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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 2, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 21(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, a certified copy of the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Alberta.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-39, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in relation to the motion adopted on Monday, January 30, 2023, regarding McKinsey & Company.

* * *

• (1005)

PETITIONS

COPYRIGHT

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be presenting two petitions this morning.

The first petition is close to my heart because Canadian creators matter. Our writers and publishers are at the centre of this petition brought forward by people from my community.

The petitioners are asking for an amendment to the Copyright Act for the government to ensure educational copying is licensed, with royalties flowing back to writers and publishers; to clarify that Copyright Board tariffs are mandatory, with statutory damages for non-compliance; and to work with provincial governments to ensure the education sector is properly funded so it can pay its bills for materials and deliver essential services to Canadian students.

I thank the members of my community for bringing this petition forward.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition brought forward by people from my community. This one is on foreign affairs.

The petition is asking the Government of Canada to send immediate aid to severely affected countries, such as Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syrian Arab Republic, Sudan, northern Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Haiti and Burkina Faso, by releasing Canada's surplus wheat to the above-mentioned countries, and to increase monetary donations substantially to countries suffering from high rates of hunger and starvation as a result of climate change.

HEALTH

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table today what I believe is a very time-relevant petition. It is calling upon the Government of Canada, provinces and other stakeholders to come together to deal with a very important issue: health care and the Canada Health Act. The petitioners are asking for co-operation and for the different stakeholders to work together for the betterment of health across the country.

CANADA CHILD BENEFIT

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition in the House.

Petition e-4166 calls on the federal government to stop the Canada child benefit clawbacks from families that received pandemic supports. This petition was brought forward by Leila Sarangi, and Campaign 2000 gathered 600 signatures.

Business of Supply

The petitioners call on the government to refund amounts clawed back from the CCB as a result of families receiving pandemic benefits; protect the CCB from future clawbacks by excluding the CERB, the CRB and other pandemic benefits from the CCB income test; and implement a repayment amnesty for all people who received the CERB or the CRB whose incomes are below or just below the poverty line and for all youth aging out of care.

In the midst of a cost of living crisis, the government should not be punishing single parents and others who are struggling to make ends meet with these unfair clawbacks. I am proud to table this petition in the House today.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is regarding just transition legislation. The signatories are asking that the government reduce emissions by at least 60% below 2005 levels by 2030, making significant contributions to the reduction of emissions globally. They are calling on the government to wind down the fossil fuel industry and the related infrastructure, end fossil fuel subsidies and transition to a decarbonized economy. They are also calling for the creation of new public economic institutions; the expansion of public ownership of services and utilities across the economy to implement this transition while creating good green jobs; an inclusive workforce and things that will strengthen human rights and workers' rights while respecting indigenous people's rights and sovereignty and making them a part of this conversation; and overall the creation of a future that our children can live in.

HEALTH

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, which was presented to me by a constituent, is related to the privatization of health care. This petition has 33,666 signatories.

The petitioners are calling on the government to protect our universal public health care system under the Canada Health Act seeing as some provincial governments have thrown the door wide open, including in Ontario, to private, for-profit health services after intentionally underfunding and misusing federal transfers.

The petitioners are calling on the government to ensure those public dollars do not go into the pockets of private corporations and their shareholders, and ask that the government stop the outsourcing of medical procedures and the further burdening of our public system with inflated costs caused by this privatization. They are calling for the government to show leadership on this, as our party is. I thank the over 33,000 signatories for this petition.

* * *

● (1010)

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if a revised response to Question No. 1054, originally tabled on January 30, 2023, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1054—**Mr. Michael Barrett:**

With regard to tweets made by the government that were later deleted, broken down by each instance, since January 1, 2019: what are the details of each instance, including the (i) Twitter handle and username, (ii) date the tweet was posted, (iii) date the tweet was deleted, (iv) summary of its contents, (v) reason the tweet was deleted, (vi) titles of who approved the initial tweet, (vii) titles of who ordered the tweet's removal?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—BAIL REFORM

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC) moved:

That, given that, after eight years of this government's soft on crime policies,

(i) violent crime has increased by 32%,

(ii) gang-related homicides have increased by 92%,

(iii) violent, repeat offenders are obtaining bail much more easily,

(iv) increasing daily acts of crime and violence are putting Canadians at risk,

(v) five Canadian police officers were killed in the line of duty in just one year,

the House call on the government to enact policies that prioritize the rights of victims and law-abiding citizens, namely:

(a) fix Canada's broken bail system by immediately repealing the elements enacted by Bill C-75, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, which force judges to release violent, repeat offenders onto the streets, allowing them to reoffend;

(b) strengthen Canada's bail laws so that those who are prohibited from possessing firearms and who are then accused of serious firearms offences do not easily get bail; and

(c) ensure that Canada's justice system puts the rights of law-abiding Canadians ahead of the rights of violent, repeat offenders.

Business of Supply

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Fundy Royal.

There are two reasons we are here today talking about bail reform and violent crime.

The first reason is that Canadians across the country are growing increasingly alarmed by the violent crime wave impacting every major community and our rural communities across the country. Canadians are waking up every day to headlines of violent crime, police officers being murdered and people being murdered on public transit. That is why we are here. We hear their concerns and are here to represent them and demand change.

The second reason we are here today is to demand change from the Liberals, which have done absolutely nothing to address the violent crime surge in this country. They have taken no responsibility. They have made no commitments to Canadians that they are taking this seriously and will do anything about it. They have brought forward no new ideas on how to address the need for immediate bail reform in this country, address the violent crime surge in this country and address the repeat violent offenders who are being caught and released by police over and over again and who are wreaking havoc on our communities on a daily basis.

That is why we are here today. We want to talk about bail reform and crime for our Conservative opposition day motion, which was just outlined.

What I would say to Canadians is that it is not just in their heads that violent crime is going up. It is going up. In fact, it is up 32% in the last eight years under the Liberal Prime Minister. More than that, gang murders have almost doubled. They have gone up 92% in the eight years that the Liberal Prime Minister has been at the helm.

We have also seen, as I mentioned earlier, that police officers are being murdered on the job. There were five in the last number of months, particularly over the holidays. A young new constable in the Ontario police, Greg Pierzchala, was murdered by a violent repeat offender who was out on bail. He was shot and murdered by that man. That man also had a weapons prohibition order. He was deemed too dangerous to possess a firearm by our law system and had a long rap sheet of harming people in his community. This repeat violent offender was let out on bail, and then he murdered a young, innocent police officer over the holidays. That story, unfortunately, is becoming less and less unique in this country.

This is not just happening in Toronto. Of course, folks from Toronto will know better than I do that public transit is becoming less and less safe. In fact, increasingly, women are concerned about riding the subway because people are being murdered. There are teenagers swarming people and stabbing them to death. People are being lit on fire. People are being assaulted and pushed to the ground. We just saw a CBC reporter get assaulted and die. Four days earlier, an elderly woman had the same thing happen in Toronto. They were just walking down the street minding their own business and were murdered.

In Vancouver, the community is facing serious drug issues, with people face down in the street overdosing. It is horrible. I think everyone agrees that we need immediate action on that. We are also

seeing terror inflicted on that community, on the most vulnerable communities and in Vancouver at large by a very small group of people. In fact, last year, 40 people were arrested 6,000 times. That means each of those 40 people was arrested 150 times in one calendar year. That is every two or three days, or sometimes multiple times a day. Police say they are sometimes arresting the same person committing violent acts twice in one day. Forty people were arrested 6,000 times. I think that is astounding, so I will keep repeating it. What kind of justice system do we have if 40 people can wreak havoc and commit 6,000 crimes in one year?

The bail system is broken in this country, and it is not just the Conservatives saying this. The Conservatives have been saying we need bail reform for quite some time, but it is also a non-partisan issue. It is also said by every single premier in Canada. It is all three premiers of the territories and all 10 premiers of the provinces, representing Conservatives, the NDP and Liberals. This is a non-partisan issue.

They all signed a historic letter to the Prime Minister in the last couple of weeks demanding bail reform. Do members know how difficult it is to get every region of the country to sign on to one letter and agree on a specific policy? It is pretty rare and very difficult, and they did that on their own volition. They came together, signed the letter and demanded bail reform from the Prime Minister. One would think we would have heard the Prime Minister call a press conference and say he is going to do something about this as every region in the country is concerned about it, but there were crickets. Nothing is happening on the Liberal benches.

● (1015)

Liberals have made no announcement and no commitment to bring in bail reform. When we have asked questions in question period, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, the man tasked with the responsibility for the Criminal Code, says that is on police and provinces, blaming police and provinces for the issues in this country.

The minister says they are open to ideas. There is an idea right here from the premiers, every single premier in this country, in fact, and more ideas, if the Liberals would like them, from the Toronto police, the epicentre of violent crime in this country. The Toronto police penned a letter, on their own, to the Prime Minister of this country proposing three measures concerning bail. In fact, police associations across the country and municipal police forces are saying bail reform will save lives. That is what police are saying. Those are the frontline people putting their lives at risk for community safety, the ones dealing with violent repeat offenders, saying that we need bail reform and Canadian lives will be saved.

Business of Supply

The data tells us that as well. I recently heard from Chief Myron Demkiw of the Toronto police, who said there were 44 murders by shooting in Toronto last year, 44 innocent lives taken by violent criminals using guns. Of those 44 murderers, 24 were out on bail. If our bail system was a little tougher on repeat violent offenders, 24 people would still be alive. Therefore, the data shows that the police are correct that bail reform would save lives, and yet there is nothing from the Liberal benches. They are not taking this seriously. They are taking no responsibility, and people are dying. I do not understand it. They are tasked with public safety.

The Minister of Public Safety spent the better part of January touring the country and talking to hunters about taking away the tools they use because the Liberals are getting tough on guns, as they say, gun control, on duck hunters, farmers and sport shooters. He spent considerable time and resources going to talk to hunters about taking their firearms away. Meanwhile, police officers are being murdered in Toronto. People are being murdered on the subway. Why was the public safety minister of Canada not touring our cities to talk to police about what they are facing on a daily basis? Where are the time and resources on that?

This is a Liberal government that is going to spend billions and billions of dollars going after people like me, people on these benches who have firearms legally and lawfully, who hunt and shoot with their families. That is what the Liberals are focused on. That is what all the resources are being focused on by the Liberal government when it comes to guns, for the most part. Meanwhile, people are being murdered by repeat violent offenders who continue to get bail. That falls at the feet of the Liberal government.

We can look at Bill C-75, a bail reform bill the Liberals brought forward a few years ago. When we talk to police, all those changes in policies that made it easier for repeat violent offenders to get bail are coming home to roost now. That is what we are hearing from the brave frontline police officers in this country.

We need to repeal the most harmful aspects of Bill C-75. That would be leadership from the Prime Minister: to get tough on crime, tough on the 40 people being arrested 6,000 times for violent crime in Vancouver, and ensure that we save 24 people in Toronto next year. The statistics are about the same every year in Toronto: Over half of the shooting murders are by people who are out on bail. Let us save those lives next year. That could be done in the next few months. That could be announced today by the Liberal government.

To conclude, the Conservatives have a tough-on-crime record. In fact, under Stephen Harper, in the 10 years he was Prime Minister, crime went down 26%. They brought forward 80 criminal justice bills. It was a top priority for Stephen Harper. In the eight years that the Liberal Prime Minister has been at the helm and in power in this country, violent crime reversed and went up 32%. There is a clear difference in approach to dealing with crime, and a Conservative government will be the one to save lives in Canada, get tough on crime, treat law-abiding citizens with respect, put victims' rights first and ensure that repeat violent offenders stay off our streets.

• (1020)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr.

Speaker, first and foremost, I do not believe the manipulation of stats that are often portrayed from the Conservative Party of Canada. If one listens to the Conservatives, one would think there was never any crime when the Conservatives were in power. They have this attitude of "get tough on crime" and they know all the wonderful spin words. The Conservatives were in power, true, and they supported bail and probation officers and the important roles that probation officers and judicial independence at times play in society, or at least they would give that image.

Does the member believe that our judges and the independence of our judicial system, our probation system, are fundamentally flawed? Is that what the Conservative Party believes today?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member from Winnipeg spent any time speaking with police, but my remarks are fuelled by facts and police officers I have spoken to in Winnipeg and across the country. If he does not believe me, we can talk about Stats Canada. I do believe he believes in the institutions and the researchers in government, so I am going to assume he is going to take me at face value, but I am happy to share this with him afterwards.

In the 10 years Stephen Harper was Prime Minister, there was a decrease of 25.86% in crime per capita. A 26% decrease is a statistical fact. In those same stats, one can see a 32% increase in violent crimes since the member's leader has been Prime Minister. Those are the facts. The women who are concerned about riding public transit in Toronto, I do not think it is all in their head. Perhaps he does, but the stats show they are more at risk today than eight years ago, before the Liberal Prime Minister brought in all of his soft-on-crime policies and ensured that violent repeat offenders were let out on bail in our communities. We will stand up for them, unlike the Liberals.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my first university degree was a bachelor's degree in criminology.

During my studies, we would discuss being for or against parole, loosening or tightening restrictions and so on. As we progressed through the program, the better we understood the issues, the more we read and the more we relied on science and credible studies. By the end of our undergraduate program, we understood that this rigidity that the Conservatives want would not get us anywhere.

Business of Supply

The best example is the United States. That country has the harshest and most coercive system in the world, with appalling incarceration rates and a drive to keep inmates in prison and on parole as long as possible. It just so happens that the United States is also seeing a jump in its violent crime rate.

What makes my colleague and the Conservatives believe that a tougher stance will result in lower rates of violent crime?

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I have two quick points. The member said a factually incorrect statement. Under Stephen Harper, the days spent in prison by an average individual in prison went from 126 days to 105 days, so he is factually incorrect on that part.

I am disappointed in the Bloc Québécois, actually, because in Quebec a woman was violently raped. She fought her rapist. She was violently raped by a man. How many days in prison did that rapist get for violently raping that woman? Because of Bill C-5 from the Liberal government, it was zero days. The Bloc Québécois party supported Bill C-5. Now her rapist will see zero days in prison because they allowed conditional sentencing for rapists. He is going to serve his sentence for violently raping that woman from the comfort of his home, so I will take no lectures from that member about being tough on crime and the results we are going to see.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on what is a very important and pressing issue in our country today.

Our justice system under the Liberals is broken. Everybody knows it. All 13 premiers have gotten together to demand change. Our bail system is the responsibility of the federal government. Those provisions are in the Criminal Code. It is this Parliament that has jurisdiction over the Criminal Code. Our bail system is badly broken.

Some of the recent stats that we have seen out of Toronto will absolutely amaze members. We have heard from police associations across the country. We have heard from the Ontario Provincial Police. We have heard from the Toronto police. We have heard from police officers, and my fellow members have probably heard in their own ridings, about the dangers of our current catch-and-release bail system: the same individuals being caught for a crime and being let back on the street.

In Toronto, and I find this amazing, there were 44 shooting-related homicides last year. Of those 44 perpetrators, the accused, 24 were on bail. Our system is broken. That stat alone will tell us that our system is badly broken, when over half of the homicides in Toronto are committed by people on bail. There are people walking the streets in our community whom we had in custody. The police did their job. They caught them after committing a crime. They charged them, but because of a broken Liberal bail system, they are back out on the street.

This other one, again, amazes me, from the Toronto police: In 2021, 47 individuals were let out on bail. Who are these 47 individuals? They were individuals who were arrested for a firearms offence but were given bail. They committed a firearms offence, but now they are out on the street. They were re-arrested for another

firearms offence, and 47 of them were given bail again, given bail twice for firearms offences. The system is broken.

Now we look at the tragic death of a police officer that has galvanized police organizations and has galvanized the premiers, every premier in our country. As my colleague just said, it is hard to get multiple parties from multiple provinces, different premiers, to all agree on something. We do not expect, in Canada, that we would all agree on something, but every single premier in this country, of every province and every territory, agrees that we need bail reform. They are saying that repeat violent offenders who commit gun crimes should not be let out on the street. That is not too much to ask.

Two days after Christmas, a young police officer was gunned down by an individual who was on bail, an individual who had a lifetime firearms prohibition order against him. If someone with a lifetime firearms prohibition commits a firearms-related offence and we cannot keep them in custody, the system is badly broken.

Who broke the system? It was the Liberals. In 2019, Bill C-75 made it far more difficult for offenders who should be behind bars to be kept behind bars. Bill C-75 was a sweeping bail reform by the Liberal government that established a catch-and-release system that ensured that even repeat violent offenders who use guns to commit their crimes would be back out on the street.

It gets worse. The Liberals like to say that the Conservatives' "tough on crime" does not work. The fact of the matter is that it does work. Violent crime went down when we were in government. What is happening with crime now? Crime is up 32% in Canada since the Liberals took government. Gang-related crime and gang-related homicides nearly doubled since the Liberals took government, less than eight years ago. To lay this at the feet of the Liberals is entirely appropriate. It is their system.

• (1030)

What does Bill C-5 do? It removes mandatory minimum sentences for crimes like extortion with a firearm, robbery with a firearm and for drive-by shootings. It allows house arrest for individuals who burn down homes, arsonists. They burn down someone else's house, but they get to serve their sentence from the comfort of their own house. Those who commit sexual assault are now able to serve their sentence from their home and possibly in the same community as their victim.

When we say the Liberal justice system is broken, it absolutely is. Liberals will often talk about the tough-on-crime approach of the Conservatives. If someone is a repeat offender and commits robbery with a firearm in this country, if someone walks into a store or into someone's home with a firearm and robs them, they do not need to be out on the street. They need to be in jail.

Business of Supply

It is not helping anyone. We are not helping the victims. We are not helping our communities. We are not even helping the offender. How does putting an offender back on the street help them? Under the Conservatives, if someone committed robbery with a firearm, they went to jail for a minimum of four years.

Under Bill C-5, which recently passed into law, the Liberal Bill C-5 that is soft on crime, there is no longer a mandatory jail sentence for committing a robbery with a firearm. There is something interesting I heard the justice minister say many times. He said that tough on crime is not constitutional.

Less than a week ago, just yards from here, the Supreme Court of Canada said the mandatory penalty of four years for robbery with a firearm is constitutional. It was a seven-to-two decision. The Supreme Court of Canada said that a mandatory penalty of five years for robbery with a prohibited weapon is constitutional. What a surprise. That was a seven-to-two decision. Those were two separate cases.

Soft on crime does not work. Canadians know it. Conservatives know it. Premiers of all political stripes know it. The only people in this country who like this approach would be the Liberals and repeat offenders. That is poor company to keep.

We have to take action on behalf of victims. I do not know how we can look a victim's family in the eyes and say the system does work. Then we say that the person who was out on bail for a firearms crime, who had a lifetime firearms prohibition, was able to murder their loved one and the system is working. The system is not working.

We need strong changes. We need to repeal Bill C-5. We need to that ensure if someone robs another with a firearm they go to jail. We need to ensure that if someone burns someone's house down or commits sexual assault, they are not serving their sentence from the comfort of their own home. We need to ensure that a repeat firearms offender serves their time in jail.

We need to make sure that when the police catch someone who has a firearms prohibition order and who has committed another firearms-related crime, like a drive-by shooting or robbery with a firearm, it is not too high a bar to meet to say that while that person is awaiting trial, for the safety of the victims, the community and our frontline police officers, they are going to be held behind bars.

That is appropriate. It is reasonable. It is what all premiers are calling for. It is what the police are calling for. It is what Canadians are calling for. Unfortunately, for three days in a row, we have asked the government, in good faith, to do something and correct the mistake it made. Will it change the bail laws so individuals, who should absolutely not be roaming our streets, committing crimes and murdering people, are held behind bars? It is crickets over there.

The Liberals said if the opposition wants to come up with something, they will consider it. They are almost victim blaming by saying the police and the provinces have a role. No, the Criminal Code is their job. We are calling on them and demanding that they do something to reform our broken Liberal bail system. They have to do it today.

• (1035)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to Bill C-75, I just want to make something absolutely clear. Bill C-75 imposed a reverse onus on those who are charged to prove they should be released. It is a very important tool in the criminal justice system. It is one that imposes an onus on the individual to prove that they should be released, whereas in most cases it is a presumptive release.

Can my friend opposite outline what change he would make to Bill C-75 that would undo this, or is he asking that we strengthen this? I am not clear on where he is going with this. As is, Bill C-75 did strengthen bail and it made our communities stronger. I think my friend opposite is misleading us in that regard.

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the facts do not back up my colleague's assertion. Bill C-75 enshrines in law the principle that the least onerous provision possible has to be put in place for offenders. That means that the onus is on the prosecution to show why a less onerous provision would not be appropriate, which has resulted in a broken bail system.

Members do not have to take my word for it. We are on opposite sides of the House here. However, they should listen to the 13 premiers from their own provinces. The Ontario Provincial Police and the Toronto police are saying the same thing. They are all laying the blame on Bill C-75. They are saying it is easier for repeat violent offenders who commit gun crimes, since Bill C-75 passed, entrenching this in law, to get bail. The results are in. Individuals who are out on bail are committing murders. Over half the murders in Toronto are committed by individuals out on bail. What more evidence do we need to see?

• (1040)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no disagreement from New Democrats that we have some very serious issues with the bail system in this country, especially when it comes to violent offenders, and we have public order problems, which a few repeat offenders cause. However, I am a bit perplexed, because on Monday, the member for Fundy Royal, at the justice committee, presented a motion to have the committee work on effective and serious solutions to these problems. Three days later we are here in the House with a sensational, heightened rhetoric motion that is trying to divide us on this issue.

Business of Supply

Which is the Conservative Party here? Is it the one that wants to take serious action at committee to find real solutions to the problem or the one that wants to fundraise off this issue and motivate its base?

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, this is the Conservative Party and these are parliamentarians. We are going to take action through every avenue at our disposal as an opposition for now. We are going to take every avenue in the House, at committee and everywhere to ensure that the government listens to the police, to victims, to communities and to the 13 premiers in this country who are calling for bail reform. We make no apologies for that. We will take every action we can to get the job done.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for his thoughts on the recent ruling where a violent rapist was sentenced to zero days in prison because the Liberal government brought forward the option of conditional sentencing for rapists. Can he comment on that with a bit of the history?

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, in Bill C-5, the mandatory penalties for serious gun crimes were eliminated. House arrest was prohibited for certain offences, including sexual assault, under the Criminal Code, thanks to changes that were made during our years in government as Conservatives. We said that arsonists who burn down someone else's house and individuals who commit sexual assault should not serve their sentence from the comfort of their own home in the same community as their victims. All Canadians understand that. However, Bill C-5, which recently passed in the House, allows for sex offenders who commit sexual assault to get house arrest. That is wrong and we need to change that.

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the hon. Minister of Public Safety.

[Translation]

I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the important issue of bail and a possible reform in Canada. I know that Canadians are concerned about this issue. Making sure that our laws are effective and fair and that they protect Canadians is certainly a priority for my government.

[English]

First, I would like to express my condolences to the families of Constable Greg Pierzchala and Michael Finlay and Katie Nguyen Ngo, and of all victims of the disturbing incidents of violence across this country that we have seen in recent months. Each has been a personal tragedy and a blow to our communities.

Canada has a strong and effective criminal justice system, including its bail laws, but we all know that things could always be improved. Canadians deserve to be and to feel safe, and we have a role to play in protecting our communities. I want to reassure Canadians that, if someone poses a significant threat to public safety, the law tells us they should not be released on bail.

I am disappointed that the official opposition is using tragedies to try to score political points. Canadians know that these are serious and complicated issues, and there are no quick or easy solutions. That is why we have been working hard for months, in collabora-

tion with our provincial and territorial counterparts, to find solutions that would ensure the long-term safety of our communities.

Canada is not broken, despite what the Leader of the Opposition would like people to think. Indeed, data from Toronto shows that between 2019 and 2021, there was a decrease, both in the percentage of individuals granted bail and the number of people rearrested while on bail.

● (1045)

[Translation]

That being said, our government is always looking for ways to improve public safety and the efficiency of our justice system. At the federal-provincial-territorial meeting in October, the Minister of Public Safety and I committed to continue working with our counterparts on the issue of bail. This work is well under way. We also received a letter from the premiers about bail and we are carefully reviewing their proposals and other options.

[English]

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of meeting with my B.C. counterpart, Minister Sharma. Minister Sharma and I agreed that the best way to address the complicated issue of bail reform is by working together. I am hopeful that all of my provincial and territorial counterparts will agree.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation out there on the old Bill C-75. Bill C-75 is the result of a lengthy collaborative effort with the provinces and territories. It codified the bail principles set out in binding Supreme Court of Canada rulings.

I want to reiterate that Bill C-75 did not make any fundamental changes to the bail system. It did not change the criteria under which an accused can be released by the court. On the contrary, Bill C-75 made it harder to get bail for certain offences, such as violence against intimate partners, by reversing the onus of proof.

[English]

I trust that the hon. member for Fundy Royal will also be reassured to learn that there is already a reverse onus where an accused subject to a weapons prohibition is charged with a firearms offence, exactly as his motion calls for. That means the accused would be denied bail unless they can prove to the court that their release would not pose a significant risk to public safety or undermine the public's confidence.

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I also know the hon. member for Fundy Royal well enough to be sure he was not deliberately trying to mislead the House on the recent Supreme Court decision, which actually confirmed everything we did in Bill C-5. The minimum mandatory penalty we struck down, the court struck down as unconstitutional, and the minimum mandatory penalties we chose to retain in that bill have been upheld by the court. I would suggest the member read the Supreme Court decision a bit more closely.

One of the calls in the letter from the premiers is to establish a reverse onus for additional offences. I can assure the House that I am giving this serious consideration, and the work is well under way. We have also heard calls for law enforcement reform. I am grateful for their recommendations based on frontline experience. Work is under way to develop legislative and non-legislative options to address the particular challenges of repeat violent offenders.

[*Translation*]

We also know that it will take more than a legislative reform to completely fix this problem. The police need the necessary resources to monitor offenders who are out on bail and to arrest those who breach their release conditions.

We have already provided significant funding and we are open to providing more where it is needed. There has to be support and care for mental health, as well as for addictions treatment. There needs to be a social safety net. The previous government cut social programs and now we are seeing the very real and serious consequences of those cuts. As a government, we have made unprecedented investments in mental health, including \$5 billion for the provinces and territories to increase access to care.

[*English*]

I commend our partners in B.C. for the action they took on bail in November as part of their safe communities action plan. I encourage all provinces to use the many existing tools at their disposal to ensure bail laws are applied safely, fairly and effectively. Yesterday I was happy to see the Premier of Ontario commit to action in this space, and I will reach out to my counterpart in coming days to discuss how we can collaborate.

Addressing the particular challenges posed by repeat violent offenders requires a comprehensive approach that crosses jurisdictions and levels of government. We will be acting at the federal level, and I hope my provincial counterparts will do the same. The only way to solve this problem is by working together. To this end, as has been planned since our last meeting in October, in the coming days I will be reaching out to justice and public safety counterparts to convene an urgent FPT meeting to continue our important work on bail.

I am hopeful that together we can review the product of months of joint work by federal and provincial officials and agree on a comprehensive path forward.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

We know there is no easy solution to such a complex problem. We strongly believe that we need to protect Canadians.

[*English*]

At the same time, we must ensure that any measures taken will not exacerbate the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples and Black and racialized Canadians in our jails. We must not further marginalize vulnerable people, including those struggling with mental health issues and addiction, and we must also ensure that everything we do is compliant with the charter.

I look forward to sincere debate in this House today, and I will happily take any good-faith suggestions made by members of Parliament. I discourage members from wasting this opportunity with empty rhetoric designed to inflame the fears of Canadians. Let us debate real solutions and focus our energy on offering ideas for how the system can be changed to better keep Canadians safe while respecting our fundamental rights and values.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I encourage the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to reread the Supreme Court of Canada decision released last week. I am looking at it right now, and for the record, it is *R. v. Hilbach*. In a seven-to-two decision, that particular court indicated that the four- and five-year mandatory minimums for robbery with a firearm and robbery with a prohibited firearm were not grossly disproportionate, did not constitute cruel and unusual punishment and were charter-compliant, but the court opined that, given the results of Bill C-5, the issue was now moot, so I encourage the justice minister to reread that decision.

My point, however, is that I heard him indicate earlier this week that he was open to suggestions and that he was looking for some ideas. He has literally heard from the provinces, police chiefs, premiers and interested parties, for close to 11 months now, crying out for bail reform. He is indicating that talks are in the works.

Be specific, Minister. What are you doing?

The Speaker: Before the minister answers, I just want to remind the hon. members that the questions go through the Chair and not directly across.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I would recommend to the hon. member that he reread not only the Supreme Court decision, but also Bill C-5. I realize the problem was the inflammation of rhetoric during the debate on Bill C-5. We did not remove all the minimum mandatory penalties with respect to those gun offences. We only did it in a very narrow band, and it mirrored exactly what the Supreme Court did.

We have been on this question for a long time, since at the very least the federal-provincial-territorial meeting of last October. As I mentioned in my speech, Bill C-75 basically reframed the Supreme Court of Canada jurisprudence that had evolved over previous years. It added reverse onuses with respect to intimate partner violence. There are some reverse onuses that already exist.

We are working with the provinces to find other ways to improve the law while remaining charter compliant. These discussions have been going on, particularly at a technical level with our experts. We are going to continue to do this.

We have a responsibility to do this. We have exercised that responsibility. We do not wait until inflammatory rhetoric drives us. We have been doing this for a long time in a prudent way in collaboration with our partners.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my brother drives the Bloor-Danforth line every day. He says that the violence in the subways has become much worse, but he also says that it is caused by the homelessness. At 6 a.m., the subways are full of homeless people. It is also caused by the lack of mental health services and the crisis of the pandemic.

That being said, the need to address bail reform is a huge issue, because we have seen senseless acts of violence. I know my New Democrat colleagues in the justice committee have pushed for a review of this, because we need to do this right. I was here in all the Harper years, and every single one of their tough-on-crime bills was tossed out by the Supreme Court because they were playing to their fundraising base as opposed to doing smart, intelligent review so the laws lasted.

Would my colleagues support our call to investigate bail reform to make sure we get this right and we keep people safe? We also need to put the resources on the ground to deal with the clear mental health and homelessness crisis that is driving a lot of the senseless violence we are seeing in the city of Toronto.

• (1055)

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question comes from a very sincere place. First of all, with respect to what is happening in Toronto, certainly his assessment of it is similar to the assessments I have heard, which is that there is a real problem with homelessness and mental health and mental health supports. This is exacerbated by cold snaps in the winter, which make the subway system an ideal place to get warm, and other things happen. We are working on that with the provinces. I can assure him we do have that goal in mind, to work with the provinces to improve that situation.

With respect to his question on bail, we will work with members of the House. I am looking at the hon. member from Sooke as well. We will work to look at good-faith attempts to reform the bail system. We know there have been issues. We have been well aware of these issues. We are working with other governments and will certainly work with parliamentarians in this place.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for the opportunity to have this important debate about bail reform. Before I come to the remarks that have been prepared for me in advance, I want to take a

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few moments to acknowledge the grief, trauma, loss and the sense of suffering being felt by communities across the country. I had the chance to visit with many communities, whether it was out west in Vancouver or out east in the Atlantic communities with the families and the victims in Portapique and Truro.

[*Translation*]

More recently, it was in Quebec City, with all the families and survivors at the commemoration of the sixth anniversary of the mosque shooting.

[*English*]

It is also in my hometown, where we are seeing a recent spate of violence in our public transit system. It is imperative that we have a thoughtful discussion based on a number of pillars. Yes, we need to take a look at our policies and our laws.

I want to commend the Minister of Justice for many of the reforms he has advanced to improve the administration of justice so that we can focus on serious offenders who do, in many instances, need to be separated from the community for protection. Also, I want to underline the work that he and our government are doing to address many of the systemic challenges that have led to overrepresentation in federal incarceration facilities, as well as provincially, when it comes to indigenous peoples and racialized Canadians. We cannot have these discussions in isolation.

I have grieved with families. I have grieved with the community of law enforcement officers who have lost five of their own. We owe it to them and to every single Canadian to make sure we are informing our discussion on the basis of principles that are underlined in the charter, but equally by the experiences of those who have suffered. It is in that spirit that I hope we can have this debate today.

My colleague, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, has spoken about an openness to receiving proposals with regard to the bail system. I have worked on the front lines of the criminal justice system. I have seen how these laws are applied in a very real, practical and tangible way. Even as we navigate the proposals being put forward by the various constituencies, including the law enforcement community, I hope all members will appreciate that there is no one cure-all for the challenges we face. We need to take a look at the entire suite of laws and policies, not only with regard to bail but also with regard to how we are tackling gun violence.

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There is a bill currently being studied by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, Bill C-21, which would equip law enforcement with additional tools to tackle gun violence by raising maximum sentences against hard traffickers and by giving law enforcement additional surveillance tools to interdict the organized criminal networks that would seek to traffic illegally firearms that make their way into our country, potentially to be used in violent crime to terrorize our communities.

We also need to take a look at the other investments the government is making to support law enforcement in keeping our communities safe, including a \$450-million allocation over the last few years for CBSA. That will enable law enforcement agencies to acquire the resources, the technology and the techniques that they need to build on the progress that they have made in the last two years where they have seized a record number of illegal firearms.

Beyond those investments, I do think it is important as well to talk about prevention. One of the challenges I find around the debate on public safety is that we place great emphasis on laws and policies. We talk about Bill C-21. We talk about the acts that have been passed, and led and shepherded by my colleague, the Minister of Justice. We talk about Bill C-75, which, by the way, was a piece of legislation aimed at addressing the systemic and chronic backlogs in our court system so we could focus on the most serious offenders who commit the most serious crimes and pose the most serious risk to public safety. That was the genesis of Bill C-75.

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

The purpose of Bill C-75 was to reduce the case completion times.

[*English*]

To hear some colleagues from the Conservative Party mis-characterize that bill as catch-and-release legislation does a disservice to this debate. We do not need slogans; we need concrete solutions. I would submit to the chamber that this is precisely what the Minister of Justice and this government have been doing. I would also say the same thing with respect to Bill C-5.

We heard a colleague from the NDP point out that the last time the Conservative government had the reins of government, it introduced a number of policies that were reviewed and then struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada. We do not need a return to the failed policies and overreach, which detract and diminish from the independence of the judges to assess on the merits and based on the facts and circumstances of each offender who comes before them. What we need is a thoughtful, constitutional approach to this matter, and that was the point of Bill C-5. It was not to promote catch-and-release policies, which has been overly simplified and distilled. That may play well on YouTube or in social media, but, again, it does a disservice to the complexity of the challenges that are faced when it comes to keeping our community safe.

As we focus on laws and policies, we do not talk enough about the underlying root causes. We do not talk enough about the need to provide additional support for mental health care, homelessness and poverty. We do not talk enough about the need to provide additional skills, experience and confidence to those who are most at risk of

being exposed to criminal elements, which I have seen across the country and in my own community.

When I had the chance to travel to James Smith Cree Nation and grieve with those families, community members told us that they knew their own, that they knew how to ensure they could take care of them and put them on the right footing. It is only through collaboration and partnership with those communities through initiatives like the building safer communities fund, a \$250-million federal initiative that is administered out of Public Safety Canada, that we can start to address these challenges at the root cause so we can stop crime before it starts.

In the context of the debate we are having today, we need to put as much emphasis on looking at preventative strategies, which we can work together on to advance, to see crime come down. No matter which side of the debate we are on, no matter which party we belong, no matter which constituency we represent in the chamber, the one thing I am assured of is that all Canadians are unified behind the common cause of wanting to reduce gun crime, wanting to reduce any kind of violent crime, which may find its stem in the systemic challenges that I have discussed. We need to come together to have that debate and not resort to slogans, bumper stickers or any of the other catchy phrases that we heard in the to and fro of the heated debate in the chamber, but have an actual and thoughtful debate that is based on facts and constitutional principles. That is precisely what I hope we can do today.

