



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Official Report
(Hansard)

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Thursday, November 30, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 30, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to three petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Health entitled “Strengthening the Oversight of Breast Implants”, which we hope will bring some hope to those women who have been the victims of adverse effects of breast implants.

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

[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Wednesday, November 1, be concurred in.

I am very pleased to have occasion to bring this important matter to the floor of the House of Commons, because there is an important decision pending for the Minister of Finance, which is whether to approve the RBC-*HSBC* merger. What we are debating today is a very concrete and simple recommendation of the finance committee of the House of Commons in its 12th report to the House. It was very clear that a majority of finance committee members do not support that merger going ahead.

There are at least a couple of main reasons why New Democrats are concerned about this merger going ahead. The first is that, as we know, right now Canadians are living through very difficult circumstances. Their household budgets are under severe stress because of rising interest rates and because of the rising costs of all sorts of necessities of life, whether that is housing, home heating or groceries. Every little thing right now means a lot to Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet.

We know that even before the pandemic, something like half of Canadian households were only \$200 away from insolvency at the end of the month, and that has only gotten harder. We see the effects in our communities, whether that is the longer and longer lines at food banks for people struggling to feed their families or the fact that more and more folks are homeless and living on the street. I just had the opportunity to travel with the finance committee to many different cities across the country, and that was a common theme, no matter whether we were on the east coast or the west coast. There are tons of folks right now who are no longer housed, and the problem of homelessness is increasingly visible as more and more Canadians cannot make their rent payment at the end of the month or cannot make their mortgage payment and have nowhere to go.

Indeed, some Canadians who are gainfully employed cannot find a place to live that they can afford. It is no longer the case that it is just folks who are not able to get a job or who have a disability and are not able to work who are finding themselves homeless. We are also hearing from folks who do have a reasonable monthly income, what would have been considered reasonable just a few years ago, that they cannot afford a place to live. They have to figure out how to work a full day and go back somewhere to a tent or a spot they found under a building with a bit of shelter, feed themselves, go to sleep, wake up and look presentable in the morning to go back to work, which is certainly a real challenge and not one that I would wish on anyone. That is why we need a government that is going to act with a much stronger sense of urgency in respect of the housing crisis.

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One of the other things Canadians have struggled with for a long time is the fees that banks impose to do business at their institutions: to hold deposits and write cheques, or, more and more, to withdraw from ATMs and do e-transfers. We know that in Canada, Canadians pay high fees for that. One of the reasons they pay high fees is that we do not have a competitive banking sector in Canada. We pretty much have five big banks with over 90% market share when it comes to banking in Canada. Think about that. That is not a lot of players in the market. In economics they call that an oligopoly, and while it may not be an oligopoly on paper, it is certainly an oligopoly in practice.

Now what we have is one of Canada's largest banks, RBC, proposing to eat up the seventh-largest bank in Canada. The difference between those two banks is considerable. HSBC is not a huge player, but it is a scrappy player. If we were to look up mortgage rates right now, I think it is offering mortgages at over 70 basis points lower than what RBC is offering them at. Historically, HSBC has offered mortgage rates that are considerably lower than those at RBC.

• (1010)

The government, in the fall economic statement, rightly announced something the New Democrats have been calling for: Folks with insured mortgages will be able to shop around and transfer their mortgage without having to undergo the stress test again. This is exactly the kind of move that Canadians would be looking to make. If they have a mortgage with RBC, they may well want to go to an institution like HSBC that is offering over half a percentage less in the rate for a mortgage. Clearing the way so they would not have to do a stress test is important, but it is not going to matter if HSBC gets gobbled up by RBC and then offers the same rate as RBC. That means Canadians will have won the right to transfer without having to undergo the stress test, but would no longer have somewhere to transfer to that is offering a better rate.

That is why New Democrats think it is important that the government say no to this merger to preserve one of the few players not in the big five in Canada, particularly when they have a track record of exactly the kind of effect we would hope to get from competition, which is competitive pricing on mortgage rates and other services. We know the big five have been relatively unchallenged, and Transcona went through this since I was elected. The TD branch on the corner of Regent and Bond shut down. There are not a lot of bank branches in my community anymore.

Thankfully, Manitoba has a strong credit union movement that I am very proud of. I am a proud member of a couple of credit unions. There are many in Manitoba. I know a former board member of one of those credit unions is in the House today. It is a wonderful thing. It is really only because of the credit unions in Manitoba that we continue to have local branch banking available in my community. The big banks have all but fled in an attempt to reduce costs. That leaves consumers wanting the kind of traditional relationship they had at a local branch, but they are unable to get it. Why is it that the big banks can get away with that? It is because they do not have sufficient competition.

As I said, I am glad I live in a province where the credit union movement is filling an important void with respect to banking ser-

VICES. I am also glad to say that I get my banking services at a credit union. That was in jeopardy not that long ago when the government was looking at changing the Bank Act to outlaw talking about banking at credit unions. I am glad that common sense prevailed and people can say they bank at a credit union. The banks did not get their way on that, just as I hope that the big banks are not going to get their way with this merger, because competition will provide lower rates for Canadians.

I do not want to mislead anyone. It is not that HSBC is some kind of second environmental coming or something, but it was the first bank to offer green bonds. It has made some pretty serious commitments and backed them up with investment plans to lower the emissions profile of its investments. That is exactly the kind of thing we need to start seeing in the financial sector if Canada is going to meet the legal climate commitments we have signed on to in the Paris Agreement and elsewhere.

RBC, on the other hand, is the bank that does the most fossil fuel-heavy investment in Canada today. It is an important player, for instance, in the government's TMX project and put up a lot of capital for that. It is very invested in growing fossil fuel infrastructure in Canada, despite the fact that the oil and gas sector in Canada is extracting more barrels of oil today than at any other point in our history, which is easy to forget in the kinds of debates we have about the oil and gas sector on the floor of this place.

For those who say that the industry is in distress or on the verge of extinction, let us take a deep breath and look at the facts. The fact is that the oil and gas industry in Canada is more prolific today than at any other point in our history. That does not necessarily mean that it is employing more people than it has ever employed, because as technology advances, jobs for workers and the profitability and productivity of the oil and gas industry are on separate paths.

• (1015)

The truth is that oil and gas companies are able to extract more and make more money than ever with fewer workers. The continued advancement and increase in extraction are no longer tied in the same way they used to be to the creation of jobs for people in Canada, which is not to say that there are not a lot of jobs in the oil and gas sector or that this is not important. It is to say that we need to find the right level of extraction that is sustainable for the planet and that provides a strong economic basis for Alberta and other parts of the country where that industry is really important.

All of that is to say that RBC is being driven to grow and grow, with no sense of sustainability or what would be a sustainable rate of extraction. Therefore, both on the environmental front and on the consumer protection front, there are strong reasons to oppose this merger. It is why opposition parties on the finance committee sent a very clear message by working together that this was not a good idea.

I do not know that the Conservatives would endorse some of the environmental concerns I have raised on the floor today. I wish they would. I think Canada would be a better place if we could talk more about these issues in a serious way and about how to get Canada's emissions under control. I know that is not a conversation we want to have, but I am glad we can at least agree on the need for more competition and financial services and what that would mean for Canadians. It is an important signal the government should not ignore that so many parties in this place, for their own reasons, do not think this merger is a good idea.

We are going to hear at some point from Conservatives on this matter, and Canadians should take what they have to say with a grain of salt. They talk a lot about the Competition Bureau these days and the importance of competitiveness. Of course, this merger was looked at by the Competition Bureau, but not under the new framework that is on its way both through Bill C-56, which just passed in committee last night and is going to make some important changes to the Competition Act, and through, if we look at the ways and means motion, the budget implementation act the government will be tabling presumably after a vote on the ways and means motion. More changes to the Competition Act are coming there.

● (1020)

This merger was not reviewed with any of the new powers that would be afforded to the Competition Bureau. It was reviewed under a regime at the Competition Bureau that even the federal government itself recognizes as being deficient.

We know in the past that, for instance, Conservatives have talked about wanting to have independent officers doing work without political interference. I have certainly heard that at committee. I am glad to hear that, but I remember them setting up the Parliamentary Budget Office under Stephen Harper in the early days. It was a good thing they did that when they did.

Then the Parliamentary Budget Officer started saying things they did not like, and shockingly, the campaign of character assassination began. Kevin Page, who was the Parliamentary Budget Officer, came under direct attack by the Harper government. It was not that great an outing for the Harper government after all. Conservatives did the right thing initially, but they could not stay the course because they cannot stand any criticism and react badly as soon as someone starts calling them out for things they would prefer to get away with.

Canadians should be taking some of the remarks the Conservatives are making today as an opposition party with a grain of salt when it comes to their desire for an independent Competition Bureau. I certainly hope that in the future, if we have a Conservative government, we will not see that government decide to attack the competition commissioner if he starts telling them things they do not want to hear. The whole point of having those independent offices is to be able to do that.

We saw it again with David Johnston, who is someone they held up at one point. They held him up to the point that they were willing to appoint him as Governor General of the country. Then, when he started saying and doing things they did not like, a campaign of character assassination began. That was unfortunate because it detracted from the important point, which was that, when it came to

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being a special rapporteur on foreign interference, that was not the right way to proceed. Making it about David Johnston detracted from the important point, which was that it was a bad process and what we really needed was a public inquiry.

I am proud to say that New Democrats stayed the course and finally put that process on track. I do not think the personal attacks against David Johnston were helpful in that regard because they detracted from the main issue. Conservatives were so concerned with attacking David Johnston that it took them a long time to work with us in the right way to get that process back on track.

This is just another example of Conservatives claiming they want certain people in positions of authority to be able to make pronouncements on what the government of the day is doing, but then as soon as those pronouncements are not in line with their partisan lines, all of a sudden it is a problem and an affront to democracy, and the character assassination begins.

It is important we take this moment when Conservatives are prepared to do the right thing. Those moments are few and far between. We should not waste the opportunity. The government itself should be listening and taking the opportunity to do the right thing and say no to a merger that would both set the private financial sector back in green financing, potentially, and maintain and reinforce the lack of competition that Canadians have already been suffering under for too long. They have had to pay some of the highest banking fees, even as those same banks reduce services in their communities and close local branches.

Those are some of the reasons we think it is really important that the government take this opportunity and not do what it did on the Rogers-Shaw deal, which was to ultimately cave to those big corporate interests. We talk a lot in here, rightly, about corporate-controlled Conservatives, but we should not forget that the Liberals do their fair share of corporate service here in this place. After all, that is the true coalition in Parliament: Liberals and Conservatives serving Canada's corporate sector.

We have a real opportunity here, one of those few and far between moments, when the Conservatives are prepared to do the right thing in opposition. Let us seize the day. With the Rogers-Shaw merger, and the minister likes to say he put conditions on it and everything else, some of the things we would expect to happen did happen.

Somebody from B.C. called me up and said that he had been a Shaw customer. When the merger happened, Rogers sent him a new SIM card, and he had to figure out how to put it in his phone and everything else. He had not done it yet. It took him a couple of months, as household administration sometimes does, and I am sure there are many Canadians listening who are sympathetic to the fact that sometimes it is hard to stay on top of all those things, particularly if there is a technological component one is not familiar with.

Routine Proceedings

What happened is that, with this merger that was not going to have any negative consequences for Canadian consumers, he started getting a bill from Shaw because he had not changed the SIM card yet, and he was getting a bill from Rogers. He was getting two bills from the same company for one cellphone, if members can believe that. Unfortunately, I can because I know what it is like to deal with some of these big telecom companies and other corporate oligopolies, whatever the sector. The fact is that it is very hard to get justice as a consumer.

That has been true for Canadians in respect of the big five banks, and this merger is not going to help. It is going to take a smaller player out of the market that is doing its work to be scrappy and to offer competitive rates. That is not what Canadians need, especially not in a time of economic and financial strain.

What they need is more competition to be able to deliver lower prices and take a bit of that strain off their household budget, just as the government is bringing in new rules to make it easier to transfer one's mortgage. When one's term is up is not the time to take competitors out of the market that are offering lower rates. HSBC is one of those very banks, with its lower offering, that Canadians will be looking to in order to save money in their monthly household budget. Let us make sure those options are there, just as Canadians get the freedom to transfer their mortgage, without having to undergo another stress test.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian banking system is sound, stable and free from political interference. It has served Canadians well through the 2008 great recession and during the COVID recession as well. Why do members opposite continue to politicize a pillar of our economy?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, of course most companies in an oligopoly are sound and secure. That is kind of the point, is it not? They have the market power to ensure that their own business is sound and secure. The problem is they are doing that on the backs of Canadian consumers.

We want to see more competition in the financial sector so Canadians do not have to pay for the soundness, security and peace of mind of bank CEOs. We think that is backward. We also think it is the job of this place to ensure that Canadians' interests are put first, not the interests of wealthy bankers. That is why we continue to say it is important to not approve the merger and keep a scrappy smaller player in the market to provide more competitive pricing to Canadians.

• (1025)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the Conservatives and the NDP, surprisingly, agree that competition is broken in Canada. We certainly, at the finance committee, agreed that the HSBC-RBC merger is a product of that broken system. There are broken laws that we have to fix. Everyone has brought new laws in.

The biggest thing that would change banking in Canada would be consumer-led banking or open banking. Does the member agree with the bill I have brought forward, that this party has brought forward, which would push the government to bring competition to

Canada? That means consumer-led banking, with many different fintechs, would compete and lower the price of banking for Canadians.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I do support open banking. I think that is really important. For folks watching at home who may not be familiar with the term, open banking just means that one should own one's financial data.

When one is banking with an institution, it should not be able to say that one cannot take this information and share it with another institution. That is one's information. It is one's finances. It is one's money. If one wants another institution to know the facts about one's account, the current financial institution that one banks with should have an obligation to share that without a bunch of silly business or putting up walls or making it difficult for one to shop around and get a better price.

As I say, we believe that there is not enough competition in the financial sector today and that Canadian consumers are paying a serious price for that. That needs to change. That is why we oppose the HSBC-RBC merger. It is why we support open banking.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a little earlier this year, The Canadian Press reported the following:

According to a report, Royal Bank of Canada was the biggest fossil fuel financier in the world last year after providing over \$42 billion U.S. in funding in 2022, \$3 billion U.S. more than in 2021.

Of that amount, \$4.8 billion went to the oil sands and \$7.4 billion went to hydraulic fracking extraction.

According to the same report, since the Paris climate agreement was adopted in 2016, RBC has provided over \$253.98 billion U.S. in funding to fossil fuel companies.

I am wondering about the climate accountability of these big banks. Does the Government of Canada not also have a responsibility to legislate to force these banks to phase out their investments in fossil fuels and instead encourage investments in clean energy?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

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I think that one very important point raised by this acquisition relates to the environment. Clearly, RBC's strategy is based on endlessly increasing its investments in industries that produce greenhouse gases. I think that is one of the major issues the government needs to consider when deciding whether to approve this acquisition.

We need a clear green taxonomy for the financial industry and for institutions that truly want to start greening their portfolios beyond mere greenwashing. The government has a role to play in encouraging institutions to make green investments like HSBC does.

We do not want to see an institution like this gobbled up by one like RBC, which is clearly intent on increasing the greenhouse gases in its portfolio.

• (1030)

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask if the member could expand on corporate greed and what really underlies these decisions to amalgamate and buy out competitors. Could the member for Elmwood—Transcona explain how this hurts consumers?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, one of the important issues at play in changes to the Competition Act, for example, if we look at the private member's bill of the NDP leader, the member for Burnaby South, is the question of killer acquisitions, which is when companies buy up smaller competitors before they get the market share to become competitors to the bigger players in the industry.

We have a bank that is quite small compared to the big five, but it has shown that it is willing to price its products competitively, and Canadians can benefit from that if they so choose. They are going to have a better opportunity to benefit from that after new rules come in not requiring them to take a stress test when they transfer their mortgage. That will not help very much if the smaller player that is offering better rates disappears between now and when those measures come into effect.

Absolutely, corporations, in the name of gathering up market shares and making bigger profits, do try to acquire and shut down smaller competitors that are undermining what otherwise is a pretty comfortable pricing environment for those bigger players. It is something that is not in the interests of Canadians. It is in the interests of those larger companies, which already have dominance within their market, and it is something that, as legislators for the public interest, we should be concerned about stopping, not encouraging.

• (1035)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that really concerns people in my riding is the disappearance of financial institutions in neighbourhoods where it is not seen as being financially convenient for them to be in that big business market. One of the things we had been pushing for is postal banking. The government did start it, but not successfully. Even though it was successful on the ground, it seems the government has abandoned that pilot project.

How can that also help, with just credit unions providing an alternative for people to have more power over their banking situation?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, it is certainly a concern for folks in my riding as they have watched bank branches close and access to financial services get more difficult for those who care to do it in person. There are still a lot of people in Canada who want to have a direct face-to-face relationship with the people who are in charge of their savings.

Postal banking would be a great way to do this. As I said, I am very proud of the credit union movement in Manitoba. I think it has showed that, if smaller financial institutions, such as credit unions, can have brick and mortar branches in our communities, sometimes more than one for the same credit union, it is certainly possible for the larger banks to do it, but it is something that should not fall through the cracks.

I think that, through the infrastructure of Canada Post, we have an excellent opportunity to make sure that banking services are available in every community, in addition to whatever the private financial market, through credit unions, banks or others, would provide.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the NDP's support on our motion.

Will the NDP join us in delivering more than just words and, in fact, deliver action in voting non-confidence if the government allow this merger?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I would gently remind the member that we are actually debating my motion of concurrence today. I was very glad that they brought the issue forward at the finance committee with my support. I think that shows that it really is an act of true collaboration.

As for confidence votes, we will take those as they come. As long as the government continues to deliver on the CASA commitments, we will continue this Parliament.

We are certainly in the midst of some important negotiations on pharmacare. That is an issue that we think is election worthy. I am not sure that having a corporate-controlled Conservative government is the answer for Canadians if these guys are willing to approve the merger.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am committed to giving a short speech today.

On that note, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that it be carried on division.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, we would request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1115)

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

(Division No. 462)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier

Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Noormohamed
O'Regan
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
O'Connell
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
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NAYS

Members

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Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreesen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garon
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genius	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Khanna
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie

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Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Majumdar
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Mtuys	Nater
Normandin	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shipley
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Tolmie	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
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Wagh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
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PAIRED

Members

Deltell	Fast
Guilbeault	Joly
Lalonde	Ng
Tochor	Trudel— 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, the app did not provide any photo for the member for Drummond. Would you check into that please?

The Deputy Speaker: The issue was resolved on the screen at the last minute. I thank the hon. member for raising this matter.

• (1120)

[*English*]

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC) moved:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology that, during its consideration of Bill C-27, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, the committee be granted the power to divide the bill into two pieces of legislation:

(a) Bill C-27A, an Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, and an Act to enact the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act, containing Part 1, Part 2, and the schedule, to section 2; and

(b) Bill C-27B, an Act to enact the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act, containing Part 3.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed that we are not talking about housing, and about RBC and HSBC, in the House today. After eight years, this country is in the worst housing crisis we have ever had. We just have to talk to any constituent to see exactly what is happening.

Before I get into that, I want to mention that I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

When we talk about housing, it is absolute ludicrous that there are families right now that cannot afford the mortgage they do have, if they are so lucky to have a home, and also that those who are renting are finding that rents have doubled. We are hearing, across all of our communities, that homelessness has doubled. I met with the police chief and the mayor from my city last week, and we talked about detox centres. It is not only a housing crisis that has put people on the street; it is also a major drug, mental health and addictions crisis that is putting people into precarious situations. Oftentimes things are out of control and they cannot handle it. We had 66 overdoses in one week in Belleville, Ontario. It is just out of hand.

Housing should be announced as a crisis in this country. At the end of the day, after four years of talking, and after eight years, housing is in such dire straits. Of course, we look to competition to be the answer for that. Every single government has brought that forward and talked about competition. However, it has really been just drip, drip, drip. There has been one little policy or one little change, but no major competition. For the most part, it would bring in consumer-led banking, which would mean that many companies, fintech companies, could provide different options for consumers. The second part of that would be to ensure that we really look at stopping major bad deals that have happened under the existing Competition Act.

The speed of competition is really bad right now. There are major oligopolies in the banking sector. Six companies have 93% of all of the banking and 87% of all of the mortgages in Canada. The HSBC rates right now are 81 basis points lower than the RBC rates. This morning, HSBC is at 6.14% for a five-year variable mortgage rate, versus RBC at 6.95%. We can see what that means for competition.

The Competition Bureau is really a policing agency that is not supposed to prosecute but is supposed to look at competition in terms of a law enforcement society. We have all watched *Law and Order*. I don't remember their names, but the two detectives are supposed to bring the culprits in, and then, of course, there is the judicial system to tackle that.

The speed for competition law is about 100 kilometres an hour, when competition in housing should be a school zone; the speed should be 15 to 20 kilometres an hour so we look at slowing things down, blocking mergers such as HSBC's being bought by RBC, which would become the biggest bank in Canada by buying the seventh-biggest bank.

Routine Proceedings

My bill, the consumer-led banking bill, if it were to push the government to bring legislation to the House, would ensure that we change one thing in the Banking Act: to ensure that people's personal data, which should be theirs, could be shared, with their consent, with other banking institutions. Doing so would create real, meaningful competition in the banking sector.

That is exactly what we are looking at with Bill C-27. Bill C-27 is about protecting data. It is looking at personal data for Canadians. I have spoken extensively about that in the House, about how our children's data is not protected right now. All of our children, at one point, have an iPad or an Amazon firestick, or they are on personal phones. Right now, data protection is so bad in Canada that all of that data can be scraped, and it is owned by companies, not by the children. It is sold to other companies.

Of course, we have not talked about the Privacy Act in Canada's not having been updated since 1987, way before the iPod. It was way before the time when we had technology and the Internet, as explosive as it is, which puts our children's data at risk.

• (1125)

However, the government, in its speed, in not adhering to speed signs, has sometimes been talking and making announcements as quickly as it can, and certainly not bringing action forward as quickly as it can. It has taken a year for the government to put Bill C-27, after its introduction in the House, into committee where it is now. The biggest problem with the legislation and the out-of-control speed of the government on announcements and on talking, not speed of action, was that the Liberals combined an AI bill with Bill C-27. The minister at the time said that this was because it was what the Liberals needed to do and that we would be the first jurisdiction across the world to do it. However, they were so speedy in announcing that they were doing it instead of doing it. They did not even do public consultation. We had no chance for public consultation when the AIDA was thrown into the act as the third section of Bill C-27.

So far, we have had about nine or 10 committee meetings about Bill C-27. Every witness so far has basically said that the AIDA, the third section of the act, is terrible and it is weak. The bill would not do the things we need to do, because we did not have public consultation and did not look really prudently at legislation that should have had public consultation and public input that would have listened to the industry.

