the abortion debate. That bunch of Harper clones who still believe that the Earth is flat are totally fine with that. They will take Quebeckers’ money and votes, but when the time comes to defend Quebeckers’ jobs, they will take a break. They do not defend our rights, our people, or our environment. How then will they defend our interests?

, I would first like to thank the Minister of Health for sharing her time with me. This clearly demonstrates that she believes in fair play and democracy, since she knows that I am opposed to the motion and the bill.

That being said, I am wondering how I will say everything I have to say in 10 minutes.

I will begin with the heart of the issue. The premise of the fundamental debate relates to our understanding of the principle of self-determination. Here are the main questions that the Department of Justice and the two ministers should have asked themselves. Why and on what grounds would we take away people’s right to self-determination throughout their lives? When, even in urgent medical situations, no medical intervention can happen without a patient’s free and informed consent, why and on what grounds would we take away people’s right to self-determination at a time when they are enduring intolerable suffering, when they are about to die, when they are their most vulnerable?

The government says that it is in order to strike a balance, but that has never been proven, and the Supreme Court thought it was futile. Had it been referred to the Supreme Court, the bill would have been amended and considered unconstitutional. I imagine that is why the bill was never referred to the Supreme Court. It said that three rights had been violated by the total prohibition.

If we carefully study the Morgentaler ruling, we see that the court agreed to strike down the law that allowed abortions under certain conditions on the basis of just one right: the pregnant woman’s right to security of the person. How can anyone seriously believe that the security of the person who is enduring intolerable suffering from a grievous and irremediable illness, disease, or disability would be protected by section 1 of the charter, which states that any limits must be reasonable in a free and democratic society?

It is quite unreasonable for a person who is among the most vulnerable in our society, the one who is suffering, to have to bear the burden of proving to the courts that he or she meets this criterion of reasonably foreseeable natural death or, as we saw recently, to have to go on a hunger strike in an attempt to meet the criterion.

The government should have, with the assent of all parliamentarians, given us the means to act and found ways of doing things properly instead of gagging people, since we know full well the deadline will not be met. We are told that it is very serious, but I must point out that the Morgentaler decision was struck down and declared unconstitutional as far back as 1988, but as far as I know, it is still in the Criminal Code, and we have not descended into total chaos in that area.

We have to move forward, but let us not get carried away. With regard to form and content, the question we have to address at this stage is the minister’s unproven claim that her bill passes the charter test.

In the Morgentaler decision, the judges struck down the abortion law based on just one of the principles, just one of the rights affirmed in section 7 of the charter: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person”.

Since the judges in the Carter case decided that three rights had been unreasonably infringed, namely the right to liberty, the right to life and the right to security of the person, it would suffice for just one of these rights to be infringed for it to be unreasonably infringed and for section 1 to fail to save the minister’s law.

Now, I asked her the question several times. I asked her to show me how a grievous and irremediable disease or disability that causes a patient intolerable suffering does not unreasonably infringe the right of that patient to security of the person. According to the government’s bill, to have access to medical assistance in dying, this person will have to either go before the courts, or go on a hunger strike so as to approximate the totally deplorable, inhuman, vague and unconstitutional criterion of reasonably foreseeable natural death.

According to the Supreme Court, section 7 of the charter includes three rights, the right to life, liberty, and security of the person, and these three rights are affected by the total prohibition and the “reasonably foreseeable natural death” criterion. The Supreme Court indicated that the right to life is being undermined because some individuals are being forced to take their own lives prematurely rather than wait until their suffering and their lives have become intolerable. This bill does not address that issue.

That is why this bill will be ruled out of order and unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Many people are certain of that. Why then is the government insisting on making this compromise?

That is what legislators did with regard to abortion in the 1970s. What the Supreme Court said in 1988 in the Morgentaler case is exactly what is happening with this bill.

When a law sets out exceptional and exculpatory measures in an attempt to respect rights and fundamental values, those measures have to be real. People have to be able to access them. We cannot take away a person’s ability to decide for themselves. No one can make that decision for them. No one here should compare one life to another. It is not about that. No one here should get to decide for a patient what his or her quality of life is.

However, this bill attempts to do so because, to a certain extent, it attempts to qualify a person’s death based on a foreseeability criterion. Unless her age was a factor, Kay Carter was not facing a natural, reasonably foreseeable death. That is the danger with this bill. The danger is that someone will either have to go on a hunger strike, which is inhumane, or else we will have to take their age into account. However, spinal stenosis, for example, can be just as intolerable at 42, 62, or 52 years of age.

What does this bill do about all the people who have degenerative diseases and do not want to die? People are not living with a disease that makes them suicidal. They are living with the disease. What they do not want is for someone to decide what is right for them.

Throughout our lives, we have the right to self-determination, meaning that no one can undermine our integrity. In the case of an emergency at the hospital, patients have to give their free and informed consent before they receive any treatment.