● (1105)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of the Minister of Public Safety today, although I did not hear specific, concrete changes that he or his colleague, the Minister of Justice, would like to make concerning the Criminal Code. Therefore, I am assuming there are no changes coming.

We have heard from every premier in the country, asking for changes to the Criminal Code concerning bail. We have heard from the Toronto police, proposing three proposals concerning bail reform. Again, this is all in light of the fact that a young new police officer was killed over the holidays by a violent repeat offender who was out on bail and also had a firearm prohibition. He shot and murdered a young police officer, and I did not hear anything to satisfy me that the government would be doing something in the next few months to bring forward some change.

What concrete steps is Minister of Public Safety going to take, working with the Minister of Justice, to ensure that this is the last police officer who is murdered by a violent repeat offender?

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Hon. Marco Mendicino: First, Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly share my colleague's concern about the loss of Officer Pierzchala. I grieved with his family and the entire OPP community. That was the fifth in a series of months last year, and it was among the most difficult functions that I exercise in this office.

I assure the member, and I hope she takes it at face value, that I understand the trauma, the grief and the suffering that is being felt not only by the law enforcement communities but by communities right across the country, including indigenous and racialized communities that have been systematically marginalized as a result of policies whose design and intent was to do just that. That is wrong.

With regard to the member's specific question on bail reform, I hope she will have heard the Minister of Justice, and I will reiterate it, that we are in direct lines of communication with law enforcement. I have spoken to the president of the CACP. I have spoken to other senior leadership in law enforcement. We are going to sit down and look at those proposals very carefully in a specially convened meeting of federal, provincial and territorial partners. That is where the work will be done on the merits.

However, it is not the only thing we need to address. We also need to address the other preventive strategies that I discussed in my remarks as well.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to hear the minister's stance on this important issue. We have been working together on Bill C-21.

Gun violence is top of mind these days. While Bill C-21 addresses some of the issues, it does not address them all, unfortunately. Most importantly, it does not do anything about the proliferation of firearms.

In 2022, Montreal's murder rate hit a 10-year high. Something must be done, and it is the federal government's responsibility, because it is in charge of borders.

During interviews, the minister has said more will be done in addition to Bill C-21. What exactly does he have in mind? Will he make it happen fast? We cannot go on having murder rates that keep going up year after year. Concrete action must be taken to prevent gun violence.

• (1110)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague and her party, the Bloc Québécois, for their co-operation on Bill C-21. I hope we will continue in that spirit so we can get this bill passed. It is just one pillar in a comprehensive strategy created on this side of the House to reduce gun violence.

The member asked me what else we plan to do, besides this bill, what other options are on the table, and what we plan to do about the border. Over the past two years, the federal government invested \$450 million in a prevention strategy. Some of that money was invested in Quebec. As Minister of Public Safety, I went to Quebec and announced a \$40-million investment, in partnership with the Quebec government and municipalities, to identify the root causes contributing to violence on the street.

There are plenty of opportunities for the government and Quebec to work together, including with the Bloc Québécois. I am always willing to work with my colleague.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was glad to hear that the minister wants to engage in addressing the causes of crime.

In my riding of Vancouver East, and particularly in the Downtown Eastside, we have a major homelessness crisis. We have people with mental health issues who cannot get mental health supports. We have people with an addiction issue who cannot get support or treatment on demand. People are dying in the community. The fallout of that is that it impacts the entire community in all its ways.

Will the minister support and will he have the government initiate what had been done before, which was the Vancouver agreement, bringing all levels of government together, working together, to address the crisis in the Downtown Eastside? That is a possible approach to bringing forward solutions to the problem.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes. In fact, I have met with battered women's groups and shelters in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. We have met with municipal leadership there. I had the chance to meet with the new mayor. We are looking forward to being able to make, I hope in the not too distant future, some announcements around the building safer communities fund, which speaks to the core of our issue around prevention to address the systemic issues that have far too long plagued our justice system.

We need to ensure that we put an appropriate focus and emphasis on those who have been marginalized: women, members of the 2SLGBTQI community, indigenous peoples, racialized Canadians. That has to be part of this debate, and that is precisely what this government will do. Let us keep all Canadians safe.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a happy new year. I know that February is a bit late, but this is one of the first times we have seen each other this year. I would also like to wish my constituents, the people of Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, a happy new year. I will begin by saying I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Jean.

I am very pleased to speak to this issue, which I believe is exceptionally important. Law and order is obviously an area that we, as members of Parliament, are concerned about.

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I agree with my Conservative colleagues on several aspects of this motion. In the past eight years, violent crime has increased by 32% and gang-related homicides by 92%. The number of violent crimes has skyrocketed, inevitably jeopardizing Canadians' safety. Five police officers were killed in the line of duty in just one year. That is enormous when compared with previous years.

In Ontario, 44 police officers were killed in the line of duty between 1961 and 2009. That is about one per year, and, in my opinion, that is one too many. In 2022, five police officers died while on duty. That is not just too many, that is totally unacceptable. The people who undertake to protect the public should never pay with their lives.

In this respect, I am in complete agreement with my colleagues, and I must say that the efforts made by the Liberal Party in recent years to prevent violence, limit the number of firearms in circulation and help break up gangs have been less than stellar.

It would be wise to try not to get lost in the statistics. There are many statistics out there, and they support some of the facts included in the Conservatives' motion. Overall, the number of crimes reported by police in Canada in recent years shows an alarming increase.

Hate crimes have increased by 72%. These are mainly crimes motivated by hate towards a religion, sexual orientation or ethnic origin.

Gun crimes have risen 25% in the past 10 years. As I was saying earlier, there were more murders in Montreal in 2021 than in any of the previous 10 years. Some 37 murders were committed, compared with 28 in 2020, with 25 being the result of a dispute or settling of scores within organized crime and 12 involving Canadians between the ages of 12 and 24.

In 2021, police reported 34,242 cases of sexual assault. That is about 90 cases of sexual assault for every 100,000 citizens, keeping in mind that only about 6% of sexual assaults are reported to police.

Let us not fool ourselves: This increase in violence is not just a big-city problem. In my own rural riding in the Gaspé, in Eastern Quebec, a man was arrested for weapons trafficking in Pointe à la-Croix barely three weeks ago. He allegedly supplied illegal weapons and narcotics to Montreal street gangs. In 2021, a raid in Gaspé led to the seizure of multiple illegal firearms, more specifically, 50 long guns, 10 handguns, bullet-proof vests and ammunition of every calibre. Last August, shots were heard in a residential neighbourhood in Gaspé, and an individual was arrested.

The picture we are painting here is pretty grim. The government must take concrete and legitimate measures to address Canadians' concerns and to ensure their safety.

In its motion, the Conservative Party calls on the government to repeal the elements enacted by Bill C-75. Although it is true and entirely legitimate to point out that certain elements of the bail reform are problematic, as we have seen in the news recently, the fact remains that the wording of the motion is also problematic. Some elements are simply false.

Let us be clear: No changes made by Bill C-75 require any judge to release violent repeat offenders. With all due respect, saying oth-

erwise, intentionally or not, is more of an opinion than a proven and verified fact.

● (1115)

To say that the bail system is no longer working is also not entirely true. The bail system is based on the art of finding a balance between public safety and the presumption of innocence, which is protected by something that is quite dear to the Conservatives, specifically, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Bloc Québécois had a number of good reasons to vote in favour of Bill C-75, even though, as we said, given recent events, we can now see that the legislation has its flaws. I am sure that my colleague from Saint-Jean will elaborate on this idea because she is an extremely competent and seasoned legal expert. I will be happy to just go over some of the facts that were checked and quantified.

While the convicted offender population has been gradually declining in recent years, the number of people held in pre-trial detention almost tripled in the past 35 years. This increase occurred while the overall prison populations remained relatively stable during the same period. In fact, the crime rate had been falling since the 1990s.

Under the law, there were more innocent people held on pre-trial detention than actual offenders serving custodial sentences, after being convicted, in provincial and territorial correctional facilities since 2004-05. This data is widely available. It comes from an analysis conducted by the Department of Justice in 2015 in connection with Bill C-75. My colleagues should therefore be able to obtain the report and base their decisions on those facts, which were checked.

We must keep in mind that, financially speaking, a growing population in pre-trial detention will result in considerable additional costs for governments at every level. This only places more pressure on already limited resources.

The debate surrounding the bail system is perfectly legitimate, and it is a good thing. On this point, once again, I agree with my Conservative colleagues. Bill C-75 has several flaws, as the provincial premiers unanimously pointed out to the federal government. Basically, they are asking for the same thing as one of the elements included in today's motion. They claim that it is justifiable to strengthen bail laws so that people who are prohibited from possessing firearms and are then accused of a serious firearm offence cannot easily get bail. I think that some work could be done in this area.

This inevitably leads me to the actions that the government should take to prevent gun crime. We have said it often enough: Bill C-21 does not necessarily fix the problem of the proliferation of firearms. I was happy to be able to discuss this with the minister. Other actions must be taken in other areas.

More specifically, we need more border controls and prevention measures in large cities. Obviously, financial investments must be made, and the government always enjoys showing off its financial record in this area. However, there are other things that can be done, and the Bloc Québécois has presented several options, for example, collaborative efforts between the various police forces. There are a lot of things that can and should be done.

Although we agree with the Conservatives on several aspects of this motion, the idea of strengthening legislation is rooted in the ideology of law and order. Right now, the proliferation of firearms in our major cities is a problem, we cannot say it often enough. Although this reflex reaction is understandable, a number of experts, including Carolyn Yule, a professor of sociology and anthropology at the University of Guelph who studies the bail system, claim that there is no evidence to suggest that a harsher approach to bail would improve public safety. I think that is something to think about.

Given that the text of the motion moved today includes elements that may not have been fact-checked and that could potentially turn out to be false, it is impossible for the Bloc Québécois to support this motion, unfortunately. As I said, we agree with several aspects, and the government must do more. It is true that crime has increased in recent years, but unfortunately, because of certain elements in the motion, we cannot support it.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has done tremendous work on the public safety committee. She is concerned, as we all are, about the increase of gun crime and gang violence in cities across this country.

This motion is a call to action. Never before have I seen, and I am sure my colleague has not seen this either, a coming together of so many organizations, individuals, big city mayors, police chiefs across the country, police associations, community groups and advocates talking about the need for bail reform.

This motion is more of a call for action, reflecting what those organizations are telling us. They are on the ground. They are seeing it. If we talk to police officers, and my colleague likely has, they are telling us that the system is broken and it needs to be fixed.

My question to my hon. colleague is as follows: What are some of the solutions that she would propose to fix the broken bail system in this country?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises an interesting point. It is indeed a call for action. That is a good thing, because we are talking about this issue today.

Premiers and police associations across the country have also sounded the alarm. However, I have doubts about the means the

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Conservatives are trying to use today to take action. Is today's motion the right way to resolve the issue or to provide solutions? Would the ideal way not be to introduce a bill to amend certain provisions that were in Bill C-75? Perhaps that would be a better way to take action.

Obviously, we, the parliamentarians, are not really the experts. We invite experts and listen to them. If certain police associations are saying one thing or another, it is our duty to listen to them.

I am not sure that today's motion is the right way to move forward. I understand why the Conservatives are putting this issue on the table. It provides us with an opportunity to discuss it. However, if they really want to change the provisions included in Bill C-75, I think that they should introduce a bill.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has taken a very balanced approach to this question today. I appreciate that the Bloc has recognized that there may be better ways to solve this problem than the motion before us.

I know the hon. member is a member of the public safety committee. Does the hon. member share my optimism that all parties came together on Monday to agree to hold hearings on the bail challenges we face in this country and to look for practical solutions to specific problems? Does she share my optimism that we can work together among all parties here to get that job done?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for his optimistic approach.

My favourite moments in the House are when all the parties agree on a subject. We saw it then, and we saw it again yesterday with the motion on the Uighur people. I think that we are all capable of working together and putting partisanship aside in order to move toward something that will benefit the entire population. It is even more important to do so when it comes to matters of public safety.

I share my colleague's optimism. However, we must put partisanship aside in order to work together quickly. We know how difficult it is to move quickly in this massive system, and it can be hard to advance certain files. When it comes to matters of public safety, we need to move forward quickly.

The Speaker: The member for Berthier—Maskinongé has 30 seconds to ask his question followed by what I hope will be a brief response.

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Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, which was very straightforward, sensible and reasonable.

In the time we have left, I would like her to talk about what should be done. This morning, we are talking about how to enhance public safety. In her speech, my colleague talked about what the Liberal government has failed to do to control illegal firearms in Quebec and Canada. What specific measures could be put in place?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I do not have much time, so I will focus on one specific issue: what the government is not doing about illegal gun trafficking. For example, trains and ships arriving in Canada, in Quebec, at the Port of Montreal, should be inspected. Currently, only 1% of containers are inspected, even though we know car thefts are happening right at the Port of Montreal. If it is that easy to sneak cars through, imagine how much easier it is to sneak guns through. The federal government could definitely be doing more. Borders are its responsibility.

We have suggested lots of solutions. For example, a collaboration must be established between police and the Canada Border Services Agency. According to the experts, this is an idea worth considering.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few seconds to wish you a happy new year, good health, happiness, love and anything else your heart desires. I want to also send that message to my constituents in Saint-Jean, as this is the first time I have spoken in the House this year.

I am not going to put the Conservatives on trial for their motion today. I would like to believe that this idea stems from a genuine desire to reduce violent crime and prevent the proliferation of illegal firearms. I hope that I will not be put on trial either, despite the fact that I am going to describe the problems with this motion. In my opinion, it does not provide a solution. I will be disappointed if I hear, yet again, during question and comment period, that the Bloc Québécois has helped put dangerous criminals back on the street and refuses to admit that there is a problem. I hope that does not happen, but I will be sure to manage my expectations.

There are a few problems with the motion, and I will go through them one at a time. For instance, no distinction is made between correlation and causation. Some members have presented statistics showing an increase in certain crimes and said that this is caused by Bill C-75. That is correlation. There is a theory about that, known as the hemline economy theory. According to this theory, when short skirts are in fashion, the economy is doing well, and when long skirts are in fashion, the economy is doing poorly. If we were to rely solely on this index, we would probably all make some very poor choices in the stock market. Similarly, if a temporal correlation is the only correlation that exists between an increase in crime and the passage of Bill C-75, then we are probably overlooking the real solutions to a multi-faceted problem.

Another problem is that some of the “whereas” clauses and demands in the motion are based on somewhat fallacious arguments, and some are not supported by any evidence. I will come back to that aspect when I go through the motion in greater detail.

The arguments raise another problem. We are hearing a lot of references to the case of Randall McKenzie, who allegedly killed a police officer in December while out on bail. If we look at this case more closely, we might find that it is not just him being out on bail that is the problem. Randall McKenzie had already been locked up and was released on bail with some of the strictest conditions possible. He was on house arrest 24 hours a day, he wore an electronic tracking device and he was allowed to leave home only for medical reasons or to get legal advice from his lawyer. The question is, what happened? How did he end up out in public when the company monitoring the GPS device should have sent an alert to have him immediately apprehended? There may be a problem there too. No one has raised that issue yet, but the analysis should go beyond the simple issue of bail.

I heard it said that if Randall McKenzie had not been out on bail, the police officer would still be alive. I am sorry, but we have still not heard all of the evidence in this case. The authorities are not certain that he is the one who pulled the trigger. There is a co-accused in the case, so the argument is perhaps a little thin. This is only a secondary point, I only wanted to mention it. However, it is perhaps a stretch to say that a life would have been saved if bail had not been awarded.

I would like to point out a fourth problem with the motion. Making it more difficult to obtain bail in the case of illegal arms possession will not dissuade people from procuring illegal arms. The motion will not have an impact on first offences with a firearm. Adopting the motion could leave us with a false sense of security.

I will quickly review some of the points in the motion.

The motion states, “That, given that, after eight years of this government's soft on crime policies, (i) violent crime has increased by 32%”. According to Statistics Canada, this number includes sexual assaults.

- (1130)

In recent years, thanks to greater awareness among other things, there has been an increase in the number of crimes reported, which contributes to the increase in this number. When we talk about violent crime in general, we are not necessarily referring to violent gun crime or cases in which the accused was awarded bail. That, however, is how the question for the government is being framed.

The motion states that “violent, repeat offenders are obtaining bail much more easily”. I still have not heard a clear explanation of whether this is true, and, especially, if it is related to the repeal of certain aspects of Bill C-75 requested in the motion.

Business of Supply

The motion also states that “five Canadian police officers were killed in the line of duty in just one year”. That is both deplorable and tragic. We should do something about that. However, no connection is made between the murder of these police officers and the bail system. Statistics are used to justify strengthening bail provisions, but there is not necessarily a rational link between the statistics and what the motion is asking for. That is deplorable. I think that the Conservatives could have been more thorough in presenting their motion.

One of the things the House is being called to do is the following:

(a) fix Canada's broken bail system by immediately repealing the elements enacted by Bill C-75...which force judges to release violent, repeat offenders onto the streets, allowing them to reoffend;

As my colleague mentioned, there is a fallacy in this paragraph. There is nothing in Bill C-75 or the Criminal Code forcing judges to release people. In fact, when we get right down to it, the only thing that forces judges to release people is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There are two fairly specific rights in the following paragraphs of section 11 of the Charter:

Any person charged with an offence has the right...

(d) to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal;

(e) not to be denied reasonable bail without just cause;

The charter, not the former Bill C-75, sets out that requirement for judges. The charter and the sections that allow for bail have established criteria.

Custody of an accused is only justified by the Criminal Code in certain cases, for example, “(a) where the detention is necessary to ensure his or her attendance in court”, such as someone with dual citizenship who is afraid of losing citizenship in another country, or “(b) where the detention is necessary for the protection or safety of the public”.

There are pre-existing criteria that judges can use to maintain institutional custody. Where “(c) the detention is necessary to maintain confidence”, the judge has the discretion to keep an accused in custody.

Section 515 of the Criminal Code also provides terms and conditions. For example, consideration must be given to “(iii) the circumstances surrounding the commission of the offence, including whether a firearm was used”, which we already do, and “(iv) the fact that the accused is liable, on conviction, for a potentially lengthy term of imprisonment or, in the case of an offence that involves, or whose subject-matter is, a firearm, a minimum punishment of imprisonment for a term of three years or more.”

The Conservatives are saying that they want to, and I quote:

strengthen Canada's bail laws so that those who are prohibited from possessing firearms and who are then accused of serious firearms offences do not easily get bail;

However, that is already included in section 515 of the Criminal Code. Will that really change anything? It is a fair question. When we talk to criminal lawyers about the gun problem, we see that it is getting harder and harder to get bail when a firearm was used to

commit a crime, so the motion contains some things that are already covered.

The motion seeks to repeal the former bill without really explaining what it is about. It attacks Bill C-75, which actually does some other worthwhile things. For example, it creates a reverse onus for domestic violence. The accused must prove that they will not be a danger to the public if they are released on bail, whereas for other crimes the opposite is true. With regard to gun violence, the onus is already on the accused, or in other words, it is up to them to prove that they do not pose a risk to society.

As I mentioned, although this motion addresses a real and serious problem, it may not be the right solution. As I also mentioned, if a person makes their stock market decisions based on the hemline index, then they will likely make poor choices.

• (1135)

I think the same applies here. We need to have conversations about the best way to proceed so we do not opt for a bad solution to a real problem.

[English]

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague touched upon something I think is very important. Bill C-75 did impose a reverse onus on serious offenders to prove that they have conditions and reasoning to obtain bail. She said something about it is getting harder to get bail, especially for those offenders.

Can she elaborate on that and assess whether weakening Bill C-75 served the purpose of this opposition day motion?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, the real question is, should judges be told what to do more than they already are?

Generally speaking, when judges are told what they must do, such as with mandatory minimum sentences, those rulings often blocked by the courts because they do not comply with the Charter. That is a real risk, so it seems to me that may not be the best way to make sure potentially dangerous people are not freed. Maybe it would be better to figure out how we can ensure that people who are released on parole do not represent a real threat to the public and how we respect the right of people who are presumed innocent not to be wrongly imprisoned.

There are a lot of things to keep in mind here, including the fact that it now takes up to two and a half years to get a hearing. People can be detained that whole time before being found not guilty in the end. Would it not be better to do something like increase funding for the judicial system so that, if someone has to be held without bail, their trial can at least happen sooner? That could be part of the solution, and I may have other suggestions when people ask me questions.

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• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member cited the incident with Randall McKenzie who recently killed a police officer in southern Ontario. She also cited information that was provided earlier in the House and created doubt as to the accuracy of that information. One thing that is very certain is that, out of the 44 murders in Toronto this past year, 24 of them were committed by people who were out on bail. We also know that Randall McKenzie was out on bail.

What part of that does she not understand? Had those people not been out on bail, those incidents would not have happened.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, to hear my Conservative colleagues tell it, as soon as someone commits a crime, even as minor as simple drug possession, they should automatically be detained so as to prevent any subsequent crimes. However, there are solutions that would be much more appropriate for this kind of problem. For instance, measures could be taken to ensure that conditions are respected and that, when there is a breach, the person is more easily returned to custody.

Many gun crimes are committed in the context of substance abuse problems. We should be looking closer at this aspect and offering the right services to the people who need them.

As I mentioned, Randall McKenzie was wearing a GPS tracking device. That is one of the strictest bail conditions that can be imposed. Obviously, he was able to leave his home without any alarms going off, without the GPS company notifying anyone, and without any police following him. There was obviously some sort of problem there, too.

There are several aspects of the problem that can be addressed without going for a solution that seems a little too good to be true, one that is too singular, one that risks giving the public the impression that the problem has been solved, when it probably would not be solved.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Jean for her very thoughtful, reasonable and well-informed speech.

In Montreal, there are shootings and gunfire. Violence has increased, parents and families are worried about their children and there is a proliferation of guns.

I would like my colleague's opinion. Is there not a security problem that stems from the lack of gun control?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I think that is obvious. My colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia demonstrated that as well. It is the topic of many discussions.

When we talk about bail, we have to remember that a crime was committed. What we want to avoid is the commission of an offence in the first place, before we even begin to talk about bail.

Can we address the root of the problem, which is currently the proliferation of illegal guns? I think we are only scratching the surface of the problem in a rather partisan way. As a result we are

avoiding the problem and that is where I have to point the finger at the government. There is truly a much bigger problem we need to be addressing and that is where we should be focusing all of our energy.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as members of the House know, I am always pleased to rise to talk about issues of criminal justice and public safety. My background, before I came here, was 20 years as an instructor in this field. I am also always pleased to talk about this as a former member of a municipal police board. Of course, right now, I am particularly pleased to get to address this question as a member of a community that, like many others across the country, has seen a rise in public disorder, which is of great concern to citizens and, I have to say, specifically small businesses in my riding, which quite often bear the brunt of that public disorder.

I am also pleased, as always, to get to talk about solutions, and that is why I am not so pleased to be discussing the Conservative motion before us today.

As I mentioned earlier in a question, something perplexes me a bit. On Monday, we came together in the justice committee on a very reasonable motion put forward by the member for Fundy Royal, which I supported and which the government eventually supported, to agree that the committee should work on practical solutions to the real problems that have been raised by municipal leaders, the public and premiers to find practical and effective solutions that would increase public safety by changes to the bail system.

There we were on Monday getting ready, and we have actually scheduled those hearings to start within two weeks, so we are moving rapidly, for the House of Commons, to try to find those solutions. I must say that we are moving more rapidly in the Commons than the government has moved. These issues were presented to the government months ago by the premiers, and we have not seen much happen. However, I am optimistic, I and was very optimistic on Monday, yet here we are, three days later, with the Conservatives bringing forward a very divisive motion full of inflated rhetoric, sensational statistics and claims about the bail system that are really not true.

As I said before, it makes me wonder which is the real Conservative Party on this issue? Is it the one that is doing this sensational motion, which I cannot help but conclude is about motivating its base and fundraising, or is it the party that put forward a reasonable motion that we could all agree on, the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP, to work together in the justice committee to find practical solutions to the real concerns Canadians have about the bail system?

I guess the proof will be in the pudding when we get to the committee, where we will see if the Conservatives will work with the rest of us to find those practical solutions, because this motion really does fan the flames of public fear rather than make a contribution to solutions to the problem.

New Democrats agree that we need to find ways to address the problem created by certain violent criminals who have been previously charged and convicted of serious offences and who have ended up receiving bail. We need to look at how we tighten up the system in that aspect.

At the same time, we are also concerned about the public order questions. We know that there is probably not an easy legislative fix to those public order problems. They create real fear among citizens, rightfully so, but we know that most of those public order problems are rooted in things such as mental health issues, addiction and poverty.

Until we as a society address the poverty, the addictions and the mental health questions, and until the federal government actually delivers on its promises to provide more funding for those kinds of programs and to the provinces, then I do not think we will have a real solution to the public order problems before us.

At the heart of what we are talking about today is something that is sometimes lost, and that is the presumption of innocence. In any just society, those who are accused of a crime have the right to be presumed innocent, which is enshrined in our charter, until they are found guilty.

In our system, we do have a presumption against pretrial detention. We really believe that we should not be penalized by being detained before one has actually been convicted of anything.

It is quite disturbing to me to look at our system and find that up to two-thirds of people in provincial detention centres, on any given day, have never been convicted of anything. They are there awaiting trial. That is a very large number.

When we hear people talk about our bail systems as a catch-and-release system, it is not a catch-and-release system. We detain very large numbers of Canadians before trial. Who ends up being detained? Who does not end up getting the benefit of bail? It tends to be indigenous people, racialized Canadians, new Canadians and low-income Canadians.

• (1145)

Why is that? It is because for people to get bail, we demand certain things. We say that people must have a stable job, a stable address and someone who can supervise them while they are out on bail. Of course, the people who have the least resources in society have the least ability to meet those fundamental conditions for getting bail. If they do somehow get bail, they also have the least resources for meeting the conditions that might be imposed on them.

I know someone quite well who worked with an individual with mental health challenges who was required to report to their bail supervisor on a regular basis, but they could not get it together to do that because of their mental health challenges. Those people risk ending up with bail violations, with another offence, even if they were not guilty of what they were charged with in the first instance.

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What we have, honestly, operating in our system contributes to the overincarceration of indigenous people, racialized people and poor people in this country, starting with the bail system.

While, yes, we acknowledge there are some problems with the bail system that we need to look at, New Democrats would expand that to take a look at what we can do to make sure we are not penalizing people unnecessarily by putting them into detention for long periods while awaiting trial.

Most upsetting to me in this bill is the misuse of statistics by the Conservatives. We all know that the overall rate of crime in this country has been on a 30-year decline. That is still the general trend. We know, though, that in the past five years there has been a spike in public order crimes, violence on the streets and serious violent crime.

Where does that come from? We need to take a serious look at what causes those increases. We have had some unusual things happening in the world and in this country in the past five years. Therefore, some of it is related to the pandemic; some of it is related to the mental health challenges that we honestly failed to deal with, which resulted from the pandemic. When we are talking about finding solutions to these problems, it is not good enough for me to look at a spike in statistics and say we must make general changes in our system. That is really throwing out the baby with the proverbial bathwater.

We have specific problems we need to address, and we need to look very carefully at those problems and find effective solutions that really contribute to public safety.

As I mentioned earlier, provincial and territorial ministers of justice brought concerns forward at the justice ministers' meeting in Nova Scotia last October. They had concerns about serious violent offenders and the bail system and about the public order crisis at the community level, and the Minister of Justice promised to review the bail system. I am told again and again that the government is working on this. Maybe we need a faster gear; this is something we often hear from the New Democrats when we are talking about the Liberals. Yes, they have said the right thing; now let us actually complete that task.

In January, after the high-profile murder of an Ontario Provincial Police constable, where one of the accused was on bail, the premiers had heard nothing specific from the Liberal government. They drafted a letter making a very specific suggestion to the Prime Minister that reversing the onus for additional serious and violent offences should be considered as a reform to the bail system. This is something I take very seriously, and I think New Democrats are quite prepared to look at it.

Business of Supply

To be clear, reversing the onus for bail means that one would need to demonstrate why one should be released rather than the prosecution demonstrating why one should be retained in custody, which is the norm. There is a list of offences already for which there is reverse onus for bail, including murder and serious violent firearms offences. This also includes something Bill C-75 did, which was reversing the onus in domestic violence cases. The presumption is now that those who are charged and have been previously charged or convicted with domestic violence offences need to show why they should be released rather than the prosecution showing why they should stay in jail.

Considering this issue means hearing from some experts, police and prosecutors about how we can fix the problems and what we specifically need to do. What offences should be added to that list?

Again, there is a bit of irony. We tend to hear the Conservatives as defenders of firearms owners, but in this motion, they are saying that any firearms offences should get a reverse onus, that it should get a restriction on bail.

● (1150)

That seems peculiar to me coming from the Conservatives because my concern is about serious violent offences, not technical violations of gun laws. Therefore, when they say we should get rid of all of Bill C-75, it begins to sound like this was a bill about bail reform. Actually, it was an omnibus criminal justice bill that had many things the New Democrats supported and many things that I had long advocated for, including reversing the onus on bail in domestic violence cases. However, the claim that Bill C-75 somehow forces judges to do things is simply false. The claim in this motion is not true.

What Bill C-75 did was put into law the Supreme Court decision from 2017, called *R. v. Antic*. In that decision, the Supreme Court was very clear that fundamental justice and the charter require that those who are awaiting trial be released at the earliest reasonable opportunity and under the least onerous conditions in order to respect the principle of the presumption of innocence. Are there some unintended consequences of that decision in Bill C-75? Perhaps there are. I am looking forward to the committee looking at the specifics of what we can do if we have those unintended consequences. However, as the member for Saint-Jean so rightly pointed out, repealing Bill C-75 would not change anything about the law on bail because the charter and the Supreme Court decision would still exist. Therefore, to single out Bill C-75 for repeal is really not realistic as a solution to the problems.

What is it I want as a New Democrat and a member of Parliament? I want us to do that hard work at committee to figure out how we can reassure Canadians that those who are accused of serious violent crimes and already have a record of serious violent crime do not get bail before a trial for another offence.

I also want us to take a look at that broader question of how we make sure that changes in the bail system do not inadvertently contribute to the denial or inordinate detention of indigenous people, poor people or racialized Canadians. We cannot make sweeping changes to that system and still respect the need to make the justice system fair for all Canadians.

With that, I am going to conclude my remarks today. I want to say that I am disappointed with this motion, and for that reason, New Democrats are voting against it. However, it remains obvious that there is at least a part of the Conservative Party that came to the justice committee on Monday prepared to work seriously on these issues and find real solutions to the concerns that the public has about public disorder and violent crime. They are prepared to find things that are effective in increasing public safety as a way of addressing those, and not a motion like this, which sensationalizes the problem and provides no real solutions.

● (1155)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but reflect on the fact that there have been at least three pieces of legislation brought in by the former Harper government with mandatory minimum sentences that have been struck down by the court. I guess the only way to go around that is either to rewrite the charter or use the notwithstanding clause. It seems that the Conservatives keep bringing forward legislation that is clearly infringing upon people's charter rights. Would the member be willing to share his thoughts on what a charter of rights developed by the Conservative Party would look like?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question, which I will not take seriously. However, I think he raises a concern. We have seen this rhetoric about "tough on crime", and we saw it implemented in Canada under the Harper government. Two things resulted from that. One was that, as the Supreme Court pointed out, most of the measures on the tough on crime agenda were unconstitutional and violated the charter. The second was that they were in place for a time in this country. What was the result of them being in place? Did crime rates plummet? No, they did not. Did the costs of the justice system and correction system skyrocket because of those measures? Yes, they did.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is one thing the member was talking about that I found interesting, and I would like him to elaborate on it a bit more. He was talking about people who are awaiting trial as those who are caught up in the system. He acknowledged that there are violent criminals who are out on bail, but there is also this other issue. I would like him to talk about the other issue, which was that part about people who are stuck in the system simply awaiting trial. I wonder if he could elaborate on that point a bit further. If he has some suggestions, that would maybe be beneficial to the debate here today.

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• (1200)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I think it is a concern that we sometimes do not pay enough attention to. A large number of Canadians who are never found guilty of anything have ended up spending a long period of time in detention before they were found not guilty of those offences. In particular, this falls heavily on indigenous people, racialized Canadians and Canadians who have low incomes. Unfortunately, it also falls heavily on new Canadians and on immigrants and refugees.

The first solution to that, of course, is to have adequate funding for the justice system, so that we do not have such large delays before cases get dealt with in court. That is probably the easiest thing we could actually do. For a long time the appointment of judges was slow. The Liberal government took a long time to get going on this, but it has now been filling those vacancies more regularly. This will help cut those delays before people reach trial.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

This morning we are again seized with some sort of motion addressing one of my Conservative friends' favourite topics, namely law and order and justice.

This morning, my colleague and other members spoke about the fact that it is also important to proactively address poverty indicators, including housing, mental health and addiction. How would all the investments that the government could make impact the number of people who get arrested and the time they spend in jail?

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, we could pass all the laws we want in the world, here in the House of Commons. However, if we fail to address the crisis in addictions in this country, the mental health crisis and the housing crisis, then all those laws would make no difference at all in what happens at the community level. It would make no difference in how safe members of our communities actually are or how safe they feel. Therefore, the member is quite right that we do need to spend at least part of our time in this House making sure we are addressing those serious social, mental health and other housing problems. This is fundamental to getting society back on track and to having safe communities.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I hope my friend from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke will not mind that I change from the subject of bail and the efficacy of our current bail system to something slightly outside the Conservative motion. Does he have any comments on the nature of bail conditions and family members putting up bonds and surety for people awaiting trials?

The actual day-to-day reality is that when someone breaks their bail conditions, their mothers or family members almost never have to come up with the money because the person violated bail conditions. Does the member have any thoughts on whether, if we focus on this to increase the likelihood that bail conditions are observed, perhaps we do not need to tinker with making the system more punitive?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question. It is outside the scope of the Conservative motion, but it is important. However, I would back up a step and ask us to look at why people fail to meet their bail conditions. Seriously, most of the time it is because people have mental health, addiction and poverty problems. I cited the example in my speech of someone with a mental health problem who needed their supervisor on bail to actually contact them regularly to get them to those meetings. It was not because they were evil or deliberately breaking bail conditions; it was because their grasp on reality was sufficiently disturbed that they simply could not get it together to make those meetings.

Oftentimes we also do things like say someone cannot go to an area of town. We would have a red zone, and part of one's bail conditions would be that one does not go there. It is unrealistic to ask somebody without a fixed address, when maybe all their friends and associates hang out on the streets in those areas, never to have contact with their support networks in their communities.

As such, before we ask about that, I think we need to ask whether those are reasonable conditions and why people are breaking those conditions.

• (1205)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, on the issue of the violence we are seeing, certainly the opioid crisis, the homeless crisis and the lack of mental health supports have really exacerbated senseless violence, but the issue of bail conditions also has to be addressed because we have violent offenders who are seriously impacting public safety.

However, I want to question my colleague on the fact that the justice committee is set to do a review, and yet the Conservatives, once again, are doing a massive fundraising drive on what they are pushing now. I remember the Stephen Harper government, when they would get up every week on a new "tough on crime" bill and they had more recalls than the Ford Pinto because they were never about doing "smart on crime". They were just about hitting their base and coming forward with laws that, time and time again, broke the charter and the Supreme Court threw them out.

What does my hon. colleague think is with the Conservatives, that they are not willing to work with us on trying to find the solutions to get proper bail conditions, but they are just looking to get fundraising with their base?

Business of Supply

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, as I have said a couple of times this morning in the debate here, I was pleased on Monday when the Conservatives put forward a very reasonable motion to have us work in the justice committee to find practical solutions that would contribute to community safety across the country. I am disappointed in the Conservatives today with a motion that seems designed to divide us in the House. Maybe the purpose of the motion today is to contribute to the Conservative line, which we hear every day, that everything is broken, and it is kind of embarrassing for them to have to admit that on this question we had actually reached agreement among all parties to work together to find solutions.