AI in Canada is pretty scary because it is evolving quicker than we can look at it. It is not scary enough to say that we need to put in placeholder legislation and do something that is above that and different. No, it is scary enough that we have to do it right, which means that we slow it down. Just through testimony so far and because of the importance of the issue and how bad AIDA is, combined with the bill, we see that it will delay the better part of the bill, the first two parts of Bill C-27. The first two parts deal with updating privacy and the digital charter, but also with the tribunal.

The tribunal, which is still up for discussion, is taking from the Competition Act a process by which, if a privacy commissioner made a ruling or recommendation against an individual or against a corporation, at the end of the day, that tribunal would allow the option for an individual to have a second reading. The problem is that

the tribunal in the Competition Act is not all that great either, which we saw with the Rogers and Shaw merger. The Competition Tribunal was utilized to review a merger of Rogers and Shaw, which was rejected by the Competition Bureau. The make-up of the Competition Tribunal is supposed to be three experts in privacy law, only three, so there is a lot of debate on that.

The first two parts of the bill are so complex. The third part throws the whole bill into a spin. The recommendation we are making is one we have made before. However, after hearing testimony in committee, we have recommended to separate the third part of the bill, which really needs to be scrapped because it is so weak. The recommendation about the bill would be to make it a separate vote. Probably the biggest argument for this is that it could save the first two parts of the bill, because we do need to update privacy legislation.

With respect to the most important part, which is owning one's data, I am going to go back to why that is so important with competition in banking. Right now, the only way to get people's credit-card and banking-statement data, which is theirs, is a method called "screen scraping", which means that people give their safe word to another institution so they can go into their bank account and see their information. This is wrong. The U.K. and Australia have outlawed that because it is absolutely wrong, but it is a practice we allow in Canada. Consumer-led banking would ensure that people own their data, and, on their consent, they move that data to new competitors. New competitors could then bank them and provide better service, lower cost and more competition in Canada.

We have to separate the third part of the bill. AI is extremely scary. It is extremely important. I know that the next speaker is going to speak very profoundly on that. She is an expert on it.

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• (1130)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members who were listening to my colleague across the way's comments would hear possibly a bit of hypocrisy. When we think about it, the last time we had six major grocery giants in Canada, one of them, Shoppers Drug Mart, was consumed under Stephen Harper. Shoppers was providing competition to the big five, and Loblaws ultimately bought it out. I wonder whether my colleague across the way would agree that maybe Stephen Harper messed up in terms of competition on groceries by allowing Shoppers to be consumed by Loblaws. Does the member have an opinion on that aspect of the competition when he references competition here in Canada?

• (1135)

Mr. Ryan Williams: Mr. Speaker, let us talk about hypocrisy. The government has voted to shut down debate on competition in the banking sector in Canada today, and there is a housing crisis that is the largest and the worst in the whole world. Then again, the member likes to talk about Stephen Harper. The member must be so proud today that he was mentioned in *The Globe and Mail* editorial that talked about his party's obsession with Stephen Harper. Over here, we have our glasses of water, and every time Harper is mentioned, we drink. There is always lots of water to drink, because the member likes to blame everything on Stephen Harper. However, the reality is that there have been 12 mergers in competition, in banking and in telecom approved under the government's watch over the last eight years. This includes propane company mergers, Sobeys and IGA, and Sobeys and Farm Boy. The government, over the last eight years, has approved so many mergers. That is hypocrisy.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Bay of Quinte for raising again today the issue of open banking.

I think it is really important that Canadians own their own data. We see a problem in the financial sector where financial institutions put up barriers to Canadians' being able to share their own information about their own financial situation with other financial institutions in order to be able to compare apples to apples when it comes to shopping around for a better price. Of course, we see other instances, often in the medical system, for example, where patients are told that they do not own their information, and that if they want to transfer information from one health service provider to another, the information is proprietary to the offerer of the service. It can be quite costly, difficult and onerous to be able to procure one's own information and transfer it to another health care institution.

I wonder whether the member would like to speak more generally to the kind of principles around consumers of various types of services being able to own their information and to make it easily portable for them so they can engage in the activity of trying to find the best service. This could be service either at the best price or even in the context of systems where they are not having to pay for those services but still want to be able to get better service by shopping around.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear the member talk positively about consumer-led banking, but I am extremely disappointed that, after speaking this morning, he voted with the

government, as he often does, to shut down debate on the RBC and HSBC merger, which is going to hurt Canadians. RBC is trying to buy 800,000 mortgage holders, which is a great thing for RBC, because it would just take them out of the market and move them into its bank. However, the reality is that 10% of Vancouver mortgage holders and 5% of Toronto's mortgage holders, in the hottest and third-hottest housing markets in all of the world, are going to be gobbled up by RBC. There is an 85-basis-point difference in mortgage rates today between the two competitors. We are going to have more people who need help in Vancouver and Toronto. They will be falling behind and paying more. By the way, it is about \$400 a month more on a \$500,000 mortgage, which is low for a mortgage. We should have been allowed to debate this today. There should have been a vote to shut the merger down. I am disappointed in the member because he shut debate down.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to refocus the discussion back on the matter at hand, which is splitting Bill C-27. I would like the member to comment on the inadequacy of the bill, the weakness that he has found in it and why it is so important that we get it split into proper components such we can debate them and have them voted on separately.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his hard work and for contributing to the debate.

Bill C-27 has a lot of different aspects, but here are the worst parts of them.

There is a provision called "legitimate interests", which allows businesses to collect data, but there is no real definition as to what they can use that data for. It is so obscure that, right now, without a clear definition, we are not going to be able to get it through. There is no instance in the purpose clause or in the bill of privacy being a fundamental right, and that is something Conservatives have been fighting for. We are the only party, really, fighting to have that in.

When it comes to AIDA, the third part we are trying to split off, when I asked witnesses at committee about three weeks ago to rate it from one to 10, one being bad and 10 being the best, six out of seven rated it a one out of 10. That piece, without public consultation, which did not happen, needs to go. It needs to be split off, and that is why we are asking for the motion.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad we are debating the motion today, because today is the one-year anniversary of the release of a generational, society-changing technology, and that, of course, is ChatGPT.

I think I was the first legislator in the world to stand up in a parliament and say "Hey guys, have a look at this." Since that time, over 80% of Fortune 500 companies are now integrating ChatGPT technology. Legislators around the world are trying to deal with the vast societal implications of the release of the technology. Also, the world is trying to grapple with the fact that the technology was released into the world without any sort of comprehensive regulations around the development of large language models and the large-scale deployment of this type of technology, and then without a lot of thought to use.

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The other thing is that, in the last year, we have had to build, internationally, parliamentary capacity for legislators both to understand the technical aspects of how artificial intelligence has the capacity to impact our society and to try to look at how our regulatory systems can meet the challenge. Our systems are notoriously non-nimble and slow, and this is why there should be no partisan divide on the fact that the motion should pass. The Artificial Intelligence and Data Act should be hived off. Without offence to the government, the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act was developed about a year or a year and a half prior to the deployment of ChatGPT. It is like developing regulations for scribes, putting them forward and debating regulations for scribes, after the printing press was deployed around the world. That is really the transformational change we are dealing with.

Taking a partisan hat off, civil society, academia and industry all need to be consulted, and we need to go back to the drawing board on a lot of places in the bill. As my colleague for Bay of Quinte talked about, this is something that the Standing Committee on Industry has heard over and over again from every witness it has had. However, it is also important to split the bill to give the government an opportunity to better coordinate with other jurisdictions around the world that are trading partners with Canada, are already well ahead of us and are close to passing their own artificial intelligence regulations. For example, the European Union is already well down the path, as is the United States. Frankly, we also need to include the global south in the conversation. We need to be working with the global south, as it impacts the global south.

I am pleased to announce that the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union successfully passed a motion at the IPU's last assembly in Rwanda a few weeks ago, and that Canada will be a co-rapporteur on the Standing Committee on Human Rights to develop a motion specifically to do this, to build capacity for parliamentarians around the world to learn about the impacts of artificial intelligence, to take that back to their respective political parties and legislatures and to ensure that all voices are being heard. This is one of the reasons we have to pass the motion before us today.

I want to echo what my colleague for Bay of Quinte said. I think there is one testimony that sums up why AIDA has to be hived off so the privacy components of Bill C-27 can proceed. I will read from Barry Sookman, senior counsel at McCarthy Tétrault, who argued that AIDA fails to adequately shield the public from potential risks associated with high-impact AI systems. He also said that the centralized power that was envisioned in this pre-ChatGPT legislation undermines the structure of parliamentary sovereignty, adding that "AIDA sets a dangerous precedent".

• (1140)

These are Canadian legal experts who have made the argument that the implications of implementing under-considered legislation on an issue as impactful as artificial intelligence is extremely risky. Any flaw in AI regulation could affect millions of people, exposing companies to class action lawsuits of historic proportions. It could also expose the public, our constituents, to risks, because we have not thought this through. This issue is so huge. It has the capacity for so much societal transformation that the bill must be hived off. Members from all political parties need to be engaged in robust,

fulsome debate with all aspects of Canadian society. They need to think about this in three silos.

The first is the way that artificial intelligence is developed. It has come to light over the last year that ChatGPT was developed using extremely low-paid labour in the global south. These low-paid labourers were exposed to violent child pornography imagery to help train the large language model. There are no global regulations or standards around this. That needs to change.

The other thing there is really no global standards for, certainly not in Canada, is the protection of intellectual property when it comes to training large language model systems. This is highly problematic. We are already seeing precedent-setting legal cases coming forward in other jurisdictions, which could have extreme impacts on Canadian businesses, the ownership of IP and also how we promulgate and respect our trade agreements with other partners. A lot of our trade agreements did not consider artificial intelligence.

The second is the development of artificial intelligence. The fact that ChatGPT was released on the public, where a hundred million users are using this on such a regular basis without thought to what that means, is like releasing a pharmaceutical onto the public with no clinical trials, with no data. As a country, we need to think about how we research these products, how we allow research and innovation, but also we need to ensure that the societal impacts are thought about in an ethical framework prior to deployment.

The last thing is that I want to encourage colleagues to join the parliamentary caucus on emerging technology. I have colleagues who are sitting here today who I know have such a heart for these issues. This debate has been in a non-partisan manner. It has been collaborative and it has been great.

Just briefly, there is the impact of AI on democracy with deep-fakes, with the spread of information, and on labour and the disruption of labour. Will we see AI replacement workers? Is that being considered in any legislation? These things need to be considered in an AI regulatory framework: cross-jurisdictional issues, the issues of human rights, the issues of autonomous weapons.

I could go on and on, because the bill needs a separate vote. Probably, the government needs an opportunity to go back to the drawing board to internalize the situation. This needs to happen now, though. I think that this is a no-brainer. I think there is a lot of consensus in the House of Commons for that. I would like to see agreement in the House on this matter and it be put to a vote.

With that, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1145)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

During the taking of the vote:

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, could someone please check the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster's photo? It looks like she is not identifiable in her photo.

The Deputy Speaker: We will check.

• (1230)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 463*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Albas
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Berthold
Bezan	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chambers	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Davidson	Deltell
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Findlay	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Khanna
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lawrence
Lehoux	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Poillievre	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner

Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thomas
Tolmie	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 112

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NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Bérubé
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Koullaway
Khalid	Koutrakis

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Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lemire	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
O'Regan	Pauzé
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Powłowski
Qualtrough	Rayes
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Sorbara	Sousa
Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vignola
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi — 203	

PAIRED

Members

Deltell	Fast
Guilbeault	Joly
Lalonde	Ng
Tochor	Trudel — 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the games the Conservatives continue to play to stop debate on the important issues of the day for Canadians is no surprise. At the end of the day, the very same bill, Bill C-27, is the one on which they moved the concurrence motion. Let there be no doubt that the Conservatives oppose the legislation. This is yet another tactic being used to filibuster legislation, legislation that is important to Canadians in many different ways. In this situation, we are

talking about the privacy of the digital charter, which is so very important. It also talks about AI, which impacts every Canadian.

My question for the member opposite is this. Why do Conservatives continue to play a destructive role on the floor of the House of Commons in an irresponsible fashion? We see this virtually on a daily basis. The best example that comes to my mind is when they filibustered and voted against the Canada-Ukraine agreement. Shame on them.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been here during my colleague's time in the House. In his role as House leader, he does not understand what we just voted on. The motion that I moved would have adjourned debate on this topic so the question could have been put to the House, we could have split the bill and the government could have had the opportunity to undertake some of the activities that have already been raised in the House. It was a motion to move forward.

Therefore, I would ask him to avail himself of a better understanding of procedure in the House, rather than to cast aspersions on colleagues with respect to a very serious matter, which is moving Canada forward in alignment with the world on regulations and protections around artificial intelligence.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, the speech of my colleague from Calgary speaks to some of the radical shifts that are taking place in the technological landscape in our country and our world. If a government is not willing to be responsive to that, it puts not only our country at an economic disadvantage, but also at a security disadvantage.

I wonder if my colleague could speak further about some of the challenges. If we are not responsive to the issues surrounding specifically AI, that puts our nation at a significant disadvantage. Right now, we are already lagging behind and if the government is unwilling to be responsive, we will simply lag further behind.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, there are no rules around the development of this technology. IP can be stolen. Labour can be exploited. There are no rules around the deployment. This technology is highly disruptive and could be used for things like autonomous weapons. There are no rules around that either. However, there are also potential benefits.

Because our country is so far behind the rest of the world on this topic and has not engaged civil society, academia or industry in a meaningful way, or international partners, we are becoming an unstable place for investment and we are rapidly going to lose talent. The brain drain for AI is real and people are rapidly leaving our country.

The government needs to rethink a bill that it developed two years before the launch of large language model technologies like ChatGPT, separate it out from the privacy bill, engage civil society, industry and academia and move forward.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, artificial intelligence obviously depends on models and information that it scoops up off the Internet. There are two sources of information to build the AI model: low-wage workers working sometimes in deplorable conditions and also AI scanning through places like Google or DuckDuckGo or other browser engines. It hoovers up data and images. When AI picks up AI images and information, it becomes extremely brittle.

I think this is an opportunity to have that type of idea implemented in legislation, to address the problem of AI-generated information and images off of AI-generated information and images.

I would like the member to speak to that.

• (1235)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I think what my colleague highlights is a problem where the technology is changing so much faster than either the government's or Parliament's current ability to be nimble and flexible and move quickly.

Just to reference the government deputy House leader's response, this is not a time for the typical theatrics we might see in the House. This bill needs to be split and the government needs to go back to the drawing board. We need to see movement on this immediately. I implore the House.

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

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

• (1320)

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

(*Division No. 464*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford

Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Miller
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Noormohamed
O'Connell	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
Sorbara	Sousa
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi— 171	

Routine Proceedings

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brook
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Ferri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garon
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genius	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shiplay	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin

Waugh
Williams
Zimmer — 145

Webber
Williamson

PAIRED

Members

Deltell
Guilbeault
Lalonde
Tochor

Fast
Joly
Ng
Trudel — 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I had some technical difficulties when I was trying to change my vote, and I would like to request unanimous consent to change my vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to change her vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 19

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance) moved that a ways and means motion to introduce a bill entitled An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, be concurred in.

The Deputy Speaker: If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I would request a recorded vote, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1405)

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

(*Division No. 465*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Battiste

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Beech

Government Orders

Bendayan	Bennett	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Bibeau	Bittle	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Blaikie	Blair	Virani	Weiler
Blaney	Blois	Wilkinson	Yip
Boissonnault	Boulerice	Zahid	Zarrillo
Bradford	Brière	Zuberi — 173	
Cannings	Carr		
Casey	Chagger		NAYS
Chahal	Champagne		Members
Chatel	Chen		
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Aboultaif	Aitchison
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier	Albas	Allison
Coteau	Dabrusin	Arnold	Baldinelli
Damoff	Davies	Barlow	Barrett
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Dhillon	Diab	Bergeron	Berthold
Dong	Drouin	Bérubé	Bezan
Dubourg	Duclos	Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Duguid	Dzerowicz	Block	Bragdon
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Brassard	Brock
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore	Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Fisher	Fonseca	Caputo	Carrie
Fortier	Fragiskatos	Chabot	Chambers
Fraser	Freeland	Champoux	Chong
Fry	Gaheer	Cooper	Dalton
Gainey	Garrison	Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Gerretsen	Gould	Deltell	Desbiens
Green	Hajdu	Desilets	Doherty
Hanley	Hardie	Dowdall	Dreeshen
Hepfner	Holland	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Housefather	Hughes	Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Hussen	Hutchings	Falk (Provencher)	Ferri
Iacono	Ien	Findlay	Fortin
Jaczek	Johns	Gallant	Garon
Jones	Jowhari	Gaudreau	Gazan
Julian	Kayabaga	Généreux	Genuis
Kelloway	Khalid	Gill	Gladu
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Godin	Goodridge
Kwan	Lambropoulos	Gourde	Gray
Lametti	Lamoureux	Hallan	Hoback
Lapointe	Lattanzio	Idlout	Jeneroux
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Kelly	Khanna
Lebouthillier	Lightbound	Kitchen	Kmiec
Long	Longfield	Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Kurek	Kusie
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor	Lake	Lantsman
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Larouche	Lawrence
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Lehoux	Lemire
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Lloyd	Lobb
McLeod	Mendès	Maguire	Majumdar
Mendicino	Miao	Martel	Mazier
Miller	Morrice	McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McLean
Morrissey	Murray	Melillo	Michaud
Naqvi	Noormohamed	Moore	Morantz
O'Connell	O'Regan	Morrison	Motz
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski	Muys	Nater
Qualtrough	Robillard	Normandin	Patzer
Rodriguez	Rogers	Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Romanado	Rota	Perkins	Perron
Sahota	Sajjan	Plamondon	Poillievre
Saks	Samson	Rayes	Redekopp
Sarai	Scarpaleggia	Reid	Rempel Garner
Schiefke	Serré	Richards	Roberts
Sgro	Shanahan	Rood	Ruff
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh	Schmale	Seeback
Sorbara	Sousa	Shields	Shipley
St-Onge	Sudds	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Tassi	Taylor Roy	Small	Soroka
Thompson	Trudeau	Steinley	Sor-Marie
Turnbull	Valdez	Strahl	Stubbs

Statements by Members

Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Wagh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zimmer— 145	

PAIRED

Members

Deltell	Fast
Guilbeault	Joly
Lalonde	Ng
Tochor	Trudel— 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, the House do now proceed to Statements by Members followed by Oral Questions, and that the usual allotment of time be afforded for each rubric.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (for the Minister of Finance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-59, an act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023.

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

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I believe I heard my colleague from the NDP move to seek unanimous consent, which was granted. It was that immediately following the vote, we would go right into Statements by Members and that the time provided would not be affected by the length of time that the vote took.

I think anything that has happened between that motion being adopted and statements starting should be null. We should go right into statements, have the full 15 minutes for statements, and then go on to question period.

That is my understanding of what the motion would have prescribed and what the House just agreed with.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for raising that issue. It seems that there might have been a delay in terms of how that motion should have been presented.

The original intention of the motion, of course, was to bring forward the ways and means bill. It should have been presented after the Chair had read out that the bill would be read the first time and printed. After moving on, that motion should have come forward.

Nothing has changed in terms of the intention of the motion and in terms of making sure that we are following the procedures of the House.

I thank the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for his understanding in this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday in this chamber, the leader of the official opposition recklessly labelled a car explosion in the U.S. near the Rainbow Bridge as a “terrorist attack”. The Conservative leader's characterization of the event shocked many Canadians, including me. I was terrified and instantly prayed to God hoping that no Muslim was involved in this incident.

Jumping to such baseless and emotive language without verification and spreading misinformation demonstrate a serious lack of judgment, especially at a time when the conflict in the Middle East has led to an increase in Islamophobia and anti-Semitism—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1410)

The Speaker: Colleagues, I invite you all to listen to your whips. One person has the floor at this time for the purpose of making a statement.

I am going to ask the hon. member Brampton Centre to start his statement from the top.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday in this chamber, the leader of the Conservative Party recklessly labelled a car explosion in the U.S. near the Rainbow Bridge as a “terrorist attack”. The Conservative leader's characterization of the event shocked many Canadians, including me. I was terrified and instantly prayed to God hoping that no Muslim was involved in this incident.

Jumping to such baseless and emotive language without verification and spreading misinformation—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Prince Albert and the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to please restrain themselves so the Chair can listen to the statement. I am having trouble listening to the statement.

Mr. Rick Perkins: So are we.

The Speaker: I will ask the member for South Shore—St. Margarets to respect the Chair.

The hon. member for Brampton Centre, from the top, please.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday in this chamber, the leader of the official opposition recklessly labelled a car explosion in the U.S. near the Rainbow Bridge as a “terrorist attack”. The Conservative leader’s characterization of the event shocked many Canadians, including me—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I have asked members to exercise restraint three times.

The hon. member for Brampton Centre, from the top, without interruption, please.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday in this chamber, the leader of the official opposition recklessly labelled a car explosion in the U.S. near the Rainbow Bridge as a “terrorist attack”. The Conservative leader’s characterization of the event shocked many Canadians, including me. I was terrified and instantly prayed to God hoping that no Muslim was involved in this incident.

Jumping to such baseless and emotive language without verification and spreading misinformation—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I know members value the opportunity they have to make statements that are very important to them and their constituents. We are now running behind because this is the fourth time I have stood on my feet on this issue. It will be the last before I start cutting statements from today’s list that has been provided to me.

I will ask all members to please keep themselves under control so that all statements that were planned can be given today.

The hon. member for Brampton Centre, from the top, please.

● (1415)

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday in this chamber, the leader of the official opposition recklessly labelled a car explosion in the U.S. near the Rainbow Bridge as a “terrorist attack”. The Conservative leader’s characterization of the event shocked many Canadians, including me. I was terrified and instantly prayed to God hoping that no Muslim was involved in this incident.

Jumping to such baseless and emotive language without verification and spreading misinformation demonstrate a serious lack of judgment, especially at a time when the conflict in the Middle East has led to an increase in Islamophobia and anti-Semitism here at home.

The leader of the Conservative Party tries to criticize every issue for political gain by spreading fear and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Statements by Members

The Speaker: Since there are no points of order allowed at this time, I would invite the hon. whip to approach the Chair while we move on to the next statement.

* * *

MESSAGE OF PEACE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recent incidents targeting our Jewish and Muslim communities concern all of us deeply. Many Canadians, including my colleagues in the House, are being targeted based on their religious or cultural backgrounds, and this is unacceptable to everyone.

Let us stand together as a testament that Canadians value each other as colleagues and as fellow citizens, and that it is paramount to support the right of each other’s communities to enjoy peace and security in Canada. Canada has always been a country where peace, tolerance, mutual understanding and kindness are of utmost importance. Prejudice and hatred have no place in our nation. We must rise above division, extending compassion and support to all.

Canadians made their kindness a worldwide brand, and there is no better branding for us than this. Let us be grateful for what we have and unite around peace and tranquility in Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JOHANNE JOANNETTE

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that buying local is crucial. However, to benefit from local goods and services, we need entrepreneurs with solid regional and national roots. The Acton region understands this extremely well.