Why, then, at the most intimate moment of a human being’s life, that person’s own death, would anyone presume to do such a thing? On what basis would it be done? On the basis of the common good? Would a neighbour agree to die in that person’s stead?

Some would presume to tell a person what to do and take away the right to self-determination when that person is most fragile and vulnerable. That is what the Liberal Party is condoning because it lacks the political courage to do what the Carter ruling asked it to do. It lacks the political courage to make a decision.

We may soon end up with a judicial democracy, but it is not up to the Supreme Court to legislate. That is a job for legislators, and each one of my colleagues opposite is responsible for shaping laws in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

I repeat, according to the principle of fundamental justice, found in section 7 of the law, exculpatory measures must be real; they must be genuinely available.

Anyone who wants to vote against these two amendments needs to prove to me that the bill, as currently written, will fulfill the requirements I just discussed.

This is another example of how this government has imposed its regressive ideology on Canada’s official development assistance. During the G8 and G20 summits in June 2010, the government said that one of its priorities was maternal health, a millennium development goal. That is a very commendable and admirable priority. However, CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency, refuses to fund abortion, even though many experts say it should be included in order to cover all women’s health needs.

The women of Quebec and Canada have won this freedom of choice, and the debate is closed. In Canada, women have the right to choose to end a pregnancy and they have access to all the care and services required for that choice. So why did the government remove all funding for abortion in its assistance plan for women in developing countries, if not to appease groups that advocate this conservative ideology?

Since coming to power, Conservative members have been introducing bills meant to surreptitiously reopen the abortion debate. One such example is Bill C-484 introduced by the member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park. That bill would have given a legal status to a fetus, which has no such status under current laws.

Another perfect example is Bill C-510 introduced by the member for Winnipeg South. That bill patronizes women by implying they are frequently coerced into abortion, but the vast majority of women make their own decision to have an abortion and take full responsibility for it. It is clear that, once again, the Conservative government was trying to limit a woman’s right to choose regarding abortion, by making women feel isolated when making such a decision.

This government will stop at nothing to promote its partisan interests and impose its regressive ideology, as it demonstrated with non-governmental organizations, civil society representatives and human rights groups.

, yet another International Women’s Day. It is the 100th anniversary. It is beginning to become repetitive to have to examine, every year, how women are doing, as if no other problems existed.

What? In 100 years, did they not obtain the right to vote? Now they can go to work. They can decide whether they want children and when. They now have the pill. They can choose—whether the pro-life caucus in this House likes it or not—whether or not to have an abortion. What more do women want? At some point could we stop celebrating this International Women’s Day?

We agree that having International Women’s Day for the hundredth time is becoming repetitive. But whether those who are bored by women’s demands like it or not, everything is not rosy. According to the World Health Organization, between 100 and 140 million women have been subjected to genital mutilation. Somewhere in the world, a woman dies every minute because of complications arising during pregnancy or childbirth. Even today, women are stoned as punishment for adultery. In countries ravaged by war, such as the Congo, Ivory Coast or Sudan, rape is used as a weapon of war. This is the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day, and we are still at this point.

In 2007, Quebec women earned 84.25% of what men earned on average; in Canada, women earned just over 70%. According to the OECD, the wage gap between men and women in Canada is the fifth highest of 22 industrialized countries.

In 1996, Quebec passed a proactive pay equity law. In 2009, Canada made pay equity a negotiable right, which was nothing less than a step backwards.

Quebec has implemented a preventive withdrawal program for pregnant women, which allows them to receive 90% of their salary. Canada pays only 55% of their salary to women under its jurisdiction, and for only 15 weeks.

The National Assembly unanimously voted to support a motion to highlight the consensus on women’s freedom of choice with regard to abortion. The debate continues to rage in Ottawa.

We are celebrating the 100th International Women’s Day, and so much more remains to be done. I do not know how many more years it will take, but I do know that the fight for equality is not over. And I also know that the women in this House and around the world are patient and determined and that, in the end, we will be victorious.

, tomorrow is Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness Day. Every day, women and men of all ages contract sexually transmitted diseases because of lack of education and, above all, insufficient resources, programs and services.

In Canada, we need only think about our aboriginal sisters. According to the Canadian Women’s Health Network, aboriginal women account for approximately 50% of all HIV-positive test reports among aboriginal people, compared with only 16% of their non-aboriginal counterparts.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government has offered very few concrete solutions to improve this situation. Its failure to act is not overly surprising, though, given that this is the same government that, for ideological reasons, refused to subsidize abortion services under the G8 maternal and child health plan. Thousands of women’s lives would have been saved.

, the Prime Minister was recently boasting about his government’s accomplishments over the past five years. The real picture, however, is far less impressive, particularly concerning the status of women. Let me refresh everyone’s memories.

Since 2005, the Conservatives have slashed Status of Women Canada’s budget by 40%, thereby forcing the closure of 12 of its 14 offices. They abolished the court challenges program. They eliminated funding allocated for feminist research and women’s rights organizations.