I do not believe the House is broken. I believe the justice committee can find real solutions to the two problems, and, let me say, there are two problems. One is the problem of serious violent offenders, and the other is the public disorder problems that result. Bail affects both of those, and we need to separate those two issues and look at how to solve each of those problems. I know the justice committee will do great work in doing so.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, everything feels broken. After eight years, we have half of Canadians cutting back on groceries and 20% of them skipping meals because the Prime Minister's carbon tax, with the help of the NDP, has made food prices unaffordable.

After eight years, Bloomberg says we have the fifth-worst housing bubble on planet earth as a nation, and Toronto, according to UBS, is the most overpriced housing market in the world. After eight years of the Prime Minister, rent for the average apartment has gone from \$1,000 to \$2,000, and the average mortgage payment, from \$1,500 to well over \$3,000. People's finances feel broken after eight years.

What else is broken? It is our laws, literally broken. Our violent crime laws have been broken 32% more than when the Prime Minister took office eight years ago. There are major parts of our cities that have turned into crime zones after eight years of the Prime Minister. We see this not just in the staggering anecdotes of people being hit in the face with ice picks on transit stations or doused in flammable liquids and lit aflame. We see it in the random attacks on strangers on the streets of Vancouver and Toronto. We see it in the half-dozen police officers murdered, in some cases by multiple offenders who were out on early bail, because after eight years of the Prime Minister bail has become easier and more automatic to get for the violent offenders who do the most crime.

When we speak up against this broken bail system that the Liberals have created, they respond with their typical divide-and-distract. They attempt to convince people to be afraid of the solution rather than solving the problem. They claim that Conservatives want to bring in some kind of Dickensian system of criminal justice, which is actually false. Our approach has not only been tough on the repeat violent offenders, but it has been smart, and now we can all say, having looked at the data, it has been proven right. Let us look at the data.

Actually, before we look at the data, I want to talk about the general principle that guides our approach to criminal justice. Contrary

to the false rhetoric of the Liberals and the NDP, and the dishonest reporting from the CBC and other Liberal outlets, our approach narrowly targets the most violent, dangerous offenders. We agree that long criminal sentences are not helpful for a young person who makes a small mistake and wants to start over and rebuild their life. We believe that a young person making such a mistake should get rehabilitation and support.

Also contrary to the false and dishonest reporting of the Liberal media, we do not believe that someone who is suffering from a drug addiction should go to prison; we believe they should go to treatment, something that is not happening today. We believe those who prey upon drug addicts should pay the real penalties and not the addicts themselves.

Finally, we believe that the government, instead of flooding our communities with dangerous and lethal drugs, should put our resources into recovery and treatment, as the Alberta government has done with great success in bringing down the overdose deaths that have afflicted people right across this country. We see the alternative in British Columbia, where there has been a 300% increase in drug overdose deaths since the Prime Minister took office eight years ago. His and the NDP's approach in that province has been a disaster. It has created a living hell in certain communities throughout Vancouver, where addicts lie face down on the pavement, live permanently in encampments, and six people die every single day from overdoses. That is the empirical evidence about the approach the Liberal government has taken.

It is time to rescue our brothers and sisters, our friends and neighbours, to help them: yes, with the medications that reduce the symptoms of withdrawal, and yes, with the medications that reverse overdoses, but also with recovery and treatment and not by flooding our communities with drugs. That has not worked and that is not the way to go.

• (1210)

Now, on to violent offences, there were two different approaches. Conservatives believe that the most violent repeat offenders should serve longer sentences. This is the approach we took when we were in government, which led to both a reduction in crime and, interestingly, a reduction in incarceration numbers.

Let us look at the data on the first point. When the Conservative government left office, there were 382,000 violent crimes, obviously too many, and that was in the year 2015, but that has risen now, after eight years of the Prime Minister, to over 500,000 violent crimes, an increase of 32%. Now, one might assume, listening to the rhetoric from the far-left media, that this is because everyone went to jail. Well, that is false, actually. During the previous Conservative government, the number of people behind bars actually dropped from 238,000 to 201,000, a reduction of roughly 37,000. That is 37,000 fewer people who were behind bars.

How is it possible, then, that we call it “tough on crime”? The answer is that we targeted the worst offenders, the repeat offenders, the frequent flyers, those who come back to commit one crime after another, and we see this phenomenon now reversed as this government has allowed those frequent-flyer criminals to go back out on the street again and again.

Let me turn members' attention to a letter from the B.C. union of mayors, where they highlight the problem we are trying to address today by fixing the broken Liberal bail system. In the letter, they say that the same 40 offenders had 6,000 negative interactions with police in one year. That is 150 interactions per year per offender: on average, about one every two days. Across British Columbia, the same 204 offenders had 11,648 interactions with the police. Most of these, by the way, are arrests. So, again, these same 204 offenders in all of British Columbia had about 50 interactions with police per year per person.

This is what is happening. The same repeat offenders are committing, in many cases, dozens and dozens of offences, and then when police arrest them, they are released on bail the same day, because of the Prime Minister's catch-and-release policies. They then go out and reoffend the same day and police officers have to arrest them again. Ironically, this does not reduce the incarceration rate. What it means is that the same people are incarcerated, but their incarceration is punctuated by a short-term release during which time they can go out and smash someone's face in, if I can be blunt about it, because that is what is happening with these random attacks.

What we, as Conservatives, propose is that those offenders who have a track record of multiple reoffences, but then are charged again, should be kept behind bars to await trial until such time as they are either acquitted or they complete their sentences. Why? It is because the evidence has shown that they are a danger to public safety, and that is why we want them behind bars. It is not because we hate the offender, but because we love the victims, and we want to protect them from future harm.

As my deputy leader, the member for Thornhill, will say, as I am splitting my time with her, our purpose in this is to protect public safety, to follow the evidence and the data, and to listen to the true experts, which is to say, the police officers, the prison guards and those who work in rehabilitating and helping those who have been in crime, the real experts who do the real work. Let us listen to them. Let us protect our people. Let us fix what is broken and let us bring safety and security home to our people.

• (1215)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

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Madam Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about the Conservative approach. What we know about the Conservative approach as it relates to their “tough on crime” legislation is that on multiple occasions the Supreme Court has shot down their legislation saying that it is unconstitutional and infringes upon charter rights. In fact, Bill C-75 only mirrors exactly what the Supreme Court has ruled.

In order for the Conservatives to use their approach, they would have to do one of two things: either invoke the notwithstanding clause or change the charter in a way that suits their ability to bring forward the legislation they want. My question for the Leader of the Opposition is quite simple. If he was the Prime Minister and wanted to bring in this legislation, which of those two choices would he do? Would he change the charter or would he use the notwithstanding clause?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the proposal that we make today in this motion is constitutional, so I would not have to choose between the charter and the common-sense proposal. We can actually have both.

If it were challenged, then we would go to court and present the evidence. What is the evidence? The evidence is that the broken Liberal bail system has led to the violation of rights of victims. I point to the data again from the B.C. union of mayors showing the same 200 people being arrested 11,000 times in a single year, 55 arrests per offender British Columbia-wide.

In Vancouver, it is much worse, with 40 people being arrested over 6,000 times. Imagine if we had a pinpoint approach to target those 40 people, how many other people would be spared victimhood? The 6,000 victims would have been spared just by targeting the worst offenders. That is common sense, and it will stand up in court.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his speech.

This is a very emotional subject. We all want disinformation to be set aside. To some extent, we all want to be able to rely on science and research to make changes. Clearly, Bill C-75 is not perfect. We would like to comment on that.

We must focus on the good elements and work towards implementing them, which is not happening now, in my opinion. Furthermore, there is clearly a vote-seeking aspect to the Conservatives' motion.

I would like to ask the Leader of the Opposition what his reaction is when I talk about science and research. Carolyn Yule, a professor of sociology and anthropology—

• (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize for interrupting the member, but I must leave time for other questions.

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The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. He said that this is a very emotional subject, and I agree.

Of course, when someone's life is destroyed by a criminal act, it is bound to be emotional. However, my speech was not emotionally charged.

I presented the facts, and the facts are very clear. The Conservative approach reduced the number of criminals and the number of violent crimes. Ironically, we did it while reducing the number of people in prison. Why? It is because we very carefully targeted the most violent repeat offenders. That is what we are proposing today.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that denying bail and using pretrial detention disproportionately impacts black and indigenous people and it makes it more likely that people will reoffend, not that he cares about indigenous peoples or colonization after meeting with the Frontier Centre leading residential school denialists. Just like his opposition to harm reduction, the member ignores the evidence when it conflicts with his ideology, including evidence coming out of the Canadian Public Health Association.

Instead of going back to Harper's tough on crime, which we know does not work, will the member support investing in crime prevention, like outreach, like a guaranteed livable income, like mental health—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow for an answer.

The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we know the member's approach. Her approach, along with her coalition partner, the Prime Minister, has been an absolute disaster everywhere it has been tried.

In Vancouver today, we have a more than 300% increase in the number of people who have died of drug overdoses. We have a 32% increase in violent crime right across the country. That member should take personal responsibility for her involvement in the Prime Minister's agenda that has led to that disastrous outcome.

We will take no lessons from the member or her disastrous radical NDP approach, which floods our communities with dangerous drugs and puts the most violent offenders out on our streets.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been eight years of the Prime Minister and thousands of new victims of crime across Canada in those eight years.

I stand here not only as the voice of my constituents in Thornhill, but also as the voice of thousands of people in every corner of the country who want us to start taking the safety of our communities more seriously.

I grew up in the place that I represent in the House of Commons today and I have spent almost my whole life living in the Toronto area. Even though the city is home to millions, we have always been blessed to have a feeling of big-city safety. That is not often found elsewhere. For years, we rode transit without fearing the ran-

dom attacks. Now all we have to do is open the newspaper, go to Twitter or turn on the news to see violent attack after violent attack throughout the last number of months.

We gathered in public places with our loved ones and we were free to do the things we wanted to do whenever we wanted to do them without fear. We went about our daily lives, safe from criminals and the people who wanted to harm others, for the most part. We used to feel safe in the city. That feeling is fading away. All one has to do is open the newspaper to see it.

With every day that passes comes another story about the out-of-control violence in our streets and the innocent people who are being terrorized by it: stories of people being stabbed in the head and face with ice picks; stories about people being swarmed and beaten, in some cases by teenagers, or pushed in front of moving trains or shoved to the ground; stories about people being set on fire in the biggest city in our country.

All the recent attacks, the ones we have outlined a number of times, were random. All of these attacks were in Canada. The GTA is used to making international news, it is a big place, but not international news like this. Last week, it was on the BBC. A few weeks ago, it was in the New York Times. Even my hometown of Vaughan made it onto CNN last December after a horrific shooting.

We are obviously seeing more of this. The rate is rising. The stats are clear. Rising crime is not just something that is tearing into my community and it is not isolated. It is something that is happening in every neighbourhood across the country. It is happening in Vancouver where entire sections of the city are being taken over by out-of-control drug and gang activity. It is happening in rural communities, where only 18% of all Canadians live but 25% of violent crimes take place. Those numbers are shocking.

There were more homicides in our nation in 2019 than in 2018. There were more in 2020 than in 2019. There were more in 2021 than in 2020. That is a pattern and somebody has to say it. Things are not okay because each day we see more suffering in our communities and more inaction or, frankly, not the right action in our Parliament.

While our neighbourhoods are affected by crime, the Liberals are busy telling us, once again, that it is somebody else's fault or it is somebody else's job, deflecting blame and denying guilt again. However, the stats are clear; we only need to turn on the news.

While families are grieving the loss of loved ones to violence, the Liberals are busy reducing the penalties for heinous acts like robbery with a firearm, fentanyl trafficking that is ravaging the streets in places like Vancouver, or in smaller places like Peterborough and London or places like right outside the House. Kidnaping is also on the list.

While victims of crime are struggling to get justice, the Liberals are standing by their policies and making it easier for the very people who are responsible for those crimes to go back out in the world and do it all over again. The Liberals are standing by Bill C-75, which is what we are talking about today. It makes it easier to get bail, easier to be let out of custody, easier for criminals to go back to their illegal activities and harm even more people. It is broken. What we are doing is not working and everybody else knows it.

Last year in Toronto, there were 44 shooting-related murders. Seven of those arrested were out on bail already for charges of gun crime and 17 of those were out on bail for other crimes. If people are keeping score that is more than half. Of the 44 murders in the city in which I have spent most of my life, more than half, or 24, of those accused were out on bail; 24 additional families that lost loved ones because of the Liberal broken bail system. Every premier says that the system is broken along with every police union and police chief.

● (1225)

If we listen to everyone else who is talking about it, they say that bail reform could save lives. There are a lot of other things that we can talk about, but not talking about this when we know it can save lives would be irresponsible.

In 2021, 165 people in Toronto, who were out on bail for gun charges, were arrested, including 98 people who were arrested on gun charges. It is broken and what we are doing is not working, and everybody agrees.

Since the Liberals have been in power, violent crime has increased by 32%. Gang-related homicides have increased by a staggering 92%. Car jacking has doubled in Toronto. Property theft has gone up. It has all gone up; it is broken. What we are doing simply is not working. Our laws are broken.

It is shocking that the Liberal member for Scarborough Southwest is a cabinet minister and former Toronto police chief, and he said more about crime in Memphis last week than he has said about crime in his own city. That is disgraceful.

Today, Liberal members continue to insist that everything is fine, that nothing is wrong and that they are working on it. There was a meeting last November where all premiers and the federal government agreed to do something, and there is still nothing.

All 13 premiers have written a demand letter to the Prime Minister to fix our broken bail system. The voices are united. It is police officers, it is frontline officers, it is police unions and it is people on our front lines who are all begging the government to do something about it.

We will always stand on the side of law enforcement in our country. We are also going to stand on the side of victims of crime, and not on the side of criminals. We are going to stand for ending soft-on-crime laws like Bill C-75 that put the rights of criminals above those of the victims. That is wrong. All we have to do is open a newspaper to read about it.

We are here today to demand action because if the Liberals will not anything, we will. If they are not prepared to make a change, to

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do their job and protect Canadians, they should step aside and let somebody else do it.

It is not about some archaic regulation. It is not about political posturing. Everybody agrees. All premiers from different stripes agree. The mayor of my hometown, who just ran for the provincial Liberal leadership, wrote a demand letter to the Prime Minister asking for bail reform.

This is not a Conservative issue. It is an issue that speaks to public safety and to the protection of the rights of victims over the rights of criminals.

Our proposal is simple: prioritize the rights of victims and law-abiding citizens, not the criminals, and fix the broken bail system that lets murderers and repeat offenders out, free to recommit crimes in the community.

We need to bring back penalties and punishments that actually fit the crime, particularly for violent repeat offenders. We need to fight crime where it exists, at our borders and in gangs, not in the home of law-abiding firearm owners or hunters.

It is time to go back to the time when people felt safe in their communities, where people can walk on the streets without being randomly attacked, where criminals are punished for the crimes they commit, where Canadians have the right to travel wherever they want whenever they want and be free of fear on public transit, to go out in public with their families and feel safe.

I hope all members, on behalf of their communities, their constituents and their loved ones, stand up for those rights. We can do that by passing this motion today. I hope hon. colleagues in the House see that too.

● (1230)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, being called a radical by folks who hang out with far-right radical extremists and take photos with people like Jeremy Mackenzie, who is now facing criminal charges, threats with criminal harassment, and saying that they stand onside with law-abiding citizens, not victims, is pretty rich. I am pretty complimented about that.

The members talk about listening to law enforcement. In the City of Winnipeg, the Winnipeg city police came out in support of harm reduction as a crime reduction strategy. The Conservatives pride themselves on being tough on crime. Will they agree with the Winnipeg city police and support harm reduction approaches?

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Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, on bail reform, we absolutely agree with the frontline police officers, including those in Winnipeg, who have called for bail reform. We agree with the 13 premiers who have all agreed that the Prime Minister needs to fix bail reform. If the member opposite wants to get up and yell at the government and then support them at every juncture, she is free to do so.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-75 was definitely not perfect. There were many ways it could have been improved. However, we must not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

It is also important to take a broader view of the situation and ask what causes the violence. A child is not born violent. Various aspects of a person's life leads them down that road.

Across Canada, social services have been greatly affected by cuts to health transfers over the past 30 years. Are those services still effective? Should we not be reinvesting in health?

Therein may lie part of the solution. It will not happen overnight, but over the long term. Health transfers have suffered 30 years of cuts, and it is time for that to change.

I would like to hear from my colleague on this issue.

• (1235)

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I am happy to hear that my hon. colleague believes there is a problem in our bail system and that she is willing to support some reform. That is exactly why we are here today, and I hope that she supports this motion. There is no disagreement that it needs work. This is not about a young person who made a mistake who we are putting away forever. That is not what Conservatives do, so any suggestion of that, frankly, is just false.

I know that there are bigger problems, but it starts here and it starts with bail reform. There are hundreds of frontline police officers out in the streets who have said that this will save lives, so I hope that she supports that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the speech given by the member and, indeed, the comments made by several Conservatives today, they have been citing statistics that I cannot seem to find anywhere. They said that they are from Statistics Canada. However, based on the numbers they have been talking about with respect to crime rates and what-not, I am unable to locate the information.

Can the member restate exactly what those numbers are and exactly where I can find them so that I can look at them myself?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I will be happy to table the crime statistics in the House from Statistics Canada. One of the statistics I stated was that of the 44 murders in Toronto, 24 were committed by those on bail. That is from the police chief of Toronto.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is really disappointing and sad, quite frankly, to hear the other members of the House talk about this motion in terms of rhetorical or playing to a base. These are very real problems happening in our country. There are organizations, police chiefs, big-city mayors and police associations that are all coming together to ask for bail reform in a non-partisan manner.

I am wondering if the hon. member could comment a little more on that.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I think that we saw, by who led off this debate, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice in this country, that the Liberals know this is a problem. The Liberals know they have not dealt with the problem. The Liberals know that everybody has been asking for bail reform in this country. I look forward to actually seeing and hearing them say they are going to do this and they are going to support this motion.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the motion brought by the hon. member of Parliament for Fundy Royal. I would like to split my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the tragic and disturbing events involving the recent deaths of several police officers in this country. It is beyond words to describe how that profoundly shocks our communities when those who dedicate their lives to serve and protect others from harm become the victims of horrendous acts of violence. It is also unimaginable what grief the families of these officers must be experiencing, and my heartfelt thoughts and condolences go out to them.

I recently had an in-depth and substantial conversation with our chief of police in Peel and his team to talk about what kinds of issues really concern our communities, especially mine in Mississauga—Erin Mills. The number one issues that we touched on and talked about were gender-based violence, the use of guns within our communities, car thefts and how we can prevent all of those. We talked about the limitations that the police force faces in terms of providing that support.

One thing that really struck me was the conversation about what exactly we are trying to do when we serve and protect our communities. What perspective are we taking in terms of creating a legal framework and providing the administration of justice in our country at the base of our communities? Are we trying to punish offenders, casting a wide net and then take in all of them without keeping in mind what rehabilitation means in our communities? How are we going to, for example, impact young offenders and rehabilitate them to become fully functioning members of our society? Are we going to talk about how the indigenous community is impacted by access to justice, bail regulations and laws within our Criminal Code?

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This debate, this conversation, this topic of issue is a lot more substantial than the unfortunate fearmongering that we are experiencing with the opposition party. We have to talk about how it is that we are going to have a harm reduction principle embedded within our criminal justice system. More importantly, we have to also understand, in the context of the federal, the provincial and the regional governments, how justice is administered and how that whole bail regime is instilled within our communities and our societies. How do we protect our communities by working together with all levels of our government?

Therefore, putting together an opposition motion and asking for certain things that just do not make sense, when we take in the full context of how it is that our justice system works, is a little disingenuous. I will take some time today to discuss the bail system in Canada and the critical role that it plays in promoting public safety, in maintaining confidence in the administration of justice, and in ensuring that our criminal justice system upholds the rights that are enshrined in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I will start by saying a few words about Canada's criminal justice system and the importance of that institution. It is a system that is the cornerstone of our democracy. It is a key component in maintaining law and order in society and the overall prosperity of Canada. The federal government continues to make efforts to ensure that Canada is a just and law-abiding society with an accessible, efficient and fair system of justice.

Our criminal laws make and help Canadians feel safe in our communities and have confidence in their justice system, which in turn improves their quality of life as well as their contribution to Canada's prosperity. Unlike the opposition, I do not believe that our institutions are broken. Are they perfect? No, nothing is perfect. Our job is to attempt to improve them, but we should not give in to fearmongering rhetoric. Instead, we should seek constructive solutions the way that our government is doing, by working with all levels of government on this issue, as we heard our minister say earlier today.

● (1240)

The criminal justice system is a shared responsibility among the federal, provincial and territorial governments, and the regional governments are involved. While the federal government is responsible for establishing the criminal law, which includes bail provisions in the Criminal Code, provincial governments are responsible for the administration of justice. That includes conducting bail hearings and enforcing bail conditions, as well as investigating and prosecuting most of the Criminal Code offences within their respective jurisdictions. A successful criminal justice system is dependent on each level of government successfully carrying out its areas of responsibility in co-operation and collaboration with one another.

At the federal government level, we continue to work very closely with provincial and territorial partners to examine ways to further improve the criminal justice system, including the bail regime, and to make it stronger and more efficient. For example, our government is carefully considering the specific concerns raised about repeat and violent offenders and about bail. These have been identified by the premiers of Canada, and our government is actively

working with provincial and territorial partners to make improvements to the bail system.

When I was sitting on the justice committee, this was an issue that we did deeply dive into to see how we can better provide protection, support for communities and better access to justice across the country. We learned from witnesses and experts from across the country that we need to take an approach that is contextualized by all of those equity-seeking groups to ensure that whatever system we are trying to improve is fair for everybody. Hence, this goes back to our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the importance of it within our criminal justice system.

Canada's bail system contributes to enhancing public safety and confidence in the criminal justice system by allowing the pretrial detention of accused persons in cases where there is just cause to do so. I emphasize that the bail system, as set out in Canada's Criminal Code, is intended to ensure that the accused persons charged with a criminal offence will attend court to answer the charge and will not pose a risk to public safety prior to their case being heard or being tried, and that confidence in the criminal justice system is maintained with respect to whether the accused is detained.

If there are concerns that an accused person who is released after being arrested would compromise those objectives, police can detain the accused and bring them before a justice, where they will have the right to a bail court hearing to determine whether they should be released. Pretrial detention of an accused person is justified where it is necessary for the protection or safety of the public, including if there is a substantial likelihood that, if released from custody, the accused would commit a criminal offence.

Where an accused person is released, police or courts are empowered to impose certain conditions that the accused is required to follow until their case has been resolved or the end of their trial. For example, the court can impose any reasonable conditions it considers desirable or necessary to ensure the safety and security of any victim or witnesses to the offence. For certain specific offences, largely offences involving violence, the court is required to impose a condition prohibiting the accused from possessing a firearm, a prohibited or restricted weapon or ammunition, unless it considers that such a condition is not required in the interests of the safety of the victim, the accused or any other person.

In order for us to tackle the issues of a just, viable and fair justice system, we have to take into account our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We have to take into account how the administration of justice by provinces is taking place. Also, importantly, we need to take into account how we are supporting those on the front lines. Do they have the resources they need? For example, in my region, for Peel police we are trying to ensure that the officers have the ability to access mental health supports. How does that play into it?

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I would appreciate it if colleagues in the House, from all aisles, were able to work on that full context of what a bail reform looks like with all levels of government.

• (1245)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills talked about and highlighted the need for our current bail system to be improved. Changes need to happen.

I have just two simple questions for her. Does she agree this is an urgent problem? How much time is realistic to address this urgent problem and make necessary changes to our bail system in Canada?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, the whole point of this is that there is no flip of a switch. No one piece of legislation is going to fix the issue of bail reform in our country. As I was trying to say, this is a multi-faceted problem. We need to engage the provincial, territorial and regional governments, and we need to ensure they have the support they need to administer justice.

Over the past seven years of our government, we have been slowly putting in place legislation that is helping to improve the bail system and the bail regime in Canada, but we would really appreciate the opposition's support on all of these bills as they go forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I do agree with her that this is a complex issue.

This morning, we are talking about public safety and crime in our streets. One of the big problems we have been talking about for months is the presence of illegal guns in our communities. I agree that this morning's motion will not solve anything. It is yet another populist motion.

Still, the Liberal government is not doing much to crack down on illegal guns coming in. Do not even talk to me about Bill C-21. It does address some things, but it does not address this problem.

Does my colleague agree that more should be done at the border to stop illegal arms trafficking? Is she applying pressure on her party from the inside to make something happen?

• (1250)

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, I had a conversation with our chief of police and many other chiefs of police across the country with respect to how we are protecting our borders. I know that our government has made hundreds of millions of dollars of investments to ensure we have more restrictions at our borders with respect to how firearms are coming across. I have talked to chiefs of police who tell me exactly how they are brought in. That feedback has been taken in, and our government has made those investments.

Again, I really think this is a complex issue. It is something we need to work on within a more fulsome context. I would have hoped that the opposition, when it was in power, would have invested more, but according to my readings, it had actually cut fund-

ing to our borders by about a third by the time it was done with its governance.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have never seen the level of threat and fear that I see in Timmins and northern communities, which have always been very peaceful, and we know this is directly related to the opioid crisis. I talk to Timmins police, and they say we cannot arrest our way out of this crisis and that they are working in the city to establish a safe site, because this is about keeping people from dying. On top of that, it is about putting supports in place to deal with the homelessness crisis, with opioids and with bail reform, because there are certain offenders who simply cannot be released back into the community again and again to perpetuate violence.

Is my hon. colleague willing to work with us on addressing this issue of bail reform? How are we going to see the government move on the serious issue of the opioid crisis, which is devastating our northern communities?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, I think my hon. colleague's question is an important one, and it goes back to what I was saying: We really need to put the harm reduction principle at the centre of bail reform and how we administer justice in our country as it is.

I agree with him. I think tackling the opioid crisis is a big step and is part of the key to resolving the whole framework of providing safer communities. I look forward to working with our hon. colleague to ensure that we are looking at this issue on a fulsome basis.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the Conservative fundraising motion. Why do I say that? It is not that I do not think this is an extremely serious issue. I do, and I will get to that in a second, but I feel as though the Conservative Party is taking a serious issue and exploiting it for its own gain.

We all know the Conservatives pretty much came into the room knowing this motion would not be supported by a majority of parliamentarians, but they are looking forward to the opportunity to use it in a fundraising email blast, probably later this evening, or something of that sort. It is extremely disingenuous when we treat the House of Commons this way. I do not think it was ever intended to be used this way, but unfortunately we see the Conservatives doing that more and more.

To start, bail reform, as we know and as we have been hearing from leaders throughout the country, is a very important thing we need to tackle. That is why the Minister of Justice met with leaders back in October and committed to working with them. That is why he is meeting with them again in February. That is why he will work with them to make the genuine reforms they are looking for and need in order to increase public safety. In my opinion, he is genuinely working toward an objective of trying to make Canada a better place and improve the quality of life of all Canadians.

I am disheartened by this motion because, for starters, the first resolve paragraph in it specifically speaks to Bill C-75 and directs the government to make changes to Bill C-75. The irony, though, is that Bill C-75 was brought in to fix Harper Conservative legislation on mandatory minimum sentences. At least three pieces of legislative have been struck down by the courts at this point. By bringing in Bill C-75, we mirrored what the courts were saying. The courts were saying that the law infringes upon people's charter rights, that it cannot be imposed on people and that it must be changed.

What would the Charter of Rights look like for the Conservatives? If they continually brought in legislation that was found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, would that not imply they would rather have a different Constitution with a different Charter of Rights in it, a Charter of Rights that did not give what ours currently gives? I cannot understand how we could land on any other assumption than that.

In his address today to the House, the Leader of the Opposition specifically talked about the Conservative approach. He outlined what the Conservative approach would be. However, what he did not talk about was that this approach has been struck down repeatedly by the Supreme Court. He has to come clean with Canadians and say how he would deliver on his approach. Would he use the notwithstanding clause to override the Supreme Court? Would he change the Charter or Rights so that it does not look how it looks now? How else would we effectively get the Conservative approach to become legislation that could be upheld and deemed constitutional by the Supreme Court?

I find it very confusing and very disingenuous when a motion like this comes in. It has to do with a genuine concern being brought forward by leaders throughout our country, but the Conservatives are utilizing it and piggybacking off it to try to exploit something else they are doing. They are trying to exploit fears and anxiety in order to raise money. That is the only conclusion I can come to. That is why I said that I cannot see the purpose of this motion being anything other than a fundraising tool for the Conservative Party.

The Conservatives talked a lot about Bill C-75 making bail easier. That is not what Bill C-75 was about. As a matter of fact, one of the changes in Bill C-75 made it more difficult for people to get bail. It put the onus on the accused to explain why they should be getting bail. That was specifically related to intimate partner violence.

• (1255)

I keep coming back to this point: Why would the Conservatives intentionally exploit these fears if it was for nothing other than political gain? Time after time, we see this narrative coming forward

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from the Conservatives. We see them standing up in this House and suggesting that this government is directly responsible for some of the things that were put in Bill C-75, specifically as they relate to reforms, which were only needed because the former Conservative government that put in legislation did so in a way that infringed upon people's charter rights, if we are willing to accept the ruling of the court.

As I said, Bill C-75 did not change the criteria of when an accused person can be released by police, a judge or a justice of the peace. It is important to point that out because we have heard repeatedly from the Conservatives today that this is the case. In fact, as I indicated, we made it harder for some individuals to get bail, especially as it relates to intimate partner violence.

Bill C-75 also imposed what is called a reverse onus, as I indicated, for bail imposed on an accused charged with certain firearms offences. This means that the accused will be detained pending trial unless they can prove that bail is justified.

Bill C-75 was adopted following a binding Supreme Court decision, so the Conservatives' first resolve paragraph in the motion asking that we immediately repeal the elements of Bill C-75 is disingenuous at best, because we were replying to what the court was telling us. The Supreme Court of Canada was telling us this had to be done in order to maintain people's charter rights.

I come back to where I started: What is it going to be? Do the Conservatives believe in the charter? Do they believe in those rights? They keep bringing forward legislation that imposes upon them. Do they believe in them, or would they like to see the charter changed? If they do want to see the charter changed, what would they have it look like? I am very curious about what the Charter of Rights would look like per the definition of the Conservatives and per the legislation they have been bringing forward. What do they see for those rights? It is a legitimate question. We have to get to the bottom of that because it is the underpinning and fundamental document upon which the vast majority of challenges are made.

I will continue to listen to the debate today. I am obviously opposed to this motion, and I am glad to see that the majority of colleagues in the House are coming from the same position. It is the responsible thing to do. We need to make sure we continue to have very important conversations about bail reform with leaders throughout our country who are asking for it. We have to have them in an honest way that genuinely impacts Canadians' lives and makes the lives of Canadians safer in the process.

• (1300)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, a while ago, a wise man told me never to argue with a fool because they will never know I am right, so against my better judgment I stand up here.

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The difference between the Liberals in government and the official opposition party, the Conservatives, putting this motion forward is that we are actually listening to the voices of Canadians, those of police chiefs, police associations, big-city mayors and the premiers of all the provinces and territories in this country who are demanding bail reform as a result of the failures of Bill C-75 and Bill C-5. They are seeing it on the streets. What happened with Constable Pierzchala was the top blowing off a volcano. As sad and as difficult as that situation was, it was festering underneath in the judicial system, and now all of these groups are calling for changes.

Why will the government not listen to these groups and implement the changes that are being called for?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the government is listening to these groups. Back in October, the justice minister met with leaders throughout our country who were demanding these changes. That is when they initially had a discussion about this. He has indicated in the House today, which I am sure the member for Barrie—Innisfil was present to hear, that those discussions are ongoing and that he would be meeting with them again in February.

The member asks why we will not agree to change Bill C-75, but Bill C-75 was just about fixing the mistakes the previous government made that were identified by the Supreme Court. My colleague from the NDP made a really good point earlier when he said that despite the fact that these laws may have been found unconstitutional 10 or 15 years later, lives were still affected in the meantime. Charter rights were legally infringed upon in the meantime, and that is what the Conservatives would like to see happen. They have no problem at all with seeing that occur.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands, and I have been listening to the debate all morning.

We heard his suggestion that this might be a Conservative fundraising tactic. It is also worth noting that it may behoove his government to act fast while there is still a majority of more moderate people in the House.

At this point, rather than lob criticism at legislation that seems ill-equipped to adapt, maybe we should just reform it. Does my colleague have anything to contribute to a more substantial discussion about that?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member said he has been listening to the debate all morning. I am assuming he listened to the speech I just gave. I talked at great length about bail reform and how the Minister of Justice has committed to working with those leaders. He met with them in the fall, and he is meeting with them again in February. He is committed to ensuring that we can bring forward the proper legislation and the reforms necessary.

By the way, this is not a bill. This is just a motion. I am very critical of the intent of this and what is behind it. I do not believe that any of the resolved clauses in here would actually make changes that were constitutional, or that would benefit anybody.

I think it is necessary for the conversations to happen at the local levels, the provincial and territorial levels, so the proper reforms can come in.

● (1305)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things the House has consensus on is wanting to stop illegal guns coming into Canada, especially from the United States, whether at my border point in Windsor, or other places in Ontario and across the entire country. In the past we saw the Harper administration cut out the integrated teams we had with the United States that were doing pre-investigations, joint task force analysis, and so forth.

The reason I am referencing that is, although it will always be partisan, the current Liberal administration has not actually graduated enough CBSA officers during the pandemic.

We want to have a solution. We are short about 800 officers from the pandemic alone. What is the government going to do to increase our officers?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I had a conversation with the minister just this morning specifically about CBSA officers, and my belief is that we need to ramp them up.

However, I will go back to the member's original comment. Not only did Stephen Harper's government not move forward with laws, it actually cut the CBSA's budget significantly, reducing the number of officers, yet now they seem to be the ones standing here complaining about guns coming across the border. They were literally taking resources away from the CBSA at the time.

I believe that it is important to continue to see the graduation of those officers come through. As the member indicated, it has slowed down since COVID.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Canada's bail system is broken. Why do we say it is broken? It is because it is not working for law-abiding citizens who fear for their safety, and it certainly is not working for victims. Cities in B.C., including my hometown of Surrey, are facing an onslaught of crime, including gang activity, property damage and violence. It is no wonder why.

In 2019, the Liberals passed legislation, Bill C-75, that directed a "principle of restraint" when imposing bail conditions. Under this soft-on-crime policy, police are forced to release known criminals on a promise that they will show up in court, a practice known as catch-and-release. This approach is not working in British Columbia, nor anywhere else in Canada.

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Let us look at the tragic murder of Constable Shaelyn Yang. She was stabbed to death while on duty by a man previously arrested for assault. He was released on the condition that he would appear in court, something which he failed to do. A warrant was issued for his re-arrest, but when found living in a tent in a Burnaby park, he took the life of Constable Yang. He stabbed her to death.

Sadly, crimes of this violent nature are becoming commonplace in British Columbia. A tourist was stabbed multiple times in the back while waiting in line at a Tim Hortons in Vancouver. His assailant was the subject of a Canada-wide warrant for failing to follow the conditions of his release.

Last December in Surrey, a man with a criminal record, which included 23 convictions for assault, attacked a mother and her 11-month-old child. Last year, a man stole a ferry vessel from Victoria harbour. He was arrested, released and was later caught shattering the windows and doors of local businesses.

In Vancouver, and we have heard about this before but it bears repeating, 40 offenders accounted for 6,000 arrests last year. That is an average of 150 arrests each. No one should pretend that this is acceptable. In Kelowna, one man is responsible for 346 complaints to local police in the last six years, which led to 29 convictions for assault and property crimes.

The rates of crime, especially violent crime, have reached a crisis point in B.C. The BC Urban Mayors' Caucus has sounded the alarm bells and is calling for action to prevent this cycle of crime. In its letter to the premier, it states that its cities have to divert precious resources away from other public safety priorities to deal with repeat offenders.