The Acton business community owes a great deal to Johanne Joannette, who headed the local chamber of commerce for 22 years. Under Johanne’s leadership, the chamber thrived. It moved into the iconic Acton Vale train station, developed tourism in the region, hired young people during the summer, took charge of the region’s agri-food fair and launched the Gala Distinction.

Johanne passed the torch to Cassandra Lévesque last year, but she was still working at the chamber two days a week. Today is her last day there, and I know she is tuning in. I can say with certainty that she has not abandoned the region, however, because she is now a municipal councillor for the town of Acton Vale.

I would like to thank Johanne for all she has done.

*Statements by Members***MAISON DES JEUNES L'OUVERTURE**

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Maison des jeunes L'Ouverture is marking its 40th year in Montreal North, in the riding of Bourassa.

Under the leadership of its director, Sheilla Fortuné, this youth centre plays a vital role in young people's academic and social success. It is a place where young people thrive, because it is theirs. The organization has created various programs to empower young people, including the annual street basketball tournament that has helped some of these youths go on to play for the prestigious NBA.

It brings me joy to underscore this anniversary, since I myself took advantage of this organization's services when I was younger, taking part in soccer and dance when the late Félix Saint-Élien was director.

I congratulate the board of directors, the employees and the volunteers who are guiding our youth toward success.

* * *

● (1420)

[English]

CHRISTMAS

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Christmas is fast approaching. It is a special time of year for so many reasons. In every part of this great country, people are feeling excited and preparing for quality time and holiday cheer. Along with all the busy shopping, there is so much charity, goodwill and solace that is inspired by the season. It happens all over the world. People of many different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds celebrate Christmas, even in predominantly Muslim countries such as Indonesia, where my sister lives.

Christmas brings peace and unity during difficult times, including war and economic depression, but every so often there comes along a Scrooge or a grinch who wants to steal Christmas. This time around, it is the Canadian Human Rights Commission saying “bah, humbug”. It released a new report suggesting that our public celebration of Christmas is somehow a form of religious intolerance and discrimination. It is just another ridiculous example of woke ideology after eight years of the out-of-touch Liberal government. However, no matter what they say, I will join the overwhelming majority of Canadians and celebrate Christmas wholeheartedly.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas.

* * *

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month, which recognizes the need to drive awareness and education surrounding abuse against women.

Two weeks ago, I had the privilege of attending the From Wallet to Wealth gala, organized by the amazing Whitney Hammond. The gala raised \$70,000 for Halton Women's Place, which provides a 24-hour information and support line, outreach services and emergency shelter services for those in need of a safe space.

As a new initiative, purple benches are located in Oakville and Burlington as part of the Barb's Bench project. The project began in Nova Scotia to honour Barbara Baillie and victims of violence against women; it is a reminder that intimate partner violence still exists as a major threat to women everywhere.

This month and every day, let us take action to end femicide and gender-based violence.

* * *

HOUSING INITIATIVE IN RICHMOND HILL

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Monday marked a milestone for Richmond Hill and a significant leap forward in our fight against the housing crisis. I was pleased to join the hon. Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities in announcing an agreement to fast-track over 780 housing units in Richmond Hill.

This initiative is a catalyst for over 41,500 homes in the coming decade, fuelled by a \$31-million investment from the housing accelerator fund. This will address the long-standing barrier to housing construction and accelerate the creation of not only increased housing density but also much-needed affordable units across the community.

I congratulate the municipality for this milestone and I am proud to witness our government's historic investment in our community. It demonstrates what can be achieved with innovation, collaboration and a steadfast resolve to address the housing needs of Canadians in Richmond Hill and across Canada.

Together, we are forging a future of strong, accessible and thriving communities, affirming our commitment to affordability and prosperity for all Canadians.

* * *

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise on this last day of Diabetes Awareness Month to recognize and thank the patients, advocates, researchers and health care professionals in our communities who continue to work extremely hard to combat this chronic disease.

This subject is very important to me. As a type 1 dad and co-chair of the all-party caucus on juvenile diabetes, I know the serious health impacts it has on patients living with the disease and their families. This year marks the 102nd anniversary of Canada's discovery of insulin, and while its discovery was a game-changer for the millions of people living with the disease, there is still much more work to do. With more than 200,000 new cases diagnosed each year, diabetes is the most common chronic disease across our country.

Statements by Members

As Diabetes Awareness Month comes to an end, I invite all my colleagues to keep conversations around diabetes awareness going. Thus, we can better support all those living with this chronic disease and, one day, find a cure to defeat it.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

JEWISH REFUGEES

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we mark the expulsion of nearly one million Jews from Arab countries and Iran following the creation of the State of Israel. Their expulsion was motivated by persecutions, pogroms and genocide.

[English]

Many Jewish families found safe harbour in Canada, a significant number of whom put down roots in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence.

Despite their exceptional contributions, Jews have continued to face a torrent of anti-Semitism. Tragically, the October 7 terrorist attack in Israel has exacerbated this hate: Jewish day schools have been shot at, synagogues firebombed, students swarmed on campuses and businesses accosted.

As Canadians, we should universally condemn these appalling incidents, and those responsible must be brought to justice by law enforcement. We must also strengthen Holocaust remembrance and education. Today, B'nai Brith is hosting a virtual commemoration of the story of Jews who were expelled from Arab countries and Iran. I encourage all to visit its website and learn, because it is only through learning, education and respect that we can ultimately defeat anti-Semitism and hatred in all its forms.

* * *

[Translation]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of inflationary spending, Canadians can simply no longer afford to pay for this Prime Minister's costs. Today we learned that Canada's GDP declined by 1.1% in the last quarter, the fifth consecutive decline, while that of our American neighbours rose by 5.2%. This is very bad news for Canadians struggling to make ends meet, for the millions waiting in lines at food banks because this government's inflationary policies are raising the price of everything.

We can do something now to help Canadians. This Prime Minister can help lower food prices by taking immediate action: asking Liberal senators to vote immediately in favour of Bill C-234 and stop obstructing the Senate. Unfortunately, this week, the Liberals voted with the Bloc to maintain the tax on farmers, increasing the cost of food here for everyone. Instead of giving Canadians the help they need, the Liberals and their allies in the Bloc are trying to make everything more expensive. Voting for the Bloc is costly.

Only the common-sense Conservatives will transform misfortune into hope by abolishing the tax on everything and reducing food, gas, and heating costs for all Canadians.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were alarmed but not surprised this week to learn that food bank use in Ontario is at an all-time high. We have seen a similar increase in my home community of Hamilton. What is particularly concerning is that there has been an 82% increase in people with jobs who are relying on food banks.

The erosion of the middle class, under eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, is another reason why the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. With Scotiabank confirming that 2% of rate hikes are attributable to reckless spending and deficits by the Liberals, mortgage renewals are the latest gut punch that is going to hit household budgets. I heard this at a Diwali celebration this past weekend and at the Christmas kettles the week before. Canadians are very concerned.

I want to say to Hamiltonians and Ontarians that the common-sense Conservatives hear them and are fighting for them. Under the leadership of the hon. member for Carleton, we are going to deliver powerful paycheques and restore the middle-class dream for Canadians once again.

* * *

[Translation]

KARL TREMBLAY

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday evening at the Bell Centre, we paid a moving tribute to Karl Tremblay, the soul of the Cowboys Fringants, who left us too young, too soon. In that iconic place, we celebrated his music's indelible impact on our lives. The meaningful melodies and poignant lyrics resonated in our hearts, a reminder of Karl's exceptional musical legacy. In front of a vibrant crowd, we shared memories and expressed our gratitude to this outstanding artist.

I thank Karl for his years of devotion to Quebec's cultural scene. His legacy will endure. Tuesday evening, the Bell Centre resonated with the sound of his timeless passion. His voice will live on forever. I wish him bon voyage.

Statements by Members

● (1430)

*[English]***THORNLOE CHEESE FACTORY**

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Thornloe Cheese factory is a symbol of the resilience, skill and determination of the Témiscamingue dairy region. The various blends of Asiago, Charlton, blue and the incredible devil's rock cheese have won all kinds of awards. That is why people in the north were so shocked by the news that Gay Lea Foods is closing the plant and walking away from the region, but not so fast. The people in northern Ontario are determined to keep this value-added food processing operation, and the farmers have a winning track record.

In 2006, Parmalat announced its decision to shut the plant. Rallies were held, and a clear message was sent: Parmalat could leave, but the dairy quota would stay. The same message was sent to Gay Lea.

I worked with the Témiscamingue dairy committee to save the plant in 2006 and will be at its side to get Thornloe back up and running.

When negotiations begin with a new buyer, it is essential that FedNor and the federal government are at the table to help with the necessary upgrades, so Thornloe continues to produce a world-class product.

Our farmers have a simple message: They love the north, and they will fight for Thornloe.

* * *

*[Translation]***TREMBLANT WORLD CUP**

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after Chamonix, Val Gardena and Courchevel, it is Mont Tremblant's turn this weekend to host the World Cup women's giant slalom race.

What a source of pride for the entire Laurentides—Labelle region and for Quebec. The International Ski Federation chose Mont Tremblant because it tops many lists as the number one ski resort in eastern North America. The know-how of an entire region is being honoured and recognized.

The mood will be supercharged and joyous as we watch high-level athletes shred the slopes. I invite everyone to come. The pedestrian village will be abuzz with concerts. On Saturday, I will have the honour of personally handing out an award. It is my immense pleasure to wish the athletes and organizers a fabulous World Cup 2023.

* * *

*[English]***CARBON TAX**

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. Do members know who agrees with that statement? It is the Chiefs of Ontario, who filed a judicial review today against

the Liberal government's carbon tax. The Chiefs of Ontario are rightly claiming that the Liberal carbon tax is leaving first nations communities worse off and is intentionally designed to ignore their situations.

This liberal carbon tax disproportionately affects first nations, and the Ontario chiefs are asking why a carbon tax carve-out was only given to a region in Canada where the Prime Minister was tanking in the polls. They are left to deal with the unfair burden this tax places on their communities as they struggle to heat their homes and feed their families.

Let us remember that it was the Prime Minister who claimed the relationship with first nations is the most important one to him and his government. That clearly is not true, as the Prime Minister is forcing first nations to go to court to finally be heard in their demands to axe the carbon tax for the children, seniors and families living in their communities.

* * *

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday in this chamber, the leader of the official opposition recklessly labelled a car explosion in the U.S. near the Rainbow Bridge as a "terrorist attack". The Conservative leader's characterization of the event shocked many Canadians, including me. I was terrified and instantly prayed to God hoping that no Muslim was involved in this incident.

Jumping to such baseless and emotive language without verification and spreading misinformation demonstrate a serious lack of judgment, especially at a time when the conflict in the Middle East has led to an increase in Islamophobia and anti-Semitism here at home.

The leader of the Conservative Party tries to politicize every issue by spreading fear and misleading Canadians. Canadians deserve better. This leader is just not worth the risk.

* * *

● (1435)

HOLIDAY EVENTS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we embark on the Christmas season, we celebrate the spirit of giving that exists in communities across Perth—Wellington. I am always amazed by the generosity of so many people who give so freely of their time and talents in the service of others.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of To Stratford With Love, a community dinner organized by the Kneider family where 1,000 people may enter as strangers but leave as friends. In the town of Minto, David and Jean Anderson will once again host their annual Christmas Day dinner for all who wish to share a meal. I thank all those who are filling Christmas hampers, organizing toy drives and raising funds so that others may have a merry and bright Christmas.

Finally, in the spirit of giving, I encourage all who are able, to donate blood this Christmas season. For those who are battling leukemia, like Kelly Byers, and countless others who need this gift of life, rolling up our sleeves is the least we can do and is a small action that can have a big impact.

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CANADA'S WALK OF FAME

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's Walk of Fame is a national non-profit charitable organization that inspires Canadians by proudly shining a light on extraordinary Canadian achievers and their successes.

This Saturday, Canada's Walk of Fame will celebrate a history-in-the-making 25th anniversary gala. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, I look forward to attending this truly inclusive celebration of Canadian achievers: athletes, actors, legends, Olympians, musicians, filmmakers, storytellers, humanitarians, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, titans of science and innovation, and the next generation of heroes.

From the Honourable Rosalie Abella to Avril Lavigne and from Kardinal Offishall to my friends Drew and Jonathan Scott, this event will highlight the incredible talent of Canadians from all walks of life and the incredibly inspirational role that they play every day. The event will inspire and unify us, and remind us of the richness of talent that these remarkable Canadians from every corner of this great country share with us and the world every day.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister has sucked the joy out of Christmas for children and replaced it with misery. Across Quebec, 27,000 youngsters have asked for a gift as part of the 29th annual Opération Père Noël. One of the letters reads, "I'm 13 years old and I would like a gift card to buy something so we can have a good meal on Christmas." The fact that young people are asking for boots and snowsuits is unheard of, according to the co-ordinator.

When will the Prime Minister reverse his inflationary taxes and deficits so our children can experience the joy of Christmas?

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we will always invest in our economy and help vulnerable Canadians at the same time. That is why our Canada child benefit has lifted almost 500,000 children out of poverty. That is why we put in place \$10-a-day child care. It is so families can go back to work. That is why we are stabilizing grocery prices with the law we introduced in the House today, and we encourage every member of the House to vote in favour of it.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Minister of Environment is imposing a tax that

Oral Questions

punishes single mothers, farmers and small businesses. Meanwhile, we learn that he has flown 60,000 kilometres around the world, in business class of course. His climate change co-ordinator has flown the equivalent of circling the Earth four times.

When will the government stop with the hypocrisy and taxes?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think any Canadians who are watching us will see where the real hypocrisy is happening. The Conservative leader has been against all of our investments in green energy, including green aluminum, green steel and battery plants across the country. I have never heard the Leader of the Opposition speak in favour of the Canadian economy, the energy transition or Canadian workers.

On this side of the House, we will always fight for workers and for the green economy.

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, we have entered the next phase of the Prime Minister's economic misery. We have seen "just inflation", and today we have learned that Canada is in a state of stagflation as our economy has shrunk by 1.1% in the most recent quarter while the American economy boomed at 5%. This is the result of high taxes, big deficits and crippling red tape. At the same time as prices are rising for Canadians, their wages are falling. The economy is now smaller than it was on a per capita basis five years ago.

Why is the American economy roaring while the Prime Minister's economy is snoring?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the trite rhymes coming from the other side of the House, I would like to remind everybody in the House that we actually have an economic plan, unlike the opposition. Our GDP today is at 4.1% above pre-pandemic levels. That is higher than Italy, the European Union, France and Germany, and the IMF projects that Canada will have the highest economic growth in the G7 in 2024. That is an economic plan at work.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the economy is smaller today than it was five years ago on a per capita basis, and the IMF projects Canada will have the worst economic growth over the next six years and the next 40 years. This is the result of high tax hypocrisy.

Oral Questions

It has come out that the environment minister, after punishing single moms, small business owners and farmers for heating their homes and driving their vehicles, has flown 60,000 kilometres. His climate change chair has flown the equivalent of going around the world four times, and now they are off with 70,000 other people at an air-conditioned dome in the desert in a petrostate. Why will they not park the jet, end the hypocrisy and axe the tax?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is one number that the Conservative leader will not talk about. It is that Canada ranked third in the world for foreign direct investment.

Yesterday, Dow Chemical announced one of its largest investments in 126 years in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. This is going to be thousands of jobs and hundreds of thousands of hours of construction. This is how one leads the economy. This is how one leads a country. This is how one leads to bring investment to this country.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think he wants to lead the party, while his Prime Minister leads the economy into a ditch.

The high tax hypocrisy knows no bounds. Now first nations are speaking up. First there were the revolting Liberal MPs, who were worried about losing their seats because of the Prime Minister's tax on home heat. Then it was other premiers refusing to collect the tax. Then it was farmers fighting for their ability to produce food without taxes, and now it is first nations. Over 100 first nations communities have taken the government to court because it is violating the rights of our first people with the carbon tax on rural and remote people.

When will the Liberals stop violating the constitutional rights of first nations and axe the tax?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, they are not “our first people”. They are first nations, which are independent first nations. This government for—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Listen to that, Mr. Speaker. The colonialism from the Conservatives in this place will just not quit.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that, on this side, we respect first nations. We know that they are leaders. That is why we have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in first nations to ensure equity in water, child welfare and housing, and we will continue to do so.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie.

[English]

An hon. member: It is called hypocrisy.

The Speaker: Would the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot please wait his turn to ask a question?

[Translation]

The hon. member for La Prairie.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec alone takes in as many asylum seekers as all the other provinces combined. Believe it or not, it has cost Quebeckers \$460 million, even though asylum claims fall under federal jurisdiction.

Quebeckers should not have to foot the bill on their own on behalf of Canadians. They also do not deserve the arrogance being shown by the Minister of Immigration, who is from Quebec, I might add, and who likes to say that Ottawa is not an ATM.

It is a shame that we have to go over the head of a minister from Quebec in order to find a solution that respects Quebeckers, but that is what we have to do. We have no choice. I am therefore appealing to the Minister of Finance. Will she reimburse Quebeckers?

• (1445)

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a global migration crisis, and Canada is part of it. We have a moral obligation to act. Responsibility for asylum seekers is shared between Quebec and Canada, and this is an ongoing conversation between us.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it took a minister from New Brunswick for the federal government to finally realize how generous Quebeckers have been to asylum seekers. On Tuesday, the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs recognized that Quebec's public services and community organizations are overwhelmed.

Meanwhile, Quebeckers spent \$460 million on asylum seekers even though that is a federal government responsibility. On Tuesday, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said he would talk to his colleague, the Minister of Finance. Has he done so? When will he send that \$460-million cheque to Quebec?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague recognizes the work that my colleague and friend, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, has done.

There was a very positive meeting with Minister Roberge in Quebec City. I myself meet regularly with various ministers in Mr. Legault's government. That means we have a robust collaborative relationship.

The Bloc Québécois wants to convince us that things are not working, that there is conflict here, but the only conflict is the one the Bloc Québécois is trying to provoke among Quebeckers. There is no conflict because we are working together.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the U.S. officially charged an Indian government employee with attempting to assassinate a member of the Sikh community in New York. The target was on the very same list as Sikh Canadian Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was murdered in Surrey. These new allegations make Sikh Canadians feel even more unsafe. Meanwhile, the Conservative leader is siding with the Modi government and blaming Canada.

What is the government doing to ensure the safety of Sikh Canadians amid these serious allegations?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP, with its policing partners across the country, are very engaged with the Sikh community and other communities across the country, which understandably feel an increased threat level with respect to what the U.S. justice department filed in a court in the United States yesterday.

It is obviously a source of concern. It is understandable in the Sikh community. The RCMP continues to collaborate with American law enforcement partners and will do everything necessary to ensure the safety of Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our hearts sank when we learned that, this year, children in Quebec are asking Santa Claus for warm clothes and food instead of gifts. Opération père Noël is reporting a record increase in requests for basic items. So far, it has received 27,000 requests, up 2,000 from last year. That says a lot about the economic difficulties that families are facing.

How is the government going to tackle this crisis?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are here to continue building an economy that works for everyone. That is why we introduced a bill in the House today to build the economy for children, seniors and small businesses and to lower the cost of groceries.

That is our plan. I encourage everyone in the House to vote for our plan.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in an interview with CFRA's Bill Carroll, Dr. Barry Dworkin reported the case of a United Kingdom doctor who came to Canada, fully qualified and ready to practise, who was denied the ability to take a work simply because she was self-employed, which is an obvious paperwork snafu.

Oral Questions

She joins the 20,000 immigrants to Canada who are doctors who cannot work, and the 32,000 nurses. Why will the government not take my common-sense plan to bring in a blue seal professional standard that would allow immigrant doctors, nurses and other professionals to quickly prove they are qualified, get to work, earn powerful cheques and serve patients in need?

• (1450)

Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working in partnership with the Ontario government to help re-establish all foreign doctors, making sure they can get accredited.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, it is not worth the cost.

While the U.S. economy is booming with a growth of 5.2%, Canada's economy is shrinking. Canada will have the worst GDP-per-capita growth in all developed nations. In fact, U.S. GDP per person will be \$80,000 while Canada's will only be \$50,000.

Never has a government spent and taxed so much on Canadians with so little to show for it. Will the finance minister stand up today to tell Canadians why she is taking more from them and making them poorer?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives continue to talk down the economy, I will ask members to allow me to add in a few more facts.

We have ensured that 1.1 million additional jobs are available to Canadians since the end of the pandemic. That is important because those are well-paying jobs. Wages have actually increased and out-paced inflation in this country. The report that my Conservative colleague cites indicates that there was a significant upwards revision of Canada's growth in the second quarter in this country.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, the financial gap between Americans and Canadians has never been larger.

The average GDP per capita in the United States is over \$80,000. In Canada, it is merely \$50,000. Unbelievably, the situation is getting worse. The growth in the United States was over 5% this year. In Canada, it is shrinking by more than 1%.

When will the government finally take responsibility for failing Canadians, and change direction to adopt a common-sense plan led by a common-sense leader?

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Once again, I would encourage all members, especially the member for Timmins—James Bay, to wait their turn to ask a question.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member gives me the opportunity to talk about an American investment that just happened yesterday. In fact, Dow Chemical made one of the largest investments in 126 years of history. It is going to invest more than \$10 billion in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta for the first net-zero ethylene plant in the world.

We are going to be producing green plastics. We are going to create jobs. We are going to grow the economy. That is a plan for the future, and we are going to put it in place.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is this. The more the government spends, the poorer Canadians get.

Over the last eight years, the government has imposed a record tax burden on Canadians, levels of debt and deficit never seen before in our country. The result is the worst per capita growth rate since the Great Depression. There is record food bank usage, with two million Canadians going to a food bank every month.

Why are those Liberals so hell-bent to bankrupt Canadians?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our job as a government has been to balance compassion with fiscal responsibility, and that is exactly what we have done. We are there for Canadians with the Canada child benefit. We are there for families with supports. We are there for our seniors with supports.

When the member opposite talks about being there for Canadians, I wonder why that very member has been filibustering our motion on the Canada pension plan in the finance committee for weeks now.

We will continue to be there for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we learned that the American economy grew by 5.2%, while the Canadian economy shrunk by 1.1%. The American economy is booming and the Canadian economy is at a standstill. Americans are getting richer, while Canadians are getting poorer. Nothing has been working in Canada for the past eight years.

Given these numbers, will the government recognize that its economic plan is a failure?

• (1455)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague for being brave enough to ask a question in French. It is not easy to be a francophone in the Conservative caucus.

Even though I do not often agree with him, all of the Liberals in the House will be there to defend his right to speak in French.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to give a clear answer in French to the member here, who made this type of comment before on May 5, 2009, I would say that my colleague from Lethbridge apologized to the committee.

That being said, can the government tell me what it is thinking—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I will continue with my question. Children in Quebec have been sending their letters to Santa Claus to Opération père Noël since 1995. This year, instead of asking for toys, children are asking for winter boots and snowsuits. That does not make any sense.