Conservative members have introduced bills attacking women’s rights and the gains we have made. Consider for example Bill C-391 to abolish the long gun registry or Bill C-510 on abortion. Even more recently, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development suggested that women who have other people care for their children are inferior mothers.

This government has done nothing for women. If anything, it has compromised the gains women have made over the years. That is a more accurate portrait of the Conservatives.

, the problem is that the evangelical churches are the fringe of the Conservative Party. We have seen it a number of times in the Conservatives’ many attempts to reopen the abortion debate here and on the international stage. Each time a bill is deemed to go against their religious doctrine, the Conservatives bustle about to get it rejected. We need only think of our bill on the right to die with dignity. Even the Conservative government’s science policy is directed by a creationist minister.

When will the Conservatives understand that there needs to be a separation between church and state?

, on this side of the House, we have a tendency to recite the long list of the Conservative government’s faults. But upon reading Bill C-510, I finally found something positive: this government is inventive.

Its dedication to limiting a woman’s right to choose regarding abortion fascinates me. We thought it had tried everything, particularly with Bill C-484 on unborn children and its regressive international policy on maternal health. The cuts to Status of Women Canada, the court challenges program and the women’s program are just more examples.

Although their actions show that they want to criminalize abortion and set back women’s rights, the Conservatives keep repeating that they do not want to reopen the debate. But they are the ones who keep bringing this issue back to the House.

This time, with Bill C-510, An Act to Prevent Coercion of Pregnant Women to Abort, the government wants to impose five-year prison sentences for anyone who coerces a woman to have an abortion and two-year prison sentences for anyone who attempts to coerce a woman to have an abortion.

The Conservatives are using the case of Roxanne Fernando, who was killed by three men, to misrepresent things. The crown prosecutor, one of the murderers and his lawyer have all stated that the murder had nothing whatsoever to do with the woman’s refusal to have an abortion. The Conservatives are using this barbaric act to threaten the right to abortion, even if this right was not the issue. This was a case of domestic violence.

With Bill C-510, the Conservatives are moving forward with their right-wing political agenda instead of attacking the real problem, which is violence against women. The real solutions are based on achieving equality between men and women. This has to do with better access to the justice system through legal aid, financial assistance for victims of crime and their loved ones, pay equity and other improvements to social programs.

In addition to being so creative, the Conservatives also have a talent for bringing women’s rights groups together. The Fédération des femmes du Québec is opposed to passing Bill C-510. It has declared that since the Conservatives took power, “ abortion has never been so threatened”.

The Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances has also spoken out against Bill C-510. The federation expects the bill to have a number of negative consequences, one of which is that it will open the door to the criminalization of abortion. The federation also fears, with good reason, that workers in this area could be prosecuted if the bill is passed. The very vague concept of “coercion” would give the unborn child certain rights to the woman’s detriment.

For these same reasons, a number of other organizations, including Canadians for Choice, are strongly opposed to the initiative of the hon. member for Winnipeg South.

At the very least, it can be said that the Conservatives do not give up. Since coming to power, they have tried every sly tactic they can think of to reopen the debate on abortion, but have been unsuccessful. On September 2, 2010, the infamous Dimitri Soudas stated that his party did not want to reopen the debate on this issue. Since that time, several members have made similar statements. Nevertheless, last May, the hon. member for Winnipeg South said that it is “always important to take steps, small steps, to acknowledge the value of the unborn”. Finally, a Conservative member who is willing to tell the truth about his intentions.

Twenty-two years ago, the Supreme Court invalidated the anti- abortion provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada. Since that time, there has been a strong consensus in our society that the debate on this issue should be over. However, from time to time, the Conservative Prime Minister agrees to reward the most well-behaved radicals in his party by letting them introduce regressive bills. Each time, the members of the House oppose these bills, with the exception of the Conservatives and a few misguided Liberals.

But that does not matter. Listening to the peoples’ representatives in Parliament is not an option for this government. Not only is Bill C-510 downright disgraceful, it is also useless.

Counsellors at abortion clinics already screen women to ensure that they have not been coerced into abortion. Clinics refuse to perform abortions on women who are not sure of their decision or who are being coerced by a third party. In addition, the Criminal Code prohibits threats and assaults against women. That is why the criminals who murdered Roxanne Fernando are in prison. Nathanael Plourde was sentenced to 25 years in prison, and Manuel Toruno was sentenced to at least 10 years in prison. Their 17-year-old accomplice was given the maximum sentence for a minor: six years in prison and four years of probation. The maximum prison sentences proposed by this bill, five years and two years, are totally absurd and useless.

A woman’s decision to abort is rarely made alone, although it is a decision that must clearly be made without any persuasion. As I just said, such coercion is already prohibited by the Criminal Code. However, it is normal for an adolescent or a woman to seek advice from those close to her. If this person’s mother, father, brother, sister or partner counsels her not to keep the baby, the bill is so vague that the pregnant woman’s family could be subject to jail time. That is completely unacceptable.