Even NDP Premier David Eby, who was here just the other day, signed a joint letter with all premiers to the federal government calling for the broken bail system to be fixed. The letter states, "The justice system fundamentally needs to keep anyone who poses a threat to public safety off the streets. And this starts with meaningful changes to the Criminal Code..., an area solely within the federal government's jurisdiction."

The Surrey Board of Trade, an organization normally associated with economic development in my region, is expressing its concern with crime on the streets. It recently said, "The economic development of any community relies upon its reputation as a safe, viable region in which to locate and do business".

The breakdown of public safety has hit my community of South Surrey—White Rock, but the problem extends far beyond B.C. It is a national mess. This past summer, we all watched with horror the mass killing on the James Smith Cree first nation in Saskatchewan. The perpetrator had previously been charged with over 120 crimes, but none of that prevented him from taking 10 indigenous lives.

Following that senseless tragedy, the Leader of the Opposition stood in the House pleading for change. He said:

The James Smith Cree Nation was not only the victim of a violent criminal, but also the victim of a broken criminal justice system.... A system that allows a violent criminal to reoffend over and over again with impunity does not deserve to be called a justice system. Leaving victims vulnerable to repeat attacks by a violent felon is not criminal justice. It is criminal negligence.

• (1310)

I agree that the broken bail system needs to be fixed. For someone who makes one mistake, of course they should be given every opportunity to build a productive life for themselves and others, but dangerous, violent, repeat offenders cannot be allowed to terrorize our streets.

Bill C-5 would make the problem worse. The Liberals rewrote sentencing for serious crimes, putting dangerous criminals back on the street sooner than they deserved to be. They lowered sentences for crimes such as assault with a weapon, abduction of a minor and participation in the activities of a criminal organizations, making these crimes eligible for summary convictions. They expanded house arrest for other serious offences, including sexual assault, kidnapping, human trafficking, motor vehicle theft and arson. Imagine how victims feel marginalized, how their suffering is ignored.

The Liberals eliminated mandatory prison time for serious gun crimes, including robbery or extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking, discharging a firearm with intent, using a firearm in commission of a crime, and reckless discharge of a firearm. While the Prime Minister is letting drive-by shooters and gunrunners back into our community, he is going after law-abiding hunters and sport shooters.

Meanwhile, in the middle of the opioid crisis, he eliminated mandatory prison time for drug dealers. Over 31,000 Canadians have lost their lives to overdose since the Liberals took office eight long years ago. Now the crime of producing heroin, cocaine, fentanyl or crystal meth is not subject to a mandatory minimum sentence. The same goes for drug smuggling and drug trafficking.

The blame for this mess lies at the feet of the Prime Minister and his Liberal Party, but in a minority Parliament, he cannot act alone. The NDP are complicit. Thirteen NDP MPs from B.C. voted for the reckless erosion of the justice system, and they too must be held to account. They changed the justice system to cater to the sensibilities of left-wing activists who want to defund the police rather than provide safe streets for our citizens, and now five police officers have been murdered in the past year.

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The new justice system puts the criminal first and the victim last, and offenders first and the needs of the community last. It frees the felon while tying the hands of law enforcement. What is the result after eight years? Violent crime is up 32%, homicides are up 30%, gang-related murders up 92% and sexual assaults have increased by 61%.

Next election, voters in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island can count on Conservatives to clean up the mess made of our cities and our rural communities. We will fix Canada's broken bail system by repealing the elements enacted by Bill C-75, which forced judges, some of whom are now publicly complaining, which is very unusual for an independent judiciary, to release violent repeat offenders onto the streets, allowing them to reoffend.

We will strengthen Canada's bail laws so that those who are prohibited from possessing firearms and who are then accused of serious firearm offences do not easily get bail, as they do now. We will target violent repeat offenders and ensure that Canada's justice system puts the rights of law-abiding Canadians first. We will restore safe streets and protect our citizens from violent crime.

Canadians are hurting in so many ways under these Liberals. They do not care, but the Conservatives do.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is a quote I pulled up from Statistics Canada:

There were over 2 million police-reported Criminal Code incidents (excluding traffic) in 2021, about 25,500 more incidents than in 2020. At 5,375 incidents per 100,000 population, the police-reported crime rate—which measures the volume of crime—increased 1% in 2021, following a 9% decrease in 2020. In 2021, the violent crime rate increased 5%, while the property crime rate decreased 1%.

The quote ends with the part I want to emphasize: “Following a large decrease in 2020, the property crime rate was the lowest it has been dating back to 1965.”

I am wondering why it is the Conservatives are trying to give a false impression. When I get an opportunity to speak, I will expand on the misinformation and what is on the borderline of a word I cannot use so I will not.

Why are the Conservatives doing it? I think they are more concerned about fundraising—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, it is very interesting that my colleague pulls out a statistic. I have not seen that particular one, but I can say that just within the last few days my local newspaper, the Peace Arch News, has blasted headlines about the increase in property crime in White Rock and Surrey with respect to how bad it is and how victimized the community is feeling.

We are actually here to talk about bail reform and repeat violent offenders, not necessarily property crime. However, if one talks to any Canadian on any street in my communities in B.C., they will say both are up and that this makes them feel insecure and unsafe.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I realize that the events mentioned by the Conservatives today are deplorable.

I wonder if my colleague could speak about young offenders. What should we do with our youth? It seems to me that rehabilitation, which helps young people understand the consequences of their actions, always yields better results than punishment and imprisonment, especially in the case of youth.

I would like to know what my colleague would propose for young offenders.

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, as we have already said and, in fact, the leader said today, we are not interested in long prison sentences for young offenders who maybe make a mistake and want to turn their lives around, or people addicted to drugs who really want to free their lives from the travails of addiction. We are talking about violent repeat offenders. When it comes to our young people, we hope they will make better choices and we want to help them do that through rehabilitation programs, support and drug addiction programs and recovery, something on which not enough money, investment or time has been spent by the current Liberal government.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am hoping to find some consensus at least from today, which I think we can get on the border, with regard to our customs officers. There has been a previous problem with regard to their collective agreements. Several governments have finally gotten through a process, sometimes taking three to four years to get collective agreements. To the government's credit right now, there actually is a collective agreement in place that has been settled for the moment. They are going back to negotiations soon.

I wonder what the Conservative Party's position is with regard to whether there has been undertraining of CBSA officers during COVID, and also moving away from boots on the ground. There have been cuts in the past. Would the Conservatives at least agree there should be more resources and supports? Would they support a bipartisan approach to increasing CBSA officers, facilities, structures and equipment to actually stop guns from getting smuggled into Canada?

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• (1320)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, as someone who represents a border community with two border crossings, I am well aware of some of the issues at the border and with CBSA. We absolutely need to put, again, time, attention and investment into the training and support for our CBSA officers. They are often dealing with very difficult situations. They come upon them very quickly as people go to cross the border and perhaps are smuggling. We know that the vast majority of violent crime using firearms in Canada is effected with smuggled weapons, normally coming up from the United States.

We have tried to bring in even some private members' bills on this, which have been rejected by the House. Again, I agree with a bipartisan approach. Let us get on it. Let us make our borders safe and secure.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to our motion, which is very important. I will begin by saying that I have been here for eight years, the same amount of time that this Liberal government has been in power. Under this Prime Minister's reign—and I say “reign” because the Prime Minister behaves like a king who is not accountable to anyone, whether the decisions are good or bad—it has become clear that this government and this Prime Minister are very sympathetic to criminals.

This is evidenced by several decisions that have been made and several legislative changes that have been introduced over the past eight years. Whether those decisions are in relation to prisons, Bill C-75 or Bill C-5, we find that they are always oriented towards helping criminals, not victims.

In the eight years since the Liberal government came to power, we have seen an increase in crime with all these legislative changes that favour crime. This is particularly true when it comes to bail. I remember the debates we had on Bill C-75 quite clearly. The Conservative Party was very critical of what was proposed in that bill, because it made no sense.

Today, four years later, we see the result. I want to make it clear to my colleagues on the Liberal side who are here, and even to my colleagues from the Bloc who endorsed Bill C-75 at the time but who may have changed their minds by now, that today's motion is very specific. We are asking the government to urgently review certain elements of Bill C-75.

In particular, we want to review the provisions regarding criminals who use firearms and who, unfortunately, because of Bill C-75, are able to obtain bail too easily. We had evidence of this just before Christmas, when a Toronto police officer was murdered on his first day working solo. This young police officer was murdered by a repeat offender who should never have been released on bail.

This is the most serious type of crime in Canada right now. We are not here today to table a sweeping motion to revamp Bill C-75 in its entirety. We want to target this problem specifically, as requested by all the premiers of all the provinces and territories of Canada, as requested by the police associations, and as requested on January 23 by Pierre Brochet, president of the Quebec associa-

tion of police chiefs. He urged the government to change the way it deals with the worst criminals of all, repeat offenders, who commit violent crimes over and over again.

We are seeing that now. British Columbia has published reports. My colleagues love talking about reports, so let me point out that a report from British Columbia said that 40 offenders were arrested 6,000 times in just one year. That is mind-boggling. The same individual could be arrested and released three times in the same day. That is hard for anyone to understand, but it is one of the harmful effects of Bill C-75, and that is what we want to fix.

We want to fix this very specific problem. Today's motion is aimed at that. Earlier, I heard my Bloc colleague speak about young offenders. We are not talking about that. All we want to do is close the loophole in Bill C-75 regarding violent criminals, those who commit dangerous offences over and over day after day and got a 28-year-old police officer killed just before Christmas.

When we talk about lax Liberal policies, the facts speak for themselves. All the changes that have been made over the last eight years have led to the 32% increase in crime we are seeing these days. There has also been a 92% increase in murders committed by street gangs.

Why is that happening, if not because, as I said at the start, criminals are no longer afraid? Criminals are thumbing their noses at the justice system. In the streets of Montreal, criminals were eagerly waiting for Bill C-5 to be passed.

I hear my Liberal colleague on the other side saying “come on”. I would invite him to go meet with—

• (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is not yet time for questions and comments. I would ask hon. members to wait until the appropriate time.

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

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, things always get emotional when we talk about crime, but facts are facts.

The streets of Montreal would be safer had Bill C-5 not been passed, for example.

Last week, we saw one of the harmful effects of Bill C-5, which was passed before Christmas. An individual who committed aggravated sexual assault eight years ago was sentenced last week. There were many delays related to the court process, and Bill C-5 was passed in the midst of all that. The sentence that the judge handed down was 20 months to be served in the community, whereas, in the past, that individual would have been jailed. Seeing what the judge had done, the Crown prosecutor said that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice had a lot to answer for to the victims.

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Ever since this government took office eight years ago, I have been astounded by its total lack of sympathy for victims.

The Canadian Victims Bill of Rights was enacted during the Conservative era. My colleague, Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu, then prime minister Stephen Harper, then minister of justice Peter MacKay, and Steven Blaney, who was also a minister, created the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights as a way to give victims of crime the right to be protected and informed. We know victims have been totally overlooked in recent years. Criminals are laughing at the justice system because they know that justice is much weaker now and they can commit crimes over and over without fear of prison time. It is victims who are living in fear, too scared to even file a complaint anymore because they know that nothing will come of it. The Liberals can say what they want, but facts are facts.

On this day of debate on our motion, we are not addressing the problem in a partisan way at all. When the premiers of all 13 provinces and territories ask for exactly the same thing and the police associations in Canada all ask for exactly the same thing, I would say it is because there is a problem.

I hope my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois will understand the approach we are taking today. As I said earlier, if anyone reads our motion carefully, they will clearly see that we are specifically targeting firearms offences, among others.

Say a criminal who commits an offence and is charged with a firearms offence is able to get parole easily and goes on to commit another firearms offence. If we asked Canadians if they thought that was okay, they would all say no. One of the problems with Bill C-75 is that it allows criminals to be released too easily. That is what we want to be fixed. We are asking that the situation that was created by passing Bill C-75 be resolved to prevent recurring crimes.

As I said earlier, in British Columbia, 40 individuals were arrested 6,000 times in one year. That is unbelievable. In Canada, the group we are targeting amounts to a few hundred individuals. We are talking about 1,000 criminals at most. We are not talking about applying a law to every person in Canada who is facing any kind of charges. Rather, we are focusing specifically on the problem of criminals who commit firearms offences and dangerous repeat offenders. That is all we want, and we would like the Liberal government to show some understanding.

After eight years, this Liberal government needs to understand that we need more rules and that what we are talking about right now is a very valid issue. As I said, it is not a partisan issue when 13 provincial and territorial premiers from all parties are saying the same thing. These premiers are Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats. I think it is perfectly reasonable.

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I made reference to a specific quote I put to the member before. It was coming from Statistics Canada, which says, "Following a large decrease in 2020, the property crime rate was the lowest it has been dating back to 1965."

In fact, if we take a look at the murder rates, the most serious of crimes out there, we can talk about the first three years of Harper. There were 597, 614 and 611 homicides, compared to the first three years of this administration, when there were 611, 616 and 667.

If we listen to the Conservatives, one would think that everything is broken, that everything is falling apart, that people should be aware that crime is on the streets and that it is rampant, yet the facts, the reality, do not reflect what it is that the Conservatives are preaching.

Why is the Conservative Party using such an important issue, when one talks about victims and so forth, in order to raise money?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, my colleague is doing his job of trying to defend the indefensible. Thirteen premiers are calling for the same thing we are, as are all the associations representing the police officers who are out on the street, working to protect citizens across Canada. These people are not asking for legislative reform for nothing. They see that the status quo is not working. Our motion targets the most dangerous criminals and violent repeat offenders.

Why do the Liberals insist on allowing these people to go free so easily? I cannot understand it.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I admire him greatly, but I do not agree with what he is saying. Bill C-75 was not perfect. We all agree on that, on both sides of the House. There are some improvements to be made.

I would like my colleague's opinion on the remarks made by Carolyn Yule, a sociology and anthropology professor who studies bail. She says that there is no evidence to suggest that a tough-on-crime approach to bail would improve public safety.

Can we please trust these academics?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, my Bloc Québécois colleague started by clearly stating that Bill C-75 was not perfect. That is precisely what we are talking about today. We want to improve Bill C-75 as passed, by making changes to it.

My colleague talked about an academic, but we are not questioning all grounds for bail. We want to make it clear today that we are targeting violent criminals, criminals who use firearms. We are not asking to overhaul the entirety of Bill C-75 as passed, although we should. We are being specific. We are targeting one particular aspect. We do not want to completely revamp what was passed, and they need to stop thinking that way. We want to take focused action in the name of the overall safety of all Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague why the Conservatives left out illegal firearms and the border in this motion. It is quite shocking, frankly, given the fact we have such a dominance of this type of activity creating victims and problems in our country. I believe there is consensus in trying to work on this problem, maybe not how to get to it, but it is rather shocking the Conservatives did not do that, especially given that Stephen Harper, as the member referenced earlier, his former leader, actually cut the integrated system teams we had. These were men and women who did some of the proactive work to keep guns out and who worked with U.S. law enforcement to keep our streets safe. Why do the Conservatives not at least address what their failings were in the past by including it here and in the future?

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, indeed, the issue at the border is a major one. We have raised it many times. The government needs to put far more effort into controlling illegal weapons trafficking at the borders. These weapons are being used by criminals on the streets of Montreal, Toronto and all over Canada.

We did not include it in the motion today because we are specifically targeting Bill C-75 and the fact that Bill C-5 is harmful. However, the problem of weapons trafficking at the borders is indeed a priority issue. I hope the government will speed things up.

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the outset, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Sudbury. I am thankful for the opportunity to join today's debate relating to the criminal justice system, focusing on bail and repeat violent offenders.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Fundy Royal for his motion and his long-standing commitment to public safety. His motion provides me with an opportunity to discuss recent reforms to the Criminal Code, specifically former Bill C-75, and reflect on what is happening in my community and what we are doing in Richmond Hill.

Bill C-75 was introduced on March 29, 2018, in the House of Commons and subsequently received royal assent on June 21, 2019. The changes enacted by the bill came fully into force in December 2019.

While the reforms were enacted principally to address delays and criminal justice system efficiencies related to the concerns raised by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 2016 Jordan decision and 2017 Cody decision, they also modernized and streamlined Canada's bail

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regime. These reforms represented the most significant changes to Canada's bail regime since the Bail Reform Act of 1972. Bill C-75 also reflected the reasoning of Canada's top court in the 2017 Antic decision. It was a product of significant consultations with the provinces and territories. It was a thoughtful and broad-ranging reform.

With respect to the bail amendments in Bill C-75, they were designed to specifically streamline the bail process by increasing the types of conditions police can impose on accused in order to avoid sending unnecessary cases to court and to reduce the need for unnecessary bail hearings, and by no means were they designed to reduce the conditions assigned during bail; codify a principle of restraint to ensure that release at the earliest opportunity is favoured over detention when appropriate, and I will go into detail on that later; provide guidance so the bail conditions imposed are reasonable, relevant to the offence and necessary to ensure public safety; and finally, require that the circumstances of indigenous accused and of accused from vulnerable populations be considered at bail to better address the disproportionate impact that the bail system has on these populations.

My colleagues suggest that Bill C-75 has broken Canada's bail system, that its reform forces judges to release violent repeat offenders back onto the street, and that receiving bail is easier now than ever for violent repeat offenders. By no means does the data support this. These claims are, at best, ill-informed and, at worst, very misleading. We have the data to prove that.

In the past 15 years, more than half of the admissions to adult provincial and territorial facilities were for remands to await trial instead of admissions to sentenced custody. A lot of people were waiting to be sentenced or were waiting to be heard. According to Statistics Canada, the proportion of admissions to remand has increased from 54% in 2006-07 to 67% in 2020-21, despite a constant decrease in the number of adult admissions during the same period.

This increase in the remand population has disproportionately affected indigenous people and persons from vulnerable populations. As a result, Bill C-75 enacted in the Criminal Code a requirement that the circumstances of indigenous accused and of accused from vulnerable populations be considered at bail in order to address the disproportionate impact that the bail system has on these populations.

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The amendments in the bill sought to reduce the imposition of bail conditions that are unreasonable, irrelevant and unnecessary, which was also a codification of the rules developed by the Supreme Court of Canada. However, the criteria for when accused persons can be released by police or justices were not changed. The law remains clear that detention of an accused person is justified if it is necessary to protect the safety of the public.

● (1340)

We hear so often about the repeat offenders. It is in the hands of the justice system to ensure that it has the tools to be able to detain them. We have not changed that. Moreover, police are required to detain an accused person if there is a risk of reoffending.

The Bill C-75 amendments significantly expand protection for victims of intimate partner violence, particularly within the bail regime. The bill created a definition of “intimate partner” that applies throughout the Criminal Code to clarify that it includes a current or former spouse, common-law partner and dating partner.

It also created a reverse onus provision in the Criminal Code for an accused person charged with an intimate violence offence if the accused has a prior conviction for an offence involving violence against an intimate partner. This reverse onus applies regardless of whether it is the same partner, a former partner or a dating partner. What this means is that the presumption that the accused should be released pending trial no longer applies. The accused, not the prosecutor, would have to justify their release to the court. All the tools needed to prevent recidivism are there.

The change to impose a reverse onus reflects what we know about the heightened risk to safety that victims of intimate partner violence face. It also signals to bail court the seriousness of the alleged offences, as well as the increased risk of reoffending in this context.

Bill C-75 also added two new factors a judge must consider before making an order to release or detain an accused person. First, in an important change, bail courts now have to consider an accused's criminal record, something that may have occurred but was not mandated by the legislation. Second, the court needs to consider whether an accused has ever been charged with an offence that involved violence against an intimate partner. These two factors help ensure that courts are better informed and have a more complete picture of prior history of violence that could threaten the safety of a victim or the public at large.

As a result of these changes, bail courts are now required to take these factors into account when making a number of different possible bail-related determinations, including the decision to impose an order not to communicate with a particular victim, witness or other person, a detention order or an order to release the accused on bail.

If the accused is to be released on bail, the court would have to consider whether the alleged offence was against an intimate partner in determining whether bail conditions are necessary and, if so, what type of conditions are appropriate, such as a condition prohibiting contact with the victim.

Requiring bail courts to consider the safety of intimate partners before releasing an accused on bail affords increased protection to victims of intimate partner violence. Bill C-75 made changes to the bail system that respond to guidance on bail-related charter rights of the accused as found in the decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada. These changes aimed to help address the overrepresentation of indigenous people and vulnerable populations in the criminal justice system, while also increasing the efficiency of the bail system.

I emphasize that Bill C-75 did not change how the bail system should respond to violent or repeat offending, and it made some admirable changes to bail for those charged with offences relating to intimate partner violence.

In closing, contrary to the hon. member's suggestion, Bill C-75 has strengthened our bail system and helped protect victims of intimate partner violence.

● (1345)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Richmond Hill gave us a very long overview of what the bill is intended to do and what Bill C-75 is supposed to do. However, I want to share some facts.

In my riding alone, in December of this past year, in a drive-by shooting, one of the charges was possession of a firearm contrary to a probation order. In December as well, a man was attacked with a hammer and, again, there were several charges, including several counts of breach of probation. In November, a man and a woman were arrested on numerous drug charges, but again the man was charged with additional two counts of a breach of a weapons prohibition. There was another one in my riding, with multiple agencies in a drug bust, where again charges were tied to a prohibition order.

If this bill is so good and we do not need bail reform, why do the stats show that it is not working and we desperately need changes to our bail system?

Business of Supply

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, we are facing a similar situation in Richmond Hill. However, I want to draw a distinction between what the bill would enable, what it would prohibit and what it would enact versus its execution, which is in the hands of the provinces and police forces. Therefore, it is in the hands of the judge to make that determination. The laws are there to support the judge, the justice system and the police to have the proper tools to be able to prevent that. I definitely agree that we should look into restricting firearms coming into Canada. That is an area I think we need to make more investment in. We also need to work with the police force much more closely to ensure that police have the resources to deal with it on the ground.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the issue of dealing with crime is that we actually need to take the evidence, we need to have the witnesses and we need to put them together in a way that makes sure we actually get the results the public trusts us to get. This is our job as legislators, so I am very pleased that the justice committee agreed to look at bail reform and the serious issues that have arisen from the examples of violence.

The horrific killing of that young police officer in Ontario shocked us all; it should never have been allowed to happen. However, this issue is very different from what the Conservatives are doing, which is having a motion, throwing everything but the kitchen sink into it and demanding that we stand up in the House today and rewrite the whole law without the evidence and without doing the work. I have been here long enough to remember the Harper government days when every one of the Conservatives' crime bills got tossed, with more recalls than the Ford Pinto, because they were not doing the job right.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about doing this right on bail reform.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for actually highlighting that the justice committee is looking at this, because this is a real issue. This is what our communities are dealing with, and it is at the forefront for many parents and many community members. There is a right way of doing things, and there is a shortcut. I do not believe we need the shortcut. That is why it is great that it is going to the justice committee. It is being looked at. Witnesses are going to be called. Data is going to be presented, and the amendments that are going to be proposed, if any, will be amendments that are going to be well represented, well researched, scientific and based on data.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will repeat the question I asked earlier.

I think everyone agrees on the fact that the provisions of Bill C-75 need to be looked at and improved. That being said, no one is born violent. That tendency develops over time. Without support from our social services, which have been undermined as a result of 30 years of health transfer deficits, violence may increase.

I would like to know whether the government will increase health transfers to 35%.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, I do not think unconditional transfers to the provinces are necessarily the solution to this. However, what I would like to highlight from what I took from the hon. member's point is that there are other factors, specifically social and economic determinants of health, that play a huge role in this. I am sure other committees will definitely look into this.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to enter this very important discussion. I appreciate the concerns raised by the member for Fundy Royal about Canada's bail system, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss how bail law operates in Canada, and in particular, how it deals with violent offences and addresses some of the concerns we are hearing from across the aisle.

The bail system in Canada contributes to public safety and confidence in the criminal justice system. It allows accused persons to be remanded in cases where there is just cause to do so, such as when there is a need to protect public safety. I am encouraged to hear that our government is working to strengthen the regime while respecting the rights of Canadians.

Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, all accused are entitled to liberty and presumed innocent until proven guilty. Paragraph 11(e) of the charter provides that any person charged with an offence has the right not to be deprived of release or reasonable bail without just cause. The Supreme Court of Canada has provided us with important guidance on interim release and relevant charter considerations. For example, the court noted in the St-Cloud decision in 2015 that “in Canadian law, the release of accused persons is the cardinal rule and detention, the exception”. However, such exceptions are important. For example, some offences have what is called the reverse onus for bail, which means the burden is on the offender to make the case for bail. These include firearm offences and some intimate partner violence offences, which were added by our government.

Subsection 515(10) of the Criminal Code sets out the three grounds on which an accused person may be refused interim release.

First, they may be detained when this is necessary to ensure their presence in court. That is known as the main ground.

Business of Supply

Second, they may be detained to protect the public, victims and witnesses, particularly when it is likely that the accused will commit another offence or harm the administration of justice if released. This is known as the secondary ground. The protection of the public is certainly central to this ground. Several factors may be taken into account when the court considers this ground, including the defendant's criminal record, whether the defendant was on bail or probation at the time of the charge, the defendant's personal circumstances and any interference with witnesses or evidence. The court may also consider the seriousness of the offence and the strength of the Crown's case, based on the principle that the more serious the offence and the greater the likelihood of conviction, the greater the need for public protection.

Third, the accused may be detained where necessary to maintain confidence in the administration of justice, taking into account particular circumstances, such as the strength of the prosecution's case, the seriousness of the offence, the sentencing range for the offence and whether a firearm was used. This is known as the tertiary ground.

In the St-Cloud decision, the Supreme Court noted that the scope of the tertiary ground has been unduly narrowed by the courts in certain cases. The court affirmed that the tertiary ground is a ground for detention in its own right, independent of the other grounds, and that it should not be interpreted narrowly, applied narrowly or limited to exceptional circumstances. We agree with the court.

The general rule is that, when a Crown prosecutor seeks to detain an accused in custody, they must persuade the court that there are grounds to do so. However, the Criminal Code includes several provisions where the burden of proof shifts to the accused. When these provisions apply, the accused must demonstrate why their detention in custody is not justified based on the primary, secondary or tertiary ground. This is referred to as the reverse onus.

Reverse onus provisions play an important role in the criminal justice system. They balance the right of an accused person to a fair opportunity for bail with the need to protect the safety of all Canadians. To ensure the protection of the public and reduce the rate of recidivism in the criminal justice system, the reverse onus provisions target certain types of reoffending and specific serious offences. For example, where the accused is charged with failing to attend court or failing to comply with a previous bail order, the reverse onus will apply. It also applies when the accused is charged with certain serious offences. One of the best-known reverse onus situations is when someone is charged with murder or attempted murder.

• (1355)

However, other serious offences, such as weapons trafficking, discharging a firearm with intent, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault, kidnapping, hostage-taking, robbery, and drug trafficking, importing or exporting all engage the reverse onus provisions. To protect Canadians from gun violence, the reverse onus provisions are applied to offences involving firearms where the accused is subject to a weapons prohibition order, as is called for by the motion today.

I am happy to say that this is already the law, and I again express concern that the opposition is trying to create fear by implying the law is different than it is. That said, I am aware of the call to expand this to more firearms provisions from provincial and territorial premiers, and I am encouraged to hear that this idea is under serious consideration by our government.

The bail provisions also recognize the need to protect victims of intimate partner violence. For an accused charged with an offence involving intimate partner violence who has previously been convicted of such an offence, the reverse onus will apply. This provision directly targets repeat offenders and strives to ensure the safety of victims of intimate partner violence. I am proud to be part of the government that made this change.

A court must cancel an accused person's previous form of release where it finds that the accused has contravened or is about to contravene their bail conditions or where the accused has committed an indictable offence while being bound by a form of release. When cancelling the previous release, the court must order the detention of the accused unless the accused establishes that their detention is not justified.

The reverse onus provisions give the courts the tools necessary to protect the public from accused persons who fail to attend court or follow bail conditions. They also give the courts the ability to protect victims of intimate partner violence by compelling the accused to demonstrate why they should be released from custody. These provisions reinforce public confidence in the administration of justice with the knowledge that persons accused of serious crimes must convince a judge that their release is justified before they can be released on bail.

The bail system is integral to the proper functioning of our criminal justice system and contributes to a fair and safe society. As the minister said earlier in the House, we are quickly and carefully reviewing concerns and solutions that have been raised recently by provinces, territories and others. I was also encouraged to hear of the ongoing work and the upcoming federal, provincial and territorial meeting to further explore how we can strengthen our bail system at all levels of government.

In exploring solutions to the concerns raised, I know our government will take the safety of Canadians into account. I look forward to hearing more from both the Minister of Justice and his provincial and territorial counterparts.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

NORTH AMERICAN LEADERS' SUMMIT

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a few weeks ago, I was honoured to join the Prime Minister, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development and the Minister of Public Safety, at the North American Leaders' Summit in my role as chair of the Canada-Mexico Parliamentary Friendship Group.

During the summit, the leaders signed the declaration of North America, a joint leader statement focused on building our economy to benefit people and to expand trilateral co-operation.

With over 500 million people and \$24 trillion in combined GDP, representing one of the world's largest trading blocs, the trilateral partnership is an opportunity to show the world that our democracies can successfully work together to address the most pressing challenges of our time. Canada's partnership with the United States and Mexico advances Canadian priorities of building a clean economy, bolstering resilient supply chains and building our economies to work for everyone.

Our Prime Minister emphasized the importance of trade agreements being inclusive and benefiting all Canadians. It is only through inclusive and sustainable growth that we will continue to have the support of Canadians and be an inspiration to the world.

* * *

● (1400)

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, during January, I met with many folks from the west side of Saskatoon. One message became abundantly clear to me. After eight years, they are sick and tired of the NDP-Liberal coalition government breaking our community. Whether it is at the gas pumps, the grocery store or walking down our main streets, people see every day how everything is broken.

The NDP has been pushing for higher gasoline prices by raising the carbon tax on ordinary folks. It has been colluding with the Liberals to raise food prices. After eight years, crime is on the rise, as the NDP and Liberals work together to set criminals free.

People in Saskatoon continue to deal with persistent repeat criminals because revolving-door sentencing policies allow thugs to commit a crime, get released on bail and victimize yet another person as they please.

After eight years, Canadians are ready for a change from the failing, broken NDP-Liberal coalition.

Thankfully, the Conservatives, under our new leader, will meet the challenge. What they have broken, we will fix.

Statements by Members

KIM MACDONALD

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honour a long-term staff person of the Malpeque team, Kim MacDonald, who recently passed away on January 15 at the young age of 52, following a courageous battle with cancer.

Kim first started with the Malpeque constituency office in 2011 with then-member of Parliament Wayne Easter. I have had the pleasure of having her on my team since joining federal politics in 2021.

Throughout her time in the office, Kim was a caring and professional employee who helped many constituents over the years, whether that was looking into their case or simply being someone to listen to their concerns and hearing them out. Kim also was a very lively spirit in the office, with her quick wit and great sense of humour, keeping all of us on our toes and laughing even during challenging times.

I know I speak for all my staff when I say that we will miss Kim. We appreciate everything she did for me, Wayne Easter and the constituents of Malpeque.

To her husband Paul and children Austin, Malcolm, Liam and Bella, we send our heartfelt condolences and thank them for sharing their wife and mom with us. They are all in our thoughts and prayers.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BILL NAMAGOOSE

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a remarkable man from my riding is one of the 49 people who were invested into the Order of Canada on December 13. Bill Namagoose, who served as the executive director of the Cree Nation Government for 35 years, was invested into the Order of Canada for his significant contributions to the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee and to the advancement of indigenous rights across the country.

Mr. Namagoose accepted this honour in the spirit of reconciliation. He served as the band manager of the Waskaganish Cree First Nation from 1978 to 1988 and as chief of that nation from 1983 to 1984. He helped build a relationship between the Cree nation, Quebec and Canada, which he considers his proudest achievement. He also participated in the peace of the brave negotiations and the creation of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government.

I do not have enough time to list all of the wonderful things this man has accomplished.

I congratulate Mr. Namagoose for this richly deserved honour, and I wish him a happy retirement.

*Statements by Members***ARTHUR LÉON HACHÉ**

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country need to hear the name Arthur Léon Haché. Mr. Haché died on December 7, at the age of 98. He was the last surviving World War II veteran from the riding of Acadie—Bathurst.

He was only 17 when he enlisted in the North Shore regiment. Having participated in two major battles, the Normandy landing and the Battle of the Scheldt, he came home with haunting memories and physical and psychological injuries. Despite everything, Mr. Haché always attended the various commemorative activities and never hesitated to share his story and that of his fellow Canadians. He was a great inspiration to the people of our communities and we will remember him as a hero.

I offer my deepest condolences to his wife, Dorina, and his children, Hector, Michel and Carole. Never forget that thanks to the sacrifices of Mr. Haché, we now live in a free country in peace.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Groundhog Day, and I am proud to represent Canada's world-famous prognosticator, Wiarton Willie.

Before I share his prediction, I will share how Groundhog Day began for most Canadians. Their alarms went off, they rolled over, grabbed their phones and read about a Liberal sweetheart deal for McKinsey. The next day, their alarms went off, they rolled over, grabbed their phones and were shocked to see yet another McKinsey contract for millions of dollars. They went to bed that night thinking this nightmare had to end, but lo and behold, when they woke up the next morning there was another million-dollar contract for McKinsey.

We may think Bill Murray had it bad in the movie *Groundhog Day*, but after eight years and random Liberal after another random Liberal getting rich, it is costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

The good news is that Wiarton Willie brought hope for Canadians this morning. In the great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, he predicted an early spring, and he also predicted an end to the Liberal scandals and a Conservative win in the next federal election.

* * *

● (1405)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Iranian regime continues its ruthless crackdown on women's rights and other vulnerable populations, I want to call attention to the plight of Morad Tahbaz.

This past January marks more than five years since he and five other environmental activists were unjustly imprisoned by the Iranian government for allegations of espionage and sedition. I cannot understand how the activities of Mr. Tahbaz and his colleagues,

such as monitoring the ecosystems and social habits of endangered species such as the Asiatic cheetah, can possibly be considered credible grounds for imprisonment.

I applaud the Iranian people for continuing to stand up for women's rights and human rights, to shine a light on the plight of those Iranians brave enough to fight for their country and their planet.

[*Translation*]

I want to acknowledge the exceptional courage of Iranians who are standing up for their rights and their home, as well as the endurance of their fight against violence and the injustice targeted mainly at women.

[*English*]

Alongside my fellow York Region Liberal caucus members of Parliament, I endorse #MoradTahbaz, commit to fighting for his release, sharing his story and letting the Iranian regime know that we are watching. We will not rest until he is free.

We, as York Region Liberal members of the Canadian Parliament, demand the immediate and unconditional release of #MoradTahbaz and all the political prisoners who participated in the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement in Iran, in particular those who are facing imminent threat of sentencing—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City has the floor.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month, I had the opportunity to connect with many constituents about their experiences with the Canada child benefit, or CCB, and the new child care agreement in B.C.

One woman told me her heartbreaking story of being in an abusive relationship. Because of the CCB, she was able to leave and restart the lives of herself and her children. Others expressed to me how the CCB tied to inflation has kept their finances stable in this time of global inflation, allowing them to feed and clothe their children.

Regarding child care, I met a single mother who was able to go back to work because a child care space became available. Her fees were reduced by 50% thanks in large part to our agreement with B.C. Another family is also saving money on its fees. This has allowed the family to afford child care for its three kids, allowing both parents to return to work.

These are just a few stories I heard about how our government's support for families is making a difference. I look forward to 2026, when \$10-a-day child care is fully implemented in B.C.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Liberal government, Canadians are suffering greatly. The proof is everywhere we look. Crime is skyrocketing, our bail system is broken and there are Liberal scandals aplenty.

On matters of the economy, hard-working Canadians are being squeezed by the government's actions or lack thereof. On one end, Canadians are being pressured by inflation, which is being drive by out-of-control Liberal spending and a big dysfunctional government.