Does the Prime Minister think it is normal for Santa Claus to be getting these kinds of requests from children?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two official languages here, French and English. Both can be used. Both—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would ask the members to be quiet when a member is exercising his right of reply in the House.

The hon. Minister of Transport may begin his reply again.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, again, French must be respected in the House. Both official languages must be respected in the House. If a colleague chooses to respond in her mother tongue, she must be respected in that regard, whether it is English or French.

Once again, I commend my colleague's courage, because it must not be easy to be a francophone Conservative in the face of such tyranny from his colleagues. We will always defend his right to speak in French.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, COP28 starts today and the Liberals have already had time to make another cowardly decision on climate change.

Just yesterday, Canada announced that it refuses to include in the final statement that we must one day give up fossil fuels. COP had not even started and Canada was already fighting alongside other petro-monarchies to pollute even more. According to Greenpeace, “The government is severely slowing the global fight against climate change”.

Why are the Liberals sabotaging the world's efforts to fight climate change?

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, COP28 is the important next step in our collective efforts to advance human safety, economic prosperity, health and the well-being of our planet.

We recognize that there are still some challenges to address. Canada is working with its partners to accelerate global efforts to keep within reach the objective of the Paris Agreement, namely to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have bad news for the Liberals. Last week, the OECD criticized their carbon capture strategy, which is what they are hiding behind at COP28.

A report by the International Energy Agency warns that it is a mistake to rely too much on carbon capture. The agency warns that people need to drop the illusion that we will be able to capture unimaginable amounts of CO₂. The agency insists that there is no alternative to switching to clean energy.

When will the Liberals finally understand that the carbon capture strategy they are talking about in Dubai is a mirage?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see that the Bloc Québécois recognizes that the federal and provincial governments each have an important role to play in projects with environmental impacts that fall under federal jurisdiction.

I find it rather ironic that the Bloc Québécois is asking the government to cancel projects that are supported by the provinces when their position is always to tell the federal government to mind its own business.

- (1500)

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, history is repeating itself at COP28. Canada continues to hold out the empty promise of green oil. While the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is making lofty speeches in Dubai, back in Canada, the Suncor oil company announced on Monday that it was increasing its output, now that operations have resumed at the Terra Nova oil field in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Once again, while the minister engages in rhetoric, oil is flowing more freely than ever in Canada, as the planet burns. When will the Liberals stop being part of the climate problem?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my Bloc Québécois colleague and friend.

The oil and gas sector is a major contributor to Canada's economy, yet it is also the country's biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions. That is why setting an emissions cap for the oil and gas sector is a key commitment in our emissions reduction plan.

Our government intends to publish a framework on the design of the emissions cap by the end of the year.

CARBON PRICING

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after enduring eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, one in five households in Ontario is struggling to put food on its table. That adds up to 2.8 million people, including 700,000 children. This is shocking. These are the highest recorded numbers we have ever seen. It is painfully clear that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister tell his appointed senators to stop delaying Bill C-234 and to pass the bill now to bring lower prices for food for all Canadians?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we introduced legislation in the House today that seeks to modernize competition laws to stabilize grocery prices. We encourage everyone in this chamber to vote in favour, including the member opposite.

In addition, I wonder why the party opposite continually votes against measures that aim to make life more affordable for Canadians. Whether it is for the Canada child benefit, whether it is for \$10-a-day child care or whether it is for supports for small businesses, every single time the party opposite votes against. It is really difficult to understand what its plan is.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the government, there have been more people using a food bank than ever before. It is record numbers. The Prime Minister is responsible for bringing record-level hunger to Ontario.

I understand that the self-proclaimed socialist environment minister has threatened to resign if the bill passes, but Canadian farmers need this carve-out immediately. This will make food prices cheaper, because if we are taxing the farmers who grow the food, we are taxing Canadians who buy the food.

Again, will the Prime Minister tell his appointed senators to stop delaying Bill C-234 and pass the bill so we can bring home lower prices for groceries for all Canadians?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would start by reminding the members opposite that the Senate is independent and that the only senators who sit in a caucus sit in that Conservative caucus.

I would add that farmers understand the importance of fighting climate change and reducing emissions. I think that farmer for running her last election campaign on pricing carbon.

Oral Questions

That is why our pollution pricing policy reflects the realities of Canada's agriculture industry. We have spent almost \$500 million on R and D and adoption for clean technologies for grain drying. We have spent \$12 million to reduce methane emissions from cattle. We have spent \$670 million to support the adoption of greenhouse gas reduction practices on farms. We will keep supporting farmers because they are key to fighting climate change.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the costly Bloc-Liberal coalition proved once again that it is not worth the cost. Its members defeated our motion to force the Senate to pass our common-sense bill, Bill C-234. After eight years, Canadians have never been in such dire straits, yet these two parties want to increase the carbon tax even more drastically.

Canadian farmers need our support. Will the Prime Minister tell the senators that he himself appointed to stop obstructing Bill C-234 in order to reduce grocery costs for all Canadians?

• (1505)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be sure that my hon. colleague remembers that there are no Liberal senators. There are only Conservative senators.

It was Conservative senators who intimidated independent senators by preventing them from exercising their democratic rights. This is all part of the Conservative master plan to disrespect democracy and Parliament.

The Senate is independent and will act accordingly.

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[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister acknowledged missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people as an ongoing genocide. Parliament unanimously recognized it as a nationwide emergency. However, how many times does the government's fall economic statement mention MMIWG2S? Zero.

The government has a million excuses, but it refuses to take the urgent action that is needed to stop the violence.

Could the minister explain why his government's fall economic statement fails to mention this ongoing genocide?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, addressing the ongoing violence against indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ people is a whole-of-government approach that requires living up to our moral obligations as a country and to the calls for justice. That is why budget 2023 invests \$125 million to implement the national action plan on MMIWG.

We will continue to work with my friend opposite, as well as all Canadians, to ensure that we address the issues of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

HOUSING

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, there are first nations who cannot return to their home communities due to the lack of homes. They are being pushed out of their culture, family and traditions, due to the neglect from the Liberals. At the pace that the government is moving, it would take anywhere between 58 to 141 years to close the infrastructure gap, despite promising that it would close it by 2030.

Could the government tell us when enough homes will be built for first nations to be able to live in their home communities?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the member opposite's sense of urgency for closing the infrastructure gap in first nations.

In 2015, we inherited a situation where no investments had been made in housing. Since 2016, 30,000 homes or renovations had been completed across the nation, with the leadership of first nations, investing in new models, ensuring that people have the tools, the support and the equity to be able to continue to close that gap.

We will be there as a truthful partner with first nations.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day approximately 12 people die by suicide in Canada. Each life lost by suicide can have far-reaching effects, whether that is families grappling with the loss of a loved one or the effects that are felt in communities. It is essential for Canadians to have timely access to suicide prevention. They need to know that they are not alone, that there is someone there to help.

Can the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions update us on the launch of the 988 suicide prevention and emotional distress crisis line?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for St. John's East for being a strong advocate on mental health and many other issues.

Our hearts go out to all those who have lost loved ones to suicide. We also reach out to those who struggle with suicidal thoughts. Each life lost shatters an entire family, the community and so much more.

As of today, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and anywhere in Canada can now call or text 988 to have access to 24-7 bilingual trauma-informed and culturally appropriate suicide prevention support. For anyone thinking about suicide or worried about someone else thinking about suicide, call or text 988. People are not alone. There is help available.

* * *

• (1510)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. People see it on their grocery bills and farmers who grow the food see it while paying for their fuel. A young producer showed me his propane bill for grain drying from the start of harvest. In the span of just 12 days, it cost him \$950 in carbon tax alone, and the harvest was just getting going. He is still waiting to see the final bill from drying his crops.

Will the Prime Minister tell his appointed senators to stop delaying Bill C-234 and axe the tax for the farmers who grow our food?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member is a very influential member of his caucus, and people watching would know that. If he wants to give a gift to Canadians before Christmas, why does he not convince his caucus colleagues to vote for the affordability bill? Canadians know that bill would reform competition, one of the most fundamental reforms in Canadian history. It would give more power to the Competition Bureau and we will make sure it can do the study.

Canadians know that the best way to stabilize prices in the country for the mid to long term is to have more competition. We are going to do the right thing for Canadians once and for all.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fastest way to provide more affordability for Canadians would be to pass Bill C-234.

We have the receipts to show just how much the carbon tax costs farmers who grow the food. The natural gas bills for different months from a Saskatchewan farmer show that one month without grain drying is \$135, but one month with grain drying is \$6,400. That is why the House should pass Bill C-234 to give farmers tax relief.

Who does the Prime Minister think should pay that ridiculous cost: the farmer who grows the food or the families who are struggling to put food on the table for their kids?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two points. First of all, the only senators who are managed by anyone in this chamber are Conservative senators who sit in the caucus of the Leader of the Opposition.

The second point is that if members opposite were so concerned about food affordability, I would urge them to take a look across the pond at the instability that Vladimir Putin's illegal war is causing to food and supply chains around the planet. Ukraine is traditionally

known as the bread basket of the planet. Food supply issues and the cost of food are directly related to that illegal war.

It would be great if the members opposite got behind supports like the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals voted with the Bloc to keep the tax on farmers. This bill would have saved farmers nearly \$1 billion between now and 2030.

This Christmas season, people are hurting. P.E.I. farmers are paying between \$30,000 and \$75,000 more a year due to the carbon tax. A farmer in western New Brunswick has had his cost increase by over 30% on freight alone. This is unbearable for our producers and consumers.

When will the Prime Minister finally hear the cries of our farmers and tell his senators to pass Bill C-234?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the opposition Conservative Party does not have a plan for the environment.

People on Prince Edward Island are well aware of what the environment can do. With Fiona, we had winds of over 200 kilometres an hour. It destroyed barns and killed dairy cattle.

Quite simply, if one does not deal with the climate, one does not do anything with grocery prices. Our government has a plan for the environment, and we will lower and stabilize grocery prices.

• (1515)

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, everyone is struggling. Farmers across Canada buy their goods retail and sell what they produce wholesale. Farmers are now paying \$150,000 in inflationary carbon tax. They know the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

When will the Prime Minister tell his appointed senators to stop delaying Bill C-234 and axe the tax so people can afford their groceries?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I tell my hon. colleague what his party and his leader need is a plan for the environment.

We have a plan for the environment. In fact, just two weeks ago I was able to make an announcement in Manitoba with the government in order to create the last living lab right across the country. In fact, what goes on with living labs is that scientists, farmers and the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I am going to ask again. I have asked a couple of times for colleagues to please keep their voices down when they do not have the floor.

It is time for the minister to answer, and so we can all hear the answer, I ask the member for Brantford—Brant and the member for South Shore—St. Margarets to keep their voices down.

The hon. minister, from the top, please.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated quite clearly, if one is going to deal with the environment, one has to have a plan for the environment.

We have a plan for the environment. I will just use one of the many examples we have, which is living labs right across this country. What we do with living labs is make sure that farmers, scientists and the industry itself work together in order to make sure we deal with climate change. We produce better crops. We take carbon out of the air and into the soil.

We will continue to work with farmers and ranchers right across this country in order to make sure we stabilize food prices right across this country.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is unanimous. This morning, with one voice, the Quebec National Assembly spoke out against Ottawa's decision to give Boeing the contract for surveillance aircraft without a call for tenders. All of the elected officials in Quebec have spoken out against this deliberate choice to discount our aerospace industry.

Ottawa's contempt is not just depriving our industry of a \$9-billion contract. Ottawa is also undermining the sale of Quebec aircraft abroad by thumbing its nose at our aerospace industry for all of our trade partners to see. That is a pretty stupid sales strategy.

Do the Liberals realize that they are harming our industry around the world?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, further developing our aerospace industry is exactly what this morning's announcement will allow us to do, while also, obviously, giving the Canadian Armed Forces the tools they need to protect us at home and defend Canada's interests abroad, throughout the world.

That is why companies like CAE, Héroux-Devtek and L3Harris Technologies in Montreal, Mirabel and elsewhere in Canada will benefit from significant spinoffs from this morning's announcement.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us be serious. To offer \$9 billion to Boeing without an open competition is to abandon our aerospace industry. The Liberals are abandoning our primary export sector.

It was not enough for them to abandon our major corporations. Last week, there was nothing in the economic statement to help

SMEs that are on the verge of bankruptcy if the CEBA repayment is not deferred. They are also abandoning our local businesses. That is the Liberal record over the past two weeks. They are hurting Quebec's businesses, large and small.

How can we not conclude that they are hurting Quebec's economy?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, benefiting Quebec's economy and the aerospace sector across Canada is precisely one of the objectives of this morning's announcement. That is why we are moving forward over the next few months with the procurement announced today, which will be good for 3,000 jobs, or 3,000 workers, over the coming years.

The spinoffs in Canada, including in Quebec, will be roughly \$400 million a year, which will help even more of our workers in the aerospace sector in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Chiefs of Ontario joined the chorus of Canadians decrying the failure of the Liberal carbon tax. This burden inflicted upon first nations, allegedly the most important relationship for this Prime Minister, has forced 133 chiefs to take the government to court in order to get relief.

It is clear indigenous communities are not better off after eight long years of this government, nor is more money being put back in the pockets of the people who pay this tax.

After yet another failure, will the Prime Minister realize that the carbon tax has failed indigenous peoples and finally axe the tax?

• (1520)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this summer we saw a record wildfire season raging across the country. I, as Minister of Indigenous Services Canada, worked with first nation leaders all across the country as they did the most unimaginable to protect their communities, with evacuations, people displaced for weeks if not months, and land, property and infrastructure destroyed.

We will continue to work on fighting climate change and protecting people as we see this astronomical threat bearing down. I look forward to doing that with first nations leaders.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually, the Auditor General had a plan for that. It was to approve the 112 infrastructure projects sitting on that minister's desk that would deal with the effects of climate change, adaptation and mitigation. In fact, it was indigenous projects that talked about dikes, dams and culverts, things that would give indigenous communities a fighting chance to stay on their land in the event of an extreme weather event. However, the minister would rather waste money instead of investing one dollar to save six, and rather than the current plan of evacuation, relocation and rebuilding.

When will the minister get serious about helping indigenous communities, listen to the Chiefs of Ontario and axe the tax?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that the former leader of the opposition did not listen to the Chiefs of Ontario for over a decade as the infrastructure gap grew and grew, as children suffered with discriminatory first nations child welfare, as education rates and levels were underfunded per capita—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am having trouble, once again, hearing the hon. member. There are a number of voices close to the Speaker.

I will ask the hon. minister to please start again, because I would like to hear the answer.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves how that infrastructure gap got so big, and it was a decade of neglect. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition, on the day of the apology from Prime Minister Harper, said that what people really needed to do was actually get to work and show work values. These are the kinds of ethics that these Conservatives hold in terms of first nations.

We will continue to work with first nations on rights and in respectful ways in closing gaps. That is what responsible governments do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the costly Bloc-Liberal coalition proved once again that it is not worth the cost.

As usual, the Bloc members joined forces with the Liberals to defeat our motion calling on the Senate to pass our common-sense bill, Bill C-234, to remove the carbon tax on farmers. Eight years in, our food banks are overwhelmed, yet those two parties want to increase the tax even more radically.

Will the Prime Minister tell his senators to stop obstructing Bill C-234?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Conservative senators should be telling Conservative MPs is that the price on pollution does three things. One, it reduces pollution. Two, it puts more money in the pockets of eight out of 10 families. Three, it creates jobs we need for the economy of the future.

Oral Questions

Everyone knows that the Conservative elite's official policy is that climate change does not exist, but this is 2023, and we are counting on Conservative senators and MPs to reconsider their position.

* * *

[*English*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a proud Canadian. I am proud of this nation's bilingualism, and I am proud of the federal government's role in promoting both official languages. In the House of Commons, it is a privilege for me to hear both official languages being used. Therefore, I was both shocked and disappointed at the Canadian heritage committee this morning when a Conservative MP asked a francophone minister from Quebec to answer her question in English.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell the House about the long-standing importance of official language use in the government?

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I want to start by saying that I am a proud Quebecker who is proud to be a francophone and to be able to speak in French. I want to remind the House that we have the right to express ourselves in the language of our choice, regardless of the language in which the questions are asked. Today, I was in committee to talk about our government's success stories, including the Google agreement. Unfortunately, a member of the Conservative caucus hijacked that opportunity and chose to challenge my right to speak in my mother tongue.

Our government was the first to recognize the decline of French. Bilingualism is a fundamental principle of our country, one that we will continue to defend and promote, even if it displeases the Conservatives.

* * *

[*English*]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that he would drop \$15 billion on Stellantis to create new jobs. What he did not say is that those jobs would not be located in Windsor, in Ontario or even in Canada. He is shipping taxpayer money to a Dutch company that is going to employ Korean foreign workers. This is another slap in the face to hard-working Canadians who are struggling after eight years of the current government.

The Liberals cannot get their story straight on how many foreign jobs the \$15 billion is buying, so why not release the contracts for Canadians to see for themselves?

Oral Questions

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I will have to say that we will take no lessons from a party with a leader who, when he was employment minister, oversaw the loss of not 3,000 manufacturing jobs, not the loss of 30,000 of them, but the loss of 300,000 manufacturing jobs in this country. Would this man like to tell us what to do? Canadians know better.

We will continue to invest in Windsor. We will invest in the auto sector. We will invest in our workers. We will invest in a prosperous Canada.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister should take some lessons from this side.

The story changes every single time he is asked. He should admit that Canadians got robbed blind with the deal. The Prime Minister even told his backbench members to keep all of this a secret and talk out the clock so the Liberals do not have to release documents. There is no reason to do that unless they are hiding something.

We want to know what is in this deal, why he spent \$15 billion to ship Canadian jobs overseas and why they pretend that, after eight years, they care about labour in this country. Why is it so secret? What are they hiding?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 2,500 workers building batteries in Windsor are going to be Canadian, local and unionized. There are an additional 2,300 construction jobs, Canadian and local. That message was delivered on Parliament Hill yesterday by Dave Cassidy, the president of Unifor local 444. He represents 5,000 Stellantis workers. He will represent the 2,500 Windsor workers who will build the batteries.

Whom do people trust: the guy who has spent his whole life fighting for workers, or the guy who has spent his whole political career fighting workers?

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers have learned that the Northvolt battery manufacturing plant in Quebec is going to hire hundreds of foreign replacement workers. This means that \$7 billion of taxpayers' money will be used to fund these jobs, which should have gone to Quebecers. This Prime Minister is definitely not worth the cost.

After eight years in power, this Prime Minister is not protecting jobs for Quebecers. One moment; let me put on my glasses. He needs to make public the contracts awarded to battery manufacturing plants. When will he do that?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right to put on his glasses and he should start writing down some numbers.

The Conservatives have not supported a single investment in the battery industry. They opposed the GM investment, they oppose the Ford investment and they opposed the Northvolt investment. They opposed the Volkswagen investment and now they oppose the Stel-

lantis investment, which will create 2,500 jobs at the plant and up to 2,300 jobs to build the plant. That is outrageous.

Canadians can see which side the Conservatives are on. They are definitely against workers.

* * *

● (1530)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the loss of innocent lives in the Middle East as a result of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas has been tragic. There is an increasingly dire need to ensure that aid gets into Gaza, where civilians are suffering. Canadians want to know how the government is helping bring relief to the region.

Can the Minister of International Development please update the House and Canadians on what the government is doing to provide help to those people desperately in need?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada was the first western government to take action, by providing \$60 million in aid for civilians affected by the conflict in Gaza. This included a matching fund that brought in 12 Canadian humanitarian organizations. I am pleased to share with the House that Canadians from coast to coast to coast donated almost \$14 million to this campaign, and we will double this amount to nearly \$28 million. The funding will go to providing much-needed water, food and medicines to all civilians affected by the conflict.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is known for its expertise in the aerospace sector. We have the skills and the workers.

However, when the time comes to use those skills and workers to meet our need for airplanes, the Liberals opt for an American company, and they get old planes, to boot. Why not launch an open and transparent competition that would give companies like Bombardier a chance to bid?

This under-the-table deal is mismanagement of public funds. Good, well-paid union jobs are being tossed out the window. Why did the Liberals choose to abandon our aerospace sector?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to elaborate on what I was saying earlier.

This morning's announcement is good news for the armed forces because they will be better off with equipment suited to their needs and the critical conditions we are facing around the world. This is also good news for the whole country's aerospace sector.

Boeing has 550 suppliers and can invest close to \$400 million per year to create some 3,000 jobs. This will be good for suppliers in Quebec, such as Héroux-Devtek, CAE and L3Harris Technologies. There will also be partnerships with the Université de Sherbrooke, the Polytechnique and many other suppliers and industry players in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

* * *

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, members of the House are often very critical of the government, but we should also applaud its successes. I would like to thank the minister for the work she has done to sign this first agreement with a major online player, Google. This agreement will help our media industry.

However, I would like her to confirm whether measures have been taken to help our local and regional media. I am thinking of local media like www.lanouvelle.net and *Actualités l'étincelle*. I am also thinking of private radio stations like Attraction Radio or CJAN-FM.

I am hoping she can tell us whether there are any measures, any guidelines, that have actually been put in place so that these players also get their share of the pie and so that we can help them for the future.

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I remember when I was at the National Federation of Communications and Culture and I would come talk about the importance of defending our media. My colleague, even though he was in the Conservative caucus at the time, always spoke out in favour of the media, especially regional media.

I am happy to reassure him and tell him that the act stipulates that local and regional media will have a place at the negotiating table with digital platforms. The same holds true for official language minority media. This is good news for media throughout the country. We have reserved a place at the table for local and regional media.

* * *

● (1535)

TRADITIONAL STATUTORY HOLIDAYS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That the House

(a) recall that Christmas is a tradition celebrated in Quebec and Canada;

(b) denounce the Canadian Human Rights Commission's statement that "Statutory holidays related to Christianity, including Christmas and Easter", represent an "obvious example" of "systemic religious discrimination", and that this "discrimination against religious minorities in Canada is grounded in Canada's history of colonialism";

Points of Order

(c) denounce all attempts to polarize events that have been part of Quebec and Canadian heritage for generations.

(d) invite all Quebecers and Canadians to unite as we approach the Christmas season.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House of Commons condemn the divisive statements published by the Canadian Human Rights Commission claiming that public celebrations of Christmas amount to religious intolerance and discrimination; that the House recognize the rich cultural traditions that Christians and many other Canadians share at this special time with their friends, their communities and their families, and affirm their right to celebrate freely; and that the House of Commons wish all Canadians a merry Christmas.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

An hon. member: Nay.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I hope that you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: that this House reaffirm that English and French are the two official languages of this Parliament, that it reaffirm that the witnesses invited to committee can use the official language of their choice, that it denounce the comments of the member for Lethbridge, who called into question a witness' right to speak French in committee.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is very clear in our Standing Orders, and it has been a long tradition, as we all know, that for 15 minutes of every day the House sits, we have Standing Order 31, which enables members to speak for one minute on an issue they feel is most fitting for them on that particular day.