Bill C-510 is also condescending towards women. It suggests that they are often coerced into abortion and that they cannot make the decision on their own. But women are free to make that choice and they must continue to be free.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that my political party and I are fiercely opposed to this bill. As a woman and a mother, I am personally insulted by these dangerous measures that restrict freedom of choice regarding abortion. In the name of women’s right and freedoms, I ask all members to oppose it.

, I listened to the hon. member's speech on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When we look at the Conservative Party in action over the past few years, it is not the charter that bothers that party so much, but the issue of rights and freedoms. For example, when the Conservative Party attacks francophone minorities and abolishes the court challenges program, it is attacking rights and freedoms. When the Conservative Party attacks homosexuals regarding the possibility of same-sex marriage, it is attacking right and freedoms. When the Conservative Party attacks women's right to abortion, it is once again attacking rights and freedoms.

I would like our colleague to explain why the Conservative Party's positions are often inconsistent with our rights and freedoms. How can he defend the charter so fiercely?

, I find it very difficult to debate this bill today because we are once again debating abortion. Regardless of what the member for Winnipeg South would have us believe, this bill reopens the abortion debate. In fact, his leader was so angry the day he introduced this bill that he even said he would not support it. The Prime Minister's spokesperson, Dimitri Soudas, also stated that the government leader would not vote for this bill.

I cannot understand why the member for Winnipeg South still wants to debate this bill. I also cannot understand why he is still receiving so much support from his party despite the fact that his leader is refusing to support this bill.

They can try to dress this bill up and manipulate people in all kinds of ways, but the fact is that it would restrict access to freedom of choice. That debate is over. We do not need to talk about it again. It was clear last year when we debated maternal and child health. Once again, the member for Winnipeg South was very clear. He told people that some progress had been made and that more would be made in the coming year.

That is what he is trying to do with this bill, and he said so right here on Parliament Hill. The women of Quebec and Canada—the people of Quebec and Canada—are not fools. We understand perfectly well what he said and what he meant. He thinks that he made progress this year by convincing his government not to give women in developing countries access to a full range of family planning services. Yet we are well aware that thousands of women die every day because they do not have access to safe, sterile abortion services.

He said that he had made progress, and that more would be made in the coming year, with the introduction of this bill and with this attempt to manipulate public opinion. That is completely unacceptable. He hoped that by naming one person in his bill he would again appeal to people's emotions. I was touched by Roxanne's story, but the reason that the member gave for her death was not true. Roxanne's murderer, his defence lawyer and the crown prosecutor all said the same thing.

Will they stop lying? Will they stop manipulating the public and trying to make them believe things that are not true? It makes no sense.

I have been here for six and a half years now, and every year, for six and a half years, one, two or three members introduce bills to try to interfere with women's right to choose in this country. They will not succeed. They will not succeed because we will not give up. We will not give up our rights. To those who will say that the women of this country do not have the right to get angry, I will say that there are times when it is appropriate to get angry. This time, like many other times, I have a right to be angry. Men are trying to decide what is good for us, and I will tell them that I have a right to be angry because no one has the right to decide what is good for me. Once again, this government is trying to force us to adopt this kind of bill.

I was very angry this past weekend. Pro-life groups have been set up in various cities in Quebec and Canada.They are supposedly there to help women in distress, to help women who do not know what to do. These groups are supposedly there to help women who have a difficult decision to make and, supposedly, to be objective. But these groups spout all sorts of nonsense to these women. They tell the women who come to see them that the aborted fetuses are used by pharmaceutical companies to make lipstick. They say that the fetuses will be used for things that are not true.

Quite often, these groups are financed by people that we know. Quite often, they are supported by pro-life members of the government. I am ashamed to say that I am involved in a Parliament where a group of pro-life members supports organizations that lie shamelessly to women in need of help. It is not right to lie to women who need help. This bill will isolate young women even more, when what they need is to talk, be supported and be surrounded by people who understand them and by their families, friends and partners. They need advice.

At the age of 15, 16 or 17, we need to be surrounded by those who are closest to us. If the people advising these young women had the misfortune to be imprisoned because they told them that an abortion was their best option, imagine what these young women would have to live with for the rest of their lives? It would be frightening.

I cannot believe that members of the House will stand up and vote for this bill. I cannot believe it. I hope that all members will stand up and vote against it.

, the Conservative government is once again trying to impose its ideological agenda on Quebec women by reopening the abortion debate. The chair of the anti- abortion caucus introduced a bill meant to isolate women who are considering the procedure.

It is not just domestically that this government is calling into question a woman's right to choose. While the minister responsible for CIDA is announcing her child and maternal health plan for the 10 poorest countries, we still do not know whether the organizations that offer abortion-related services will continue to be funded. All forms of birth control, including abortion, should be funded by this plan.

The Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances, the Fédération des femmes du Québec and Action Canada for Population and Development are just some of the organizations that oppose these backward and ideological decisions. The Conservative government must stop tampering with the hard-won rights of women once and for all.

, one way to improve the living conditions of women is to ensure better family planning. But because of this government's ideological obsession, it refused to allow access to abortion to be discussed at the G8 and G20 summits. In addition, funding for the International Planned Parenthood Federation was suspended.

How can the Prime Minister think that his party's fundamentalists are more important than women's health?

, we have grown accustomed to the Conservatives' short-sighted, partisan, ideological decisions since they were elected in 2006.

We saw this when, because of partisan zeal, they refused to talk about abortion and access to contraception as part of the maternal and child health abroad file during the G8 and G20 summits. We saw it in connection with the gun registry, where, in their ideological blindness, the Conservatives lost sight of the fact that the registry, which has countless supporters in Quebec and Canada, saves lives. We saw it when they got rid of the mandatory long census form, which they claimed violated people's privacy. We have seen it in connection with climate change every time the Conservatives downplay the impact of human activities. That is what we in the Bloc Québécois call ideological obstinacy.

It seems clear that, as Manon Cornellier of Le Devoir recently said, “the government has shown that it has a soft spot for self-serving ignorance”.

, non-governmental organizations that offer services promoting maternal health in other countries fear that their budgets will be slashed by the Conservative government if they continue to offer abortion-related services.

Will the government set aside its backwards ideology and co

hundreds of women carrying coat hangers demonstrated in Montreal against the Conservative government's refusal to include abortion in the G8's plan for maternal health. The Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances, the Fédération des femmes du Québec, the CSN and the FIQ all denounce the Conservatives' backwards ideology.

Why is the government so keen on reopening the abortion debate, when this issue has been resolved in Quebec?

maternal and child health are part of the commitments made by Canada at the Millennium Summit in 2000. Instead of respecting the commitments we made, the Conservative government has frozen international assistance.

In light of the Conservatives' broken promises, how can we believe that they will respect the commitment they claim to have made to maternal and child health?

in addition to the environment, the government is excluding abortion from the G8 discussions for purely ideological reasons. In the view of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the G8 should not assume the right to decide which aspects of maternal and child health will be funded. That is the very opposite of what the Conservatives intend to do.

When will this government realize that its backwards ideology is jeopardizing women’s health?

, the extreme right has arrived in Parliament. The ultra-conservative members of the Reform Party, the Canadian Alliance and other right-wing splinter groups have won: they have taken Parliament hostage.

Using their favourite puppet, the Conservative Party, these groups take pleasure in destroying all the gains achieved over the years. I am referring to their position on abortion, the firearms registry and the funding cruelly taken away from the most vulnerable members of our society.

As we near the end of this session, only one conclusion can be drawn: these Reform Conservatives will do everything they can to impose their regressive views. Quebec can always count on a party that, unlike the Liberals and the NDP, will always stand up when it is time to protect these gains. The Bloc Québécois is here to defend the interests and values of the Quebec nation.

, while the largest summit on maternal health in the world is going on in Washington as a prelude to the G20 summit, the Prime Minister did not even bother to respond to the invitation. This is even more disturbing because the Conservative government claims that maternal and child health is one of its priorities for the G20.

When the time comes to lobby for the banks, and strongly speak out against plans to impose a bank tax, the Prime Minister does not hesitate to fly all over the world, but he cannot be bothered to take a short, one-hour plane trip for women.

This is just one of a long series of misogynistic decisions made by this Conservative government: refusing to fund abortions in developing countries; making cuts to funding for women's groups; supporting bills that limit access to abortion.

This Reform-Conservative government, led by the Prime Minister, must stop trying to score political points at the expense of women, and must start promoting a maternal and child health policy that includes abortion.

, the press has obtained the communiqué that the Conservative government intends to present to the G8 at the end of the month. Abortion will not be one of the options offered to women in developing countries.

Are we to surmise that the government has chosen to ignore recommendations on abortion from public health experts and that it is determined to export its ideological agenda?

One of the subjects that the G8 will focus on is maternal health—a critical issue, if ever there was one. This is what it says on page 42 of the World Health Organization report titled Women and Health:

Unsafe abortion causes a significant proportion of maternal deaths. Nearly 70,000 women die each year due to the complications of unsafe abortion. The evidence shows that women who seek an abortion will do so regardless of legal restrictions. Abortions performed in an illegal context are likely to be unsafe and provided by unskilled persons in unhygienic conditions. Poor women and those affected by crises and conflicts are particularly at risk. Where there are few restrictions on the availability of safe abortion, deaths and illness are dramatically reduced.