Today, after eight years of this Liberal government, Canadians are taking home less of their hard-earned money but they are paying more. Rent and mortgage interest rates are up, gas and home heating bills are up, grocery costs are up, inflation and taxes are up, and Canadians are fed up.

Hard-working and law-abiding Canadians need to know this. The Conservatives are here for them and they can count on us to work for them so they can live more affordably, bring home bigger paycheques and take back control of their everyday lives.

* * *

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know residential schools caused unspeakable harm to indigenous peoples, languages and cultures. Acceptance and compensation of the harms was a critical catalyst in the process of reconciliation.

It took visionary and dedicated leadership to fight for the same justice for the survivors and descendants of those victimized by day schools. The systematic destruction of indigenous identity that took place at these institutions did not just impact individuals, it impacted the nations as a whole.

After over a decade of legal proceedings, a groundbreaking settlement was reached on January 21 to compensate the bands for the collective harm. A new trust was created to support healing, wellness, education, heritage and language to help repair the damage that was done.

I want to honour the many who fought for this, including *hiwus* Garry Feschuk of the shíshálh Nation, without who justice would be denied.

?ul nu msh chalap.

* * *

● (1410)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): *Buongiorno, signor Presidente.*

The Liberals have had eight years to make our streets safer and they have made things worse. The Liberals and their soft-on-crime policies most recently allowed a man previously arrested for assault to reoffend and assault an innocent senior. An 89-year-old elderly woman was attacked, unprovoked, in January while simply walking

Statements by Members

along the sidewalks in Toronto in broad daylight. Sadly, this senior died.

Violent crime is on the rise in Canadian cities. It has increased by 32% since the Liberal government took power, and violent crime has increased 92% during the eight years of the current Liberal government. Canadians are terrified. They are afraid to use public transit and they are afraid to walk the streets.

When is the Liberal government going to care more about the victims than the criminals?

* * *

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised sunny ways. What do we have after eight years? We have the doubling of Canada's federal debt, the highest inflation rate in a generation, energy costs going through the roof and a government unable to deliver basic services to Canadians.

Sunny ways, they say. Well, the sun is shining on the lucky ones at McKinsey being paid millions as Liberal consultants and on friends of cabinet ministers. After eight years, the people working hard to join the middle class are discovering they are second class, while the government is taking care of its friends.

The Liberals cannot, or will not, deliver our environmentally renowned energy security options to our desperate allies. Foreign leaders come to Canada, asking for our help, and the Prime Minister gives them the cold shoulder. Freeze in the dark or deal with autocrats, he says. After eight years, Canada's international reputation is in tatters.

There is a path forward. The Conservative Party would mend divisions and rebuild our country, our economy and our reputation as a world leader.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS ORGANIZATIONS IN NICKEL BELT

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the volunteers at the Centre Club d'âge d'or de la Vallée, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary, and also all current members and the members who founded the centre in 1973.

I want to thank all members of the Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario, or FARFO, in Nickel Belt. FARFO has a significant impact and improves our seniors' quality of life.

It is essential that we continue to support organizations such as the Club 50 de Rayside Balfour, the Club Accueil d'âge d'or Azilda, the Club de l'amitié in Verner, the seniors' clubs in River Valley, Field, Lavigne and Sturgeon Falls, and Les aînés de la Rivière des Français in Noelville.

Statements by Members

For decades, these committed organizations have organized activities for seniors to engage them through social activities such as breakfasts and community outings.

I am proud to live in a community where these organizations work to improve our seniors' quality of life.

[English]

The Speaker: I want to remind everyone that the S. O. 31s are taking place. I know there are people talking among themselves, but it just seems to be creeping up.

The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all have a shared commitment to public safety, but when it comes to indigenous policing, services are chronically underfunded. Indigenous police forces such as those within my riding, the UCCM Anishnaabe Police, Wikwemikong Tribal Police Service, Anishinabek Police Service and the Nishnawbe Aski Police Service, do great work in serving first nations communities.

However, there is an urgent need to ensure that negotiations to renew agreements include a healthy increase to core funding.

[Translation]

Often, there are only two officers working each shift, and when officers respond to a call in one community they are consistently unable to respond to calls from other first nations.

[English]

Lately, there has been an increase in homicide, gun, drug and human trafficking-related crimes. First nations police services need more funding to hire more officers and dedicated funding for crime units to better respond to public safety issues so that no community is left unprotected.

Today, I ask all parliamentarians to call for increases to core funding and the renewal of first nations policing agreements.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

69TH QUEBEC WINTER CARNIVAL

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us play a little guessing game. I am going to talk about an event that attracts tens of thousands of tourists every year and takes place in Quebec City. It is the biggest winter carnival in the world, and its friendly mascot is loved by people of all ages. You will have guessed that I am talking about the Quebec Winter Carnival.

This year, everyone is invited to come and celebrate the world's largest winter carnival from February 3 to 12 under the theme "Shake your Pom-pom". This is all possible thanks to the organizers and volunteers who are excited to welcome people, whether it is for Bonhomme's ice palace, the canoe race, the sculptures or the famous snow baths. There is certainly plenty of snow this year.

I invite everyone to come celebrate winter and warm up at the 69th Quebec Winter Carnival. Visitors must not forget their effigies, their trumpets and their arrow sashes. I will be there, and I hope to see my colleagues there, too.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no sadder story than that of unrequited love, when one person showers the other with gifts and favours while the other claims to be totally disinterested. I am talking of course about the relationship between the Prime Minister and Dominic Barton.

When the Prime Minister spoke about how accessible Barton is, Barton claimed to not even have his phone number. When the Prime Minister gave Barton's company over \$100 million in contracts, Barton did not even recognize him in an elevator.

I used to say that this was a government that helped its friends, but maybe it is just a government that helps the people it wishes were its friends.

Then again, Dominic Barton is just naturally forgetful. His company worked for Purdue Pharma for 15 years, advising it on how to turbocharge opioid sales, yet Barton claims he did not even know it was a client.

Either way, after all that the current Prime Minister has done for McKinsey, Barton's rejection must really sting. However, it is nothing like what the Canadians who are living with the Prime Minister's economic policies have been experiencing for the last eight years.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know across Canada we are feeling the effects of a lack of health care workers. In the NWT, we have been experiencing this for some time, but recently on a much higher level.

This year, in 10 communities including my own, the health centres were able to offer only emergency services. Our territorial hospital, for a brief time this summer, was able to offer only emergency operating services, and for three months it had to close the maternity ward and fly expectant mothers to Alberta. Our vacancy rate for some health authorities has been as high as 50%.

The pool of health care workers in Canada is just not big enough. We need to train, educate and incentivize more doctors, nurses and lab specialists. This has to become a national priority. Poaching from other jurisdictions and other countries is not the way forward; expanding the pool is.

I thank all the dedicated people who are working in northern and remote areas providing these services. We see and appreciate them all.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, eight years of this government's inflationary policies have driven the average monthly mortgage cost up from \$1,500 to over \$3,000. It has doubled. Rental rates have gone up almost as much. Inflationary policies are driving prices up across the board along with interest rates.

Will the Prime Minister finally take responsibility for doubling the cost of a house?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that Canadians have placed their trust in us for eight years now.

Election after election after election, we have been here to represent them in government. Canadians know we are here for them. We were there for them during the pandemic. We are here to lift children out of poverty with the Canada child benefit and other measures. We are also here to help families take their kids to the dentist.

In short, Canadians place their trust in us because they know we are here for them.

• (1420)

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Prime Minister's inflationary policies driving up home prices and now interest rates, the cost of a monthly mortgage, on average, has gone up from about \$1,500 to over \$3,000. No wonder nine in 10 young people who do not own a home believe they never will. Home price inflation is a homegrown problem.

Instead of blaming the rest of the world for the problems he has caused, will the Prime Minister take responsibility for pricing our working-class youth out of a home?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very aware of the importance of keeping Canadian home ownership alive. That is why we introduced measures such as investing in a scaled-up rent-to-own program in Canada, the creation of a tax-free savings account of up to \$40,000 for first-time homebuyers and a two-year ban on foreign

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ownership of Canadian residential real estate to give more opportunities to young people.

What do all of these measures share in common? The leader of the official opposition voted against them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we voted against every single one of the inflationary programs that have doubled the cost of housing in this country for our young people.

After eight years, all the Liberals can do is brag about the hundreds of billions of dollars of other people's money they spent. What is the result? Home prices doubled to make Canada the fifth most inflated housing market in the world, with Toronto being the worst city as housing markets go. The average mortgage payment has doubled from \$1,500 to \$3,300 and rent in Toronto, our biggest city, is up nearly 100%.

Will they finally take responsibility for pricing our young people out of homes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not a hedge against inflation that the Conservatives voted against supporting Canadians. It is their ideology that drives them. Take a look at the facts. Canada's inflation is lower than that of the U.S., Germany, the U.K., and the averages of the G7, the OECD and the EU.

They voted against Canadians. Mothers who took CERB did not create inflation. Businesses that kept their businesses afloat during the pandemic did not create inflation. Parents who are taking their kids to the dentist for the first time did not create inflation.

The Conservatives are peddling nonsense economics. We are delivering for Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no, none of those Canadians created inflation. The Prime Minister created inflation. He doubled our national debt, adding \$500 billion of inflationary debt, more debt than all other prime ministers combined.

What did that do? That inflated the price of everything, especially real estate, and delivered the single worst housing bubble anywhere in the world right in Toronto. Toronto is more overpriced than Singapore, Manhattan and London, England. Now the cost of a mortgage has doubled across the country, and the cost of rent has doubled in our biggest markets as well. This is a homegrown problem.

Will the Liberals finally take responsibility for causing it?

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Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, will the leader of the official opposition take responsibility for voting against the housing accelerator fund, a program to build more supply and make sure we speed up processes to make sure we build more homes for Canadians? Will the leader of the official opposition take responsibility for voting against the tax-free first home savings account of up to \$40,000 to enable first-time homebuyers to buy homes? Will the leader of the official opposition take responsibility for voting against the foreign ban on Canadian residential real estate?

Whether it is on supply or whether it is on rental supports for Canadians, the leader of the official opposition votes against all of them.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of growing poverty and desperation, more and more Canadians are suffering with depression. Some of them are going to food banks, asking for help ending their lives, not because they are sick but because life has become so miserable and they want to end their lives altogether.

The government has suggested veterans should end their lives instead of getting the help they need. Now the Liberals have announced that, a year from today, they will introduce measures to end the lives of people who are depressed.

Will the Liberals recognize that we need to treat depression and give people hope for better lives rather than ending their lives?

• (1425)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is totally irresponsible for the Leader of the Opposition to misrepresent what this means.

All of the assessors and providers of MAID are purposely trained to eliminate people who are suicidal. This is for—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Hon. minister, please proceed. You have 10 seconds left.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, we on this side, and with the support of the expert panel and so many Canadians, will continue to develop and provide the kind of mental health supports necessary for people who are depressed, but the people—

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the leader of the Bloc Québécois met with the federal representative to combat Islamophobia, Amira Elghawaby.

Ms. Elghawaby, who has the full support of the Prime Minister, has made headlines since her appointment for numerous statements

against Quebecers. Even the Quebec Liberal lieutenant was insulted. The National Assembly has asked for her resignation. She cannot stay.

Will the Prime Minister finally rectify the situation and ask for her resignation?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's position is clear. We know that Quebecers oppose all forms of racism and hate.

The special representative has already clarified her comments and apologized for the impact they had on Quebecers. I refer the member to her statements on this matter.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only is Ms. Elghawaby the wrong person for the job, but the job itself is a problem. Wrong person for the wrong job. Everyone realizes that the purpose of this role is to convince people that Bill 21 is evil, that Quebec is racist and that secularism is Islamophobic. That is not true. Rather than building bridges between communities, this kind of role builds barriers.

Will the Prime Minister back down and get rid of the position of special representative to combat Islamophobia?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was with the Prime Minister on Sunday in Quebec City, and we saw that Quebecers from all walks of life stood shoulder to shoulder with Muslim Canadians on the sombre occasion of the sixth anniversary of the Quebec City mosque shooting.

The appointment of the special representative to combat Islamophobia is a recognition of and builds on the foundation of leadership of Quebecers and Canadians to fight racism and discrimination in all its forms. The special representative has clarified and apologized for the impact of her remarks, and she has shown very clearly a willingness to work with all Canadians to combat Islamophobia.

The Speaker: I would like to remind members that we are in the middle of question period, and I am hearing conversations happen. It is nice that everybody is getting along and talking, but if members have a conversation to have, if you do not mind, maybe just go into the hallway and come back once you have had your discussion.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals funnelled over \$100 million into McKinsey's coffers, and that is just the tip of the iceberg. Millions have gone to KPMG, Deloitte and their ilk. Not only is this a waste of taxpayer dollars, but it takes away from our public service. It is a form of privatization. In the meantime, the Liberals are being stingy at the bargaining table. Our public service employees deserve respect.

Why do the Liberals have millions of dollars for their consulting firm friends but nothing for public service employees?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister asked me and my colleague, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, to get to the bottom of this, and that is what we will do.

It is important to know that we are upholding the highest standards of openness, transparency and fiscal accountability. We will continue to support Canadians by making sure they have good jobs and good services. That is how we are going to keep supporting Canadians.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve accountability and transparency from the government. They deserve answers on Conservatives' and Liberals' long-standing partnership with expensive consulting firms when Canada has one of the best public services. McKinsey is just the tip of the iceberg. That is why New Democrats are calling to investigate firms that have been raking in hundreds of millions of dollars from the government, like Deloitte and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Will the Liberals and Conservatives both agree to stop giving piles of public money to their friends at consulting firms and support a full investigation into government outsourcing?

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly in this House, we are committed to ensuring that our government contracts stand up to the highest standards.

I will be testifying on Monday at the government operations committee, along with my officials, and I look forward to answering the opposition's questions more fulsomely at that time.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister and the government, Canadians are suffering. Mortgage payments have doubled, rents have increased across the country at the highest pace in the last 30 years. The cost of groceries has skyrocketed. Everything is more expensive because of the government's inflationary and uncontrolled spending.

Will Liberals now admit that their economic policies over the last eight years have not worked, and it is time to change course to help Canadians get through the mess that the Liberals created?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity, during the course of the other questions, to reflect on the question that was posed by the Leader of the Opposition.

I would suggest that the leader think about the assertion that anybody supports anybody taking their life. When there are difficult times and when we are talking about issues like MAID, it is below this place to assume that any person anywhere in this country supports the idea of suicide as a way through dark times.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the disastrous economic policy of the government for the last eight years that has left people in complete despair. It has actually caused the 40-year-high inflation that we see now and has forced the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates again. Over 70% of Canadians say that they may not be able to keep up with these rate increases.

Will the government realize that its economic policies over the last eight years have been wrong, they are not working, and it is time to change course and help Canadians get through the mess that it created?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know how to get through tough times. We pull together. We support each other. We do not leave people alone.

The Conservative ideology is this: "Canadians, you are on your own. Businesses, let the markets decide. Seniors, do not worry, go into your savings, pay for your own rent and your own groceries." The Conservatives have no plan on climate change, on building the economy or on affordability. They have buzzwords, catchphrases and nonsense economics. They have no plan. We do.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, people are truly struggling, and everyone knows it except the Liberals. The common question on talk shows is what people are cutting back on due to inflation, and the answers are heartbreaking. What is even more disturbing is that the Liberals want to blame the global market for their inability to manage people's money. Tiff Macklem said, in October, "inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what's happening in Canada."

When will the Liberals take accountability, responsibility and fix what they have broken?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is all fine and good to cherry-pick the comments of the Governor of the Bank of Canada, but let us actually look at the last statement from the governor of the bank, who clearly said that he will pause rate increases—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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The Speaker: Order.

The hon. minister can please continue.

Hon. Randy Boissonault: Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada has been clear. We expect to see inflation around 3% by the summer and closer to 2% by the end of the year. That is its mission to get inflation under control.

Our job, which the Conservatives do not seem to understand because they keep voting against Canadians, is to provide supports to those who need it the most, and that is exactly what we are going to keep doing.

• (1435)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we see this over and over again. The Liberals love to listen to themselves instead of real Canadians. They love to tell Canadians they have never had it so good, yet students are living in homeless shelters because rent in Toronto is \$2,500 for a month. Why? It is because of the Liberal Prime Minister. There has been a 100% increase under his office. People are asking for medical assistance in dying because they cannot afford to live.

When will the Prime Minister fix what he has broken? If he cannot fix it, get out of the way and let the Conservatives do the job.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the members opposite are doing is absolutely shameful. They are making a mockery of people suffering, instead of supporting them when we are putting important measures on the table.

After eight years, there is one thing that Canadians have learned. When they are in trouble and when they need help, they cannot count on the Conservatives. The Conservatives are not there for them. If they cared about low-income renters, they would have supported us with our support for renters. If they cared about low-income Canadians, they would have supported us when we lowered taxes on the middle class, and they would have supported us when we increased the Canada child benefit. However, they did none of that. Canadians cannot count on—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, where does Canada stand after eight years of Liberal governance? Inflation is at a 40-year high. Rent has doubled. Mortgages have doubled. Back home in Quebec City, eight years ago, people I know were helping those who needed food banks. Now, they are the ones using food banks themselves. That is the everyday reality of Canadians after eight years of Liberal governance.

When will the Liberals start managing the public purse properly?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that we need to invest in Canadians to help them get through tough times,

as we did during the pandemic and as we are doing right now with the increase in inflation.

That is why we are helping students by eliminating interest on student loans. That is why we introduced the new Canada workers benefit and created the Canada dental benefit for children under 12. We think that, when we invest in Canadians, it benefits everyone.

That is how Canada can be stronger.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the problem. After eight years, Canada is not stronger. Canada is weaker, despite the fact that this government has added \$500 billion in debt. The debt has doubled. There have been no spending controls at all for the past eight years. Taxes have gone up. Everything costs more. That is the reality in Canada. That is what Canadians are facing every day.

When will this government finally assume its responsibilities and manage public finances properly?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are saying that we helped Canadians too much.

I would like to know when and where they would have made cuts. Was it when we were helping with the wage subsidy that they would have cut? Was it when we were helping seniors that they would have cut? Was it when we were helping families that they would have cut? Was it when we were helping people who had lost their jobs that they would have cut?

I would really like to know at what point exactly would they have turned their backs on Canadians.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa wants to receive at least 500,000 immigrants a year until we have a population of 100 million. These targets are inspired by the Century Initiative, which originated with McKinsey and its former director, Dominic Barton.

Yesterday, in committee, I asked Mr. Barton if he had analyzed the impact of this increase in immigration on the future of French. He replied, and I will paraphrase, that the focus was just on the economics, not the social context.

Did the government paste and copy a McKinsey immigration policy that completely ignores the future of French in Canada and Quebec?

Oral Questions

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, this is the first time that I will answer a question concerning francophone immigration and its importance for Quebec and the rest of Canada. I would like to point out to the House, because I do not know if I will have another opportunity, that this is the first time ever that we have met the target of 4.4% of francophone immigrants outside Quebec in Canada.

This is a success story for our government.

• (1440)

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Dominic Barton himself confirmed yesterday that the Century Initiative does not take into account the ability to integrate immigrants in French in Quebec and francophone Canada. He said the only objective was productivity.

If McKinsey did not take into account the repercussions of increased immigration on the French language, did the government do so before applying these recommendations?

Will the minister commit to sharing all the studies he used to determine that we could welcome at least 500,000 immigrants every year without any repercussions on the French language and francization in Quebec and Canada?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, francophone immigration plays a key role in promoting the French language across Canada and Quebec. I would remind my colleagues that Quebec determines its selection criteria for the majority of immigrants in Quebec, including language skills.

We will always respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and we will continue to work with them.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Dominic Barton himself admitted that McKinsey did not consider the impact on French before recommending unprecedented increases to immigration. Unless and until we see the studies the Bloc Québécois has been calling for, we have to assume that the federal government did not consider the impact on French either before implementing McKinsey's recommendations. Obviously, that raises other questions.

Can this government prove that it did consider the impact on housing needs, health care and immigration, or did it just blindly put its faith in a subcontractor like McKinsey?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is well aware that the Canada-Quebec accord gives the province the exclusive authority to select the majority of its immigrants.

As I said, we have always respected and will always respect Quebec's jurisdiction over immigration. I know that our government is working very closely with Quebec to improve that framework. Let me reiterate that we met our 4.4% francophone immigration target outside Quebec.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians have been suffering for eight years under the government, well-connected insiders have never had it so good. Dominic Barton confirmed yesterday that McKinsey's Canadian lead, Andrew Pickersgill, was coordinating support from McKinsey to the Prime Minister's growth council. In other words, his analysts were telling the government what it needed while they were selling McKinsey as a solution at the same time. If that is not a conflict of interest, I do not know what is.

Will the government end the obvious conflict of interest and finally tell the House how much money was spent on McKinsey?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister responsible has already answered that question, but let us set the record straight in terms of who is actually standing on the side of Canadians. That is our government. What have the Conservatives done? They voted not once, not twice, but three times against tax cuts for Canadians. That side of the aisle voted against eliminating interest on apprentice and student loans. They voted against a federal minimum wage, and they voted against expanding the Canada workers benefit.

Who stands on the side of Canadians? We do. Canadians know one thing. When the chips are down, Canadians cannot count on Conservatives.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do know the government stands on the side of those Canadians who work for McKinsey. However, on this side of the House we speak for the vast majority of Canadians who are concerned about \$100 million in contracts and the public service not knowing what work was done.

After eight years, more Canadians than ever are suffering because of the opioid crisis, but the government continues to defend its friends. McKinsey's managing director, Dominic Barton, claimed to have no knowledge of the relationship with Purdue Pharma.

Did the Prime Minister or government ministers have any conversations with McKinsey staff about the opioid crisis? Yes or no.

• (1445)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, what Canadians absolutely know is that the Conservative plan, when it comes to opioids, is dangerous, it is reckless and it would put people in harm's way. What Canadians do know is that when it comes to standing with them, we have stood with them, whether it was when we came into office and put in important measures to lift people out of poverty or whether it was during the pandemic when we were there in their darkest hour. Now, when it comes to inflation, we put forward targeted measures that are helping Canadians every day. They know we stand with them.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every government uses private sector legal or technical services from time to time. What we have here is a Liberal government that has completely lost control of government over the last eight years. The Prime Minister has handed his governance responsibilities over to multinational corporations like McKinsey. Instead of wasting billions of dollars on these companies, the Prime Minister could have invested here with our best talent.

Why did the Prime Minister throw the federal public service under the bus?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have an outstanding public service, and we trust the public sector employees we work with every day.

We are investing in Canadians to ensure that our economy continues to grow and that programs are properly designed to help Canadians who need them most. All of these programs are administered by our wonderful public sector workers.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are making tough choices about what they can and cannot afford because grocery prices are so unbelievably high. Today, Loblaws decided to stop the price freeze they put in place under considerable public pressure. This proves that grocery CEOs can control what people pay. The government has to take a stand against the corporate greed that is hurting Canadian families. Enough is enough.

When are the Liberals going to put in place a windfall profits tax against corporate greed and put that money back into the pockets of Canadian families, who need it?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to all Canadians that we agree with the member. Enough is enough. That is why we took action. That is why, way back, I wrote to the Competition Bureau to ask them to investigate to make sure there were not any undue practices.

I also spoke to the CEOs to tell them to do what is right to help Canadians at their time of need. We will continue to push them to lower prices for Canadians.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seniors across the country are struggling with the rising cost of living. There is a bar of dignity that we should all expect in Canada, and far too many of our parents and grandparents are living below it.

Yesterday, the government denied my motion to get more financial help to all seniors, regardless of age. All seniors have to pay for

food, rent and medication. They deserve dignity. Why does the Minister of Seniors not agree?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP knows that older seniors are more likely to outlive their savings. They are more likely to be unable to work, be widowed and have increased health care needs. This increase helps seniors over 75, of which 50% have a severe disability, 59% are women and 40% are widows. Last fall, we doubled the GST tax credit for seniors 65 and over, which will put an extra \$225 back in their pockets.

We will always provide support for seniors, and we will continue to deliver for them.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first nations children thrive when they can stay with their families in their communities and be surrounded by their culture, and this is an area where the Yukon has made significant progress. It has been three years since the act respecting first nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families came into force.

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services inform the House how the government's work with first nations partners is advancing on this key priority?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I give my thanks to the member for Yukon for reminding us that nothing is more important than keeping families and children together.

On Tuesday, I joined Chief Glenn Hudson and Minister Rochelle Squires in Manitoba to sign a historic coordination agreement that is going to put Peguis in the driver's seat to determine the best way to protect children and families. This means the next generation has a better chance.

I am so proud to be part of a government that understands that keeping families together is of utmost importance.

* * *

● (1450)

JUSTICE

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Prime Minister, everything feels broken in Canada, including the bail system. Violent crime has increased 32%. Gang-related homicides have increased by 92%, and five Canadian police officers were killed in the line of duty this year.

Oral Questions

Bail for violent repeat offenders has become a revolving door. When is the Liberal government going to take responsibility for its actions and stop this catch-and-release bail justice system?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to be and to feel safe. We all have a role to play in protecting our communities. The laws on bail are clear: If an accused person poses a serious risk to public safety, they should not get bail.

At my direction, since the month of October past, federal officials have been working with their provincial and territorial counterparts to develop ways to best keep Canadians safe. We are open to that discussion. We are open to participating with the provinces to help in the enforcement of bail conditions. We are looking for lasting solutions.

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the minister to tell victims, in light of those five police officers, what he just told me.

Most Canadians do not live in homes surrounded by walls and gates, and they do not have the security detail of the Prime Minister. That is a luxury that Canadians do not have. With a 26% increase in crime in New Brunswick over the past five years, rural Canadians are also negatively impacted.

These failed, soft-on-crime, Liberal bail policies are making Canadians feel less safe. When will the Prime Minister put victims ahead of criminals?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take offence to the idea that any of us are less empathetic towards victims, particularly in these very cases. Our heart goes out to those victims.

With respect to the bail system, I have been working with my officials across Canada, the provincial and territorial counterparts, precisely to see where we can improve the bail regime.

We know that Canadians need to feel safe, and we are moving forward in a positive direction, appreciating that it is a complex issue and a shared area of responsibility with the provinces. With the provinces, we will find a solution.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, Canadians take offence to a government that will not listen to the pleas of all 13 premiers, who have seen violent crime go up by 32% in the last eight years. Out of 44 shooting homicides in Toronto last year, half were committed by someone who was out on bail. In a single year in Vancouver, 40 people were arrested 6,000 times. After eight years, in this Prime Minister, career criminals have never had a better friend.

Does this justice minister honestly stand by his claims that our broken bail system is working?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cherry-picking statistics and taking high-profile cases and using them for political purposes does not help us to attack the challenges that the bail system presents to us.

As I have said, we have been working on that question since the month of October with our provincial counterparts. We are looking

at solutions that can be fixed in the law, but we are also looking at the kinds of things that the provinces can do in the administration of the bail system.

British Columbia has taken a leadership role. I met with the attorney general for British Columbia yesterday to go over what B.C. was doing. Ontario is interested, and so are the provinces. We will work together—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Fundy Royal.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not need victim blaming. They need leadership and action.

Which stats would the hon. minister wish that we were not cherry-picking? Violent crime is up 32%. Gang-related homicides have increased by 92%. Of 44 shooting-related homicides in Toronto, half of the accused were out on bail, and 40 offenders have been arrested 6,000 times. If the minister has some stats that he would like to share, we welcome them.

Until then, we need to get our heads out of the sand and take action. We need to listen to the police, communities and the premiers and reform this failed Liberal bail system.

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier today in the House of Commons, statistics from the Toronto police over the past few years show that offenses committed while individuals are out on bail have gone down over the past two years.

We appreciate that Canadians need to feel safe and Canadians have a right to feel safe—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. minister will please continue.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-75 codified what were essentially Supreme Court decisions and made it harder to get bail in a number of cases. It did not change any of the severity of bail conditions for violent criminals, yet we are still going to look at other possibilities with the provinces to move forward to make Canadians feel safe.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Montreal, there are now 73% more people on social assistance than there were a year ago. This is not because of a job shortage, but because of Roxham Road.

The federal government has invited asylum seekers to enter by Roxham Road. Once they are on Canadian soil, it cannot issue a work permit for them. That takes almost one year. The federal government plunges them into poverty and they are then forced to go on social assistance. This costs Quebec an additional \$20 million every month.

Will the government pick up the tab? It is responsible for this situation.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebec continues to be one of the government's valued partners, and we recognize that the province is working hard to support asylum seekers.

Our government has provided \$534.5 million in assistance to the provinces, including \$374 million to Quebec to alleviate the pressure of housing asylum seekers.

We have also invested \$740 million to guarantee that they continue to have access to medical coverage to meet their immediate and essential medical needs.

We will continue to work with our partner.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals, who are notoriously sanctimonious, are forcing asylum seekers to seek social assistance, but it does not stop there. There is a shortage of housing, mainly because of federal underfunding, so dozens of homeless asylum seekers are turning to community organizations that are already stretched thin and to shelters that are already overcrowded for help.

People are going to end up on the streets because we do not have the resources to accommodate them. Where will these people go?

Why not suspend the safe third country agreement, make sure that asylum seekers are not all entering the country at the same place and give them the dignified welcome they deserve?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois holds the international title for sanctimoniousness.

If my colleague had looked at the relevant documents, he would have seen that, between 2017 and 2020, the Government of Canada contributed \$374 million to address the situation at Roxham Road. Quebec just gave us the bill for 2021-22. Obviously, we are going to sit down together and do our part. We are also covering asylum seekers' health care costs.

We are here and we are working with Quebec. The Bloc Québécois may not like it, but we are keeping our commitments.

[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the justice minister said that, if someone poses a significant threat to public safety, the law tells us they should not be released on bail, but in reality, in Toronto last year, of the 44 gun murders, 24 of the suspects were out on bail when they committed these murders. Those 24 people clearly posed a threat to public safety, yet they were out on bail.

When will the minister get his head out of the clouds and commit to reforming our broken Liberal bail system, which he helped to create?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a fundamental principle that, if a person poses a threat to public security, he or she should not get bail. That is balanced with the fact that bail is not only a charter right, but a common law right of long date, because in our system one is innocent until proven guilty.

We allow judges to make that determination based on the arguments that prosecutors and defence attorneys put before them, so I will not revisit an individual case, but what I can say is that we are working with our provincial counterparts to see how we can improve the bail system to make Canadians feel more safe.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, violent crime in Canada has increased by 32% since 2015 and gang-related homicides have increased by 92%.

What is more, the Liberals, supported by the Bloc Québécois, passed Bill C-5, a piece of legislation that eliminates minimum sentencing. That is what is happening in Canada after eight years under this government: more crime and more criminals out on bail.

Can the Minister of Justice face reality and admit that his policies favour criminals and penalize victims?

• (1500)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the bail system is a fundamental part of our system. If a person poses a threat to public security he or she should not get bail.

We have to strike a balance and we will work with the provinces, because even though criminal law is under federal responsibility, it is with the provinces that we will determine how to administer the system. We will do that together.

Oral Questions

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in office, a serious crime resulted in serious consequences. Now, there is no longer a minimum sentence for rapists. That is what happened with Jonathan Gravel, a man found guilty of rape, who will serve his sentence from the comfort of his own home. A Quebec Crown prosecutor had the courage to stand up and speak out against this completely unacceptable situation.

Did the minister forget that the word “justice” is part of his title? There is no justice for victims.

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we firmly believe that all victims of sexual assault deserve a justice system that treats them with dignity and respect. I would like to recognize the resilience of the victim in question. As I have said many times, serious crimes deserve serious consequences. My colleague knows that I cannot comment on specific cases, but I can say that this was a decision of the Quebec court and that it could be appealed by the director of criminal and penal prosecutions, the DPCP. Obviously, we are awaiting the DPCP's decision.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice just announced today his intention to delay by one year the expansion of the medical assistance in dying legislation to those suffering solely from a mental illness. We know that medical assistance in dying is a complex issue and very personal for many Canadians.

Can the minister explain the reasons for his decision?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *grazie* to my colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for her question and her leadership. It is indeed a very complex issue. That is why we have listened to the experts, the members of the medical community and the citizens who asked for more time to develop clear standards.

Canada has developed medical assistance in dying legislation that supports autonomy and freedom of choice while protecting the vulnerable. We will continue in that direction and we will do it right.

* * *

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of fiscal mismanagement, the Liberal government is not even hiding it anymore. It has now decided it no longer needs to accept the advice of the Auditor General, who says \$27 billion in COVID support payments need to be investigated. Instead, the CRA says it is not worth the effort.

Will the government take the advice of the independent Auditor General, or does it believe it is not worth the effort to recover money for taxpayers?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic hit, we acted quickly to get recovery benefits into people's bank accounts without

delay. To achieve that goal, we planned to verify eligibility on the back end after the fact. This approach kept workers attached to their jobs and positioned our economy to come roaring back.

The report found that our individual support programs achieved their intended goals of getting money to Canadians quickly, allowing Canadians to stay home safely and avoiding severe social and economic consequences. The AG also noted that lower-income workers and groups most impacted by the pandemic were able to benefit from the programs.

We are proud of the measures we took to support Canadians.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the words “costly coalition” have been given new meaning. Last week, we heard that the head of the CRA said it would “not be worth the effort” to fully review \$15.5 billion in what might be incorrect pandemic wage benefits.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, Canadians are using food banks more than ever and are finding it impossible to buy a home. Does the Liberal government think it is not worth the effort to fully review payments worth a total of \$32 billion in Canadian tax dollars?

• (1505)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate. It turns out the member opposite was not attending last week's meeting of the public accounts committee, because if he was, he would have heard the commissioner of the CRA say that verification work is ongoing with respect to CERB, with respect to CEWS and with respect to all of the emergency programs the government turned out to help Canadians, individuals, families and businesses.

It was a fiscally responsible approach that we promised throughout. In fact, he should go back to the record. In November 2020, it was the Conservatives who voted against carrying out CRA audits on businesses.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Abdullah Hamdard is in Ottawa this week and here today pleading with the Liberal government to get his family out of Afghanistan. Abdullah served alongside our troops in Afghanistan, and his family qualified to come to Canada almost a year ago, but nothing has happened. His brother is now missing, feared dead, and his family is living under daily threats. He personally met the minister on Tuesday.

Oral Questions

How many more Afghans who have helped Canada need to die before the minister commits to urgently getting Abdullah's family and other Afghans safely to Canada?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that if it was a matter of will, there would be 40,000 Afghan refugees here already, but there are obstacles that are beyond certain control.

As the member just said, the minister did meet him, but let me remind this House of the last numbers we have. We have so far welcomed 26,700 Afghans who can now call Canada home.

We will continue to work with our Afghan community.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like many employers, last year, the federal government experimented with new hybrid approaches to work. Now it has begun phasing in a new common hybrid work model across government.

Can the President of the Treasury Board please explain how this model will help the government serve Canadians?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his hard work for the people of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Canada's public service is one of the best in the world. Hybrid work lets us harness the best of in-person and remote work, creating shared in-person experiences that foster collaboration and trust, together with the flexibility of up to two to three days of remote work a week. Consistency in how hybrid is applied across government will make employees' experiences consistent no matter where they work, and it will support our core purpose: serving Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I presented a petition from over 33,000 Canadians calling on the Prime Minister to defend public health care.

Canadians know that when the Conservatives say “innovation”, they mean “privatization”, which means lining the pockets of corporations and sticking patients with the bill. The Prime Minister knows it too. Last election, he called out the Conservatives' support of health care privatization, promising he would defend our public system, but today he will not keep that promise.

Will the Prime Minister tell us if he meant what he said during the last election or if this is another Liberal flip-flop?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: Canadians are proud of our system, and this government is too. It is based on need and not the ability to pay, and we believe that all one should need in order to get health care is a health card, not a credit card.