Points of Order

The member for Brampton Centre, not once or twice, but on five occasions, was not able to get his statement out. I have never witnessed that in my experience in the House of Commons for well over 10 years now. In fact, it was 15 minutes later on another S.O. 31 that the member was able to give his full one-minute presentation.

An hon. member: It is full of lies.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, even as I speak, the member across the way said that it was “full of lies”. That is the lack of respect I want to make reference to in terms of the point of order. The member for Perth—Wellington Nater—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. The member for Perth—Wellington clearly indicated that you, Mr. Speaker, are a joke. That is what the member for Perth—Wellington stated. That does not include the body language that was also used, which, in essence, was a contempt of the Speaker's chair.

I would ask that the member for Perth—Wellington be asked to apologize to the House, because his actions against you, Mr. Speaker, are actually actions against all of us. The matter of the S.O. 31 should in fact be looked into by your office, because I would not want to see that type of behaviour going forward, where a member is denied the opportunity to have their full minute to express an issue they believe is important.

• (1540)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for raising this issue. I see the member he referred to in his point of order, the hon. member for member for Perth—Wellington, rising to his feet.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did indeed indicate that you were a joke. That is true. I am sorry for that. I withdraw it.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for withdrawing that remark, and I consider the matter closed.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, this is on the same point of order. There is a long-standing rule in the House that one's comments should not bring disorder to the House.

The comments by the member, which the member for Winnipeg North is defending, were so egregious, so inflammatory and so erroneous that they caused disorder in the House. I welcome the opportunity to ask you to look at the transcript of what he was saying and to come to your own conclusions.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member on this point.

The hon. minister is rising on the same point of order.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I rise very seldom on these kinds of matters, but I think it is really critical to appreciate the importance of freedom of expression not only in this country, but also in this chamber.

In this chamber, we attempt to critically reflect the views of our constituents. There are times when I have heard things, on both

sides of this chamber, and I have been here for eight-plus years now, that I do not agree with and that I am sure others do not agree with.

However, the notion of shouting down an individual, not once, but five times, and preventing them from actually being able to deliver their S. O. 31 is something I have not seen before. I think it merits reflection on your part, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. Yesterday, after question period, it was drawn to the Chair's attention that during members' statements, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills screamed profanities during a member's statement.

The member giving the statement was me. I was not given the opportunity to repeat it once, or even six times, in spite of the fact that what I said did not create disorder, but it was a member on the government side of the House who screamed profanities. Mr. Speaker, if—

The Speaker: Just because this is not on the same point of order, I am going to get to the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes and will listen to him patiently, but the member for Nunavut has been patient on her feet on another point of order, and I would like to give her that opportunity. There was a list of people who were on—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, this is on the same point of order.

The Speaker: No, you are raising—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about order in the chamber during members' statements—

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. I am just letting him know that the point of order raised was in regard to the member for Brampton South, and I believe the member is raising an issue in regard to the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

I am going to ask the hon. member, on the same point of order, to please go ahead.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the member from Winnipeg said that the 15 minutes members are given for statements are to be sacrosanct, but the member is speaking from the benches of a party that engaged in the conduct he was decrying today.

It is hypocrisy for the government House leader's deputy to rise and to cry foul when his parliamentary colleagues engaged in worse conduct yesterday.

• (1545)

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. The reason I wanted to get back to him is that the Chair had expressed yesterday that we would look at Hansard and the video, which we did. We could not make anything out. We even worked with the folks from Hansard to see if we could detect the words the hon. member referred to. Therefore, I cannot come back to the House on that point.

The hon. member for Nunavut.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am rising on a point of order based on what the Conservative leader said today during question period regarding first peoples. He used a possessive term that means indigenous peoples belong to another nation.

I need to remind the House that first nations, Inuit and Métis are not owned by governments and that this Parliament needs to make sure it is educating Canadians that we are not owned by governments. There were children in the House when he made that statement. We need to remind Canadians that first nations, Métis and Inuit are first peoples and are not owned by anyone, especially the Conservatives. We need to also remind the Conservatives that when my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, was making her intervention about genocide, Conservatives were laughing at her about her terms, her statement about genocide in the House.

This Conservative Party needs to be reminded to respect first nations, Métis and Inuit.

The Speaker: I thank the member for Nunavut for the two points in her intervention. The first was for reminding the House, and all Canadians of course, of the status and the importance of Canada's first peoples. I thank the hon. member for that.

On the second matter, I will have to take a look at the video and get back to the House if necessary.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, it is really unfortunate that the member, while condemning Conservatives, refused to condemn the minister who used the exact same word in her reply.

I would quote from a statement released by the Chiefs of Ontario representing 133 indigenous communities. It states that, “Chiefs of Ontario and Attawapiskat First Nation have filed a judicial review”—

The Speaker: I do appreciate that, but we are now venturing well into debate. It was not a debate on the point the member was raising.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot would like to make a new point of order.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, it is simply to say that the point the Leader of the Opposition was making was exactly in support of first nations, who have pointed out, in summary, that the carbon tax has a disproportionate effect on first nations. It is shameful that other parties in this place would refuse to acknowledge that same fact and would try to play games as opposed to acknowledging that first nations want the tax axed.

• (1550)

The Speaker: That is now venturing well into debate on this point.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am hoping the government House leader can inform the

Speaker's Ruling

House as to the business for the rest of this week and for the following week.

As we are nearing the end of session, I would ask her to indicate to the House, if she is able to, the business for the week after that as I know there is usually a flurry of activity in the last few weeks of the December and the June periods. If she could update the House for that week, I know most members would appreciate that.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we will debate the Senate amendments related to Bill C-48 on bail reform.

Tomorrow morning, we will call Government Business No. 31, which concerns Bill C-50, an act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy. Tomorrow afternoon, we will call report stage and third reading of Bill C-57, which would implement the 2023 free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine.

Next week, priority will be given to the motion relating to Bill C-50. We will also call report stage and third reading of Bill C-56, the affordability legislation, and second reading of Bill C-59, an act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement, which was introduced earlier today. Thursday will be an opposition day.

For the following week, I will circle back to the member opposite.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY COMMENTS IN THE HOUSE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on a point of order raised on November 27 by the member for Yorkton—Melville concerning language used in question period that day.

According to the member, the government House leader made insinuations on the motives of certain members in relation to their vote on the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, wondering if it was because they were pro-Russia. Her objection was echoed by the House leader of the official opposition and several members of her party. They referred to the ruling made earlier that day, where a member was asked to withdraw a statement accusing other members of being Hamas supporters. Members felt that being accused of supporting Russia was equally offensive.

[*Translation*]

The member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, for his part, suggested that the statement was made, and I quote, “with the intention to be provocative and to elicit a response.” He added, and I quote, “it caused disorder in that moment”. He also suggested that the minister apologize.

Government Orders

[English]

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons countered that the comments made respected parliamentary rules and that it was common for members from all sides to reflect on the manner in which a political party votes.

I must say that I welcome the comments made by members intervening on this matter. It shows an interest in elevating the tone of debate in the House. It raises the bar for everyone.

[Translation]

The member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie is right right in saying that the language used on Monday created disorder. This is indeed a key factor, one of the most important, in determining whether words used were unparliamentary or not. However, as explained in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 624, the Speaker must also consider the tone, manner and intention of the member speaking, the person to whom the words at issue were directed and the degree of provocation.

On contentious issues, it is not uncommon for members to criticize each other's positions or to speculate as to why they are voting a certain way. For the most part, these kinds of remarks are part and parcel of vigorous debates. Members often feel that their positions are mischaracterized by others, but that is generally a matter of debate and not something in which the Speaker gets involved.

[English]

However, the Speaker does have a responsibility for maintaining order and decorum. This can become problematic when a member seeks to associate one of their colleagues with an ideology or an entity whose values we would find odious. In the past, for example, Speakers have judged it unacceptable to compare a member with the wartime fascist regime in Italy or with the racist Ku Klux Klan.

As I said on Monday, I believe accusing a member of supporting a violent and anti-Semitic terrorist organization would also fall into this category. These things clearly cross a line, cause disorder and contribute to an overall lowering of the quality of our discourse.

● (1555)

[Translation]

Members have suggested that being accused of supporting Russia in the current context should be treated the same way. I think in some circumstances, depending on how such allegations are phrased, that can be true. On Wednesday, for example, I felt it was inappropriate to have accused another member of, and I quote, "cozying up to Russian dictator Vladimir Putin" and I asked for that comment to be withdrawn. I am not certain the comments of the Government House Leader were quite so categorical, though they clearly were not helpful.

[English]

I suspect that if one were to scour the Debates, one could unfortunately find a series of examples of members, from all parties, attempting to suggest that their colleagues were in some way sympathetic toward regimes we would find brutal or oppressive. Going forward, I would ask all members to stay away from such inflammatory statements and to not attempt to make such provocative as-

sociations. Neglecting to do so may result in a member being cut off by the Speaker and a withdrawal being insisted upon.

[Translation]

In my statement of October 18, 2023, which can be found at pages 17591 to 17593 of the Debates, I implored members to be mindful of the effect that their choice of words has on the proceedings of the House. I said, on page 17593:

...the growing tendency to make pointed criticisms in a way that is unnecessarily personal and designed to denigrate, bully, elicit an emotional reaction or attack the integrity of the person introduces a toxicity into our proceedings that hampers our ability to get things done. This includes...making comments that question their courage, honesty or commitment to their country.

[English]

Speaker Milliken made a similar point on May 26, 2009, when addressing a rash of unparliamentary language. He said at page 3703 of the Debates:

I want to reiterate that certain words, while not always aimed specifically at individuals and, therefore, arguably technically not out of order, can still cause disruption, can still be felt by those on the receiving end as offensive and therefore can and do lead to disorder in the House.

It is that kind of language that I, as Speaker, am bound by our rules not only to discourage but to disallow. That is why I am appealing to all hon. members to be very judicious in their choice of words and thus avoid creating the kind of disorder that so disrupts our proceedings and so deeply dismays the many citizens who observe our proceedings.

I would ask all members to reflect on the events of the past several days, on the words used and on the aspersions made and the atmosphere they are creating. It is possible to criticize a party's position on the Middle East without calling members Hamas supporters. It is possible to criticize a party's position on the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement without suggesting that members stand four-square behind dictators. I would encourage all members to find ways of engaging in vigorous debate without resorting to these sorts of associations.

I thank all members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1600)

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (bail reform).

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved the second reading of, and concurrence in, amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (bail reform).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. members. I am very pleased with the progress of Bill C-48 in both Houses, and I am happy to be speaking to it again here.

This bill will strengthen our bail laws so they continue to protect our communities and maintain public confidence when it comes to violent repeat offenders and weapons offences.

I will start by briefly reiterating the bill's intent. I will then describe the amendments proposed by the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. Lastly, I will lay out the government's position on these amendments.

[*English*]

This bill demonstrates our government's commitment to public safety and my commitment to public safety. We will always fight to ensure that our communities are protected from violent crime. Families have been forever changed because of senseless killings.

I want to take this moment to express my sincere sympathies to victims of violence and their loved ones. A 16-year-old, Gabriel Magalhaes, was fatally stabbed at a subway station in my own riding of Parkdale—High Park. This terrible act should never have occurred. We need to do address crime, as well as what causes crime, to stop future violence from occurring.

Bill C-48 is the culmination of extensive collaboration with provinces and territories, with which I have been working very closely. All 13 premiers came together and called for bail reform. We responded to this call and went even further in Bill C-48.

In addition to the premiers, Bill C-48 has received support from municipal leaders, police groups and victims' organizations right across the country, from coast to coast to coast. I am pleased to see such incredibly widespread support for a measure that would ensure Canadians can live free from fear of violence.

I am also grateful for the discussions we have had with national indigenous organizations on the topic of bail reform. Their views help us better understand how we can keep indigenous communities, and all communities, safe. I look forward to continuing my collaboration with representatives of these important organizations.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge and recognize that members from all parties passed Bill C-48 unanimously in the House back on the first day of the fall session, on September 18. It was clear then that all of us recognized the importance of these measures. I am very hopeful that we can maintain the same unanimity of purpose today.

Public safety is paramount. It is fundamentally why all of us were elected to this chamber. Every member of this chamber wants the communities that we represent to be free from violence. I thank my colleagues for their support to date and I hope I can count on it today and going forward.

On this side of the House, we also commit to maintaining public safety while looking also at tackling the root causes of criminality. We need more mental health resources so that people in crisis do not resort to violence. I say this on a day when we have just launched the 988 suicide helpline. We need social services to help offenders reintegrate safely into their communities after serving

Government Orders

their time. We need treatment options for those struggling with addiction so that they do not get mired in conflict. Investing in long-term solutions to crime is a core belief of mine and of our Liberal government.

Too often, I have heard fearmongering for political gain from people in this chamber. We need solutions; we do not need finger pointing. We need investments in long-term safety. We need evidence-based legislation. I challenge my colleagues to join me in supporting community investments so we can stop crime at its root.

I will now discuss the substantive changes proposed in Bill C-48. Canadians expect laws that both keep them safe and respect the rights enshrined in the charter. In Bill C-48, I believe we have struck that balance.

Bill C-48 is a targeted approach to stopping repeat violent offenders. The bill proposes amendments to the reverse onus bail provisions in the Criminal Code to make it more onerous for certain accused persons to receive bail. A reverse onus does simply this. It shifts the burden of proof at a bail hearing from the Crown to the accused. This means that there is a presumption that the accused will be detained unless they can demonstrate to the court that they should be released because they do not pose a significant risk to public safety, are not a flight risk or that their release would not undermine the confidence of the public.

● (1605)

What Bill C-48 would do is add a reverse onus provision to ensure greater scrutiny of cases involving repeat violent offending with weapons. For this reverse onus to apply, the accused must, one, be charged with a violence offence involving the use of a weapon. Two, they must have been convicted in the last five years of a violent offence involving the use of a weapon. Three, both the offence charged and the past offence must have a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years or more. This threefold criteria would encourage courts to focus their attention on those who present a higher risk of reoffending at the bail stage of criminal proceedings.

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Second, four firearms offences would be added to the reverse onus provisions that currently exist. This proposal has the broad support of law enforcement agencies right across this country, from literally every province and territory. It would implement the call from all 13 premiers of three different political stripes to add a reverse onus for the offence of possessing a loaded prohibited or restricted firearm. What we would be adding to the premiers' request is unlawful possession of a loaded or easily loaded prohibited or restricted firearm, breaking or entering to steal a firearm, robbery to steal a firearm and making an automatic firearm. Anyone involved in those offences would be subject to the same reverse onus.

This bill would also clarify the meaning of a prohibition order at the bail stage. A reverse onus at bail currently applies to accused persons charged with offences involving firearms or other weapons where they are subject to a weapons prohibition order. This bill would make absolutely clear that a prohibition order includes a bail condition prohibiting an accused from being in possession of firearms or other weapons.

The other changes proposed by Bill C-48 relate to considerations that courts must make in their bail decisions. This bill would require bail courts to consider if the accused person's criminal record includes a history of convictions involving violence regardless of whether the accused is subject to a reverse onus.

In addition, Bill C-48 would add a further requirement that bail courts expressly consider the safety and security of the community in relation to the alleged offence when making a bail order, in addition to the safety and security of any victim who is involved. This would ensure that specific concerns from smaller municipalities, indigenous communities and racialized or marginalized communities are taken into consideration at the bail hearing. That directly responds to what we heard, particularly from small communities in Canada's north, including small indigenous communities in the north, which wanted their needs reflected and views heard at such bail hearings.

Let me now turn to two changes the Senate is proposing to make to this bill.

The first proposal of the Senate relates to an amendment that would require a statement in the record of proceedings as to how a justice or justice of the peace considered section 493.2 of the Criminal Code. This section states that, when making a decision relating to bail, courts shall give particular attention to the circumstances of indigenous accused and accused who belong to a vulnerable population that is overrepresented in the criminal justice system and that is disadvantaged in obtaining bail.

This is a mandatory provision that requires courts to turn their minds to these circumstances anytime they make a bail decision. What the Senate is doing is doubling down on that provision and emphasizing its importance. In terms of the overrepresentation of Black Canadians and indigenous persons in the criminal justice system, overrepresentation is a critical problem and I welcome this amendment.

The provision being cited by the Senate was originally enacted in 2019. Since then, many cases on the application of this provision have developed guidance for bail courts. It is clear from these cases

that failing to adequately consider section 493.2 is an error of law that is a reviewable error. That said, the Senate heard from some witnesses that section 493.2 is not always considered and not always applied consistently despite there being a requirement to do so.

What the proposed amendment from the Senate would do is ensure that bail courts are fulfilling their obligations to consider these particular circumstances in every applicable case and recording that they have done so. This amendment would also be consistent with the preamble of Bill C-48, which currently reiterates "the need to consider the particular circumstances of accused persons, including those from populations that face disadvantages at the bail stage and are overrepresented in the criminal justice system". In light of this, the government and I support this amendment and invite all members of this House to vote in favour of it.

● (1610)

Tackling the overincarceration of Black, indigenous and marginalized Canadians remains a fundamental priority for me and the government. We cannot accept a status quo in which marginalized groups are disproportionately incarcerated on account of systemic factors, including systemic racism and discrimination. To date, we have made progress on addressing this problem, including by removing multiple mandatory minimum penalties in the form of Bill C-5, which has already passed in the House.

There is always more work to do. I am proud of the work we have done on implementing assessments of the impact of race and culture and relaunching the anti-racism action plan, as well as the work that is ongoing on the Black justice strategy and the indigenous justice strategy. This is all fundamental to the work that will continue to be done to address systemic inequalities in the justice system.

The second amendment adopted by the Senate specified that this legislation be referred to a standing committee of the Senate for review at a future date. The effect of this amendment is that both the House of Commons and the Senate would be required to review the legislation five years after the act receives royal assent. I support this change as well.

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[*Translation*]

I am encouraged by the speed at which we were able to reach a consensus in the House of Commons last time we studied this bill on September 18. I would suggest that we do the same so that the bill can be passed as soon as possible.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that bail is a responsibility shared by the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Every level of government has a role to play to make sure that our bail system works as intended. The government is doing its part, but non-legislative changes such as access to permanent housing and mental health and addiction support services are also key elements in improving our bail system.

I commend the work recently done in these areas, and I will continue to collaborate with all levels of government to make sure that the objectives of the bail system are achieved. I also undertake to make sure that we collect accurate and complete data on the bail system in Canada, and I will continue to work with our partners to that end.

[*English*]

Data sharing is essential for monitoring our bail system and ensuring it functions properly. I call upon provinces and territories to collect and share enhanced bail data. This will allow us to make evidence-based changes to bail law in the future.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to read from a news article from this summer with respect to a shooting that happened in Toronto. It outlines that, in 2019, this person was previously sentenced for aggravated assault and weapons dangerous for an altercation with another man in 2018. He was acquitted of a charge of attempted murder. He also acknowledged in the article that he had a long rap sheet of previous issues, including a lifetime weapons prohibition, yet this individual is still out on bail for two other altercations that he had in 2022 and 2021. This summer, while out on the street, he shot and killed somebody.

What is this bill going to do to make sure that this man gets jail and not bail?

Hon. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for outlining that important situation. It reflects the needs and concerns of communities right around this country, particularly with respect to firearms.

What I would identify for him is that we have firearms legislation that is currently in the Senate: Bill C-21 is geared toward promoting community safety.

I would also refer him to the specific provisions asked for by Conservative, Liberal and NDP premiers right around the country about ensuring that bail is not provided when people have violated the rules relating to having a loaded, prohibited or restricted firearm. We have added to those and have actually gone further than what was asked for by the premiers to include those who break and enter to steal a firearm, use robbery to steal a firearm or make an automatic firearm.

There is no doubt that ensuring that we get tough with firearms and those who use firearms to commit crimes is part and parcel of

keeping our communities safe. This bill will help do that by ensuring those types of people do not get bail, as will Bill C-21.

● (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his statement. This is a delicate issue that must be handled intelligently. It is a matter of striking a balance between individual and collective rights, between safety and social peace. Finding that balance is a very delicate exercise, and we all have several cases we could cite.

What is also important is to preserve the basic principles of law, such as the presumption of innocence and the right to remain silent. How can we reconcile all this and still allow judges a certain amount of power at the local level? Judges are trained for this purpose; they hear individual cases and have to render decisions.

I would like to hear what the minister has to say about this. How can we strike that balance? Where do we draw the line between public protection and the guarantee of individual rights?

Hon. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Bloc Québécois member for his important question. We are trying to find that balance, as he pointed out. That is in fact the responsibility of every government when it comes to constitutional rights.

What I will stress is that this is indeed a delicate balance. If we promote reverse onus in the context of bail, we need to always respect paragraph 11(e) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects the right to reasonable bail.

The Supreme Court of Canada has already ruled that the burden of proof can be reversed in certain specific contexts. In our opinion, this bill follows the Supreme Court of Canada's instructions and advice. We respect the individual's right to bail, as well as the collective right to be protected against violent crime.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too am pleased to see this bill back before the House fairly quickly, with Senate amendments, which I think help improve the bill.

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We can make the legislative changes around bail, but there is a concern about public disorder and low-level offenders. We know that one of the reasons people who might be on bail for low-level offences reoffend is that they lack access to mental health programs, adequate income and a lot of the things that would help them overcome the problems that lead them into conflict with their neighbours, friends, family and the legal system.

Will there also be a commitment from the government to provide the funding we need to help support people being a success when they are on bail?

Hon. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member opposite for his work on the justice committee and for his dedication to this cause, as well as the dedication of the B.C. NDP government, in terms of promoting this.

With respect to the issue that he has raised, I would say that he is absolutely accurate. One cannot be addressing one facet without addressing some of the complementary features. I would point him to a couple of things.

First, in terms of the commitments we have made financially, in terms of health care supports throughout the country and in terms of the \$190-billion 10-year deal that was struck by our government with various provinces, in that accord, we targeted certain sectors or certain categories of health care treatment, including mental health.

Second, I would also underscore that we have put money into the system to help with guns and gangs. That guns and gangs portion or envelope of money, which totals over \$700 million over the last four years, is being used by law enforcement personnel around the country to ensure that the bail provisions we are putting forward are coupled with the tools necessary for law enforcement to ensure that they are keeping communities safe on the ground.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the minister can just provide his thoughts in regard to the bill being at the stage that it currently is. I have witnessed just a great deal of support across the country, whether it is from premiers, law enforcement agencies or different stakeholders, even going through second reading and how it was expedited.

It seems to me that this law is in need of getting passed through the House and ultimately being given royal assent.

Could he just provide his perspective on the type of support that is behind this legislation today?

• (1620)

Hon. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I will say to the member that it has been quite remarkable in terms of the support that went into the development of this bill and in terms of law enforcement personnel and political leaders around this country, who are urging us to get this bill done.