The use of modern contraception has reduced the need for induced abortion, yet young women, especially when they are unmarried, often face difficulty in obtaining contraception and may resort to unsafe abortion. Globally, women of all ages have abortions but in sub-Saharan Africa, which has the highest burden of ill-health and death from unsafe abortion, one in four unsafe abortions is done on adolescents aged 15 to 19 years.

How much is the Conservative government, which determined that maternal health would be a priority at the next G8, willing to invest to help these women in developing countries who die as a result of an abortion? Not a cent.

This $13 million-an-hour government does not want to reopen the abortion debate, as if the other G8 countries would play along with the idea that this topic, which is inherent to women's health, should not be debated. Hillary Clinton was very clear about this.

And that is why we will be supporting the Liberal motion. We will continue to maintain and support Quebec's wishes. Here in the House, we will argue against poverty, and support health, education and women's groups, whose funding has been cut. We have a gun registry that costs $4 million a year. This $1 billion, or the $500 million left over for security, is significant. And we could list many more examples. That is why we will be supporting the Liberal Party motion.

, the Minister for Status of Women and the Minister of International Cooperation have repeated all week that it is important to save the lives of women and children who are dying because of a lack of health care in developing countries. Yes, of course it is.

However, on this International Day of Action for Women's Health, are these ministers aware that by failing to fund access to abortion for women in developing countries, they are allowing more than 70,000 women to die every year for lack of access to this service? Does this government not have any compassion for these women who are dying because of an excess of dogmatism.

The Conservatives claim that they do not wish to reopen the abortion debate. However, backbenchers are at complete liberty to introduce bills limiting access to abortion, with the obvious approval of a Prime Minister who is obsessed with controlling everything.

The Conservatives must listen to what Quebeckers and Canadians are telling them and fund access to abortion in developing countries, while maintaining this service

, the Conservative government says it does not wish to reopen the abortion debate. Cardinal Ouellet candidly admitted yesterday that he was raising the abortion issue now because the Conservative government had revived the debate by excluding abortion from its maternal health policy for developing countries.

Does the Prime Minister realize that because of him and his refusal to include abortion in his maternal health policy for foreign nations the abortion debate is again raging in Canada and Quebec?

, the Minister of International Cooperation said in committee that the government as a whole refused to include abortion in the maternal health initiative. In other words, supposedly pro-choice ministers from Quebec were party to the decision to deny women their fundamental rights.

Can the Prime Minister tell us his reasons for excluding abortion from the list of measures to promote maternal health?

, first the Conservative government cut funding for groups that help women, and now it is penalizing groups that do not share its backward ideology.

According to the former president of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, “The [Prime Minister's] government's policies and actions are systematically killing the women's movement and stifling important voices—”.

Why is the Prime Minister so bent on shutting down anyone who opposes his conservative ideology, especially women?

, once again last week the Conservative government demonstrated just what it is capable of in terms of controlling the message and giving it a distinctly Conservative flavour.

Hundreds of young people were invited to a meeting to discuss issues related to the G8 and G20, providing what should have been an opportunity for them to ask the Prime Minister some questions. Some of those young people have said that the Prime Minister's staff changed and even discarded some of their questions in order to avoid any controversial or potentially embarrassing topics for the Conservatives.

Any questions related to abortion in their policy on maternal health in developing countries were discarded. Any questions related to the environment were discarded.

There was nothing transparent about the question and answer session, which was led by Senator Mike Duffy, a good Conservative. The Prime Minister's Office managed to turn the whole affair into a partisan exercise.

The Conservative government should be ashamed of itself for its obsession with controlling the message and for muzzling these young people in the context of what was supposed to be a democratic exercise.

, the Conservative government says it does not wish to reopen the abortion debate. However, it was Conservative members who introduced bills to restrict access to abortion and it is the Conservative government that is proposing to stop funding abortion abroad. Even Msgr. Ouellet stated that he was prompted to make a public statement because the Conservative government had reopened the debate.

Will the government admit that it has reopened the debate on abortion to satisfy the religious fundamentalists of the Conservative Party?

, the Conservative government has so discredited itself by taking this backward position on abortion that it could derail the G8's negotiations to improve the health of women and children in developing countries. The ONE campaign notes that there is still no concrete plan on the table one month before the summit.

Does the government realize that its ideological stubbornness regarding abortion is stifling the momentum for maternal health?

the Prime Minister's entourage has expressed surprise that funding for international maternal health could lead to a debate on abortion. However, the Conservative caucus has tried to reopen the debate through back-door measures that would limit access to abortion. They refuse to admit it here, but they do not hide their intentions from anti- abortion groups.

Will the government admit that the best way to not reopen the abortion debate is to fund projects that offer freedom of choice to women in developing countries?

Quebec's National Assembly reaffirmed the right of women to freedom of choice and is asking the Conservative government to not cut funding to groups that support the right to abortion.

Instead of listening to the religious fundamentalists in its party, when will the Conservative government start listening to Quebec, which reaffirmed the right of women to freedom of choice?