We will make sure that our investments respect the Canada Health Act while always defending our universal public health care system.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, there are organizations in my riding that host international artists, athletes and students year after year. Naturally, they need visas. The problem is that the processing time is now over a year and a half. That is 14 months longer than in July 2022, despite the fact that the standard is 14 days in these types of cases.

Last August, the minister claimed that demand would peak by the end of September and that delays would return to normal after that. It is now February, and it is getting worse.

Can the minister explain this total failure for people trying to get a visa to come to our country?

● (1510)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are taking every step to address the backlog in the short term while making Canada's immigration system more sustainable in the long term.

Allow me to be very candid. We have processed approximately 4.8 million applications in total, nearly double the number of the year before. We tripled the number of work permits issued, and we returned to a 60-day service standard for new study permit applications. We achieved that by digitizing applications and hiring more people, more employees, to help us meet our commitments.

We are going to continue to be there to welcome more immigrants to Canada.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT ACT

The House resumed from February 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-22.

Call in the members.

● (1525)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 250*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Allison
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dong

Dowdall	Dreeshen
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gallant
Garneau	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Goodridge	Gould
Gourde	Gray
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hallan
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Johns	Joly
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kniec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martel
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Muys
Naqvi	Nater
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer

Government Orders

Business of the House

Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poilievre	Qualtrough
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Ruff
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seeback	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Sousa	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Virani
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Wauh	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williams	Williamson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
Zuberi — 321	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Drouin Godin
Jones Villemure— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORDER PAPER QUESTION—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on January 31 by the member for Calgary Nose Hill concerning the government's response to written Question No. 974.

In her intervention, the member argued that the government's response did not address the substance of her written question. Therefore, in her view, it should be considered a failure to answer within

the 45 days required by the Standing Orders and this failure should be referred to committee.

[Translation]

The right of members to seek information from the government is a fundamental one and it is a central accountability mechanism. Written questions are one of the means members possess to obtain the information that allows them to perform their parliamentary duties.

Written question Q-974 was placed on the Order Paper on November 15, 2022. The government presented an answer on January 30, 2023, within the 45-day limit. The response provided appears in that day's Debates.

[English]

The main point of contention raised by the member for Calgary Nose Hill regards the substance and completeness of the government's response. In her view, the response fails to address many of the matters raised in her question.

However, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 529, states, "There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions."

[Translation]

Our precedents are clear that it is not for the Chair to rule on the content of the responses to written questions. Indeed, in a ruling on a similar matter on April 25, 2022, at page 4310 of the Debates, the Chair stated: "The Chair is of the view that ruling on the completeness of responses to written questions is tantamount to ruling on their content, and that is not the Chair's role."

[English]

While members should have access to relevant and accurate information to ensure they can fulfill their parliamentary functions, it is not for the Chair to evaluate the content of responses to written questions. Therefore, while the Chair always advocates for greater co-operation between members and ministers in their exchange of information, the matter raised by the member for Calgary Nose Hill does not constitute a point of order.

I thank members for their attention.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now that we are back from the holiday break, this is the first chance I have had to rise and ask the government to give us the rundown of what is on the agenda for the rest of this week and for next week.

Business of Supply

Unfortunately, the government House leader is not able to answer my question, so I will keep talking about the government's eight years in power. We were hoping for bills to help Canadians, but the sad fact is that Canadians have never suffered as much as they are suffering now. We have seen that on many occasions, including today as we debate a very important motion on bail. Crime rates are going up faster than ever. Why? Over the past eight years, ever since this government took office, violent crime has gone up by 32%. In the coming days, tomorrow or next week, will the government introduce bills to implement stricter bail conditions?

I hope someone on the government side can answer my question now.

I will repeat my question. Can the government House leader, who waited eight minutes to answer my question, tell us why in eight years the government has not been able to find solutions to the length and leniency of bail? Of course, I would also ask that he outline the work that we can look forward to tomorrow and next week.

• (1530)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am here and I am very happy to answer the question.

We will certainly continue to bring crime rates down across the country. I hope we can work together on this issue.

Tomorrow, we will begin second reading of Bill C-34.

[*English*]

This is the national security review of investments modernization act. We will continue with the debate on this bill Monday and Wednesday of next week.

I would also like to inform the House that Tuesday, February 7, and Thursday, February 9, shall be allotted days.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 13 minutes.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—BAIL REFORM

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

It is always a privilege to stand in this House to speak on behalf of my constituents of Brantford—Brant. After eight years, the Prime Minister and his government are solely responsible for our failing justice system. This is pressing and urgent; bail reform is needed now. Far too often, we are hearing Canadians use language such as “catch and release”, “a revolving door” and “an unequal justice system” to describe the state of affairs in Canadian bail courts.

In my almost two decades of prosecuting in the trenches of our criminal justice system, I have repeatedly witnessed dangerous criminals being released on bail. I am honoured to add my experience working in the criminal justice system to such an important debate. A major concern during my lawyer years was our inability to keep violent repeat offenders off the streets and in custody where they belong. I was unable to vocally criticize the lenient bail system as a Crown attorney, so I made the decision to become a politician to effect change.

The Liberal government wants Canadians to believe it has crime under control with its justice policies and that it is on the right track. I thank our Conservative leader and all my Conservative colleagues for bringing this debate into the House and for showing Canadians that this Liberal soft-on-crime agenda has broken our bail system and eroded confidence in our judicial institutions.

In 2019, to codify the principles outlined in the Supreme Court of Canada case *Antic*, the Liberals passed Bill C-75. Although it was intended to modernize the bail system, the effect of this legislation was to allow offenders arrested for violent crimes to be released back on the street fast enough to commit other crimes, sometimes on the same day. In fact, this was an occurrence that I routinely saw as a Crown prosecutor. I would often read Crown briefs noting the accused laughed and bragged to the arresting officers that they would be released in hours.

After receiving numerous calls and emails from my constituents, who shared their concerns about Canada's justice system, I met with the Brantford police chief, Rob Davis, and the president of the Brantford Police Association, Constable Jeremy Morton. It was important to learn directly from them what the root causes are and how we as parliamentarians can address them.

Chief Davis shared with me that it is disheartening to all police officers to see that they are doing their job, they are catching people, they are putting them before the courts, they are asking that they be held in custody but they are being released. He said that criminals are brazen and are laughing at the current justice system. He said oftentimes, they are getting back home before the officers do, and the next thing he knows, they are committing twice as much crime. It is a telltale sign of the level of brazenness among criminals. He also reflected on how the system has dramatically shifted and said that criminals' rights have now superseded the rights of victims.

Business of Supply

For years, Canadian law enforcement worked hard to build trust in the police and give victims a level of security if they came forward, and the perpetrator was put into the justice system. Now, everything, according to him, is upside down. The Liberal soft-on-crime approach, he says, is bringing the justice system into disrepute, and the concern that law enforcement now has is that if society loses faith in the justice system, we may find ourselves in a situation where citizens will decide to take things into their own hands.

I never thought as a parliamentarian that I would be quoting Oprah Winfrey, but on her show, every Christmas, she would have giveaways. She would point to the audience and say, “You get a car”, or they got another gift. That is precisely what has happened with the Liberal government and the Prime Minister given their approach to the bail system in Canada. With the Prime Minister, for the last eight years we have said, “He gets bail. She gets bail. Everyone gets bail”, regardless of the fact that they have repeated criminal offences on their record, regardless of the fact that they have an outstanding charge and regardless of how serious the charge is.

• (1535)

It is a statistical fact that the majority of serious violent crimes committed in this country are committed by a handful of repeat offenders. For example, in Vancouver alone, 40 offenders were arrested 6,000 times in one year. That is 150 arrests per person, per year. Brantford Police Chief Davis further spoke on this issue and stated that we have entire neighbourhoods that one or two bad apples will terrorize as repeat violent offenders.

The data published by Statistics Canada clearly shows that between 2008 and 2014, under the Harper government, Canada witnessed an annual decrease in the crime severity index. From 2015 onward, this trend changed dramatically.

Since the Prime Minister took office, the number of crimes has grown year after year. Violent crime has gone up 32% in one year. Gang-related killings have gone up 92% since the Liberals formed government. In 2021, there were over two million police-reported Criminal Code incidents, marking an increase of 25,000 incidents since 2020.

Since the fall of 2022, tragically, five Canadian police officers have been killed while on duty. With hundreds of murders in 2021, one Canadian was murdered every 10 hours throughout the year. The 2020 data shows that Canada's homicide rate is roughly double that of the U.K. and France, and four times higher than that of Italy.

Even though the Prime Minister and his government are claiming that Bill C-75 was meant to clear the backlog of people waiting for bail hearings, experts say it has done much more than that. Essentially, the government has told judges dealing with bail applications that they need to make sure anyone accused of a crime is released at the earliest opportunity and on the least serious conditions. Let that sink in. Primary consideration is for the accused, not for the victim and not for society at large. Some judges and justices of the peace feel that the bill has put shackles on them and has resulted in an increase in releases, even by violent offenders.

Last month, all 13 premiers sent a letter to the Prime Minister calling for amendments to keep more people in custody as they

await trial. This call was supported by police chiefs, police associations, mayors and provincial attorneys general from coast to coast to coast. Recently, the Toronto police chief opined on the issue of bail reform and argued that only judges and not JPs should be allowed to hear bail cases when serious gun charges are involved.

A multipronged approach to bail reform is required. According to the Supreme Court, everyone is entitled to a speedy trial. However, it can often take years to get to trial. We need to speed up the system so that when criminals show up in court, the judge knows they will get a speedy trial and may be less inclined to bail them out.

The Liberals said they were open to discussions, but that has been their position since the provincial justice ministers raised that issue last March, almost a year ago. Instead, the government has been busy passing Bill C-5 and Bill C-21.

This January, a judge in my riding of Brantford—Brant said that my hometown community is “plagued by gun violence—murders caused by guns and people walking around with firearms. It never used to be as prevalent as it is today.” She said, “Now it’s an epidemic”, and that the Crown should get tougher on offenders.

To put it into perspective, the Liberals and the NDP have ignored the real way that most criminals get their guns under Bill C-21. They eased bail conditions for serious violent crimes under Bill C-75 and decided to put the safety of victims at risk with Bill C-5. The Conservatives have been calling for a balance to the justice system and bail reform for years, but the Liberal Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada continues to defend the current system.

I have a very quick primer on bail. Bail legislation reflects the fundamental principles outlined in Canada’s charter that attempt to balance the rights of the accused by upholding the presumption of innocence with public safety and confidence in the system. The law allows for people who are deemed risky to be detained for certain indictable offences, or when confidence in the administration of justice would be undermined by releasing a person into the community.

Business of Supply

Canada needs bail reform now to pull back from the failed views put forward by the government. We cannot continue to endanger our communities by letting repeat violent offenders walk freely on our streets and simply wait before they harm somebody. How much more blood needs to be spilled on our streets? How many more police officers need to lose their lives before the government finally acts?

• (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make quick reference to a couple of facts that come from Statistics Canada.

In 2021, the violent crime rate did increase by 5%, while the property crime rate decreased by 1%. Following a large decrease in 2020, the property crime rate was the lowest it has been dating back to 1965. If we take a look at the homicide murder rates for the first three years of Stephen Harper's administration, there were 597, 614 and 611. In the first full years of this administration, there were 616, 667 and 662.

One would think, if one listened to the Conservatives, that the whole system is broken. It might need a nice little bumper sticker, but the reality is that there are some concerns, and we are working with the provinces. I will be able to elaborate more on that.

Could the member opposite tell me honestly if he believes that people on probation did not commit crimes when Stephen Harper was prime minister? How ludicrous is the Conservative argument today?

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, what is ludicrous is the proposition that the member put forward.

We are not talking about Stephen Harper. We are talking about the current Prime Minister and the Liberal government. They have broken everything under the sun in the last eight years and are making our communities less safe.

Under former prime minister Harper, we did not have the cry of premiers of every province and territory. We did not hear from police chiefs. We did not hear from police unions. We did not hear from victims crying out for justice reform. If the member for Kingston and the Islands could be quiet for a second since I have the floor, not that member, then I will continue answering the question.

• (1545)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to get the member to address a couple of other issues.

We keep hearing the Liberals talking about property crime. The reality is that property crime is, by and large, not being reported because people are being victimized but they know that the police are not going to come. It would be hours before they could get there, and the resources are stretched too thin. This allows these people to keep committing crimes and getting away with it, making matters worse.

Does the member have anything to add to that?

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, this is not a bill regarding property crime. I hear his comments, and I take them very seriously.

When I talk about a multi-faceted approach, this particular motion deals with one aspect alone. This aspect is that serious repeat violent offenders are routinely being released from criminal bail courts from coast to coast to coast, causing havoc in our streets.

Property crime is important, but what is more important is that the Liberal government should finally heed the calls to action, to quote my colleague, the member for Barrie—Innisfil, who will be talking shortly. The government needs to act.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since this is the first time I see you occupying the Chair, I want to congratulate you.

I thank my colleague for his speech. There are several elements of the Conservative motion before us today that we agree with. Obviously, we want to see an end to the increase in violent crime that has occurred in recent years, and the government needs to do more in that regard.

If the Conservatives do not agree with certain provisions of Bill C-75, I have to wonder why they have not introduced a bill to amend those provisions, rather than moving a motion on an opposition day.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that. Is this the beginning of a process? Will a bill be introduced in the near future? Why not?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the member supports in principle what the Conservative opposition is proposing by way of this motion.

I have indicated in the crux of my speech that a multi-faceted approach is required. Ultimately, when we look at the bigger picture, this is a very important first step to address that pressing, urgent need across the country. To answer the member's question directly, yes, it is one of many.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Brantford—Brant for sharing his time with me this afternoon. I will admit it is difficult to follow a former Crown prosecutor who understands intimately not just our justice system but the bail system as well. He has done a good job explaining what some of the significant challenges are with respect to our bail system.

It is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the residents of Barrie—Innisfil, a community that has certainly felt the scope of tragedy over the last several months. It started in October with the killing of two South Simcoe police officers in Innisfil, Constables Devon Northrup and Morgan Russell, and two short months after that we found ourselves in a tragic situation where Constable Greg Pierzchala of the Ontario Provincial Police, a south Barrie resident, was killed in the line of duty.

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I stood on that bridge, as I did for Constables Northrup and Russell, waiting for Constable Pierzchala's procession to come by with about 100 OPP officers and other members of the community, like Constable Pierzchala's grade 2 teacher, firefighters and general people of the community, who felt the impact of not just what had happened two months prior, but certainly the impact of what had happened just before the new year.

As I was standing on the bridge waiting for the procession to come by, I had an OPP officer come up to me and ask if he could speak to me for a second. He pulled out his phone and showed me a picture. He told me a story of something that had happened up in Orillia. Police had been chasing a suspect in a car. The suspect had ditched the car and ran, but on the floor of the car by the driver's seat was a nine millimetre semi-automatic handgun with an extended mag. It was clearly illegal and it clearly would have put in danger those police officers who were out that night chasing the suspect.

What was most disheartening with what the officer said was that 24 hours after the arrest of the perpetrator, he was out on bail. Let us think about that. The lives of these officers were at risk 24 hours prior to the person being out on bail, carrying a clearly restricted firearm with an extended magazine. The officer said that we had to do something about the bail system. In fact, he expressed the sentiments of OPP Commissioner Carrique after officer Pierzchala was killed in the line of duty. When Carrique stood in front of the media, the media asked him what he thought was wrong with the bail system and how did he feel. Commissioner Carrique said, "I'm outraged".

Pressure has built up in the system. We have seen it. We have heard throughout the day from my colleagues on the Conservative side of the numerous examples of criminals who have been arrested and then let out on bail only to be arrested again by police officers. That buildup was almost volcano-like, where the lava dome was about to explode. What Constable Pierzchala's killing did was cause that dome to explode.

We have not just OPP Commissioner Carrique, but we have metro Toronto police Chief Demkiw, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Association of Ontario, the Toronto Police Association and the 13 premiers of the provinces and territories from different political stripes, all unanimous in telling us that we need to fix the bail system. We do not just need to fix it for the sake of safety in our communities. We need to fix it for those police officers who put their lives on the line every day trying to keep our communities safe. When they do catch a perpetrator, like they did in Orillia, and see that individual released in 24 hours, that must be frustrating for them.

• (1550)

How tragic is it when an OPP officer, stopping on the side of the road to help somebody in a ditch, gets ambushed by someone who should not have been out on bail because of a previous violent past, and beyond that, was restricted from having a firearm for life? This exposes the weakness in the system.

I have sat through this debate all day and heard members from the government side talk about Conservatives using this to inflame and incite or using it for rhetorical purposes, the most disgusting of

which is fundraising. Actually, we are doing our job. We are reflecting the voices of those Canadians, police officers, police chiefs and premiers who are asking for changes to the bail system, as well as those in our community who are demanding it because they feel unsafe.

We have heard the statistics. Gang-related crime is up 92% since 2015. We have seen a 32% increase in violent crime in this country since 2015. A lot of it has a pattern of consistency with bills being introduced that limit or reduce the bail system and that allow those who commit crimes with firearms to have reduced or suspended sentences. We heard the story today about a rape that took place in Quebec where the rapist is at home serving a sentence. What type of system is that?

How are we fulfilling our obligations as parliamentarians to keep our communities, victims and police officers safe when those who are perpetrating these crimes are out on bail within 24 hours in many cases? I think we are abdicating our responsibility if we are not listening to the voices of Canadians, if we are not listening to those who are demanding a call for changes to Canada's bail system.

A lot of the problems result from these pieces of legislation. If we talk to those who understand this and those who see the increase in crime happening on our streets in this country, when we see those hardened, violent criminals getting let out within 24 hours, they will tell us why that is happening. It is because we have a bail system that allows it to happen. I have talked to those police officers, and I, for one, am so glad they are coming out hard on this issue. Who knows better than our police officers what is happening on those streets?

Let us look at the headlines from the last month. I have pulled some out.

The first one reads, "The man accused of killing Const... Pierzchala was out on bail on criminal charges, including assaulting a police officer". We all know that.

An article from January 11 reads, "Man out on release order charged in 'random' Mississauga stabbing".

Another reads, "Winnipeg man wanted after car stolen minutes after suspect's release from arrest in Selkirk".

A fourth reads, "Man on release for gun charges charged with shooting a gold dealer in a robbery".

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This is happening far too often in this country. It is right for us to question it, as we are doing today, with a call to action on behalf of those who are expressing deep and grave concerns about Canada's judicial system and what has been happening to the bail system since 2015. It is right to question, and that is precisely what we are doing today. We are questioning the government on its inability to deal with this situation. The challenge is that we cannot solve a problem when we have created it. We have an ideological situation here where it has been made easier for criminals to get out on bail as opposed to protecting victims, communities and our police officers.

Finally, I will say that we have a responsibility to do this. The police officers I have spoken to speak of a lack of respect for authority and policing. Criminals know they have more rights than not only the victims but also the police officers who enforce the laws in this country.

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do believe it is more about fundraising for the Conservative Party. Let me give an example. Conservative after Conservative stood up and talked about a rape, an assault, that had taken place in the province of Quebec. Then they turn to the Government of Canada to blame it, as if that person is not serving one day in jail as a result of that sexual assault, and as if we are the ones to blame.

It was a provincial court, a provincial prosecutor who ultimately made that decision. Ottawa is working with provinces to deal with a wide spectrum of issues, including bail. The Conservatives are convinced they need to blame Ottawa. Ottawa has nothing to do with that case, yet several members stand up and use that.

I do not support what has taken place there. I suspect the member does not support what has taken place in Quebec. Why do they use that specific example when they know it is misleading?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things I will point out to the member. First and foremost, the Criminal Code in this country is a responsibility of the federal government, and any amendments, consequential or otherwise, that are made to it fall under the Minister of Justice and Attorney General in this country. With one fell swoop of a pen, they can change laws, bring them to Parliament, we can debate them and they can pass.

Second, the prosecutor in Quebec is actually blaming Bill C-75 for that situation.

I want to address an issue he brought up, because I have heard this today. Liberals talk about fundraising. We are the voices of Canadians. The fact is that they are accusing us of using this for fundraising, but we are actually being the voices of Canadians. When this member says that, he does a great disservice to police chiefs, police officers, police associations, premiers and others who are calling for bail reform. They are not sending out fundraising letters. They are asking us to do something about a broken system.

• (1600)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that the member is very passionate about this topic and has a big heart in this space.

New Democrats want to be sure all parties work together in the upcoming justice committee hearings on bail reform. We look forward to those conversations.

My question to the member is around other solutions for preventive measures that can be taken by the government, if he has some to share with us.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that there are other measures that need to be taken in terms of mental health, drug addiction and all of that stuff. We are talking right now. I think most of those stakeholders I referenced earlier such as those police chiefs, are talking about those violent criminals who are let out on bail after committing violent crimes with guns and who oftentimes, as we have heard and seen through the stats, will get out on bail to repeat those violent crimes. That is what we are talking about.

There needs to be a whole approach to dealing with violent activity and violent crimes in this country, not the least of which is dealing with mental health and other related issues as well. For the safety and security of our communities and of the police officers we charge with looking after our communities, we need to fix the bail system that has been broken since 2015.

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we heard the Liberals talking about rumour mongering and about fundraising. I wonder if the member can talk to us about how victims feel hearing those kinds of comments.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, they probably feel the same way I felt today hearing this type of response from the government. It has been shameful, and quite frankly, I have been embarrassed for the Liberals every time they stood up and talked about fundraising letters with absolutely no thought to victims, police officers and their families who have been impacted by this. As I said earlier, we are the voices of Canadians. The Liberals seem to be the voices of their caucus.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg North, and I know that everyone will want to stay tuned for the hon. member's comments after mine.

With regard to the discussion today and Canada's criminal justice system, I wish to note that a sibling has been a police officer in Canada for over two decades. I am very proud of my brother, who has served with much pride the citizens of Vancouver as a police officer in many different capacities. To him and his colleagues, obviously, may there be blessings by the one up in the sky, and may they please stay safe in everything they do to keep us safe.

[*Translation*]

I appreciate the concerns raised by the member for Fundy Royal about Canada's bail system. I welcome the opportunity to discuss how Canada's bail legislation works, particularly how it deals with violent crime and repeat offenders.

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The bail regime in Canada contributes to public safety and builds trust in the criminal justice system by allowing accused persons to be held in pre-trial custody where there is just cause to do so. Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, all accused individuals have a right to their freedom and are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Section 11(e) of the Charter provides that everyone charged with an offence has the right “not to be denied reasonable bail without just cause”. Section 6 of the Criminal Code further affirms the presumption of innocence.

The Supreme Court of Canada has shared important decisions on bail and relevant Charter considerations. The Court noted the following, for example, in the 2015 *St. Cloud* decision: “in Canadian law, the release of accused persons is the cardinal rule and detention, the exception”.

In the 2017 *Antic* decision and the 2020 *Zora* decision, the court ruled that, for the vast majority of offences, interim release is favoured at the earliest reasonable opportunity and on the least onerous grounds, although there are plenty of circumstances under which the Crown can persuade the court that certain conditions are required or that the accused should remain in custody pending a decision in their case.

Subsection 515(10) of the Criminal Code sets out the three reasons an accused may be denied interim release. First, where the detention is necessary “to ensure his or her attendance in court”, which is known as the primary ground. Second, for the protection of the public, including victims and witnesses, and when it is likely that the accused will “commit a criminal offence or interfere with the administration of justice” if released. This is called the secondary ground. Protection of the public is very important and is central to this ground.

Many factors may be taken into account when the court considers this ground, including the accused's criminal record, whether the accused was on interim release or on probation at the time of the charge, the accused's personal situation and any interference with witnesses or evidence. The court may also consider the gravity of the offence and the strength of the Crown's case based on the principle that the more serious the offence and the more likely a conviction, the greater the need to protect the public.

● (1605)

The third reason why an accused can be refused bail is if the detention is necessary to maintain confidence in the administration of justice, having regard to all the circumstances, including the apparent strength of the prosecution's case, the gravity of the offence, the range of sentences for the offence and whether a firearm was used. That is called the tertiary ground.

In *St-Cloud*, the Supreme Court noted that the scope of the tertiary ground “has been unduly restricted by the courts in some cases”. The court stated that the tertiary ground is separate and independent from the other grounds and that it should not be interpreted narrowly or applied sparingly. It should also not be limited to exceptional circumstances.

The general rule is that a Crown prosecutor who seeks to have an accused temporarily detained must persuade the court that there are grounds for detaining them. However, the Criminal Code includes a

number of provisions under which the onus is transferred to the accused.

When those provisions apply, the accused must demonstrate that there are no primary, secondary or tertiary grounds for their detention in custody. That is what is called a reverse onus.

Although the reverse onus represents an exception to the fundamental right to bail, it does not mean that the accused cannot obtain bail. It simply means that the accused must establish, on a balance of probabilities, that their detention is not justifiable.

The provisions for reverse onus play an important role in the criminal system because they make it possible to strike a balance between the right of the accused to have a reasonable opportunity to secure bail and the need to protect the safety of all Canadians.

To ensure the protection of the public and reduce recidivism in the criminal system, provisions for reverse onus focus on certain types of recidivism and certain serious offences. For example, when an accused does not appear in court or breaches a previous pre-trial release order, reverse onus will apply.

The reverse onus of proof also applies when the accused is charged with certain serious offences. The reverse onus of proof generally occurs when a person is charged with murder or attempted murder. However, other serious offences such as gun trafficking, discharging a firearm with intent, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault, kidnapping, hostage taking, robbery or exporting drugs also fall under reverse onus of proof provisions.

The reverse onus of proof also applies to offences involving the activities of a criminal or terrorist organization, as well as the Security of Information Act, which includes economic espionage and communication with a terrorist group.

In order to protect Canadians against gun violence, reverse onus of proof provisions apply to offences involving firearms when the accused is subject to a firearms prohibition order.

I thank my colleagues for listening to me deliver my speech in French today. I am very pleased to have had this opportunity.

● (1610)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): I would like to congratulate the hon. member on his French.

The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

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[English]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech sounded like a chapter out of a criminal law textbook, but it did not touch at all on the reality of what Canadians are hearing, feeling and seeing on the streets.

Twenty-four out of 44 gun-related murders in Toronto were perpetrated by people who were out on bail on firearms-related charges. Surely there is a crisis in Canadian cities and surely the member opposite would see that amending the catch-and-release rules would be a justifiable limitation, justifiable in a free and democratic society, pursuant to section 1 of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, that is an important question from my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove with regard to keeping Canadians safe and making sure Canadians feel safe in their homes, on their streets, with their children, at the mall, at the skating rink or wherever they may be.

In that vein, I look forward to discussions between the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada at the federal level and all pertinent authorities and their provincial representatives, working together to strengthen any laws that need to be strengthened and ensure that Canadians are always kept safe in their communities.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about justice, about real problems on the streets, about the increase in violence, our discussions must be guided by the idea of justice and what is right. A fair balance means not distorting certain elements.

As much as we are sympathetic to the Conservatives' motion that refers to certain realities, they are masters at crafting motions that only they can vote for. They distort certain things, and of course we cannot support something that distorts reality.

My colleague talked specifically about Bill C-75, which passed. If the prosecutor does his or her job properly, what happened in Ontario should never happen. The burden of proof regarding bail lies with the accused, not the Crown.

Could my colleague comment on the Conservative view that Bill C-75 should be repealed because it does not meet the reverse onus?

• (1615)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague from Quebec. The Conservatives' solutions are too easy and do not take into account the reality that exists in our country.

[English]

Bill C-75 was adopted following a binding Supreme Court decision. There is a reverse onus in Bill C-75 with regard to bail. At the same time, our government's top priority, like any government's, is to keep Canadians safe and make sure they feel safe in their homes, on their streets and in their communities. I know in my community this is an important topic, and we will not rest until we know that police officers have their resources.

We must also remember that the Conservative Party of Canada was the party that cut CBSA's budget. We are now putting more money into CBSA to make sure illegal arms do not come into Canada, do not harm our citizens and are kept away from criminals. We will make sure we arrest those criminals and support our police officers day in, day out, hour by hour and day by day.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is an important conversation. We recognize that the early release of people pretrial who are violent or repeat offenders is a real concern. We have heard from municipal leaders and premiers who have come to Ottawa. They are waiting for concrete proposals to be presented to this House that we can consider.

We have also heard from police that the gap in supports for mental health and people living with substance use is causing a real issue. We have been waiting for the mental health transfer, \$4.5 billion over five years, which the Liberals still have not delivered. They would not even let my bill go to committee, to listen to their own expert task force, to talk about solutions when it comes to the substance use crisis.

When are the Liberals going to deliver on mental health and a real plan to tackle the substance use issues facing Canadians in our country?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): Unfortunately, we are out of time, and that will have to stand as a comment as opposed to a question.

Continuing debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to listen to a great deal of the debate on the motion that has been brought forward by the Conservative Party today. Suffice it to say, if members have not detected it in my questioning of the Conservative Party, they will find that I am somewhat disappointed in the Conservative motion that we have before us.

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I have had the opportunity to act in many different capacities over my parliamentary career, whether it was as a justice critic in the province of Manitoba or sitting in a quasi-judicial youth justice committee as a chairperson and as a board member, dealing with the issues surrounding things like parole, bail and so forth. I would like to reflect on the things I have done in the past and, more importantly, reflect on what I believe based on discussions I have had, whether it was with law enforcement agencies, officers, constituents or the many different stakeholders out there. I will try to summarize it all by saying that we are all concerned about safety in our communities. We all want to feel safe in our communities, and I think we all have a responsibility to do what we can.

I would suggest to my Conservative friends across the way that, yes, there have been some tragedies that have occurred where real lives have been affected in a very profound negative way because of criminal behaviour. One does not have to belong to one political party over another in order to understand and appreciate the severity, the emotions, the anxiety and the blame that take place. I appreciate that and I am very much concerned about victims, not only today's victims, but the ways in which we, as a government or as parliamentarians, can advance the minimizing of future victims by investing.

This government has invested literally hundreds of millions, going into billions, of resource dollars and others in non-profits and other levels of government, whether provincial, municipal or indigenous communities, and so much more in terms of dealing with issues such as dysfunctional families, alcohol and drug abuse or addictions and investing in communities, health centres and issues such as mental health. These are all things that I have a holistic approach to.

We want to prevent crimes from happening. We realize that criminals will eventually leave jail, and we are discouraged by that revolving door. At the end of the day, we have a system in place. It is not perfect, and I myself have some very serious issues with some of the things I have seen over the last number of years, but those years go beyond just this government. If one listens to the Conservative Party, one would think that people who were out on bail or on probation when Stephen Harper was prime minister were never in violation or never committed any crimes. However, not that much has actually changed.

The Conservatives make reference to Bill C-75, but that bill did not make it easier to get bail. I would argue it might have even been the opposite. However, the digging and taking advantage of tragedies that have occurred, those high-profile cases, and trying to say that the system is broken, well, that is something the Conservative Party leadership is trying to say on all issues. They are trying to convince Canadians that in every way society is broken because of what has taken place over the last seven years under this administration, and they are wrong on all accounts. Let us be very clear on that.

● (1620)

When the Conservatives say it is broken, which they say about everything because that is the theme of the Conservative Party, they are wrong. They are saying some numbers today to try to get Canadians worried and try to convince them that things are broken. To

those who are following the debate, I would suggest they do not listen too closely to what the Conservatives are spreading in terms of misinformation.

I went to Statistics Canada. Listening to the Conservatives, one would think there is crime in every corner and everywhere we look. Stats Canada, in 2021, said the violent crime rate did increase 5%, while property crime rates decreased 1%, following a large decrease in 2020. The property crime rate was the lowest it has been dating back to 1965.

The Conservatives talked about homicides. They said that is where we have really seen this huge, dramatic change and that is why the whole system is broken. Let us look at the first three full years of Stephen Harper. During the first three years, and this comes from Stats Canada, in 2006, 2007 and 2008, the numbers were 608, 597 and 614 for the number of people who were murdered. For our first three full years, the numbers were 616, 667 and 662. Our population might have grown by a million, but that is a side point.

The point is that the system is not broken. The example that many of the members stand up and talk about is the issue in the province of Quebec. I am upset about it. I am very upset about it. I think anyone who assaults and rapes a woman should have to spend time in jail. That upsets me, but it was a provincial court that made the decision and it was a provincial prosecutor. That is still to be determined. Is the prosecution going to appeal that decision? I would hope so. I am not in a position to make that decision.

That is why the minister himself has said we are working with provinces. Here is a newflash: We have been working with the provinces on bail reform since well before the Conservatives raised the issue within the last few days. In fact, back in October, the Minister of Justice and the department were actually working on consultations. During the last couple of days, those discussions have been even more amplified.

Conservatives do not care more than the Liberals care about the victims of some of these crimes we are hearing about. Our prayers, best wishes and condolences go out to the families that have been so profoundly impacted by it.

Today, we have the Conservative Party taking a look at those tragedies and putting together a motion. All one needs to do is take a look at the word "broken". How often do they use the word "broken" nowadays? It is a political spin message, to try to give the impression that the Conservatives want to be tough on crime.

It is interesting that the critic for the Conservatives said that under Stephen Harper the number of days in jail actually went down from an average of 126 to 105. She implies that when they were in government, the number of days in jail went down, yet they are really tough on crime. It is because they are in opposition. The wording they are using is to help them, as an opposition party, get a few more headlines and create more false impressions, at least in part, in order to be able to raise more money for their coffers. It is no reflection on the law enforcement officers, the non-profit organizations, the victims or anything of that nature. I would suggest they might even be taking advantage of that situation.

We are trying to deal with it in a very real and tangible way, with legislative changes and budgetary measures, which is making a difference. We will continue that dialogue.

• (1625)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the louder the member for Winnipeg North gets and the angrier he gets, the better we seem to be doing with speaking on behalf of Canadians. For him to suggest that the Conservatives are taking advantage and trying to peddle something, instead of being the voice of Canadians, is disgusting, quite frankly. Also, we are speaking on behalf of the 13 premiers and on behalf of police chiefs from across the country.

However, I did hear something interesting that the member who spoke before the member for Winnipeg North said. He said he was going to consult with all the justice ministers across the country and come back with bail reform.

Does the member have the courage to stand up and bring back the consultations from those justice ministers and what they actually say? I will bet that they are going to agree with their premiers and say that bail reform needs to happen now to protect Canadians.

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that our judicial system is a shared responsibility between Ottawa and the provinces and territories. That means there are ongoing consultations and discussions taking place at virtually every level. That is important to say. I can be very emotional on all sorts of issues, especially when I catch the Conservative Party trying to twist and play with facts and manipulate Canadians. They do not necessarily represent what Canadians are saying, but rather they manipulate and try to influence Canadians with misinformation.

That does concern me quite often in the chamber. I think, at times, it is important for the opposition to hold the government accountable, but there is also some importance for the government to hold the opposition accountable for its remarks. That is one reason I am very critical of the whole cryptocurrency idea that the leader of the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): Continuing with questions and comments.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed. I joined this debate this afternoon, and all I hear from the Conservatives is that everything is broken. Everything I hear from the Liberals is that everyone is wrong. We have an op-

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portunity here to talk about bail reform, which is really important. This is something we have heard from municipal leaders and something we have heard about from premiers that has to be fixed. These are legitimate concerns.

We also have not talked about the current bail system and how it is not working for many people. There are far higher rates of pretrial detention for indigenous people, for racialized Canadians, for new Canadians and for low-income Canadians. It is mainly because they do not have the necessary resources, or even a stable address or stable employment.

My friend Martha's son, Mike Martin, was in pretrial detention. He had an opioid addiction, and he had been in there for repeat offences of drug-seeking and related crime. He did not get the medicine he needed and took his life.

Will the parliamentary secretary talk about some solutions, so we do not lose more people like Mike Martin?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member caught the beginning of my comments. I talked extensively about how the government plays an important role in dealing with the types of issues the member has raised, whether it is through budgetary measures or legislative measures. I would cite Bill C-75, which the Conservatives are critical of.