I will say quite candidly that I took it as an opportunity when the leader of the official opposition said to get this bill done, to let us reconvene Parliament. He said on a radio show, in the middle of the

summer, that we could do it on the same day Parliament was reconvened.

He was true to his word then. I would ask him to stay true to his word now. We were able to get this done with unanimity in this chamber because premiers, including Conservative premiers, and ministers were pushing us to get this done. They included Minister Bronwyn Eyre in Saskatchewan and Premier Doug Ford in Ontario.

That was amazing co-operation at the time. That goodwill still exists among political leadership and law enforcement leadership around Canada.

I would like to harness it and harness the goodwill of the parties opposite to, again, have these amendments passed quickly. Thus, we can ensure that Canadians are kept safe, particularly as we enter the Christmas season.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister mentioned rural Canada. I have risen in this House 27 times now, presenting petitions on behalf of the good people of Swan River, Manitoba.

I have just one statistic here, Minister, that I want you to listen to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will ask the member to address all his questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the minister.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

One individual in Swan River was responsible for 20 offences and 93 service calls in only 18 months. Would this bill address that individual?

Hon. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa in Manitoba raising this instance and talking about repeat offending. I would say that, if those offences involve violence and offences with a weapon, the rules that we are putting in place are certainly meant to be applied by judges and justices of the peace right around the country, including in Swan River. There should be a direct impact on situations such as that in terms of promoting community safety around the country.

I would say equally that we were able to get this bill done quickly the last time it was in the chamber, in a matter of hours on the same day. That kind of co-operation is critically needed. Unfortunately, we have not seen that level of co-operation in the Senate, particularly among Conservative senators. They have delayed this bill in some respects over the last three to four weeks.

I am glad the bill is now before us. We have two Senate amendments to deal with. We can deal with them today, get this passed today and get it to royal assent immediately. That would be a terrific outcome for Canadians, including those in Swan River.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Sport; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Housing.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am standing on two points of order.

First, there have been discussions among the parties and, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 66 on Motion No. 43 to concur in the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair and at the conclusion of the time provided for debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred pursuant to Standing Order 66.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary's moving the motion will please say nay.

[Translation]

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

WAYS AND MEANS MOTION NO. 19

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the second point of order is a little more detailed.

I rise to respond to a point of order raised on Tuesday, November 28, by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle respecting the inadmissibility of the notice of Ways and Means Motion No. 19 and two items of Private Members' Business.

The crux of the argument by the member opposite is on the principle of a bill at second reading stage. This is the heart of the argument. I would humbly point to the purpose of the second reading debate and the vote at that stage, which is on the principle of the bill.

Before I get into the specific matters involved in the member's argument, I would like to remind my colleagues across the aisle of what a debate and vote on the principle of a bill entails.

Points of Order

Members of the House know that our Standing Orders and practices derive from those of Westminster. If a member would like to look into how debates at Westminster are handled at the second reading stage, they might be surprised. The British House of Commons has 650 members, yet the debate on any government bill at the second reading stage very rarely exceeds one sitting day.

Now I will go to the specific argument raised by my colleague across the way. The two bills in question that are subject to certain provisions containing Ways and Means Motion No. 19 are Bill C-318, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, and Bill C-323, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act (mental health services).

With respect to the first item, Bill C-318 requires a royal recommendation which would govern the entire scheme of a new employment insurance benefit for adoptive parents. As a result, the bill cannot come to a vote at third reading in the absence of a royal recommendation provided by a minister of the Crown.

The bill was drafted by employees of the law clerk's office who would have notified the sponsor of this requirement. While I would not want to speculate on the intentions of the member who sponsored this bill, there is little doubt that the member knew this bill would not pass without royal recommendation.

As a result of a ministerial mandate commitment to bring forward an employment insurance benefit for adoptive parents with an accompanying royal recommendation, the government has brought forward this measure for consideration of the House in a manner that raises no procedural obstacle to providing this important benefit for Canadians. It is the sole prerogative of the executive to authorize new and distinct spending from the consolidated revenue fund, and that is what is proposed in the bill that would implement the measures contained in Ways and Means Motion No. 19.

Now I will go to the point of a similar question. The example my colleague raised with respect to the Speaker's ruling on February 18, 2021, concerns Bill C-13 and Bill C-218 respecting single sports betting. Both bills contain the same principle, that being to allow certain forms of single sports betting. The approaches contained in Bill C-13 and Bill C-218 were slightly different, but achieved the same purpose. As a result, and rightly so, the Speaker ruled that the bills were substantially similar and ruled that Bill C-13 not be proceeded with.

The situation with Bill C-13 and Bill C-218 bears no resemblance to the situation currently before the House, and the member opposite has been again helpful in making my argument. The member cites the situation with Bill C-19 and Bill C-250 concerning Holocaust denial.

The case with this situation, and the case currently before the House, is instructional for the question faced by the Speaker, which is whether the principle of the questions on the second reading of Bill C-318 and Bill C-323, and the question on Ways and Means Motion No. 19, are the same.

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The answer is categorically no. The question on both Ways and Means Motion No. 19 and the question should Ways and Means Motion No. 19 be adopted on the implementing of a bill are vastly different. The questions at second reading on Bill C-318 and Bill C-323 are specific questions on the principle of measures contained in those private members' bills.

• (1625)

The question on Ways and Means Motion No. 19 and the question at second reading on the bill to implement those measures is much broader. As the member stated in his intervention yesterday, Ways and Means Motion No. 19 contains many measures announced in the 2023 budget as well as in the fall economic statement. While the measures to implement the fall economic statement are thematically linked to the issue of affordability, they contain many measures to address the affordability challenges facing Canadians. As a result, the question at second reading on implementing legislation is a very different question for the House to consider.

In conclusion, while there have been precedents respecting similar questions on similar bills which propose a scheme for a specific issue, namely Bill C-13 and Bill C-218, this and other precedents do not in any way suggest that the questions at second reading on Bill C-323 and Bill C-318 in any way resemble the question on Ways and Means Motion No. 19 and the question at second reading on the implementing bill for the measures contained in the 2023 budget and the fall economic statement.

• (1630)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the member. I appreciate the additional information and we will certainly take that into consideration as the deliberation is happening on drafting a response to the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-48, an act to amend the Criminal Code (bail reform).

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the current Prime Minister, Canada is not as safe these days. Canadians know that and they feel that. They hear example after example of that fear right at home. Members need not take my word for it. Canadians can share, sadly, many personal examples of that. However, I want to start my comments by framing the context of why we have this bill before us in Parliament again.

Earlier this summer, the government's own numbers agency, Stats Canada, released some staggering numbers that show just how bad the crime wave in Canada is after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government. It summarized a scary national breakdown of public safety in this country for an increase in occurrences of crime since 2015. Total violent crimes are up 39%. Homicides are up 43%, and are up for the fourth year in a row. Gang-related homicides are up 108%. Violent gun crimes are up 101%, and have been

up every single year the Prime Minister has been in office. Aggravated assaults are up 24%. Assaults with a weapon or bodily harm are up 61%. Total sexual assaults are up 71%. Sex crimes against children are up 126%. Kidnappings are up 36%. Car thefts are up 34%.

When we look at the violent crimes severity index, under the previous Conservative government, it decreased by nearly 25%. Under the current Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government, it has gone in the total opposite direction. We can do a regional breakdown. I am taking the time to put this data from Stats Canada into the record for a specific reason.

In the city of Toronto, the total number of violent Criminal Code violations increased to 57,896 in 2022. That is a 30% increase since 2015. Homicides are up. After eight years, they are up 65.85%. In Toronto, violent firearms offences increased to 655 in 2022. That is an increase of 64%. Last year, 44 murders were committed with a firearm in Toronto. Twenty-four of those were by someone who was out on bail.

In the city of Winnipeg, the total number of violent Criminal Code violations increased to over 14,000, a 48.5% increase in eight years. Homicides increased by 136% in the city of Winnipeg.

In Calgary, the violent Criminal Code violations increased to nearly 16,000 last year, a 40% increase over eight years since the Prime Minister came into office. Violent firearms offences increased by 42.8% in Calgary.

Let us go a little bit further to Edmonton. Violent firearms offences increased by 97%.

Let us go a little further west to Vancouver. Violent Criminal Code violations increased to nearly 32,000 in 2022. That is a 22.5% increase since the Prime Minister and the NDP-Liberal government took office. Homicides are up 55% in Vancouver and violent firearms offences are up 22% in that city alone.

• (1635)

Coming back here to the nation's capital, the Ottawa-Gatineau region, the number of violent crime violations is just shy of 14,000, which is a 37.1% increase over eight years. Homicide has increased in the nation's capital by 112%. Violent firearms offences have increased by 115%. This is the situation after eight years of the Prime Minister and the Liberals' soft-on-crime policies. This is the record they sadly own.

Government Orders

Just over my shoulder behind me is my colleague for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, which is in rural Manitoba. I have highlighted the stats of many of our major cities, but rural crime is also out of control. My colleague has raised this, I would say, at least a couple of dozen times. I have heard him tabling multiple petitions in the House from Canadians begging the Prime Minister to understand the public safety threat and the crime wave that has been unleashed in this country because of the government's policies, but it is to little or no avail. This is what is so frustrating for Canadians.

The Prime Minister is the best at photo ops. He loves selfies. He loves making announcements about the things he will do, how great it is, and how it has never been so good for Canadians. This is what we hear him talk about often, but any time the going gets tough, or we read the data and statistics as I just did, the Prime Minister heads for the hills. He goes up to the cottage and refuses to answer questions.

I have never, in my 36 years of life, seen somebody skirt from accountability based on their own record. It is always somebody else's fault. When we watch debate in the House and watch question period, we never see the government take an ounce of responsibility for the problems of this country. The Liberals will blame the provinces. They talk about law enforcement. They talk about everything but what they are actually responsible for and the policies that are doing this to every part of the country.

Before I get to Bill C-48 specifically, it is important for Canadians and the House to be reminded why we are talking about Bill C-48, and for the Liberals and the NDP to be humbled. It all emanates from an idea they had less than five years ago with Bill C-75, which made significant, major and wrong reforms to the bail process in Canada. It was passed in 2019, and it legislated a “principle of restraint”, which is what they called it, concerning bail. This was for police and courts to ensure that release at the earliest opportunity would be favoured over detention. Bail by default is a simple way of explaining this.

However, make no mistake about it, I read all those comments into the record about the severity of public safety in this country, which is being felt by millions of Canadians in their communities. This is not because of some random chance. It is not because of some phenomenon that just came along. It is because the Prime Minister passed Bill C-75 and wrecked our bail reform process. A revolving door of bail is happening in every part of this country.

Now, with Bill C-48, the Liberals have admitted it. This was after immense pressure from Conservatives, premiers of all parties in every province, territorial leaders and law enforcement officials who are working on the front lines of this crisis day in and day out. They were polled and forced to make this change to backtrack on their soft-on-crime policies. However, let me make it clear that this is only one small step of what needs to happen when it comes to bail reform in this country. They have gone back an inch, but they need to go back a heck of a lot further to solve the problems we are facing. It is simple, as members have heard us say before: jail not bail for repeat violent offenders.

• (1640)

I will nip this in the bud right off the bat. The Liberals always say that people make mistakes. Now I am not perfect, and I have

made some mistakes, believe it or not. We all have. Canadians are concerned and frustrated that there are these repeat violent offenders in all those crime stats I just talked about. They are also seeing that law enforcement is extremely frustrated because, when someone gets arrested, they go in, and within a day or so, they are out on bail.

We are seeing a correlation. Law enforcement statistics are showing that repeat violent offenders are out causing chaos. They are causing numerous police interactions, numbering in the thousands. We are not talking about a speeding ticket, a small amount of substances or even a first offence. It is repeat violent offenders, and Canadians are getting tired of the revolving door. Our law enforcement is demoralized at how the government is ignoring the very valid concerns it is raising.

The Vancouver Police Union had an unbelievable statistics. I had to reread it probably two or three times just to comprehend the magnitude of how broken the bail system has become under the Liberals and the NDP. The Vancouver Police Union said that the same 40 offenders last year had 6,000 police interactions. Members can think of the resources of the revolving door, which is, over and over again, deferring police resources from keeping our communities safe. There were 6,000 times involving the same 40 people. That is insane. That is a broken Liberal soft-on-crime policy.

The frustrating part about all this is that the Liberals still do not get it. This bill goes nowhere near far enough to reverse the damage they have done and the public safety crisis, the crime wave, they have unleashed across the country.

The Prime Minister is in trouble. He was in trouble back in the summer. He desperately wanted to reset things. He is down in the polls, and after eight years, Canadians realize he is just not worth the cost, the corruption or the lack of safety we have in this country. He shuffled his cabinet. A few people announced their retirements and went to the backbenches or the side benches. New fresh faces came into cabinet.

There was a new justice minister, who I am going to guess on the very first day, after visiting Rideau Hall and heading to the Department of Justice for a briefing, was given a summary of the same Stats Canada data I just read. The first opportunity is not a full reversal on the failed Bill C-75.

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We will fast-forward to the new justice minister going on CBC, of all places, for an interview. When he was confronted about those stats and how devastating they were, with the rapid increase of violent crime in this country, his response to Canadians was to say that it was all in their heads. He said, “empirically it’s unlikely” that Canada had become less safe. That is the reset. That is the new justice minister advocating for public safety in this country saying that it is just in Canadians’ heads and that it is just a thing you hear on TV. He is out of touch.

This is what we have seen time and time again with the government’s approach to bills such as Bill C-48. Premiers, law enforcement and millions of Canadians who have become victims of crime and/or know somebody who has become a victim of crime are saying that enough is enough.

● (1645)

The justice minister gave a slap in the face to victims of crime. To have the Prime Minister double down, denying just how bad the public safety crisis is in this country, shows us where the Liberals are starting from. The Liberals should frankly be embarrassed about Bill C-48 because they are admitting that the approach in their previous bills was absolutely wrong. They have backtracked.

As I said before, Conservatives have been clear that this does not go far enough to fix the revolving door of bail in this country. This bill is before us only because of the efforts of Conservative members of Parliament at committee, of provincial premiers who were united against the federal government and the Prime Minister and of courageous frontline law enforcement in every part of this country. They have all had enough. We owe it to them to not just pass Bill C-48 but to do the full fix to protect law enforcement and Canadians and keep people safe. This bill is an admission of failure by the Liberals and NDP. It is an admission that they were soft on crime, and it is proof that they are failing Canadians in keeping them safe.

I want to highlight the months of testimony that was heard at the justice committee on Canada’s broken bail system. There were many key points raised that need to be brought into the debate we are having on the floor of the House. Comprehensive bail reform is urgent. Repeat and violent offenders are becoming a bigger problem for law enforcement. The public’s right to be protected against violent repeat offenders must outweigh the violent repeat offenders’ right to bail. That, as we would say, is common sense.

There is agreement among numerous individuals with a background in law enforcement and public safety who testified that Bill C-75 has failed to help victims of intimate violence. The current bail system now has put frontline officers at risk, and the Liberals, with their efforts, have sadly eroded the integrity of Canada’s bail system. Judges have to apply the Criminal Code as written, and now people who pose a risk to public safety are too often receiving bail. The government is sending the wrong message to Canadians.

It did this only after all of this pressure, whether it was at the justice committee, in question period, in the letter that the premiers signed, from numerous police unions and provincial and national chiefs of police associations or, most importantly, through the devastating stories from way too many Canadians about how they have become victims of crime and about living in neighbourhoods

where, for generations and decades, they felt safe in their hamlets, subdivisions, communities and small towns, and now that has been eroded.

It is important in these debates to humanize what is going on. The sad part that is not in Bill C-48 is the devastating and sad story from only a few months ago of OPP Constable Grzegorz Pierzchala. His killer was out on bail. We now know that, based on this bill and its small fix, which is not the full fix but a partial fix, that individual would have still been out on bail. It is extremely frustrating. The list goes on of media story after media story that highlight the crisis we are in.

It was the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police that begged for an urgent meeting with premiers and national leaders about this bill. It does not go the full way that it has been asking for. It says easy bail policies make “much of our work pointless”. That is what the chiefs of police are saying about the Liberals’ legislative record on justice and public safety.

The BC Urban Mayors’ Caucus compiled data showing more than 11,000 negative police contacts by just 204 offenders who “rarely faced any consequences for their criminality”. I spoke before about the Vancouver Police Union. Police officers in Vancouver themselves have released data on the 44 most recent stranger attack suspects, showing that 78% of them had already been charged in a previous criminal incident.

● (1650)

Most notably, the law requires that the top priority in any bail hearing is “the release of the accused at the earliest reasonable opportunity and on the least onerous conditions”. That has got to change. Again, jail, not bail, for repeat offenders must be the goal of the government. After eight years, Canadians cannot afford any more of this nonsense from the Liberals, propped up every step of the way by the NDP.

I want to end my comments tonight with a reflection on where we are at when it comes to the priorities of public safety of the Liberal government and the Prime Minister. I want to talk about the benefit of the doubt, and have Canadians reflect on something that would tell them everything they need to know about the broken approach the Liberals have and the contrast on this side of the aisle with Conservatives, which could not be more clear.

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With respect to bail reform, with Bill C-75 in the Liberals' legislative record, they want to give the principle of restraint, the least onerous bail conditions, and give those who are accused the benefit of the doubt so they can get out on bail. Even if, over and over again, they are being arrested or charged, or are having interactions with the police, by default, by benefit of the doubt, they get out. The result has been a crime wave, with skyrocketing numbers from Statistics Canada on where we are at in this country.

By contrast, when we talk about the benefit of the doubt, what is the solution for the problem, in the minds of the Liberals? It is to take away hunting rifles and go after law-abiding hunters, farmers, indigenous communities and sport shooters alike. There is zero benefit of the doubt for those who are law-abiding, have their PAL, have a criminal record check and have never had an issue or an interaction with police whatsoever. The Liberals and the Prime Minister do not think they deserve any benefit of the doubt; they just want to confiscate and waste billions going after Canadians who are of no concern with respect to public safety. That benefit of the doubt tells us everything we need to know about the Prime Minister. There is no common sense there.

It is time, not just to pass Bill C-48, a small fraction of a solution, but to do the right thing for Canadians who are tired either of being the victim of crime or of hearing of a neighbour, a friend or a co-worker who has been the victim of crime. Do it for the frontline law enforcement members in this country, who deserve the resources to keep repeat violent offenders behind bars. We need jail, not bail, for repeat violent offenders.

It is time in this country for common sense. It is time for a real plan for public safety. It is time for the Prime Minister to put a little water in his wine, have a little humility, listen to premiers, listen to law enforcement and bring change, not only with Bill C-48 but also with the full fix this country needs in order to be protected.

• (1655)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member would like to be a bit more granular. I am looking at the crime severity index, and it seems that the communities that are really suffering the most with the lift, particularly in violent crimes, are medium-sized and small cities that are more in the rural areas. Therefore, I am wondering whether he could offer an explanation as to what might be going on there that causes this lift, especially in violent crime. That is the first thing.

The second thing is that I would like him to comment on a situation that I have commented on quite often in British Columbia, where the police cannot lay charges; they have to be approved by a provincial Crown counsel. Provincial Crown counsels will not lay charges unless they are almost 100% sure they are going to get a conviction. I do not know whether that is the situation in other provinces, but I would not mind the hon. member's reflection on that.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, if the Liberal member of Parliament from British Columbia wants to know what is happening in small and medium-sized cities, we have had a Liberal government for eight years that has passed soft-on-crime legislation that has put repeat violent offenders on the streets, over and over

again, and we are seeing skyrocketing crime rates. The Liberals broke the bail system; that is why the bill is before us. The Liberals are admitting that the bail reforms they made are broken and are not working. However, they are not going far enough. The Liberals need a little more humility.

Here is the thing. This is the problem with the member from British Columbia. I cited the Vancouver Police Union and the Union of B.C. Municipalities that talked about exactly that for repeat violent offenders, but the member goes on and blames everybody else but the Liberal government. Liberals have been in power for eight years. Crime went down before they came into office, and since they have been there, it has only gone up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague has already touched on the subject, but I would like him to tell us more about other initiatives that are seeking stronger mechanisms to ensure that the justice system is more closely aligned with public safety, particularly with regard to repeat offenders or people who commit offences using a firearm.

Can he remind us of what more should be done?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for asking me this question, which I appreciate. As a bonus, it gives me a chance to practise my second language a bit.

A lot of work can be done in communities across the country to reduce gun violence, for example.

[*English*]

There are a lot of things we could do when working with law enforcement, and not take away tools, like bail reform, by saying that repeat violent offenders can have a revolving door. We need to go after the smuggling of firearms from the United States. We need to go after gang violence and its increases. Programs for youth and deterrents for those crimes need to be investments. We need to invest in our law enforcement, not take resources away.

At the end of the day, when we look at this and at the root causes, not just the devastating numbers I mentioned from Stats Canada, we are seeing repeat violent offenders being a significant part of the increase. We are seeing illegally smuggled guns being part of it. We are seeing a government that is completely unserious about addressing the problem and that is instead going after law-abiding hunters and firearm owners in this country rather than going after the root causes.

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Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am a bit puzzled by the speech from the Conservative member, because, of course, his party was part of the House of Commons that unanimously supported the bill. His party was the one that called for swift action to deal with repeat violent offenders. Many of the groups the member cited in raising the problem now support the bill. It is a little puzzling to hear the tone of the speech, when I hope the Conservatives are still supporting a bill like this, which has been so broadly supported by the Canadian public, including premiers, police and victims associations.

• (1700)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I would say that the member needs to dig a little deeper into the testimony and into the words being said.

Again, Bill C-48 would fix a small part of a very big problem in this country. It is not the end. It is not that we just pass the bill and walk away and clap, saying that it is a job well done. There is a lot more that needs to be done. There are many examples, as I cited in my speech, of repeat violent offenders getting out through a revolving door, over and over again.

The Liberals are taking a narrow approach that would not fix the problem and would not get crime rates and the crime wave addressed in this country. The NDP always does this. New Democrats go along with the Liberals; they go along with the plan, and now, they are just as responsible for the backtrack. They pushed the initial bill, Bill C-75 every step the way. They are admitting, just as much as the Liberals are, that they were soft on crime and that they are wrong in their approach. They need more humility. They need a little more water in their wine, and they need to do a full backtrack.

Law enforcement, Canadians and numerous experts are saying that this is one step, but many more steps are needed to fix the problem. The work is not done yet.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, we know that Canadians are less safe. I see that in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country. We know that this crime wave has been created by bail reform changes that happened with Bill C-75. We now have a revolving door of criminals in Canada.

As you mentioned in your intervention, this would fix some of the issues, but not all of them. It certainly would not bring it back to the level that it was before the government made the changes. Could you comment on the fact that it would not be going back to the same level and would not actually fix a lot of the crime issues we are seeing with bail?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind members that they are to address all questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the members.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, if I had a piece of advice, and I try to give some constructive advice and commentary around here once in a while, I would encourage every member of Parliament, every member of the House, regardless of party, to spend a little time on the front lines.