, in a report obtained under access to information, we learn that CIDA officials recommended that the Conservative government include abortion in its maternal health policy abroad. That report clearly states that access to safe abortion for women in developing countries would save lives.

By ignoring the recommendations of his own officials, did the Prime Minister not just prove that his maternal health policy is dictated by religious right lobbies?

the Prime Minister can deny all he likes that he wants to reopen the debate on abortion, the fact is that he has decided, against the advice of his own officials, to restrict access to abortion for women in developing countries.

If the Prime Minister is serious, why does he not take concrete action by including abortion in his policy on maternal health, before the G8 summit?

# INDEPENDENT

Madam Chair, I am going to give a 10-minute speech, and leave five minutes for questions and answers with the minister.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to the committee today about issues that are priorities for the Government of Canada: promhonooting gender equality and empowering women and girls.

I am proud to say that gender equality and empowering women and girls are now central to Canada’s feminist approach to international development efforts.

Our approach is to identify gaps and obstacles that have an impact on the fundamental rights of girls and women, on their participation in decision-making, and on their access to and control over resources.

We are convinced that this is the best approach to reduce poverty and inequality and to build a more inclusive world. Let me explain why. First, let us be clear that poverty is sexist. Around the world, women and girls still face many challenges in realizing their full potential. Each year, an estimated 50 million girls under the age of 18 are forced into marriage. That is 50 million girls who are robbed of their opportunity to go to school and reach their full potential. Every year, out of desperation, an estimated 22 million girls and women endanger their lives by undergoing unsafe abortions. An estimated 62 million teenage girls in the world do not go to school or are frequently absent, double the number of boys, and in developing countries, women spend significantly more time than men on unpaid care, limiting their ability to invest their time in education, paid work, political and public participation, and leisure.

Second, women and girls are powerful agents of change who can drive progress toward peace, prosperity, and sustainable development. We know this, because when women and girls are part of the decision-making process, policies and programs are more effective and bring about real and lasting change. When women and girls have access to quality, safe education, their lives and the lives of those around them change for the better. They tend to marry later, have fewer children, provide better health, education, and nutrition for their families, and earn more than women without the advantage of schooling.

When women can participate in the economy on an equal footing with men, economic growth rates and income per capita increase, allowing people to be lifted out of poverty. When women and girls have access to information about their health and well-being and have agency over their sexual and reproductive health and rights, they are empowered in all aspects of their lives. Rates of unintended pregnancy, maternal mortality, and unsafe abortions go down and families thrive.

Adopting a feminist approach is both the right thing to do and the smart thing to do. Canada can make a real difference in the lives of women and girls around the world while ensuring that its international assistance provides the greatest development impact benefit for all.

Canada’s commitment to the empowerment of women and girls received an overwhelmingly positive reception through the international assistance review. A wide array of partners and stakeholders emphasized the need to increase support to feminist and women’s and girls’ rights movements and women-led initiatives and to address the root causes of poverty, including gender-based discrimination, inequality, and harmful social norms.

Over the past month, we have been making it clear to our partners and stakeholders that this is the way forward for Canada’s international assistance, and we have been busy delivering on our commitment to be a leader in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This is why we are supporting a comprehensive approach to close existing gaps in sexual and reproductive health and rights as a top priority.

To mark International Women’s Day, the right hon. Prime Minister, along with the hon. Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, announced an investment of $650 million over three years in funding for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Canada’s support will focus specifically on providing comprehensive sexuality education, strengthening reproductive health services, and investing in family planning and contraceptives. Programs aided by this announcement will help prevent, and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, including child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and cutting, and support for the right to choose safe and legal abortions as well as access to post- abortion care.

We have also increased spending on programming that targets the specific needs of women and girls in conflict situations. For example, as part of the $1.1 billion package for the Middle East, Canada is providing $40.5 million in multi-year programming on sexual and gender-based violence with the UNFPA in response to the Syria and Iraq crises, to include reproductive health services, as well as assistance to women and girls who have experienced sexual and gender-based violence.

Moving forward, we will take an active stance for gender equality and women’s human rights in all bilateral, multilateral and international fora, and in mobilizing our partners. We will continue to prioritize gender equality initiatives starting with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including sexual and gender-based violence, and supports to women’s organizations and movements, including women’s rights organizations, and we will strengthen the integration of gender equality results across all other interventions from education, to food security, to climate action.

To make a real difference, we will ensure that the empowerment of women and girls is not a check box at the bottom of a form. We want to see women and girls involved in the decision-making process, so they can shape the services, programming, and policies that touch their lives. We want to see them in positions of leadership.

Finally, we are committing to a high degree of accountability for achieving gender equality results supported by a system to measure impact, and by reporting concrete results to Canadians. Looking ahead, we are eager to release Canada’s new international assistance policy statement which will tackle gender inequalities, address significant obstacles faced by women and girls all around the world, and recognize the active role that women and girls can and must play in society for everyone’s benefit.