Bill C-75 actually made it harder to be released on bail. For example, the bill imposed what they call a reverse onus. There is a wonderful opportunity for the House of Commons to be able to debate the importance of the need for making changes. However, we also need to recognize that it is not just for the House of Commons and that we have an obligation to work with others. Those others include the shared responsibilities with our provinces, territories and indigenous communities, among many other stakeholders.

It is not as simple as saying here is an idea, let us make it happen and bring in the legislation. There is a need for consultation when we have shared responsibilities. This is something that the government has strived to do. We have tangible examples of investing financial resources and legislative resources to try to improve upon our system. It is far better than it was, but it is something we can always look at ways of improving.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Public Safety; the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, The Environment.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

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I want to talk about a word that seems to have escaped the Liberal government since it took office eight years ago and that is “consequence” or being accountable for one’s actions. The Liberals seem to have a really hard time being accountable for their actions. Even though it has been eight years, they seem to have a really hard time taking responsibility for being in power. They seem to have a really hard time owning up to the mistakes they have been making for the eight years that they have been in office. Perhaps that explains why they have hard time asking others to be accountable for their own actions, which is even more serious when it comes to crime.

Let us look at this government’s track record when it comes to failing to be accountable. It will likely explain the Liberals’ position on today’s opposition motion.

In 2016, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner found the Prime Minister guilty of breaking ethics laws. The Prime Minister apologized, but suffered no consequences. In 2018, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard was found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act. He apologized, but suffered no consequences. Just apologize and move on.

In 2019, the Prime Minister once again violated the Conflict of Interest Act, this time in the SNC-Lavalin case. The Prime Minister says he took responsibility for his actions. However, he suffered no consequences. In 2021, again, the Prime Minister and, this time, the then Minister of Finance, Bill Morneau, were charged under the Conflict of Interest Act and Mr. Morneau was found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act. Mr. Morneau suffered no consequences.

In 2022, in a file currently before us, the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development was found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act for giving a lucrative contract to her best friend. The minister suffered no consequences. She rose in the House, said that she apologized and that she would take responsibility for her actions. What does taking responsibility for one’s actions mean to this government? What does ministerial responsibility mean? It means absolutely nothing.

This week, I asked the Prime Minister a question about the case of a rapist who received a 20-month sentence to be served at home. The Prime Minister stated that it was none of our business and that it was not the responsibility of we, the politicians, to manage the law. The Prime Minister has forgotten one thing: He and his government created the law that resulted in this individual receiving a 20-month sentence to be served at home. That is the reality. Those are the facts, and I want to present them to my Liberal colleagues and even my colleagues who belong to other parties. I encourage them to listen carefully to the meaning and the words of the motion that we moved today. I will read the motion, which is important.

(i) violent crime has increased by 32%, (ii) gang-related homicides have increased by 92%, (iii) violent, repeat offenders are obtaining bail much more easily, (iv) increasing daily acts of crime and violence are putting Canadians at risk, (v) five Canadian police officers were killed in the line of duty in just one year

We are not asking for anything major. We are asking that something be done to help victims and to help Canadians feel safer. Here is our first request:

(a) fix Canada’s broken bail system by immediately repealing the elements enacted by Bill C-75, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, which force judges to release violent, repeat offenders onto the streets, allowing them to reoffend;

I want to repeat those last few words: “which force judges to release violent, repeat offenders onto the streets, allowing them to reoffend”. That is one of the effects of the legislation from Bill C-75 that we are talking about today. Our second request is this:

● (1635)

(b) strengthen Canada’s bail laws so that those who are prohibited from possessing firearms and who are then accused of serious firearms offences do not easily get bail;

In all honesty, how can anyone oppose this? Someone explain to me how the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois could disagree with that. Our last request is as follows:

(c) ensure that Canada’s justice system puts the rights of law-abiding Canadians ahead of the rights of violent, repeat offenders.

It is just common sense. We know that the Liberals will vote against it, but I do not understand why the NDP and the Bloc will vote against it. There is absolutely nothing partisan about this motion, absolutely nothing negative for Canadians in general. It is meant only for violent criminals, who unfortunately are too often released and commit crime after crime. This is a direct consequence of Bill C-75 and Bill C-5.

I know the parties supported Bill C-5 and Bill C-75. Unfortunately, it is now time to make amends. Past mistakes can be corrected. Why are the NDP and the Bloc Québécois not voting for this motion in order to correct this situation?

We are not the only ones saying this. The premiers of all the provinces, including Quebec, have signed a letter calling on the federal government to do better on bail to prevent tragedies from occurring, dangerous criminals from being put back on the streets, and women, children, men and families from being sadly affected by violent crimes committed by individuals who should be behind bars and not on the streets.

That is exactly the point of the motion we moved. It is entirely consistent with the letter that Canadian provincial and territorial premiers sent to the federal government. Unfortunately, the government seems to have chosen to turn a deaf ear.

Business of Supply

I get that the Liberal government does not want to admit the Conservatives are right, so let us listen to someone else. I am talking about the famous case I mentioned earlier, the individual who sexually assaulted a woman and was sentenced to 20 months to be served at home with his cellphone and Netflix. That kind of sentence for that kind of crime is totally unacceptable.

Here are some quotes from the article in La Presse:

A Crown prosecutor chastised the [Liberal] government for its recent law opening the door to house arrest for sex offenders.

Right now, [the Prime Minister] and [the Minister of Justice] probably have some explaining to do to victims of sexual assault, said Crown prosecutor Alexis Dinelle after the hearing.

This is a direct consequence of Bill C-5 becoming law, and I am asking the NDP and the Bloc Québécois to make amends for that today.

The article goes on to say the following:

Until last November, a judge could not impose a sentence to be served at home for sexual assault. Hard time in prison was the norm for such crimes, and sentences ranged from 12 to 20 months for assaults similar to this one.

Without any fanfare, the Liberal government's Bill C-5 made it possible for offenders to serve a sentence in the community for sexual assault.

It is not me or the Conservatives who said that. It is a Crown prosecutor who has to live with the consequences of the passage of Bill C-5.

For these reasons, because I hope that my colleagues from all parties want to protect Canadians who have been the victims of violent crime and prevent new crimes from being committed, I encourage them to help us make the necessary changes to ensure that violent repeat offenders stay behind bars and not in our communities.

• (1640)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today's motion calls on our government to ensure that those who are prohibited from possessing firearms and who are then accused of serious firearms offences cannot easily get bail. That is already the case. It is also the case for organized crime offences, arms smuggling and trafficking, sexual assault, robbery, extortion with a firearm and drug trafficking.

I would like my opposition colleague to tell me what the motion would change.

• (1645)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I am not allowed to use documents to illustrate what I have to say, but I do have numerous documents that indicate inconsistencies in what my colleague is saying, unfortunately. I know she thinks everything is perfect. That is what we have been hearing from the Liberals for far too long. They say everything is fine, there are no problems, and they are doing what needs to be done.

Unfortunately, there are victims. Five police officers were killed in the line of duty in a single year, most of them by repeat offenders. Most femicides are committed by men who were previously convicted. Something is wrong with our system. Denying that will not fix it, but adopting motions and taking measures like what we put forward today will.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I felt compelled to comment on what my colleague said in his speech, when he asked why the Bloc Québécois will not vote in favour of today's motion.

He is right that there are several elements in the Conservative motion that we agree with. For example, the increase in violent crime in recent years is undeniably true.

However, point (a) of his motion is not entirely true, not to say downright false. There is nothing in Bill C-75 that requires judges to release repeat violent offenders. What the Conservatives are suggesting is false.

There is no point in searching high and low to figure out why the Bloc Québécois cannot support this. If the Conservatives really want to make changes to certain provisions of Bill C-75, I invite them, with all due respect, to introduce a bill to amend certain provisions of Bill C-75. I think that would be better than waiting for either the Bloc Québécois or the NDP to agree with this motion.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, one thing sets us apart from the Bloc Québécois. One day, we will be in power and we will be able to introduce bills. We will then be able to correct the provisions spelled out in Bill C-75. The Bloc Québécois will never be able to do that.

The Bloc Québécois should ask itself some serious questions about certain positions it has taken in the past weeks and months. For example, there is Bill C-21 and the amendments it supported to ban certain firearms. That happened. It is true.

It also supported Bill C-5, which is directly responsible for the release of this rapist to his home. The Bloc Québécois should ask itself these types of questions when it is time to support and adopt motions.

The Conservatives have a solution. It is not perfect, but it is a starting point. I hope once again that the Bloc Québécois will make amends and support our motion.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the conversation we are having today is really important. I would have liked to have seen the Conservatives expand this to look at other areas.

In August, I had the pleasure of going to Agassiz and visiting two federal institutions, the Mountain Institution and Kent Institution. I had a chance to talk with both program officers, who work within the institutions, and parole officers, who deal with inmates on the outside. They are crying out for resources. I think with the important work they do with inmates, that kind of work is incredibly important and has much more of an effect on increasing public safety.

Business of Supply

Would my colleague agree with me that those program officers and parole officers in Correctional Service Canada need more resources so that we can have a more effective justice system?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, first, they need a law that would allow them to do their jobs correctly. That is the responsibility of the federal Liberal government. It does not want to play its role. Unfortunately, there are victims everywhere in Canada who suffer because of that.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to speak to this motion, sponsored by the member for Fundy Royal. It is an important debate we are having today, and I appreciate listening to the members and their various perspectives on this issue.

It is clear that Canada's justice system and, more specifically our bail system, is indeed broken. Canadians do not need to take my word or the word of my colleagues on this side of the House. They just need to turn on the news on any given day for the reality to confront them.

I was shocked. Canadians across the country were shocked to hear that a young, respected OPP officer, Constable Greg Pierzchala, was tragically killed in the line of duty. He was killed just two days after Christmas. He was shot after responding to a call for a vehicle in a ditch west of Hagersville, Ontario, in the county of Haldimand, which I represent.

The people who knew him best said that he was an example of service over self. He was a loving brother and a gifted athlete. He was just 28 years old. He had his entire life ahead of him. Thousands of officers and first responders came out in the pouring rain to honour this fallen officer at his funeral in his hometown of Barrie.

We know that one of the accused of this heinous crime was out on bail after being charged with multiple offences. In 2018, he received a life prohibition from owning firearms. In 2021, he was charged with several firearms offences and assaulting a peace officer. He was later released on bail with conditions but failed to appear in court. On September 6, 2022, a warrant was issued for his arrest and additional charges were laid. He, once again, failed to appear.

The news of the tragic death of Officer Pierzchala shook our small community.

The Liberal government has had eight years in power, and if it were competent and its policies actually worked, we would not be hearing these tragic stories time and time again, over and over again.

I take issue with the words of the Minister of Justice, who, earlier today said that he discouraged members from wasting this opportunity with empty rhetoric designed to inflame the fears of Canadians.

My constituents' words are not empty rhetoric. Are the letters that I received from people all over the country inflammatory rhetoric? Are the pain and the cries coming from the families of victims across this country empty and inflammatory rhetoric?

Canadians do not need to be inflamed. They are actually afraid. Many Canadians are living in fear because our criminal justice system, specifically our bail system, is broken.

Constable Pierzchala was the fifth officer slain in a period of just months last year.

Since 2015, when the Prime Minister took office, violent crime has gone up 32% in Canada. Since 2015, gang-related homicides have increased by 92%. That is double. Out of the 44 shooting-related homicides in Toronto in 2022, 17 of the accused were out on bail at the time that they were alleged to have committed these offences. In 2022, in Toronto, 50 individuals received multiple firearms bails and 11 individuals had five or more previous firearms convictions. In Vancouver, the same 40 offenders were arrested 6,000 times in one single year. These are profoundly startling statistics.

• (1650)

We have 13 premiers now unanimously calling on the Prime Minister to do something about our broken criminal justice system. They have all called for urgent action and meaningful changes to the Criminal Code, particularly when it comes to firearms offences. Instead of focusing on criminals who are terrorizing our streets, the Liberals have watered down the consequences for the violent criminals who have impacted our communities. They have diverted precious police resources to focus instead on law-abiding firearms owners, including hunters, farmers and sport shooters.

How do we solve this problem? First, we need to prioritize the rights of victims by ensuring that repeat violent offenders stay behind bars and are offered some hope of rehabilitation before they are released. We need to recognize the brokenness of our criminal justice system and, specifically, our bail system.

As a lawyer, when I left Bay Street, for a short time I practised criminal law, and it was so disheartening. It was so frustrating to see the same people go in and out of jail. I knew at that time that something was wrong with our system. We need programs to reform and restore those who can be rehabilitated. We need a bail system that keeps violent offenders off the street, and we can do both.

There is something wrong when nothing can be done for people who commit violent offences to ensure they are rehabilitated before they are permitted to re-enter society. It should not be accepted that violent offenders can go back on the streets within the same hour of their arrest. This is not compassion. This is sheer recklessness.

Business of Supply

At the same time, we need to work together with provinces to come up with compassionate solutions that will meaningfully reduce recidivism and keep Canadians safe. We must invest in local community resources and centres that work with at-risk youth. We must increase access to rehabilitation and counselling resources within the criminal justice system to give offenders a chance to be rehabilitated so their return to society does not put communities in danger.

There is nothing compassionate about letting somebody out on bail who has a history of violent crime when there is no evidence of change and when there is no evidence of rehabilitation. All this does is terrorize the communities with more crime, creating more victims. I remind the House that oftentimes those communities are racialized communities.

I have a young teenage son not much younger than Constable Pierzchala. Every mother's heart was broken with the killing of this young officer. I cannot imagine the pain this family has endured. His death was tragic.

I remind everyone in the House that Canada's revolving bail system must be changed. We owe it to those who have lost their lives, such as Constable Pierzchala, his family and my constituents, to make the needed reforms. Canadians deserve better. Victims deserve better. Our streets once again need to be safe.

• (1655)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned in her speech the need to invest in communities and community organizations. I note that every time our government has tried to make significant investments in community programming, the Conservative Party has voted against them.

I am wondering if the member could explain why her caucus has consistently voted against measures meant to keep our communities safe and allow young people to have an outlet outside of crime.

• (1700)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives do not oppose meaningful investments in communities. In fact, we believe in the compassionate way of reducing recidivism. I remind my friend that it was this side of the House that passed a recidivism bill last year.

Our main issue is waste. Our main issue is the fact that we have diverted millions of dollars away from dealing with violent crimes and into focusing on law-abiding firearms owners, like hunters, sport shooters and farmers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I understand the impulse. I understand the intention behind this motion, given the proliferation of firearms these days and the rise in violent crimes in recent years. There is no ill intention here. However, making the provisions of Bill C-75 harsher is based on the ideology of law and order.

Experts, including Carolyn Yule of Guelph University, are currently studying this issue. She studies the bail system. She says that,

at this time, there is no evidence to suggest that a harsher approach to bail would necessarily improve public safety.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, the individual who took the life of Officer Pierzchala was out on bail. He had a lifetime prohibition on having a firearm, yet that was not a deterrent.

The family of Officer Pierzchala is listening and watching. When we say there is no hope of keeping someone behind bars and attempting to rehabilitate that person, and that the only thing we can do is put them back on the street to commit another violent crime and take another life, it is a travesty of justice.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I happened to be in the House when the Conservatives were in government. I was there when the Harper government dismantled the network of community prevention centres and crime prevention programs across this country, even though evidence showed that, dollar for dollar, this was the best way to reduce crime and lower the number of new victims.

I want to talk about the current issue of bail. We recognize that justice requires protecting both public safety and the presumption of innocence. It forms the foundation of our legal system. As a lawyer, my hon. colleague knows that nearly two-thirds of those in provincial jails right now are awaiting trial, and the vast majority of those detained have never been convicted of anything. She would know that the current bail system results in far higher rates of pre-trial detention for indigenous people, racialized Canadians, new Canadians and low-income Canadians, mainly because they usually lack the resources to fight.

The current bail law allows a prosecutor to argue that a person should not get bail if they present a flight risk or a danger to public safety. Could the member tell us why that law is not working today and how she would change it?

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I have worked in the Jane and Finch community, where many programs were funded by the Harper government for community policing, so I beg to differ on that.

I acknowledge that our bail system needs to be reformed both for those people who may be overrepresented in it and for the victims of crime.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my Conservative Party colleague from Lakeland. Not surprisingly, I will be sharing my time, but not the same views.

Business of Supply

I want to put all this in context. Today is the Conservative Party's opposition day. The motion was moved by the member for Fundy Royal. It is a direct attack on Bill C-75, which was passed in 2019, three years ago already.

The Bloc Québécois feels that Bill C-75 is a good bill overall, but there are some flaws. We do not believe that there is such a thing as a perfect bill, to be honest. Eventually, at some point in the future, there will be amendments, additions or deletions made to certain elements of Bill C-75.

The day is winding down, and we have been discussing this bill all day. Everyone knows that the Bloc Québécois is opposed to the Conservative motion. Yes, we know there are real problems when it comes to crime, but the solutions proposed by the Conservative Party are not the right ones we need to make the changes that we will eventually have to make.

As we have been seeing all day, this bill really gets people fired up. Everyone's emotions are running high, and everyone keeps firing off demands. This bill also opens the door to a lot of misinformation. Certain groups of people hide behind their ideology, which, sadly, has nothing to do with science. Others adopt a more sensationalist approach and, as in the current case, appear to be electioneering.

The motion is based on individual cases. All day, we have been hearing about two or three specific cases: murdered police officers and a man accused of rape who is serving his sentence at home. I do not want to downplay these situations, but I do want to point out that these are all individual cases the Conservatives are talking about here today, cases they are using as justification for upsetting the apple cart and going back to square one with Bill C-75. The Bloc Québécois is against that. We want to move on, and we will vote against the motion.

The Bloc Québécois thinks that there is a bit of bad faith involved in moving this motion and that our Conservative colleagues are trying to create a false sense of security. Repealing Bill C-75 as it was passed is not going to enhance public safety. That is just not true. Let us keep in mind that we are talking about laws, justice and social justice. The Bloc Québécois supports victims. We will always side with the poor and with victims, and we think that, in this case, it is inappropriate to pursue the repeal of Bill C-75.

The Bloc Québécois hopes that we can take a sensible, reasonable and balanced approach to such important bills. We are well aware that Bill C-75 is not a cure-all, but it meets a lot of needs.

Of all of the misinformation our Conservative colleagues are spreading, there is one allegation that really irks us. They are saying that Bill C-75 requires judges to release violent repeat offenders who can then go out and commit other crimes. That is obviously misinformation, and it is easy to prove it. The Conservatives keep making this argument, but it does not hold water for the Bloc Québécois. It is not true at all. Judges still have the final say in the cases they try.

• (1710)

Another thing that is based on misinformation is the presumption that the Canadian justice system puts the rights of violent repeat of-

fenders ahead of the rights of law-abiding Quebecers and Canadians. That has been repeated all day, but it is totally false. It is clear that the claim that the bail system puts the rights of repeat offenders ahead of the rights of other individuals is a complete falsehood.

Another claim that keeps coming up is that the bail system is bad. To us that is a false claim. Bail is a way of finding a balance between the presumption of innocence, which is protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and public safety. That is why we think that statement is false. They are talking about things that do not exist, that are not there, that are purely made up.

Again, this is a very delicate exercise.

On what are the Conservatives currently basing their claim that we have to take an axe to Bill C-75? Are they relying on empirical data? No, they did not present any empirical data today, absolutely none. Are they relying on peer-reviewed studies? No, they did not present any such studies today.

Of course, we have heard plenty of anecdotes about individual cases. We have been hearing about the same cases all day. However, that does not justify a major reform of a bill like Bill C-75. It is not possible and it is not logical. In a system like ours, to begin with individual points like this and reshuffle the deck would be madness. We could go round in circles forever.

Canada has a population of 35 million people. What do these individual cases represent out of 35 million people? I do not want to minimize the cases that have been put forward, but we cannot decide these things based on individual cases.

What is both interesting and useful about research and science is that they provide for studies to be done on large numbers of individuals. This is what validates research and why it can be presented and shared with some degree of certainty. Not all research results are perfectly accurate. At times, there are contradictory findings from one study to the next, but overall, this is what can be expected.

I want to touch on a couple of pieces of research. Earlier, in a question, my colleague referred to Carolyn Yule, a professor of sociology and anthropology at the University of Guelph. She is an expert in this area and has spent part of her life studying bail. The findings of her studies, of which there are several, suggest that a tougher approach to bail would not improve public safety.

That said, she is just a scientist, just a girl who does research and has spent most of her life studying this topic.

Business of Supply

Furthermore, Jane Sprott, a professor of criminology at Toronto Metropolitan University, says that there is no reliable way to predict who will commit a violent crime, regardless of the type of crime. She says it would be fiscally irresponsible and unrealistic to increase the number of people in remand. This is related to what we are talking about today. She also states that pre-trial detention hurts a person's chances of not reoffending and their social reintegration. This is obviously contrary to Conservative values. I would also like to share one other small study, but I do not think I will have enough time.

• (1715)

Seeing as people are making assertions based on nothing, here is a big one: From 2006 to 2015, while the Conservatives were in power, crime rates dropped. Dig no deeper, and that sounds great. Three cheers for the Conservatives. The problem is that as soon as they lost power, crime rates started going up.

Is it fair to say the Liberals were responsible for what happened in that first year or two? No. It takes time for a law—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): We have to move on to questions and comments. The hon. member will be able to share more information in a bit.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which I enjoyed. He helped clarify what is going on with the flimsy arguments we have been hearing from the Conservatives all day. He talked about misinformation, especially when it comes to judges' obligations.

Does my colleague think judges are performing their duties justly and proportionately?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes, absolutely. I believe in our justice system. It is not perfect, but I believe in it. Judges are not normally appointed overnight. There is a series of steps. There is a selection process. These individuals have a great deal of experience. I have complete confidence in our system.

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I got to know my colleague from the Bloc quite well last year in Europe. However, I would like him to reread the motion. He made a statement that was factually incorrect when he said that our motion is calling for the complete repeal of Bill C-75. The motion does not state that. It states that we want to repeal those aspects that are allowing violent repeat offenders to get out there and commit additional violent crimes and murders.

My question is simple enough. Does the member agree the bail system does need reform and, as all the premiers have called for, including the premier of *la belle province*, we need that reform immediately and it needs to happen now?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to get that question from my colleague.

I would like to give an example. I did not have time to do so earlier. The incarceration rate of the United States is the sixth highest in the world. It incarcerates criminals in droves. It incarcerates 505 people per 100,000, compared to 85 per 100,000 in Canada. Are things better in the United States? Is there less violent crime than here in Quebec or in Canada? No, absolutely not. It is increasing.

Here is another example. There were 213 mass shootings in the first 145 days of 2022 in the United States. There are shootings in Canada, but we do not see numbers like that, even if you calculate it per capita.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the bail situation in this country does require examination. I think I speak for all my constituents in saying that we all believe that the protection of the public is paramount in these cases, but equally so is the presumption of innocence. When someone is charged with a crime in our legal system, we must assume they are innocent.

The current bail law says that a prosecutor can apply to have a person incarcerated prior to trial if they can establish that the person presents a threat to the public. I am wondering if my hon. colleague can tell us why that is not happening. If, as the Conservatives say, dangerous people are being let out on bail, why is it that prosecutors in this country are unable to demonstrate or persuade a court that those people should not be let out on bail?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, preventive detention exists. A person can be detained longer if a judge has sufficient grounds to do so. That exists.

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from Quebec said in his speech that Conservatives are not putting forward any data. I would ask him to reread the motion once again. There is some data put in there. One important fact is that of the 44 firearms-related homicides in the city of Toronto, 24 saw the person charged with the crime being out on a firearms-related bail, so that is a very significant fact. Also, Constable Pierzchala has been mentioned a few times.

Could the member comment on the lack of data? He was wrong on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, I am not questioning the numbers.

That said, we need to understand what is behind those numbers. We need to understand why bail was granted to people during trial or while awaiting trial. We need to allow time, but we need to see if there are reasonable grounds.

Business of Supply

When this happens, assessments are made by criminologists to determine whether an individual is dangerous.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the current Liberal government's soft-on-crime agenda that perpetuates a catch-and-release revolving door of repeat offenders, the brutal reality is that crime is up and Canadians are less safe.

I am grateful to Conservative MPs from every part of Canada who have always been and continue to be steadfast advocates for victims of crime, law-abiding innocent Canadians, and real measures to combat criminals and gangsters while reducing recidivism. I particularly want to recognize the work of the members for Fundy Royal and Kildonan—St. Paul for bringing forward this motion today.

Five years ago yesterday, I brought forward my private member's motion, Motion No. 167, which called on the Liberals to undertake a comprehensive assessment of factors related to skyrocketing rural crime, which had the highest spike in rural Alberta and was steadily increasing across Canada at the time, and to make it a priority in the House of Commons.

Over several months, thousands of Canadians expressed support for Motion No. 167, along with more than a hundred victims advocacy groups, rural crime watch associations and municipalities from all across Canada. Alberta Conservative MPs at the time were actively working with rural constituents, law enforcement and others to highlight growing rural crime and push for action. It was heartening when Motion No. 167 passed with unanimous support from all parties, and I truly believe there was concern and goodwill from all MPs at that time.

The motion was wide-ranging. It included important amendments that I accepted from the NDP, and pushed for a deep dive into several factors, including but not limited to rural crime rates and trends; existing RCMP and other policing resources and policies in rural, remote and indigenous communities, particularly in relation to population density, policing geographic area and staff shortages; partnerships with provincial, municipal and indigenous police forces; possible recommendations to improve rural crime prevention and to curb emerging crime rates; measures to increase the tactical and operational effectiveness of indigenous police forces; strategies and resources dedicated to the judicial and rehabilitation systems in rural areas; and improved support for victims of rural crime.

What followed was a drawn-out, disappointing and rude awakening. When the final report from the Liberal-dominated public safety committee was dragged out beyond the six-month timeline that the motion set for reporting on real action, to the point that I had to ask the Speaker to get the Liberal-dominated committee just to respond, it then resulted in a report that was three pages long and effectively punted total responsibility over to the provinces, suggesting those governments should simply spend more on emergency response services and dispatch centres.

I am mindful of this today as I listen to passionate Conservative colleagues from all over Canada talking about rising crime in their

communities: horrific acts of violence on transit in Canada's largest city, the murder of police officers just trying to do their jobs and keep their fellow Canadians safe, neighbourhoods in fear of all-too-regular gangster activity, and shootings with primarily illegally owned and trafficked guns from the U.S. in Canada's major cities from coast to coast. Of course, I think of my own constituents and those of other rural MPs facing record levels of ever more brazen and violent theft and robberies, trespassing, assaults and murders.

I think of the compassionate and serious work of colleagues like the MP for St. Albert—Edmonton and the courageous Shelly MacInnis Wynn, who brought forward Wynn's law specifically to close a loophole in bail hearings to mandate that an assailant's criminal history would be disclosed during a bail application, which may have prevented the murder of her husband, Constable David Wynn, who was killed by a career criminal out on bail. The majority of MPs initially supported it, but the Liberals ultimately defeated it.

I think of the “no body, no parole” initiative by the MP for Sturgeon River—Parkland, the “life means life” legislation by the MP for Calgary Signal Hill, the bill by the MP for Tobique—Mactaquac to initiate a national recidivism reduction strategy involving all the different organizations that worked to prevent repeat crime, or the constant pressure by the MP for Fundy Royal for the Liberals to appoint the victims ombudsman, an office they left empty with zero urgency for more than a year.

The common thing among all those MPs is that they are Conservatives, and there are too many to list for all the good work they have done to advance work to protect victims of crime and innocent Canadians.

However, this is the reality after eight years under the Liberals, and now unfortunately their coalition partners and boosters, the NDP: a 32% increase in violent crime across Canada and a shocking, but horribly not surprising, 92% increase in gang-related homicides across Canada.

What have the Liberals actually done? They have targeted, demonized and criminalized law-abiding firearms owners, hunters and sport shooters. They have reduced sentences and brought in house arrest for robbery, extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking, discharging firearms with intent, drive-by shootings, discharging firearms recklessly, using firearms in crimes, possession of illegal firearms or ammunition, possession of weapons obtained by crimes, and all kinds of serious assaults and violent offences.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

• (1725)

They considerably eased access to bail in Bill C-75, specifically saying that “primary consideration” should be given “to the release of the accused at the earliest reasonable opportunity”. When Conservatives say this is the wrong direction, the Liberals respond with false and vile accusations, bigotry, and close-mindedness, the usual approach they take to any Canadians who challenge them.

Just last month, all 13 premiers from all different regions and different partisan stripes asked for real urgent action to reform the broken bail system, which the Liberals created. The Liberals keep saying they want to work with everyone to make improvements, but it is hard not to notice that it is the system most recently impacted by their legislation that all their provincial counterparts are asking them to fix.

I am disheartened to say that, just like with inflation, driven by excessive spending, squeezing Canadians from all sides struggling to ends meet, I am not sure why anyone should trust the arsonists to put out the fire. I agree with colleagues today who have talked about how emotional this subject is. I am sure almost everyone has been touched in some way by crime.

What really matters is what elected representatives actually do. Both the results and the records of the last eight years of the Liberals are heartbreakingly clear that their actions speak so much louder than their words.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): It being 5:28 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

• (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, we would like to request a recorded division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Monday, February 6, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:43 p.m. so we can start Private Members' Business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]**GREENHOUSE GAS POLLUTION PRICING ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): There being no motions at report stage on this bill, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[*English*]

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I request that the motion be carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Ben Lobb moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it has been nice to see you up in the chair today, so congratulations on the good job you are doing up there.

I look forward to hearing the member for Regina—Lewvan in his speech later today. It will be interesting to hear his perspective from Saskatchewan, after me or later in the hour.

This private member's bill would amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act. What does it mean? Basically, there is an issue on farm today in the four backstop provinces. Really the issue is around natural gas and propane. Therefore, for farmers who have livestock in their barn, whether it be hogs, small chicks in a chicken operation, layer hens or turkeys, or whatever it is, wherever there needs to be heat to make the animals safe and healthy, we are asking for an amendment, through the bill, so that the carbon tax would be taken off. That is a pretty reasonable ask.

In addition to that, on farm at harvest time when farmers are taking their crops off, they need to be dried in a reasonable period of time and they need to be dried to a reasonable percentage of moisture. If they are using natural gas or propane to do that, which almost everybody is, we are asking that the carbon tax be taken off those bills. That is basically what we are asking for. In addition, for people growing food in a building, like on a mushroom farm or something like that, we are asking for the tax to be taken off as well. This is a basic principle, in my opinion. While I am thinking about it, if people are flaking corn to feed to their feedlot or such on farm, that would be another application.

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For some of these bills, somebody watching at home might think it is a couple of dollars here or a couple of dollars there. In actual fact, in some cases, the bills actually are quite substantial.

Before I get into this too far, I would also like to thank the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South. He presented a similar bill in the previous Parliament: Bill C-206. He did a nice job on that and so I am kind of taking over the reins in this Parliament on the bill. As well, I would like to thank our agriculture critic, the member of Parliament for Foothills; the agriculture committee; and parliamentarians across many different parties who have indicated their support for this bill.

Most people here, in light of events of the last year and even longer, recognize the importance of having food security in Canada be the number one priority or in the top five priorities. To me, it is unethical for a government to do anything that would put the food security of the country at a potential risk. Food security should be of the utmost importance. Fortunately, in Canada, we rarely see our store shelves other than full. However, during COVID time, we saw that store shelves were not always full and some of the fear that set in among our population when that happens. Therefore, anything that we can do to help farmers and reduce their costs; provide certainty in their industry, as much as it can be in farming; and enable them to deliver healthy, wholesome products to consumers should be on our minds at all times here in Parliament.

In addition to that, let us think about what takes place on a farm besides farming. Farmers are nature's stewards. Whether they have 100 acres or 5,000 acres, they are nature's stewards. They maintain the woodlots on their farms. They cherish those. They spend a lot of time in those to make sure the biodiversity is there and everything else is taken care of. In the fields and hills, whatever is the layout of their farm, they may do no-till drilling and they may do cover crops in the fall. They do ethical crop rotations throughout a normal cycle, meaning they could plant corn in one period of time and at a later period of time another crop in the basic rotation.

• (1735)

In Ontario, we have corn, beans, wheat and maybe a pasture for a while. This is what farmers do because they love farming. It is a multi-generational profession. It is a calling. If the farm is not healthy, if the soil is not healthy, the bottom line is not healthy. Farmers always realize this.

In addition to this, a number of years ago in a previous government, we also implemented changes to the regulations on diesel engines, for NOx and SOx. Even the combustion engines on farms today are a much cleaner version than their predecessors.

These are some important points I feel, in the debate that we are having today and we had in the previous Parliament, add some context to what we are doing.

I have heard this from some members of Parliament when talking about the rebate that was introduced in the fall statement a while ago, on the per \$1,000 rebate. It was \$1.47 and I believe in the next calendar year, it was \$1.73 per \$1,000. This is an important point to highlight the ineffectiveness of this rebate.

I will just give a brief overview. A friend of mine is a pork farmer and he sent me a bill over a year ago. I will just read it out to members. He has a sizable hog farm in the region. He sent me his heating bill for the period of November 30 to December 31, 2021. He is fortunate enough that his farm uses natural gas; it is an Enbridge bill. This is for the month of December.

The customer was charged delivery, admin fee, transportation by Enbridge, and gas supply charge for one month on one of his pig barns was just under \$8,500 before the carbon tax. The carbon tax on that bill was \$2,918. If we factor that into an \$8,400 bill for one month, that gives us an indication of the carbon tax that they were paying. We know that rate is increasing in 2023.

In addition to that, they also pay HST on that bill. They can get a rebate for that on their input tax credit, but depending on their filing, that rebate could be some time away.

Let us look at that bill of \$8,473 and the \$2,918 on the carbon tax. Remember earlier I said the rebate is \$1.47 per \$1,000 and moving up to \$1.73 per \$1,000. The rebate this farmer will receive on his allowable expenses is under \$15. If we think about it, it is per \$1,000. He has paid over \$2,900 on the carbon tax and he gets \$15 back.

He is not producing widgets. He is producing food that will go on the plates of Ontarians and Canadians from one coast to the other. That gives members an idea, because that will likely come up today, about the rebate. The rebate falls very short.

The other point I would like to mention, and I will give credit to my colleagues from the Bloc and NDP, because they made a comment, which is pretty straightforward, that there is no other option. We also understand this. There is no other viable option out there today.

To dry corn in the fall in a reasonable period of time, farmers need a fossil fuel. They need propane or natural gas. Solar is not going to do it. It would not do it and it certainly is not going to do it in the month of October. That is the reality. When the Bloc and NDP see it that way, that is a logical step for them to make and a logical point to make.

• (1740)

There are no viable options today to heat one's barn other than propane or natural gas. Maybe down the road there will be. There was a Liberal member of Parliament who talked about heat pumps. Well, it will not be today or tomorrow, but maybe some day way out in the future, that will be viable option.

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The other comment from the same member of Parliament was that maybe, if farmers insulated their barns better, it might help fix the problem. However, we are not talking about Old MacDonald's barn. These are, in most cases, modern-built barns, which obviously fit within the Canadian building code. In my province we have Ontario's building code, so obviously, snow load, insulation, etc. are all taken care of.

Thinking about some other way to heat one's barn is certainly a noble venture for the future. I think we could all support that. We can always look for ways to improve insulation, but let us be real. It is not like these barns are not insulated. Yes, if one goes to their grandpa's bank barn that was built in 1881, it may not have as much insulation, but that is not the case for the majority of barns, and certainly when we get into poultry and pork today, that is obviously not the case.

Another issue I take issue with, and most members of Parliament who represent rural ridings would see this as well, is that farmers are always asked to be the government's line of credit. What I mean is that, when we look at our business risk management programs, which include AgriStability and others, farmers pay their money to qualify to be in the program. They see how the year goes, make a submission with their accountant and then find out if they will get any money back with the agricultural stabilization program. However, that whole time, they are the government's line of credit.