I have had the honour of serving here in the House for four years. One of the most impactful things I am able to do a couple of times a year is a ride-along on a Friday or Saturday night from eight o'clock until about two or three in the morning. One morning, I was out until about 4 a.m. or 5 a.m. I have done it with the OPP in SDG and with the Cornwall Police Service.

I want to build on what my colleague just said: The bill does not go far enough with respect to the changes the government is proposing. All any member of Parliament needs to do is spend a night or two on the front lines, at least, each year. Talk to frontline law enforcement. They will tell us the demoralizing aspect, the demoralizing environment, that is being created with the bail reform under Bill C-75, and now with only this partial fix. They would tell us, I think, the intention, the message or the morale with respect to criminals. They know they are getting out all the time. They know the revolving door. MPs need to spend more time on the front lines. I think all Canadians would benefit from it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last summer, the leader of the Conservative Party made it very clear that he wanted the session to reconvene, and he made a commitment that the Conservative Party is so much wanting to see the bail reform that it would be prepared to pass it through the entire system in one day.

We had a delay because of Conservative senators, but, at the end of the day, we have an opportunity to actually pass legislation. Does the member believe there is any sense of commitment from the Conservative Party today to actually see the bill passed, given the wide spectrum of support out there and the commitment his leader gave a few months ago to pass the bill as quickly as possible?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, the member from Winnipeg gives me a good opportunity to have Canadians understand that they can read between the lines of what the member asks all the time.

The bill just came back. We are not even an hour into talking about it, and the Liberals do not like the direction in which the debate is going, because Conservatives are highlighting the failed approach after eight years of the Prime Minister and the NDP-Liberal government. I did not even get through my Q and As, and he is asking to drop it and have it go by.

I will repeat, again, which clearly makes it uncomfortable for the member opposite, that the bill does not go far enough. The Liberals, after eight years, own the Stats Canada statistics. They own the violent crime increase of 39%. It did not happen by chance or as some sort of phenomenon. There is a direct correlation. If the member spent some more time talking to frontline law enforcement members in Winnipeg, I think they would say not to just pass the bill, but to do more. It is only a small fraction of the solution that is needed to make our streets safe again.

I will say that, with regard to the Leader of the Opposition's resolve to pass the bill, it is not to just pass the bill but to fix the whole problem, and not piecemeal, not to just try to address it and pass it on.

The member does not like his record being talked about. That is just fine.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-48 is not the type of bill we are used to seeing in a democracy, at least not here in Canada, and even less so in Quebec. We firmly believe in the presumption of innocence, that a person who is accused of a crime, whatever that crime, should be presumed innocent, and that the Crown must provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt without compelling self-incrimination.

There are, however, exceptions. I do not want to repeat what I said around 10 weeks ago about the same bill when I was announcing the Bloc Québécois's support. I still support the bill, and for the same reasons. I think that there are indeed situations in which the burden of proof should be reversed, for example when a person accused of certain serious crimes is asking for bail.

What Bill C-48 proposes is that we reverse the burden of proof for serious offences involving violence, firearms offences, offences involving intimate partner violence, and offences for which the accused person has been found guilty and convicted within the past five years. In those cases, even if reversing the burden of proof is a little off-putting, I think we should do it in the case of conditional release to ensure public safety and avoid the commission of other, similar crimes. That, in a nutshell, is what I said about 10 weeks ago, and I am saying it again today. We think it is necessary in those types of cases.

Now we are studying the Senate's report. What is the Senate saying? Essentially, it is saying that it agrees with everything, but would like to add two conditions. I am summarizing a bit here, but one of the two conditions is that, if a judge decides that there is cause to reverse the burden of proof, they must "include [in the record of proceedings] a statement indicating how they considered their particular circumstances, as required under that section." The judge must take the victim's situation into consideration and, if they do, the Senate tells us that they have to include in the record not only a statement that they did so, but an explanation of what motivated their decision.

In this respect, I agree, because many of these cases will find their way to appeals courts, and many of these situations will give rise to pleas based on the provisions of the charter, which effective-

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ly guarantees the presumption of innocence and that, as a result, the Crown, not the defendant, must prove that the defendant is guilty. In this case, the Crown must prove that the defendant has to be detained in order to maintain public safety.

Seeing as this violates the provisions of the charter, the courts may have to decide whether the trial judge made an informed decision in the circumstances. Should that occur, it is important for the judge to have noted the reasons for his or her decision in the court records, which could provide insight for an appeal board on whether the ruling was sound. I think that is wise. I still believe in the importance of Bill C-48 and the reverse onus in situations like the ones indicated in the bill. For that reason I agree with the Senate's proposal, which I support almost enthusiastically.

The other provision the Senate mentions states that five years after the bill comes into force there will be a review of the question to determine whether the bill should be amended and decide whether it furthers the interests of justice.

• (1710)

The bill provided that this review would be done by a committee of the House of Commons. The Senate says it agrees, but that it too wants to participate. The amendment proposes that Bill C-48 be referred to the "standing committee of the Senate and the standing committee of the House of Commons that normally consider" these matters.

I really do not see any reason to oppose the Senate's request. For these reasons, I am also in favour of the second aspect of the Senate's report. I know I am entitled to speak for 20 minutes and that I have been speaking for five or six minutes, but I do not think I will ask the House to listen to me repeat what I said about 10 weeks ago, in late September, nor will I repeat what I have just said using different words.

We are in favour of this motion and want Bill C-48 to be passed and to come into effect as soon as possible.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am going to give my colleague an opportunity to use up a bit more floor time.

Joking aside, this is a very serious subject. We are seeking a fragile balance between individual rights and collective rights, the protection of society and the community. This is not an easy balance to strike.

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I am very interested in what my colleague had to say. He showed that people do not need to spend a lot of time talking when what they say is clear and precise. I congratulate him. As my colleague explained, this bill applies to repeat offenders when the offence is repeated within a five-year period. Could he tell us whether the bill makes a distinction for prolific offenders? Does that change anything? Is the five-year period extended in their case?

When we talk about issues like this, it is easy to fall into the trap of populism, because we can all think about horrific cases we have seen or heard about. I would like to know whether this is clearly expressed in the bill, and whether there is any leeway for the judge. It is also important to allow the judge to gauge the specific situation. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé, who always asks really good questions. It is not always easy to answer them, but they are always important questions.

That being said, I will answer both components of his question.

First, the bill defines a repeat offender as someone who has committed “an offence in the commission of which violence was allegedly used, threatened or attempted against a person with the use of a weapon, and the accused has been previously convicted, within five years of the day on which they were charged for that offence, of another offence in the commission of which violence was also used, threatened or attempted against any person with the use of a weapon, if the maximum term of imprisonment for each of those offences is 10 years or more”.

We simply want to avoid being taken for a ride. A repeat offender is someone who, every two, three or five years at most, repeatedly appears before the courts, charged with using a firearm to commit a violent offence. We believe, without presuming this person guilty, that there is a very good chance that they are dangerous for society. We are saying that the judge will have to take this into account before releasing them.

That does not mean that the judge is obliged to reach a particular decision. To answer the second part of my colleague's question, the judge does indeed retain some discretion. However, the onus is reversed. Individuals found guilty of a gun crime two or three years ago will have to prove that they are no longer too dangerous to be released. The judge will have all the necessary discretion to release them or not, but the onus will be reversed during the judicial process. The Crown will not be required to prove that such individuals are dangerous and must remain in custody. The individuals themselves must prove that they are not dangerous and that they can be released.

• (1715)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I intend to be very brief this afternoon because the bill we have before us was supported unanimously by the House and has had some useful amendments made by the Senate, which I now hear that everyone in the House is prepared to support.

The bill would do two things. One thing, which we have focused on, is that it would make it more difficult for serious repeat violent

offenders to get bail by establishing a reverse onus. All parties here recognize we have a problem that needs to be fixed and that this bill would fix that problem. Therefore, most of the attention has gone to that aspect of the bill.

However, there is a second provision in the bill that is also quite important. Despite the rhetoric we hear from the Conservatives, over the past 30 years, the rate of pretrial detention in Canada has more than tripled. Instead of the Conservatives' version, where everybody gets out with a “get out of jail free” card, we tripled the number of people in detention. Our rate is far higher than in the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, Ireland or any other western European nation. That means, in the situation we have in Canada, there is a second problem with the bail system: The poor, the homeless and those suffering from substance abuse challenges or mental health issues are more likely to be denied bail and end up in custody.

What does that mean? When people are in pretrial custody, they end up in provincial institutions, which have no programming for anti-violence, anti-substance abuse or mental health. Therefore, we are warehousing the poor, the marginalized and indigenous people without giving them the supports they need in the period when they are waiting for a trial. We have to remember that over a third of those who are subject to bail conditions or kept in custody before trial are never convicted of anything. One-third of the people are innocent.

We know what happens. Pretrial detention has very serious impacts. It can lead to loss of employment, it can lead to loss of housing and it can lead to loss of custody of children, because more than 40% of those detained in Canada pretrial are held for more than one month and many are held for as long as six months. This causes a complete disruption in people's lives. It keeps them in a provincial institution, where they have no programming, and makes their conflict in the future with the legal system and society far greater.

In this bill, there is a provision that New Democrats added, which is to make judges consider community-based bail supervision programs. We know what works for those on bail. We know it does not work to ask people's mom, dad or sister to be a surety, because how do they influence the behaviour? The John Howard Society has run very successful pilot programs in Ontario whereby a person gets supervision. In other words, someone looks after their behaviour when they are on bail. Second, they get someone who helps hook them up to the services they need, including mental health and addiction services, employment services and whatever else they need. Those John Howard programs that are running in Ontario have a 90% success rate. In other words, 90% of the people show up in court to face their trial, but in the meantime they do not reoffend.

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The Conservatives are talking about those who offend while they are out on bail, and yes, that happens. However, why does that happen? It is because they do not have access to the services they need and they do not have real supervision. The police do not have a mandate to do bail supervision, nor do they have the resources. We know that community-based bail supervision programs work, and this bill would require judges to consider them.

Of course, that means the federal government would have to pony up some money at the front end to get those kinds of programs running across the country. However, does it cost money? No, it does not, because it is far more expensive to keep people in detention than it is to supervise them in the community. Listen to this: The costs are about 10 times higher to detain someone than to put them into a community-based bail supervision program. That part of this bill is overlooked in the debate about legitimate concerns the public has.

If we really want to get the rate of reoffending down, we know what works. We know it is community-based bail supervision programs. We know it is devoting more money to on-demand mental health treatment. We know it is about more money for on-demand substance abuse treatment. We know it is better access to employment and education programs for those who currently lack those opportunities.

We will continue to support this bill. I think everybody will. I found it a little odd to hear a speech that essentially opposed it from the Conservatives, but I think everybody is on board. We know premiers are on board. We know police associations are on board. We know that victims' associations are on board. We know the Senate is on board. Therefore, if nobody is against this, I am going to end my speech at this point and ask us to move forward with passing this bill, which would approve the Senate amendments, this afternoon.

• (1720)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my town of Cobourg, we recently had an incident where an individual assaulted a person who had their child there, and the individual was out on bail the same day and committed another crime. It was because of the bail reform that the NDP supported earlier, and now this is going halfway back. Is the member at all regretful for his voting record?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I first want to start by saying that I do quite often resent the implication that anyone in the House does not have sympathy for victims and what happens to them, or that anyone in the House actually supports crime and criminal activity. What I support, and my background was in criminal justice for 20 years before I came here, are things that are actually effective in addressing those problems.

We know that if someone is let out on bail now with no supervision, with no access to programming, the chances they will reoffend while they are out on bail are very high. The bill before us, and what we are calling for, would provide for community-based bail supervision programs, which would help avoid exactly the circumstances the member raised in this incident.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about making changes that would actually make a difference.

One of the things that I had proposed in a private member's bill was to get those people who are incarcerated in federal institutions access to addiction treatment and recovery, but the NDP, unfortunately, did not support that. How does the member rationalize saying that he wants to vote for legislation that would actually make a difference and yet he will vote against a bill like that? He also supports bills like Bill C-75, which actually lessened the bail system, and we have seen from the stats how many more victims there are because of Bill C-75.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out to the hon. member that, of course, her private member's bill had a poison pill in it for people like me who want to vote for things that are effective.

Does reform to the bail system cause crime? No, it does not, and reforms to the bail system in Bill C-75 did not increase the crime rate. There are lots of other very complicated factors we could look at about why that happened, but the Conservatives like to point to the headlines and not actually point to the things that really work when it comes to combatting crimes and preventing future victims.

Hon. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, the motion respecting Senate amendments made to Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (bail reform), standing on the Notice Paper be deemed adopted.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. minister moving the motion will please say nay.

[*Translation*]

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

• (1725)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will go back to questions and comments with the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know that I can express the will of most members of the chamber, and I believe there is a great sense of disappointment that the Conservatives now, in the House of Commons, have chosen to not allow this debate to come to an end, unlike what the leader of the Conservative Party said last summer. Members will recall that the leader of the Conservative Party then said that all it would take is one day and the Conservatives would be happy to pass it through the whole system.

This is a complete flip-flop, once again, by the leader of the Conservative Party. I wonder if my colleague across the way could provide his thoughts on the flip-flop.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his comments, because I have the same reaction to this action by the Conservatives.

It is a party whose leader said they would come back and get this done in one day. It has taken a bit longer than that, but we could get this done today, and so I would like to see someone propose the unanimous consent motion once again and see if the Conservatives will actually go along with what their leader promised previously.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to come back to the attempt to obtain the unanimous consent of the House. I would like to remind all my colleagues that when someone wants to take that approach, they usually inform the other parties beforehand. My party was not informed in this case. We would have supported that consent because the fact is we were not against it. I would just like to remind members that there is decorum here. This place is not just the government. There are elected members from all parties, and it is important to consult and inform colleagues from the other parties.

I thank my colleague for his speech and I would like to know if he has any comments to make regarding that intervention.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): As the member pointed out, it is important to ensure that all parties are aware that a motion is going to be moved.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there has been dialogue among the parties inside the chamber and I suspect that if you were to canvass the House that you would find unanimous consent at this point in time, to see the message passed as the minister had proposed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

[Translation]

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

[English]

I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, amendments read the second time and concurred in)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I just wish to recognize the time and ask for unanimous consent to call the time 5:30 p.m., so that we can begin private members' hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION ACT

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ) moved that Bill C-354, An Act to amend the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act (Quebec's cultural distinctiveness and French-speaking communities), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois's Bill C-354 seeks to amend the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act so that the CRTC must consult with the Government of Quebec about the cultural distinctiveness of Quebec and with the governments of the other provinces about their French-speaking markets before carrying out its mandate and exercising its powers with regard to aspects of the Canadian broadcasting system that relate to those things.

Essentially, Bill C-354 seeks to protect Quebec's cultural distinctiveness and the francophone community in the enforcement of the new Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act. That involves organizing consultations with the Government of Quebec and the provincial governments before regulating aspects that relate to the cultural distinctiveness of Quebec.

This bill responds to an official request from the Government of Quebec during the debates surrounding Bill C-11 for the federal government to set up a mandatory, formal consultation mechanism with the Government of Quebec. Quebec wants to have its say before the CRTC takes any action that could affect businesses providing services in Quebec or the Quebec market. The motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly in this regard specifies that Quebec intends to use all of the tools at its disposal to protect its language, culture and identity.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-354 also constructively responds to the federal government's disturbing decision last year to end the tradition of alternating the CRTC chairship between francophones and anglophones. The bill is also consistent with the House of Commons' recognition that Quebecers form a nation. Quebecers form a distinct people, a nation with a unique identity based on our history, and particularly on our culture and language. It is only natural, and even essential, for a nation to manage its culture. Access to Quebec's common public language and culture allows newcomers to participate in and enrich Quebec society, and to enjoy the same rights and obligations as every Quebecer.

The idea of being sovereign in telecommunications management is not new. In 1929, Quebec Premier Louis-Alexandre Taschereau passed the law governing broadcasting in that province. However, instead of working with Quebec, in 1932, Ottawa responded to Taschereau's idea by creating the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, the forerunner of the current CRTC, under the Canadian Broadcasting Act. The idea of being sovereign in telecommunications management remained alive, despite federal interference.

In 1968, Quebec Premier Daniel Johnson said the following:

The assignment of broadcasting frequencies cannot and must not be the prerogative of the federal government. Quebec can no longer tolerate being excluded from a field where its vital interest is so obvious.

Between 1990 and 1992, the Quebec minister of communications at the time, Liberal Lawrence Cannon, prepared a draft Quebec proposal that read as follows:

Quebec must be able to establish the rules for operating radio and television systems, and control development plans for telecommunications networks, service rates and the regulation of new telecommunications services.... Quebec cannot let others control programming for electronic media within its borders.... To that end, Quebec must have full jurisdiction and be able to deal with a single regulatory body.

In 2006, that same Lawrence Cannon became a minister in the Conservative cabinet under Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

On April 9, 2008, Liberal ministers Christine Saint-Pierre and Benoît Pelletier sent a letter to the Conservatives in Ottawa—Josée Verner and Rona Ambrose at the time—to conclude repatriation agreements in the culture, broadcasting and telecommunications sector.

This is what it said:

● (1730)

The purpose of this letter is to express the will of Quebec to engage, as soon as possible, in discussions on concluding a Canada-Quebec agreement on the communications sector...and a Canada-Quebec agreement on culture.

Considering the distinct culture of Quebec, the only French-speaking state in North America, we believe that concluding such an administrative agreement would make it possible to better reflect the specific characteristics of Quebec content in broadcasting and telecommunications, and would serve as recognition of the importance of protecting and promoting Quebec's specific culture.

The Bloc Québécois is convinced that telecommunications and broadcasting are of capital importance for the vitality of Quebec culture. That is clear. That is why we are of the opinion that, ultimately, these sectors need to be regulated by Quebec. This should happen under a Quebec radio-television and telecommunications commission, a QRTC. That is the only approach that would allow

us to have full control, to be masters of the decisions that concern our language and culture.

Quebec must have the tools needed to promote a diversified Quebec offer in the television markets and on digital platforms, which are increasingly predatory. As the serious media crisis in the province shows, from the small regional newspapers to the restructuring of Groupe TVA, it is crucial to maintain a francophone diversity of information sources and plurality of voices, regardless of the size of the media group.

Furthermore, the Internet deployment strategy must be better aligned with Quebec's interests, particularly to ensure the right to a stable, affordable, quality connection. Quebec's cultural development hinges on the ability to determine its own transmission terms, namely for television, radio and new media. Should the government of Quebec deem that a decision goes against the public interest, it is the National Assembly that would call for a review.

The closure of radio station CKAC in 2005 illustrates the government of Quebec's inability to influence decisions that directly impact its duty to develop, promote and disseminate our culture. Despite a unanimous motion from the National Assembly, adopted on March 10, 2005, calling for CKAC to stay on the air, the CRTC kept silent and allowed this historic radio station to shut down.

Furthermore, this is not even a partisan issue in Quebec. All governments since the Taschereau era have argued for Quebec's independence in managing its telecommunications. It is therefore particularly frustrating to run into refusals or downright ignorance. The many times Ottawa has stayed silent demonstrate contempt, if not federal indifference, toward Quebec's culture and its political institutions.

That said, our right to develop our own culture will not be won through the courts. The Supreme Court of Canada has repeatedly ruled that telecommunications and broadcasting fall under federal jurisdiction. However, the members of the House of Commons have the authority to delegate this administrative power if they are willing to do so. One such agreement already exists. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police delegated its powers to the Sûreté du Québec to protect the province. The Sûreté du Québec manages interprovincial heavy transportation and issues freshwater fishing licences. All it would take is a bit of political will to sign an administrative agreement that would change the fate of Quebec culture.

If it so wished, the federal government could change the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act today to include such an administrative agreement. This is how EI pilot projects are integrated into the Employment Insurance Act.

Introducing Bill C-354 is a modest attempt to ensure that Quebecers enjoy a modicum of respect when it comes to their right to culture and managing their telecommunications. It is the least that can be done.

Private Members' Business

• (1735)

In an ideal world, the Quebec government would pass legislation to create a Quebec radio-television and telecommunications commission, a QRTC. The CRTC could then delegate the management of Quebec's licenses to the QRTC, which would regulate telecommunications and broadcasting companies that operate in Quebec. This would remedy the injustice that has persisted for a hundred years.

The decline of the French language and culture is undeniable. It is now crucial that we take the necessary steps to protect them.

We therefore invite members from all parties who care about Quebec culture and the francophone community to vote in favour of our bill.

• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, the name is Louis-Saint-Laurent. I have nothing against the St. Lawrence river, but the name is a tribute to the former prime minister who, let us not forget, was the one who balanced the budget after the war. I am very proud to represent the riding named after him here, in the House of Commons.

My colleague always has something interesting to say. I really like the historical aspects of his speech. He even pointed out what the Taschereau government did. We enjoyed it a lot.

I will have an opportunity to speak to the issues and certain things that we want to clarify in about 10 minutes.

My question is this: How does the member account for the fact that the current federal government did not want Quebec to be heard in parliamentary committee, despite Quebec's request?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Madam Speaker, it is indeed deplorable. We see it in many different files. The Liberal government says that it consults Quebec, when in fact it does not listen to Quebec or consult Quebec, despite its claims. In an area like culture, it should be a given.

That is why we are introducing this bill to establish a mandatory consultation mechanism for Quebec and the provincial governments in cases where regulations target their market.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a deep admiration for the culture and heritage that has developed in the province of Quebec for generations.

I believe it is very unique, and we want to encourage it and see it continue to flourish. I go to my own home province, and I have some very strong opinions on its diversity and our culture.

The CRTC has consultation, and there is intervenor status for groups, including the Province of Quebec. I understand that they use that. Could the member provide his thoughts on the issue of an independent, or arm's-length, CRTC and the things they do?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Madam Speaker, just how independent is the CRTC? We want it to be as independent as possible, but in the case of Quebec's culture and Quebec's telecommunications, it is clear that there is no authority other than the Government of Quebec that can really understand Quebec's telecommunications and broadcasting needs.

We are not necessarily saying that the CRTC never consults Quebec, but I think that there should at least be an official and mandatory mechanism ensuring that the CRTC always consults the Government of Quebec. The Government of Quebec has asked for that. A motion to that effect was adopted unanimously. As we said, every government of Quebec since the Taschereau government has repeatedly asked for that.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP finds my colleague's bill very interesting.

I am going to ask him a practical question. Whether we are talking about the CRTC or a Quebec version of the CRTC, teenagers and young adults do not watch Canadian or Quebec television at all.

How can we suggest Quebec and francophone content when they are listening to music on Spotify, looking at images on TikTok and watching videos on YouTube? What can a Quebec or Canadian CRTC do to change this, which, in my opinion, is a more fundamental issue?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Madam Speaker, there is a lot of talk these days about the need to regulate the Internet and digital platforms. I agree with my colleague that this is of prime importance. There is a bill on the way, and apparently a deal has been struck with Google. It is not exactly what we wanted.