I will now take the opportunity to ask the minister a few questions. In the course of our discussions, we talked about the need for increased levels of need around the world, and the capacity for us to look at ODA and private funding, and find a medium between the two. I know the minister has talked about the development finance institute, and how it is aligned with the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the sustainable development goals as well as the Paris agreement.

Could the minister elaborate on how the DFI relates to our official development at this stage?

, the second petition is calling that the House condemn discrimination against females occurring through selective pregnancy termination. The petitioners note that the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada vehemently opposes sex selection. Millions of girls have been lost through sex-selective pregnancy termination, causing gender imbalance, and contributing to trafficking and prostitution around the world.

, the support of the Minister for Status of Women for a motion to reopen the abortion debate has met with huge disapproval from women’s groups in Quebec.

The Fédération des femmes du Québec and the Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances called for her resignation, and now many others are objecting to her position: the Quebec minister for the status of women, the Conseil du statut de la femme, the Intersyndicale des femmes, and more than 10,000 people who have signed petitions that have been circulating for just 24 hours.

The minister may have voted according to her conscience, but will she admit that she is now unfit to occupy a position that protects the interests and the rights of women?

yesterday we were astonished to watch the Minister for Status of Women vote in favour of the motion to reopen the abortion debate.

The Minister for Status of Women, who is responsible for ensuring respect for and the promotion of women’s rights, voted to restrict a woman’s right to control her own body. It is no surprise that the Fédération des femmes du Québec is today calling on the minister to resign. The minister has betrayed the trust of women and broken her own party’s election promise.

Will the Prime Minister fire her or does he support her? Will she rise and tender her resignation today? We are ready to listen.

, last Wednesday a Conservative senator talked about reopening the debate on the death penalty. Today, a Conservative member is asking that the debate on abortion be reopened by presenting a motion to redefine the concept of a human being.

Is this government doing indirectly what it claims it does not wish to do directly, that is, reopen the debates on the death penalty and abortion?

Moved for leave to introduce Bill C-242, an act to provide for a referendum to determine whether Canadians wish medically unnecessary abortions to be insured services under the Canada Health Act and to amend the Referendum Act

He said: , this bill would provide for a referendum to be held on the question of whether public funds should be used for medically unnecessary abortions. If electors agreed that this should not be the case, an amendment to the Canada Health Act would be brought into force which would allow a reduction in fiscal transfers to provinces that allow such funding.

I note for the record that prior to prorogation the bill was numbered Bill C-452. I request the consent of the House that that designation remain unchanged.

, I will try to be brief, but it is my first opportunity to get in on this debate, although I was attempting to do so before.

I find two mistakes that have been made here, and one compounds the other. The first mistake was when the summer grants program allowed students to be hired by NGOs who were specifically focused on interfering with women’s legal rights to access safe and legal abortions. This is a right that I support and that the Green Party supports. The response, however, was another mistake. I think the minister overreached. This attestation box has created great concern among people in my community, for example, the Hope Bay Bible Camp on Pender Island, or the Friendship Community Church, which has two good programs, including one that does soccer camps at Tsawout First Nation.

I will be voting for the opposition motion because I believe the attestation box was a mistake, but not because for one second I will surrender on a woman’s right to equal choice and equal rights.

, I am grateful to be able to intervene on this matter again. It is an important thing that MPs work with their constituents to help them through this process. I do not think it is politicized by political parties. I will, on the appropriate occasion, take that up with Conservatives for politicizing issues if they do not need to.

This really is coming from the grassroots. There are a lot of really good projects run by local church and religious groups in my riding. Every year they have qualified for summer grant funding. Every year they have people in the community doing good work. They have never had a political objective with those summer grants programs.

There was that one bad example I mentioned earlier of the wrong group that should never have gotten funding. The ministers should use their discretion and communicate it through their departments that political groups who harass women seeking their legal right to abortion should never receive funding. They should not have needed to go to a one-size-fits-all checkbox.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would agree with me that some groups should not have received funding in the last round.

The first petition calls upon the House to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy terminations, which gives rise to a variety of factors, including creating a global gender imbalance.

, since the Conservatives came into office, we have watched them try to impose openly ideological measures and laws.

There are many examples, be it the firearms registry or their frequent attacks on the opposition parties, but their most nauseating practice remains the perpetual attacks against a woman’s right to choose.

My question is quite simple. Is the Prime Minister aware that the creation of a pro-life parliamentary committee charged with circumventing the medical and legal arguments, as the member is proposing, in fact reopens the abortion debate? The Prime Minister should instead be reaffirming the right to choose, as Quebec’s National Assembly and the Bloc Québécois did unanimously.

# GREEN PARTY

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# FORCES ET DÉMOCRATIE

FD - Forces et Démocratie - Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)

2012-04-26 15:06 [p.7224]

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# NEW ONES

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