In addition to that, with the HST that I mentioned before, if a farmer makes a large purchase, it could be holding tens of thousands of dollars of HST that farmer is owed. In some cases, it is for months, and in some cases that we have had in our office, it is close to a year. Therefore, there are issues that are kind of ongoing.

In the case of the Liberal's rebate program, we are once again asking farmers to be a line of credit, and I do not think that is fair. Agriculture is not an industry that has 70% gross margins. These are modest margins, so this is a way to help out.

Agriculture is the top economic driver in the province of Ontario, where I represent, and other members of Parliament who are here for their province, and it may be one, two or three, know that farmers are price-takers, not price-makers. There are world events that take place. There is the Midwest harvest, the harvest in Brazil, Chicago, ports, rails, conflicts in Ukraine and other places, and they all affect what happens down the country gravel roads in my riding and many others. These are the ways we can help them out.

Input prices are rising. It is incredible. I was at both cattle producers' AGMs in my riding, and it was amazing to hear what their input costs are, as well as interest rates. For anybody who carries an operating line of credit, it is staggering how much, in 12 to 15 months, this has changed their position.

If we think about it, people go to the grocery store every day and wonder how it could cost so much. Just something like this is a good indication of where inflation begins. Anything we can do to help consumers out and help farmers out, I think we should get behind in the House of Commons. In addition, as I said, there are no other options out there today. Any support we can have, I appreciate.

• (1745)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard the member talk at great length about supporting farmers. He said that any measures we are able to come up with we should do expeditiously to provide that support. However, I can not help but reflect on the fact that for Bill C-8, which was specifically intended for and helped 24,000 farmers throughout the country, the Conservative Party and this member put up roadblocks by bringing in various political games to avoid the passage of the bill, a bill that would directly impact and provide supports to farmers.

I am curious if the member can rectify the fact that, although he says it now, that was not what we saw when Bill C-8 was before us, which had support in it for 24,000 farmers.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, one of the best decisions this member has made was seeing the clock to private members' time today so I have to give him credit for that.

In regard to Bill C-8, the bill he is talking about, almost half of my speech talked about the critiques that were in that and that was to do with the rebate. The rebate falls short. I hate to say it. One can go to any farmer in any province and they will tell us that if one has \$1.73 or \$1.47 per \$1,000 allowable expenses and if one has half a million dollars or a million dollars in allowable expenses, how is a \$1,700 cheque going to help out? It does not help out at all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois does not like to weaken the carbon tax. Quebec has a carbon pricing law, but it does not apply to the agriculture sector. We understand the merits of this proposal because alternative measures are still very expensive for farmers. We need farmers as they provide an essential service. Food sovereignty is important.

However, if there were a reasonable alternative, we would be in favour of this carbon tax applying to farmers. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

• (1750)

[*English*]

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, that is a good point. I believe that is why we were quite open to having a sunset clause or a review clause after, I believe, eight years amended into the bill. That is good. There could be things that happen that make it practical, make it financially viable so, yes, that is a reality and that is a possibility down the road and that is why that amendment is in there now.

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Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think it is important to remember that when the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act was brought into force in 2018, even at that time the Liberal government recognized that there had to be important definitions for qualifying farming fuel for the activity of farming, for what eligible farming machinery was and what eligible farming activities were, so, even at that time, the Liberals recognized that special exemptions had to be carved out in the original act for agricultural activities.

I am wondering if the member for Huron—Bruce can comment on that and juxtapose that with the Liberals' opposition to this bill when, back in 2018, they recognized that these exemptions were actually important.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, it is a good point because, basically, we are just moving sentences around in the actual act itself.

If we think about what the member said, he is right. Diesel fuel is in there as an exemption. Gasoline is in there as an exemption on farm, in the recognition that we are making food here and we are producing food. This is one of the pillars of Canadian sovereignty and, believe me, folks, that is nothing to be messed around with.

If we have learned anything in the last year, it is that we have to support this industry. For farmers, we have to keep encouraging the youth to stay in the agricultural field and to continue to support innovation, research and agriculture.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to take part in today's third reading debate on private member's bill, Bill C-234.

As our government has made clear over the course of this debate, ensuring the strength of Canada's agricultural sector is of crucial importance. Canadian agriculture is a cornerstone of rural communities across the country. It feeds and sustains our urban centres and is fundamental to our overall economic performance. Our farmers also help feed the world.

I will tell us that this issue is very close to me personally. My father and mother both grew up on farms and I visited our family farm every summer.

The supply chain and inflationary aftershocks of the global COVID pandemic and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine have underscored the importance of ensuring that Canada's farmers remain competitive and that our agricultural production continues to grow.

Our government is delivering effective support to Canada's farmers to make that happen.

[Translation]

However, contrary to what is being proposed in Bill C-234, we are doing so in a way that does not negatively impact important objectives such as fighting climate change or ensuring that the tax system treats Canadians fairly and equitably.

[English]

An official from the Department of Finance explained how this will work in his testimony at committee stage of private member's Bill C-234. As he explained, the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act currently provides upfront relief from the fuel charged to farm-

ers for gasoline and diesel used in eligible farming machinery, such as farm trucks and tractors. He added that the GGPPA also provides relief of 80% of the fuel charged for natural gas and propane used to heat an eligible greenhouse.

He went on to explain that recognizing that many farmers use natural gas and propane in their operations, Bill C-8 introduced a refundable tax credit in order to return a portion of fuel charge proceeds to farm businesses operating in the backstop jurisdictions of Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta, starting with the 2021-22 fuel charge year. I would note that since this statement was made, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are being added to those backstop jurisdictions.

• (1755)

[Translation]

However, what the Department of Finance official said at the time still applies today. He said, and I quote:

Through the refundable tax credit, the total amount to be returned is generally equal to the estimated fuel charge proceeds from farm use of propane and natural gas in heating and drying activities in backstop provinces. This ensures that all the proceeds collected from this farming activity are returned to farmers. It is estimated that farmers will receive \$100 million in the first year, with this amount expected to increase as the price on carbon pollution rises.

He went on to say, and I quote:

In this manner, the credit aims to help farmers transition to lower-carbon ways of farming by providing support to farmers, while also maintaining the price signal to reduce emissions.

This is a different approach than that proposed in private member's Bill C-234. Bill C-234 would directly relieve fuel charges on natural gas and propane used in eligible farming activities and thus would completely remove the price signal intended by the carbon pricing regime.

[English]

As he concluded, if fuel charge relief for farmers was extended through Bill C-234, farmers in backstop jurisdictions would receive double the compensation by benefiting from the refundable tax credit included in Bill C-8, while also being almost fully relieved from the fuel charge. Such double compensation would come at the expense of households or other sectors in those provinces. This would not only be unfair to other taxpayers, but it would also undermine our efforts to address climate change, which itself is a grave threat to the viability of our agricultural sector and a key reason why we are taking action to address it.

Letting climate change run unchecked is simply not an option for our government. We know for a fact that farmers across the country are experiencing the impacts of climate change first-hand, like droughts and floods. It is hitting their bottom line, and to their great credit, they are taking action to address it. Farmers have been leading the adoption of climate-friendly practices, like precision agriculture technology and low-till techniques, which could help reduce emissions and save them both time and money.

Our government is taking action to support them. Our recent budget, for example, proposes to provide a further \$329.4 million in remaining amortization to triple the size of the agricultural clean technology program. It proposes \$150 million for a resilient agricultural landscape program to support carbon sequestration and adaptation and address other environmental co-benefits, with the details of this to be discussed and worked out with provinces and territories.

It also proposes to provide \$100 million over six years, starting in 2022-23, to the federal granting councils to support post-secondary research in developing technologies and crop varieties that would allow for net-zero emission agriculture, and it proposes to provide \$469.5 million over six years, with \$0.5 million in remaining amortization, starting in 2022-23, to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to expand the agricultural climate solutions program's on-farm climate action fund.

Moreover, the budget proposes renewing the Canadian agricultural partnership, which delivers a range of support programs for farmers and agriculture in partnership with both provincial and territorial governments.

Each year, these programs provide \$600 million to support agricultural innovation, sustainability, competitiveness and market development. This includes a comprehensive suite of business risk management programs to help Canadian farmers cope with volatile markets and disaster situations, delivering approximately \$2 billion of support on average per year. At the same time, as pointed out by the finance official at committee stage, Canada's agricultural sector already receives significant relief under the federal carbon pollution pricing system compared to other sectors.

These are the right ways to help farmers increase production while addressing climate change that threatens production.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Our pollution pricing system simply seeks to recognize that pollution has a price and to encourage cleaner growth and a more sustainable future. The federal government will not keep any direct proceeds from the federal carbon pollution pricing system. Under our plan, any proceeds from the carbon pollution pricing system are returned to the jurisdictions from which they were collected.

[*English*]

Our pollution pricing system is simply about recognizing that pollution has a cost and encouraging cleaner growth and a more sustainable future. Returning these proceeds helps Canadians make more environmentally sustainable consumption choices, but it does not change the incentive to pollute less. With this system, not just

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farmers but also consumers and businesses have a financial incentive to choose greener options every time they make a purchase or investment decision.

Canada has been a world leader in fighting climate change through pollution pricing. We should not do anything that would undermine this achievement, as Bill C-234 would, for the reasons I have set out here today.

I am thankful for the opportunity to make the government's position clear in this regard.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, this is my third time speaking to this bill or the previous version, which was practically identical. I took the time to reread my speeches to make sure I was being as consistent with myself as possible, because sometimes I am not consistent with others. While rereading my speeches, I realized that, when the previous version was before us, I was already fretting about election rumours that gave us reason to believe the bill would never be passed, even though it had achieved broad consensus.

People always talk about how expensive elections are. I often explain that to young people when I am giving presentations about politics. When they tell me the latest election cost \$130 million, I say that it actually cost a lot more because there are costs associated with our work as parliamentarians. We have to redo all the work on bills that died on the Order Paper because of the election. This bill is a prime example of that.

It costs farmers, who have had some tough years. The exemption for propane, which is pretty expensive, was extended for two years.

These are the same farmers who had to go through the propane crisis of 2019, when there was the strike at CN. These are the same farmers who had labour challenges during the pandemic. They had to wait a long time to get work permits for temporary foreign workers to finally arrive. Crops were lost. These are the same farmers who had supply issues during the pandemic. More recently, they have been burdened with additional fertilizer costs because of the war in Ukraine.

All of these problems could have been alleviated if this bill had been passed quickly, but no, an election had to be called so we could go back to square one. Again, all parties have exactly the same number of seats as when the election was called.

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There are these problems that could be described as situational, and this is in addition to the structural problems that farmers are experiencing. It is getting harder and harder to recruit the next generation of farmers. Parents are having to work longer and longer, without knowing who will take over the farm. It was really tough for children who wanted to take over the family farm, until just recently when we passed a bill that provides for a tax exemption for those children. The Deputy Prime Minister had to grant an extension.

On top of everything else, there is climate change. Farmers are increasingly affected by climate change. That is precisely what this bill is all about. The Bloc Québécois is generally not very supportive of bills that would erode the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, but we are not dogmatic about it.

With respect to the application of the carbon tax to farmers, we recognize that it would be fair to remove the carbon tax from certain fuels essential to crop and livestock production. This is because the alternatives are still very expensive or in the early stages of development.

The Bloc Québécois generally adheres to the principle of a fair environmental and ecological transition. That means that we recognize that it would be unfair to require that all of the effort be made at once by the primary victims of the energy sector crisis and the challenges associated with climate change. I am talking here about farmers.

In recent years, farmers have had to deal with rather unpredictable weather conditions, trade disruptions and volatile world prices. The carbon tax is adding insult to injury because it reduces the net income of farmers by approximately 12%. The passage of the bill now before us could therefore help farmers to save millions of dollars.

What would this bill do essentially? It would amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, commonly known as the carbon tax. The act currently provides for the general application of a fuel charge, which is paid to the government by the distributor on delivery. There are already exemptions set out in the legislation for farmers for qualifying fuels. A “qualifying farming fuel” is defined as “a type of fuel that is gasoline, light fuel oil or a prescribed type of fuel”.

• (1805)

What Bill C-234 proposes, on one hand, is to expand the definition of “eligible farming machinery” to include heating equipment, including for buildings that shelter animals. The definition of “eligible farming machinery” specifies the inclusion of grain dryers and we know that grain dryers operate primarily on propane. On the other hand, it expands the carbon tax exemption to products such as natural gas and propane, which we know are used in grain drying. In summary, two key farming activities are targeted: grain drying and building heating.

As we have already mentioned, we agree with this exemption being applied because farmers currently do not have any real alternative. There are plans for using biomass in heating and grain drying, but the technology is still in the early stages. It is expensive and does not apply to field crops and major cereal and grain production operations.

We could also consider the power grid, which at present is not really suitable as a realistic alternative. There would be so much pressure on the power grid that it would not be able to meet demand. We see that it takes several attempts with Hydro-Québec to get a grid that can adequately heat a small farm. Therefore, the transition cannot take place.

Generally speaking, the role of the carbon tax is to have a deterrent effect on the people who use it. However, what we have found is that it would have no such effect. Based on what representatives of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have told us, the agricultural sector's demand for fuel is not really affected by the price of fuel. Consequently, the tax would not be effective, because it is supposed to act as an incentive for changing energy behaviour and adopting clean technologies and energy. Therefore, if the carbon tax on agricultural fuels is not an incentive for change, the only thing it does is place another financial burden on farmers. In the view of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, having to use fossil fuels is an additional financial burden.

I mentioned that farmers are feeling the effects of climate change. During the propane crisis immediately following the election, I remember it well, I was with my father on a combine—I indirectly come from a farming community—and the snow had covered the crops. They remained stuck in the machinery. The grain was extremely humid because of the rather poor climate conditions. Farmers were having a hard enough time with the prices because there was a propane shortage as a result of a strike and we could truly see the impact of climate change on crop yields.

Committee members worked to improve the bill, and I appreciate that. I think the MPs who worked on the bill worked well together. One amendment comes to mind that was put forward by the NDP and agreed to. They wanted precise wording in the bill so the exemption would not apply to anything and everything. The NDP suggested amending the bill to ensure that the subject buildings would not simply be buildings located on a farm, which would have included a principal residence that ought not to be exempt from the carbon tax. The members clarified the wording, and it was unanimously agreed to. It made sense. MPs managed to ditch the dogmatism and work together.

As my colleague mentioned earlier, a sunset clause was added to the exemption, which was reduced from 10 years to eight years, so that there would be an incentive to change how we do things, to change production methods, to invest more in research and development in order to come up with alternative solutions. The aim was to ensure that we would not think, “Oh well, now there is an exemption, so there is no need to change how we do things.” We know that, at some point, the exemption will come to an end and all the necessary work will have had to have been done beforehand. There is a desire to ensure that the carbon tax will, at some point, be effective again, that it will be a deterrent to using fossil fuels. All of this was done in relative harmony between the parties, and I applaud that.

• (1810)

I hope that the timing is right and that another election will not be called, killing the bill yet again, much to the chagrin of farmers.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Huron—Bruce for getting Bill C-234 to this stage in the legislative process. It is important to underline we would not be at this stage if not for the co-operation and collaboration of all opposition parties. It kind of highlights how delightful it is to work in a minority Parliament when we can outnumber the government at times and control policy.

As the agriculture critic, and I have served now on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food since the beginning of 2018, I have to say that of all the standing committees of the House the agriculture committee absolutely, despite some of our policy differences, is a fantastic place to work. It comes from a recognition that ridings across Canada, this great country of ours, have farmers and agricultural activities represented by Liberals, Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois and by New Democrats. There is a desire at that committee to put aside some of our more confrontational aspects to work really on behalf of farmers and try to make sure we are presenting good policy on behalf of farmers.

The great theme we need to talk about of course is the threat climate change poses. Farmers will tell us right away they are on the front lines of the battle with climate change. They are the ones who have had to deal first-hand with irregular weather patterns, intense amounts of precipitation, wild forest fires and heat domes. I have often talked about my home province of British Columbia that, in 2021, in the space of three months went from a heat dome to an atmospheric river. The term “atmospheric river” is now part of our lingo, and no one ever really had experienced that kind of torrential downpour. It was particularly brutal in the Lower Mainland, in what it did for many farmers.

Farmers are absolutely trying their best and are going to be a key part of the solution, not only from the carbon sequestration or the different farming techniques they are employing but also just from the efficiencies that have been generated. If we look at the amount of fuel that is burned now to take off harvest from the land, our farmers have definitely been some of the leaders in taking up new technologies in trying to make their farms more efficient.

Private Members' Business

If we look at the volatile nature of prices for fossil fuels, it is absolutely in farmers' best interests to try to find alternatives to that. If we look at the very tight margins many of our farms operate by, they absolutely are trying everything they can to save money.

With Bill C-234, I have heard the arguments from the government against this bill. I understand concerns with any attempt to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act. I believe a price on pollution is important. It is important to try to get that innovation to alternative fuel sources. However, that only works if there is a viable alternative. What we have heard repeatedly at committee from members of the agricultural community is that when it comes to drying grain there currently are no commercially viable alternatives. That was said repeatedly and it was presented with evidence. Sure it might come in time, but at present there just simply is not an alternative.

I listened to the Liberals talk about their concerns. It is important to understand that, when they first brought in the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act in 2018, when they authored that act at a time of a majority government, they took the time to identify in the definitions what a qualifying farming fuel was. They took time to define the activity of farming, what eligible farming machinery was and what eligible farming activities were. They did that so in the bill, their original act, they could carve out exemptions for agricultural activities.

The Liberals, in 2018, realized that for certain agricultural activities exemptions needed to be carved out from the application of a price on pollution because there were no alternatives that were commercially viable. That is an important fact we need to remember within the context of our discussion on Bill C-234.

• (1815)

The agriculture committee had about 30 witnesses, and the overwhelming majority of witnesses who appeared before the committee were in favour of Bill C-234. Going back to the collaboration and co-operation of all opposition parties, I was glad to see some of my amendments pass. They were very helpful in narrowing the scope of the bill so that it applies specifically to buildings that have a verifiable agricultural purpose.

To send a signal to agricultural producers that this is a temporary measure, it was very important to have the sunset clause. The provisions of this bill would expire in eight years, and at that time, Parliament can take up the cause to review the state of the technology in the industry and decide whether further amendments are needed. It is very important to underline the fact that this bill is going to be in effect for eight years only. That, in itself, is an important price signal and is going to encourage the development of alternative forms of fuel and energy.

Private Members' Business

We did our due diligence at committee. Language was put into the bill. It was amended in a way that has tightened its scope, and it has an important sunset clause. I know from having spoken with many agricultural organizations that there is widespread support for this, and I am happy to continue my support for the bill. When we get to a vote, I will definitely be voting to send it off to the Senate. Hopefully the other place will make short work of it.

● (1820)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to get to my feet and second this bill from my friend from Huron—Bruce, Bill C-234, an act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act or, what we more commonly call it, the farming exemption for the carbon tax.

I was able to join the Standing Committee on Agriculture when this bill was working its way through the agriculture committee. I want to thank my colleagues on the agriculture committee, the NDP member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, the member for Beauce, our shadow minister and member for Foothills, the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex as well, and it feels like I am applying to be the next Speaker but I assure you that this is not the case, and a wonderful Bloc member as well.

I agree with my NDP colleague that the agriculture committee does work very well together. There were some amendments that were agreed to by all members. I would like to thank them for their contribution to making sure that this got passed. It is a bill that is very important to the agriculture committee across the country and very important to our people in Saskatchewan, Alberta and western Canada.

We have talked about what is involved when one is adding natural gas and propane as an exemption to this bill to power grain dryers, irrigation pumps and heating of barns for livestock.

The numbers actually have not been gone through as well as I would like. I would like to put some of the numbers on the record as to how much money we are actually putting back into the pockets of farmers, so that they can reinvest in their farm and invest in new technology, so that they can become more environmentally sustainable, because that is a goal for them. The better their land is looked after, the more land they can put into production, the more we can help with the global food crisis.

We have some numbers from APAS, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan. It calculated the carbon tax, at \$50 a tonne, will cost farmers between \$13,000 to \$17,000. That is an equivalent of a 12% decrease in net income.

One of the reasons why we want to get this bill passed as fast as we can is because, I do not know if members remember, in the recent election the Liberals promised that the carbon tax would never go over \$50 a tonne. Well, they blew through that promise. By 2030, the carbon tax is going to be \$170 a tonne. APAS said that at \$170 a tonne, they estimate that the carbon tax will cost a grain farmer \$12.52 per acre by 2030. Of that, \$4.44 will be specifically for grain drying. That is a lot of money back into the pockets of our producers.

I think that this is something that we can all agree is a very good thing when it comes to innovation in the agricultural sector.

Some more numbers have come through. The Canola Growers Association calculated that the carbon tax actually cost the industry \$52.1 million in 2022, at \$50 a tonne, which they said they would never raise or pass, which we all know now is not true, and the end goal will be \$277.9 million in 2030 at \$170 a tonne.

I think that this is something that we hear a lot from agricultural producers. My colleague from the NDP is very correct in saying that a lot of producers and a lot of groups that represent producers across our country came to the agriculture committee and said that this is something that is very important for their industry.

I am happy that the NDP and the Bloc and the Conservatives voted in favour of moving this bill forward but the Liberals did not. However, they have another chance to actually stand up for agriculture producers in this country on the vote at third reading.

My hope is that there are a few who show the courage of the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert in breaking ranks and will actually join us in supporting our agriculture producers, because it is what the industry wants.

In January 2022, the PBO updated a report on what the cost would be for Bill C-206, and by cost, I mean the savings that will go back into the farmers' pockets. It is a cumulative total of \$1.1 billion over a 10-year period.

● (1825)

Can members imagine the innovation and the inputs that money could be in farmers' pockets and back into innovation in the agriculture sector? I come from Saskatchewan, and we are big believers that a dollar in the pocket of someone who has earned that dollar is worth a lot more than a dollar in the pocket of the government.

We have seen all this innovation when it comes to soil health from our province. We have seen precision drilling. We have seen zero tillage, direct seeding and crop rotation. These are all things that were brought forward in our agriculture industry without a dime from government. It was private innovation, such as Seed Hawk, Bourgault, private companies that brought forward these innovations in the agriculture sector, that allowed us to maintain our soil health and to produce more, and that is something the world needs more of.

We say this in the chamber often, but time and time again we see the Liberal government try to hamstring our farmers in producing more of what the world needs. We talk about being a global supplier of food, but we are now talking about adding another carbon tax for farmers who are already struggling under the inputs they have.

My friend from Huron—Bruce was dead-on when he said that farms are like a carrying account where farmers put money into inputs and wait until the end of the year to see what they are going to get back from the AgriStability suite of programs. However, farmers cannot continue to carry those exorbitant input costs, such as fertilizer. The tariffs on fertilizer hit farmers a lot harder than they hit Russia, which got its money. The farmers had to pay more, because the supply was shortened.

When we talk about how we want to support, stand up and be there for our farmers, this is definitely a case where I would urge my Liberal colleagues to support this bill, because that would definitely be a demonstration of supporting our farmers and putting Canadian agriculture first. We do agriculture better than anyone else in the world, and we are proud of our farmers. We are proud of the hard work they put in.

I talked with the Minister of Agriculture at committee a couple of weeks ago, and she did not realize that 95% of Canadian farms are still family-owned and operated. Everyone has a picture of this big corporate farm in Canada now, because it is painted by the left, but it is not true. It is still Canadian families that run Canadian farms. Those are the people we are supporting with Bill C-234 today, and it is something that is very important for us to continue to do.

On the topic of the environment, I think the carbon tax has nothing to do with the environment; it is just a tax scheme. However, when we talk about agriculture and the environment, when we were able to present to the minister, we disagreed on the numbers. I told her that agriculture represents 8% of all the carbon emissions in Canada, but the minister said that figure was wrong and that it was 10%, which is as close as I have been to a Liberal on numbers in a long time, so I said, “All right, we’ll meet in the middle and say it is 9%.”

If it is 9% of our emissions, the average in the world when it comes to agriculture emissions in other countries and other jurisdictions is 25%. That is how much better our agriculture producers are doing when it comes to lowering their emissions than their competition. In trumpeting that and being proud of how well our agriculture producers are doing and will continue to do, we are now asking the Liberals to vote in favour of Bill C-234, because it is the right thing to do. It would allow our farmers and producers to have more money in their pockets to invest in more innovation on their farms to ensure that we have even better environmental standards than we already do, and they will do it better than government.

Do members know what the government might do with \$1.1 billion? I can guess that probably more of it would go to McKinsey & Company, their buddies and high-paid lobbyists. So why do we not put that money back into the farmers’ pockets? They are going to spend it a lot better than the Liberal government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. Unfortunately, I will have to cut him off at some point. The member has one minute.

• (1830)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

Adjournment Proceedings

Madam Speaker, I do not know how much I can cover in a minute, but I will say that I find it quite interesting that the Conservatives, through this bill, and I recognize it is a private member’s bill, have spent a great deal of time talking about the need to support farmers, yet when Bill C-8 was brought into the House, it took quite a while as a result of Conservative partisanship and Conservative games that were being played. That bill, in particular, helped 24,000 farmers throughout Canada. We talk about the need to assist our farmers throughout the country, but when push came to shove and there was an actual piece of government legislation before the House, it was actually Conservatives who were playing endless games in order to prevent the legislation from moving forward.

There is no doubt that farmers are on the front line of the climate crisis—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members’ Business is now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am here tonight to elaborate on something that is related to our opposition day motion today. It was a question I put to the government back in November about violent crime, Bill C-5 and the current Liberal government’s soft-on-crime approach, which is not doing anything to make Canada safer.

In particular, I talked about how violent crime has risen 32% since the Liberals formed government, which equates to over 124,000 more violent crimes since they have been in government. I talked about local headlines of people “arrested again” for participation in a criminal organization, failure to comply with a probation order, 11 counts of knowledge of possession of a firearm while prohibited, two counts of disobeying a court order and two counts of breaching a weapons prohibition.

I am going to provide more local statistics from my own riding, because this is a prevalent problem. We see the media coverage all the time in our urban centres, but this problem of repeat offenders committing crimes is pervasive right across Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

Here is something from December 16, 2022, in my riding: “Charges laid in drive-by shooting”. Charges included possession of a weapon for dangerous purpose, careless use of firearm, assault with a weapon and discharging a firearm with intent. The key point is possession of a firearm contrary to a probation order. This individual also faces an attempted murder charge after a shooting in my riding back in August.

Here is another one: “Man suffers fractured skull in Hanover hammer attack”. I know the Prime Minister likes to speak about banning assault weapons. Well, guess what. A hammer used in an assault is an assault weapon, and good luck trying to ban all the hammers in the country. I do not think that is going to achieve much for public safety either. This happened at a convenience store. There were seven different charges, including several counts of breaching probation.

I have another one here, just miles from my own farm. It required significant resources from our law enforcement in the local area. A 53-year-old woman and a 48-year-old man were each charged with countless drug trafficking issues. The woman was additionally charged with two counts of disobeying a court order and failure to comply with a probation order. The man was additionally charged with two counts of breach of a weapons prohibition.

The fourth example is of a man in my riding. He has 25 weapons charges, with 15 different counts of a restricted or prohibited firearm and two breaches of a firearms prohibition.

Finally, I have one more example that required multiple police units to be involved. A 40-year-old man, a 63-year-old woman and a 24-year-old woman all got drug charges, and one was in possession of a firearm contrary to a prohibition order.

What is the government's solution? It removed mandatory minimum sentences for repeat offenders, including 10 of the 12 that were introduced by two former Liberal prime ministers, Trudeau senior and Chrétien. I do not know what the Liberal government had so wrong back in those days, but now we have seen every premier in this country table a letter to the government demanding bail reform. We also have police groups calling for stricter rules against these violent repeat offenders.

When are the Liberals going to repeal portions of Bill C-75 and Bill C-5 and stop targeting law-abiding firearms owners, sport shooters and farmers?

• (1835)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my condolences to members of his community who have been impacted by gun violence. It would appear that gun-related crimes are a problem in the member's community and across Canada. Of course that is one of the reasons why we brought forward legislation to address that.

The federal government has taken a comprehensive approach to addressing a wide variety of factors related to gun and gang violence and other crimes. The government is continuing to make investments in the CBSA and the RCMP to strengthen border controls and to reduce the number of guns being smuggled by criminals across borders. These investments are working. Thanks to the

hard-working members of the RCMP and the CBSA, we have seen an increase in gun seizures and arrests at our borders and we expect this trend to continue.

We are also continuing to work with provinces, territories, municipalities and indigenous communities to develop gun and gang prevention and intervention initiatives.

Some have suggested that the government is not treating firearms crime seriously because Bill C-5 repealed the mandatory minimum penalties for some firearms offences. Repealing these MMPs does not change the fundamental principle of sentencing that directs courts to impose penalties that reflect the seriousness of the offence and the offender's degree of responsibility. Courts will continue to be bound by jurisdiction in this area and impose stiff denunciatory sentences where appropriate. At the same time, these changes will provide the courts with flexibility and in doing so will address the negative consequences associated with the rigid, one-size-fits-all sentencing laws that applied to offences that address a broad range of conduct.

I would further note that Bill C-5 did not alter the fact that MMPs continue to apply to gun crimes involving the use of restricted or prohibited firearms, like handguns or those for any firearm-related offences linked to organized crime. Serious crimes will be met with serious consequences.

Canada has a strong and effective criminal justice system, including its bail laws, but we know that things can always be improved. Canadians deserve to be safe and to feel safe. We all have a role to play in protecting our communities. I want to reassure Canadians that if someone poses a significant threat to public safety, the laws tell us that they should not be released on bail.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Minister of Justice, provinces and territories, and parliamentarians, including on the upcoming study at the justice committee.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, maybe we will try a different tack. That response sounded very similar to the last time I got up here and asked the parliamentary secretary about a very similar issue.

Adjournment Proceedings

We just spent the day debating the requirement for immediate bail reform. My question is to the parliamentary secretary. He stated earlier today, as has the minister, that he is committed to working with the premiers of all the provinces to address the needed bail reform in this country. Could he commit tonight to how quickly they are going to act on making these necessary changes to bail in Canada, and for once to start standing up and making this country safer versus, again, as I keep saying, bringing forth legislation like Bill C-21, which targets law-abiding Canadians, not going after criminals?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, our Minister of Justice has been committed to this for many years, and for the record, the work started many months ago.

This past Monday, we passed a motion at our justice and human rights committee to study this issue. We are committed to working with our provincial and territorial counterparts. I can assure the House and Canadians that our minister is seized with the matter and will work diligently with everyone involved, including the opposition to constructively address the issues of bail reform.

• (1840)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the debate this evening stems from a question I asked the Minister of Environment back in early December, just after the Wild Species 2022 report was released and just before the COP15 biodiversity summit was held in Montreal.

The Wild Species 2022 report covers the status of over 50,000 species across the country. It is the fifth in a series published every five years since the year 2000. That report found that over 2,000 of these species are at risk of being lost in Canada. Over 100 of the species are found only in Canada and are at risk of extinction.

Bird populations are collapsing at very worrisome rates in North America and now are over 30% below the levels they were 50 years ago. That represents a loss of about three billion birds.

This loss of biodiversity is a huge strike to our environment, our ecosystems and our food supply. I pointed out to the minister that the Liberals have made almost no progress on their promises to protect 30% of our natural lands by 2030. Right now only about 12% of Canada's land and water habitats are protected, and we rank 128th in the world in that regard, behind the United States, and well behind countries such as Australia and New Zealand.

I specifically asked whether the government will introduce a biodiversity accountability bill to make sure we reach those critical targets. I will say off the top that I am happy that the minister made a commitment to do this at COP15 in Montreal, but I would like to spend some time outlining why we need to do it and what we need to do.

First of all, we need accountability. We have seen the progress made since the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act. We need a similar legislative framework to make sure we are protecting our biodiversity. We need targets with plans to reach them. We have the basic targets for habitat protection, which are to preserve 30% of land and water by 2030. We need to flesh out those

targets because simply going for acreage would likely result in failure.

We cannot simply set aside large plots of rock and tundra. Large tracks of land are important, but that has to be balanced with protections for smaller areas that represent critical habitat for species at risk. Most of those species at risk are found in southern Canada in the areas where we live and work. These are the ecosystems that we have altered to build cities, grow crops and extract natural resources.

Some of the most endangered ecosystems are the Carolinian forest in southwestern Ontario, the tall grass Prairies of southern Manitoba, the Garry oak savannahs of southern Vancouver Island and, in my home habitat, the desert grasslands of the south Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. These ecosystems and others like them need special attention and must not be forgotten in the government's plans.

Canada has been a global leader in developing the concept of key biodiversity areas, and we should fully implement this program here as part of our biodiversity strategy. A biodiversity accountability act would clarify what ecosystem protection will look like and delineate a clear plan on how to get there. Of course, it must have robust accountability measures to make sure that successive governments are held accountable to reaching those targets.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his passion and commitment to conservation.

The world is facing an unprecedented biodiversity crisis. Canadians have a deep connection with nature and understand that protecting the environment is all about protecting our shared future. The Government of Canada is committed to continue leading efforts and strengthening partnerships to halt biodiversity loss and build a better, more prosperous and greener future for everyone. That is why Canada committed to conserve 25% of our lands and waters by 2025 and 30% of each by 2030, working to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 in Canada, achieve a full recovery for nature by 2050 and championing this goal internationally.

This is an ambitious goal. Currently, Canada has conserved just over 13% of our lands and inland waters. Important investments are setting the stage to meet the 25% by 2025 domestic target and support efforts to achieve 30% protection by 2030. In Canada, working with partners is essential as land available for conservation and protection are under diverse jurisdictions.

Adjournment Proceedings

As the national government in a federation, we have always said that we would do things in a collaborative manner. Through a number of governance bodies, we have jointly developed pan-Canadian guidance that is supported by all jurisdictions. We are working with a number of jurisdictions to advance bilateral nature agreements. These are another way to work with our provincial and territorial partners on shared objectives and outcomes. While our progress on the 30% target may not be as fast as we would like, we are proud of the deliberate and collaborative approach that has brought us to this stage.

Canada also took a strong international leadership role on the development of an ambitious new global biodiversity framework that was finalized at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity's 15th Conference of the Parties in Montreal in December. It was a proud moment for our country. The global biodiversity framework will provide a collective road map toward halting and reversing biodiversity loss and the degradation of nature and ecosystems around the world.

To the hon. member's point, we understand that some non-governmental organizations have proposed a national biodiversity act to create an accountability law similar to the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act. We will work with our conservation partners and others to implement this new global biodiversity framework and explore all potential tools that will help us to meet our nature objectives, including potential new legislative tools.

Protecting biodiversity must also be done hand in hand with indigenous peoples. Recognizing the importance of reconciliation and the role played by indigenous leaders and partners in conservation, we have an opportunity to work collaboratively to further support indigenous-led conservation efforts.

• (1845)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I have outlined what we need to do to meet the challenge of biodiversity loss in Canada. We do need legislation that has a process to set meaningful targets, a real plan on how we are going to meet those targets and public, transparent accountability measures to make sure we succeed.

The plans for biodiversity protection must include a variety of habitat management models that include measures to protect wide-ranging species, such as caribou, as well as specific sites for other vulnerable species. This will all involve partnerships with indigenous peoples, non-government organizations and, of course, the provinces that control most of the public lands in Canada, but we must succeed. The health of the environment we live in, the environments that provide us with clean air, clean water and rich soils to grow our crops rely ultimately on a rich array of species.

Canada said the right things in Montreal when the world was watching and now we must turn those words into bold action to maintain a livable world for future generations.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, we do have a plan. We are working with that plan. Since 2015, we have been getting results. Canada has increased its conserved terrestrial areas by more than 2%, an area roughly the size of Italy. Canada has conserved or protected just over 13% of our lands and inland waters.

On the marine side, Canada has conserved 14% of our marine and coastal areas, up from less than 1% in 2015. The 2022 update to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database will be available in March 2023.

We need to do this, as the hon. member said, in partnership with indigenous peoples and communities. Achieving our biodiversity goals will require a whole-of-government approach and a whole society approach.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:50 p.m.)

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