Regarding the CRTC, I think it absolutely has to consult Quebec as it works to regulate digital platforms. This is of crucial importance to Quebec. For example, I believe there are 29 television shows in Quebec with a viewing audience of over one million people. In the rest of Canada, only two shows have that kind of audience.

Quebec is really—

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Markham—Stouffville.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on September 19, Bill C-354, an act to amend the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act regarding the cultural specificity of Quebec and the Francophonie was tabled and read for the first time. From the outset, I would like to thank the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île for giving me the opportunity to reiterate our government's commitment to supporting the French language.

Bill C-354 aims to amend the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act, and this is closely tied to the government's ongoing work to ensure a broadcasting system in Canada that reflects the evolution of our digital world and in which all Canadians, including Quebecers and members of the Canadian Francophonie, see themselves represented. In fact, closely linked is an understatement. The government's efforts have already been going very much in the same direction as the objective of this bill.

On February 2, 2022, our government introduced Bill C-11, aimed at reforming the Broadcasting Act so that Canadian laws reflect the evolution of our digital world. The latter aimed to clarify that online broadcasting services fall under the act, to ensure that the CRTC has the appropriate tools, to encourage greater diversity and inclusion in the broadcasting sector and to better reflect Canadian society.

The legislative process surrounding Bill C-11 took a very long time. Indeed, one year to the day passed between the initial tabling of the bill in the House and its adoption at third reading by the Senate. Both the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications spent many hours dissecting, analyzing, hearing from witnesses and refining Bill C-11. During the same legislative process, several modifications were made to Bill C-11 to strengthen the commitment to the French language and official language minority communities.

The Broadcasting Act, as recently amended, put in place new guarantees to ensure continued support for the production and broadcast of original French-language productions, the majority of which are produced in the province of Quebec. What is more, the CRTC is required to interpret the Broadcasting Act in a manner that respects the Government of Canada's commitment to promoting the vitality of Canada's French-speaking and English-speaking minorities and supporting their development. Added to this is the fact that the act provides that regulations must take into account regional concerns and needs. It should also be noted that the government is already actively consulting the provinces and territories, particularly when it comes to broadcasting.

At each stage of the process surrounding the implementation of the Online Streaming Act, the provinces and territories were consulted. In particular, the government consulted its provincial and territorial counterparts as part of the consultations related to the decree of instructions proposed to the CRTC concerning the implementation of the law.

The final decree also contains various instructions to support the official languages of Canada and official language minority communities. The decree recognizes, among other things, the minority

nature of the French language in Canada and North America and the fact that the broadcasting system should promote the development of Canada's official language minority communities and promote full recognition and use of French and English in Canadian society. A section was even added to the final version of the decree to support the creation and availability of programming in French.

In addition, for its part, the CRTC has published a road map describing the main stages of the implementation of the act and is already actively consulting the public. It should be noted that as an administrative tribunal, the CRTC already holds in-depth consultations before making decisions under the rules of practice and procedure that it adopted in order to respect the principles of procedural fairness and of natural justice incumbent upon it. Provinces and territories have the opportunity to participate in CRTC consultations. To this end, the provinces and territories, including Quebec, can already present observations to the CRTC on issues of provincial interest during hearings and consultations.

● (1750)

It is important to specify that the Government of Quebec has the right and already uses its right to intervene in the CRTC's consultative processes. The Broadcasting Act provides for three forms of consultation, depending on the decisions it is considering. They are, in no particular order, one, with official language minority communities on any decision likely to have a detrimental effect on them; two, with CBC/Radio-Canada on its conditions of services; and three, with any interested party for decisions regarding conditions of services. The latter is an open consultation, where provinces and territories and, in fact, any interested intervenor can put forward their opinions and concerns.

In other words, the addition of the consultation obligation provided for by Bill C-354 could raise concerns that are being addressed in the course of the work of the CRTC and under the requirements of the Broadcasting Act. An obligation for the CRTC to consult elected provincial governments could also have an impact on public confidence and the independence of the CRTC. It is important that we are all mindful of not just the independence of the CRTC but the importance of that independence.

As outlined, "The CRTC is an administrative tribunal that regulates and supervises broadcasting and telecommunications in the public interest. [It is] dedicated to ensuring that Canadians have access to a world-class communication system that promotes innovation and enriches [the] lives [of Canadians]."

Further to this, under the section of the CRTC's own website entitled "We listen and collaborate", it states that, in order to "fulfill [its] mandate, [it] must understand the needs and interests of Canadians who make use of broadcasting and telecommunications services."

Private Members' Business

In conclusion, the government supports and will continue to support the French language. The Online Streaming Act and the act to amend the Official Languages Act are concrete examples of our commitment to the French language. Once more, the government regularly consults the provinces and territories, including Quebec.

The minister has consulted her counterparts on numerous occasions when it comes to regulating the broadcasting sector. The government will welcome any questions from members regarding Bill C-354 as the debate on this legislation continues.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this debate on a bill introduced by my Bloc Québécois colleague.

We obviously agree with the principle that Quebec should be heard in this situation, and I will tell you why. We need to go back to last February when the Government of Quebec, through its culture minister, called on the federal government in Ottawa, the Liberal government, to listen to what it had to say and to consult about Bill C-11, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act.

I will read the letter that Minister Lacombe sent to his federal counterpart. It says, "It is essential that the distinctiveness of Quebec and the unique reality of French-speaking markets be properly considered in Bill C-11 and in its implementation by the CRTC. In that regard, I want to reiterate our requirement that the act include a mandatory, formal consultation mechanism with the Government of Quebec for that purpose." Furthermore, Quebec "must always have its say before instructions are given to the CRTC to guide its actions under this act when those actions could affect businesses that provide services in Quebec or the Quebec market."

That was from the letter that the Minister of Culture sent to his federal counterpart on February 4. The government's response? Radio silence. It eventually acknowledged receipt of the letter, but that is all. The government never stepped up to be proactive and hear what Quebec had to say on the matter. In fact, the National Assembly went so far as to adopt a unanimous motion calling on the House of Commons to consult Quebec in a parliamentary committee so that it might voice its demands with respect to Bill C-11. Unfortunately, the Liberal government's response was once again complete and utter radio silence.

We Conservatives brought the voice of the National Assembly to the House of Commons not once, twice or three times, but about 15 times. We did it right here during question period all the way from February 14 to March 7. My colleague, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and our political lieutenant for Quebec, and I asked the government 15 questions about why it was refusing to hear from Quebec in committee. Of course we did. When a national assembly speaks with a unified voice and a government demands to be heard, that is the very foundation of parliamentary democracy. People deserve to be listened to, all the more so when a government like the National Assembly and its 125 elected members demand to be heard. Of course they should be heard. They were not heard, however. It has been radio silence here, and nobody else has said a word either.

That is too bad. We wanted Quebec to be heard during the consideration of Bill C-11, but that never happened. However, my colleague for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and I raised the issue in the House about 15 times during question period. We also took the debate to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage at its meeting last March 10, when I moved a motion specifically asking that Quebec be heard on this bill. Unfortunately, but predictably, the Liberal Party refused.

Quite surprisingly, even the Bloc Québécois voted against the motion we brought forward at that meeting, which asked that we reconsider the bill and hear from the Government of Quebec on the matter, because the Senate had proposed quite a lot of amendments. Strangely, the Bloc Québécois did not vote in favour of our request. That is too bad.

For these reasons, we certainly want to hear what Quebec has to say about its cultural distinctiveness, particularly in the context of Bill C-11. Speaking of which, let us keep in mind that yesterday, the government puffed out its chest and made a financial announcement that it had secured \$100 million from Google. Interesting. That is exactly what the government could have gotten a year ago. That is basically what Google offered. In the end, it took a year to come up with pretty much the same proposal that Google had made.

On the radio this morning, many people were wondering whether Radio-Canada would have access to the \$100 million. The answer came this morning in parliamentary committee, thanks to my colleague, the member for Lethbridge, who asked specific questions to find out where things are headed. The minister quite clearly confirmed that Radio-Canada would be among the media receiving part of this sum, which is precisely the opposite of what the Quebec government was calling for again this morning through its culture minister, Mathieu Lacombe.

• (1755)

Now we have a bill that has been introduced. However, the part of the conversation that cannot be ignored is the fact that we Conservatives have been asking for weeks and weeks for Quebec to be heard. The government refused to listen. We asked for this in parliamentary committee and, oddly enough, the Bloc Québécois voted against it, which was unfortunate. Now, however, the Bloc is introducing this bill.

For us, it is important that linguistic minorities be heard and that provincial governments tell us what they have to say on the matter. These things are not mutually exclusive. It goes without saying that minority language communities must be heard. That is actually part of the legislation governing the CRTC, but we still need to go a step further. We must ensure that all avenues are preserved.

Private Members' Business

New technology means that people can go anywhere. Earlier, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie said that young people no longer watch television, or at least they do not watch it like we used to do. Now they can go on Spotify or on any other global platform. Indeed, this poses some challenges. That is why we need to pay even more attention to linguistic cultural minorities in every community and every province.

I will remind members that we asked for Quebec to be heard. This is particularly important because we are talking about Quebec, which, as we know, is the home of the French fact in North America. As we know, the French language is currently vulnerable, and always will be. Now, with numbers to back it up, it is clear that French is under threat in the province of Quebec, particularly in Montreal, where more than half—or close—of the province lives. We must remain vigilant. We must wage a constant battle to ensure that Quebec does not lose ground.

An editorial in *Le Devoir* said that Quebec should definitely have a voice in the study of Bill C-11. I would like to quote a February 16 editorial written by Louise-Maude Rioux Soucy, who said, “The National Assembly’s unanimous adoption of a motion demanding ‘that Québec be officially consulted on the directions that will be given to the CRTC’ makes perfect sense”. That is exactly what we Conservatives have been asking for in the House and in committee, and the author of the editorial confirms it by saying the following:

That is also the opinion of the Conservatives, the Legault government’s objective allies in this inelegant showdown. It is up to Quebec to define its cultural orientations in order to protect its language, culture and identity. Bill C-11, like Bill C-18, which seeks to ensure the fairness and viability of the Canadian digital news market, cannot escape this imperative. Minister Lacombe is right to speak up.

That sounds a lot like what we Conservatives have been saying for weeks and weeks here in the House and in parliamentary committee.

This bill will obviously be studied in committee. It needs to be examined. There are a few items that need to be clarified. We believe that it contains a lot of vague elements and that definitions need to be incorporated. We will have the opportunity to delve deeper into the bill when it is studied in committee.

In closing, I cannot overlook the extraordinary affection that our leader, the member for Carleton, has for the francophone community and especially for Quebec. I will quote from the speech he delivered at our national convention in Quebec City. He said:

Quebeckers are fighting to preserve their language and culture.... That is why Ana and I are determined to speak French to our children and to send them to a French school. That is also why I voted in the House of Commons to recognize the Quebec nation. I will always be an ally to Quebec, the Acadian people and all francophones across the country. A less centralized government will leave room for a greater Quebec and greater Quebeckers.

It was the leader of the official opposition who said that. I also want to note that for the leader of the official opposition, the member for Carleton, Quebec is a model that should inspire English Canadians. Once again, I will quote the speech he delivered in Quebec City.

• (1800)

[*English*]

He said, “This business of deleting our past must end.” He also said, “And this is a matter on which English Canada must learn from Quebec. Quebecers—and I’m saying this in English deliberately—do not apologize for their culture, language, or history. They celebrate it. All Canadians should do the same.”

[*Translation*]

Those are the words of the future Prime Minister with whom I am very proud to serve.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House to speak to this important issue and this very interesting bill, which was introduced by our colleague from La Pointe-de-l’Île. I thank him for initiating this debate.

I am also very proud to be part of a political party that has recognized Quebec as a nation for many years, even before this Parliament did so. Other political parties did so too. We just heard the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent talk a little bit about that a few moments ago. I am not just mentioning it because he was motioning to me that I should emphasize that. It is true.

What is a nation? I am not going to give a sociology lesson, but I think that we can all agree that the things that define a nation are language, history, culture, institutions, lifestyle and other factors. Some of the essential components of culture are the singers and songwriters, music and TV shows we are exposed to. I was lucky to grow up in a house where we were surrounded by books, by Quebec and French literature, as well as by music by Quebec and French singers and songwriters. We listened to Félix Leclerc, Georges Brassens, Diane Dufresne, Claude Dubois and many others.

Because we were immersed in this atmosphere, we fell in love with the French language, with Quebec culture, with our Quebec songs and TV shows. Now I am about to say two things that will give away my age. First of all, when I was a kid, if we wanted to change channels, we had to get up off the sofa. There was a little dial on the television set, and there were not many stations either. Second, I am of the generation that grew up watching the original *Passe-Partout*.

The whole atmosphere of Quebec television and music shapes each generation and creates cultural touchstones. This builds connections between people and communities. We had these major television events that everyone tuned in to watch. They often reached the rest of Canada too if they were broadcast by Radio-Canada. The TV show *Les Beaux Dimanches*, for example, featured classical music and theatrical plays. It was broadcast everywhere.

Private Members' Business

These were major television events. It is important for us to have them, because it is important to preserve social cohesion and this bond that unites all Quebecers and, if possible, all francophones across Canada. However, that bond is eroding over time. In my family, there are four children between the ages of 13 and 23. Their reality is completely changing, completely different. As a parent, I remember that the last big TV show in my house was *Les Parent*. We watched it as a family with the kids. There was also *Les Bougon* at one point. There is also *Tout le monde en parle*, which is still a great television event.

Of course we need a way to ensure that the CRTC's regulatory framework respects the linguistic and cultural requirements of Quebec, which is a nation. What Bill C-354 proposes today is not all that complicated. It proposes that Quebec be consulted before any regulations are made and come into force if they relate to Quebec's cultural distinctiveness. This is no big deal. It is nothing revolutionary. I think it makes a lot of sense. It is just plain common sense, which should make my Conservative friends happy. We should be able to go knock on the door of the Government of Quebec to let it know about regulations that will impact broadcasting in Quebec, so that we can gather its feedback and figure out a way to work things out. I do not think that is asking too much at all.

As a New Democrat, I find it interesting that the Bloc Québécois's bill states the following: "to provide that the [CRTC] must, in furtherance of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, consult with the Government of Quebec or the governments of the other provinces, as the case may be, before regulating aspects of the Canadian broadcasting system that relate to the cultural distinctiveness of Quebec or that concern French-speaking markets".

The bill therefore includes francophone minorities outside Quebec. That is very important to us, too, because this is not exclusive to the Government of Quebec, and it could be just as important for the CRTC to consult francophone communities outside Quebec, such as New Brunswick Acadians. Manitoba also has a sizable francophone community. This can have repercussions for those communities.

• (1805)

I think that, when Bill C-354 goes to committee to be studied and improved by amendment, we absolutely have to make sure that representatives of francophone communities outside Quebec and Acadian communities can come and be heard. They should have a chance to tell us how they see this, whether they think it is a good thing, what the obligations should be and under what circumstances the CRTC would have an obligation to consult them or their provincial governments. This is something that matters very much to the NDP caucus. This is the kind of thing we will want to clarify, verify and maybe amend in committee.

I also think that the committee's study should include some reflection on the rules governing radio and television broadcasting of content in indigenous languages. There are two official languages, of course, one of which is and always will be endangered and vulnerable, given our demographic position in North America. However, there is also the recognition of indigenous nations, which are producing more and more interesting content in television and especially in music. I was at the ADISQ gala recently, and some very

successful, talented people won awards. How can we make sure we do not forget about the cultural vitality of many indigenous nations, the Métis and the Inuit? They also need to be taken into consideration to ensure they are not shunted aside and forgotten, as they were for far too long in the past.

I think we also need to collectively reflect on how to make francophone and Quebec content more attractive, but also more accessible and discoverable. There are some absolutely extraordinary musical works, TV shows, videos and movies out there. How do we make sure that they are seen by our young people, teenagers and young adults? How do we make sure that this content, which is truly a reflection of who we are here in Quebec, Canada or North America, can be seen, heard, listened to and shared?

My fear, which I shared a bit earlier today, is that we do not live in the same environment as the one I grew up in, where I had to get up off the sofa to change the channel. The vast majority of the content that is promoted to our young people comes from the U.S. and is in English. I think that we need to reflect on this and find a way to give make these works and this Quebec and francophone content easier to access.

It is hard because we cannot go into every teenager's iPhone or iPad and tell them what they should do or listen to. I think this is an extremely serious cultural problem: the loss of major television events and the fact that our cultural offerings often come under the heel of American imperialism. Our offerings are so fragmented and so broad that it makes us wonder how we are going to be able to legislate and regulate all this. Can we really have a francophone and Quebec culture that is going to be vibrant, attractive and seen, but also profitable? These artists and artisans need to be able to make a living from their work, after all.

I think that we need to do a lot of collaborative thinking. We started to do so awhile back with Bill C-11 on discoverability, on the idea of forcing these digital platforms to promote French-language content and make it visible. These international companies are highly resistant to any attempt to force them to put prompts on their home pages to ensure that these songs, movies and TV shows are accessible and profitable. We can no longer rely on the traditional over-the-air channels to present these works. They need to be on YouTube, Netflix and Spotify. They need to be discoverable. There needs to be a French or Quebec category. How can we ensure that these web giants accept the unique status of Quebecers and francophone minorities outside Quebec in order to make that possible? We need to find the right restrictions or incentives to make that happen. I think that this bill is a good start when it comes to consulting the Government of Quebec, but we need to put our heads together to take this a lot further.

Private Members' Business

• (1810)

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are here today to discuss a crucial issue, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act.

We have been discussing Bill C-354 for some time now. This bill is designed to establish an assurance mechanism to guarantee that the CRTC consults with the Quebec government before regulating aspects of the Canadian broadcasting network that relate to the province's cultural distinctiveness. This is crucial.

The bill also proposes to have the CRTC consult with the governments of other provinces on aspects related to francophone markets or the Canadian francophonie. This is important. It does not impose any binding obligations on the CRTC, but it does provide crucial assurance to the provinces that they will be involved in this decision-making process.

It is essential to understand the CRTC is not currently required to consult Quebec before making regulatory decisions that affect it. The bill responds to a legitimate concern about the decline of the French language and the threat of cultural assimilation. It establishes a proactive approach to ensure adequate representation of Quebec's interests, particularly with regard to its cultural distinctiveness, and of the French fact in the rest of Canada.

This approach is a legacy of the past. It goes back to 1929, when Quebec premier Alexandre Taschereau passed the province's broadcasting law. Unfortunately, instead of collaborating with Quebec, Ottawa came up with its own version, creating the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, the precursor to the CRTC and the current federal broadcasting legislation.

The idea of sovereignty over telecommunications is alive and well despite federal interference. It goes way back. Every government since Taschereau's has advocated for Quebec's independence in managing its telecommunications.

That is why it is so frustrating to run up against a refusal to listen and maybe even sheer ignorance. I interpret Ottawa's ongoing silence as the federal government's disdain for and indifference toward Quebec culture. Otherwise, we would not be here today.

Having said that, it is not through the courts that we will win our right to develop and maintain our culture. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled on numerous occasions that telecommunications and broadcasting are the responsibility of the federal government. However, the delegation of this administrative power is based on the will of parliamentarians in the House of Commons. This type of agreement already exists. Earlier, my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île talked about agreements with the RCMP. I will not go through the whole list. Members are familiar with them. There are plenty of them in Quebec.

All it takes is a little willpower. I have become more confident over the years. I think we will be able to sign an administrative agreement in 2023-24 that will change the fate of Quebec culture. If it really wanted to, the federal government could amend the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act today to include such an administrative agreement. We have proof that this can be done, looking at the employment insurance pilot projects, which have

been incorporated into the federal legislation bearing the same name. It is possible.

The Bloc Québécois firmly believes that telecommunications and broadcasting are vitally important to the vitality of Quebec's culture and language, which deserve to be preserved and, more importantly, to be showcased with pride. I hope that all parliamentarians share this belief.

• (1815)

Quebec's cultural industries, including film, music, literature and other art forms, contribute significantly to Canada's cultural diversity. That is why we think that these sectors should be regulated by Quebec, ideally under a Quebec radio-television and telecommunications commission, a "QRTC", which is the only way we would have total control over decisions that relate to our language and culture. However, until that becomes a possibility, Quebec should be consulted when it comes to its culture and how its communications are handled.

As I said at the start of my speech, this bill provides assurances, a formal guarantee that Quebec will be consulted during the CRTC's decision-making process. This consultation would not be a constraint imposed on the CRTC, but rather an inclusion mechanism. I hear parliamentarians say that we could take this further in committee, and I am happy about that. We could take this much, much further, but we have to start somewhere.

It is important to note that this measure does not seek to diminish the CRTC's authority. I have repeated that three times now. Canada is a diverse country with provinces and territories that have distinct cultural identities. As my colleague mentioned earlier, this diversity needs to be celebrated and reflected in regulatory decisions concerning aspects as crucial as broadcasting.

The bill provides the provinces with the necessary assurance that their voices will be heard during the CRTC's decision-making process. With respect to consulting governments of other provinces about aspects that concern francophone markets or the francophonie, this inclusion fully recognizes the francophonie outside Quebec. This provision highlights the importance of taking the perspectives of all provinces with sizable francophone populations into account.

It is important to note that Quebec is not alone in its attachment to the French language. Other provinces and territories, such as New Brunswick, Manitoba, Alberta, Yukon and Ontario, have vibrant, dynamic francophone communities. These communities make a significant contribution to Canada's cultural diversity and play an essential role in preserving and promoting the French language.

In closing, it is time to assert our right to develop our culture and ensure that broadcasting mechanisms come under our control. Creating an independent organization is not just a political issue; it is about preserving our identity, our language and our cultural heritage. It is time to take action and give Quebec the means to shape its cultural future as it sees fit.

Orders of the Day

• (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to address Bill C-354, for a number of reasons. For me personally, as I indicated in a question to the Bloc a little earlier this evening, I want to recognize Quebec and how, as a community and a province, it has evolved to what it is today.

I have had many discussions throughout my political career, going back to the mid-1980s and then in 1988 when I was elected back in the Manitoba legislature, about Canada's diversity, and in particular how Quebec really does stand out in many ways. I have worked with many politicians from Quebec over the years, whether members of Parliament or others, and one gains an appreciation for their advocacy for arts and culture.

I do not believe other provinces do not have that same sort of strength of character and diversity, but what I have seen over the years is that it is held a little closer to the heart in Quebec, and I truly appreciate that. However, I also value the diversity of my home province of Manitoba, or even the Prairie regions.

The member made reference to the Quebec French factor, if I can put it that way. Although I cannot speak French or do not necessarily have the courage to say it out loud, and I might think of it in my mind at times, I am very proud of the community of St. Boniface in Winnipeg.

My great-great-grandfather, and there might even be a third great, is from St-Pierre-Jolys, and his family went to live just outside Montreal over 100 years ago. I really do appreciate and love the French factor, or the culture, that has evolved in Quebec and will do what I can to encourage it and promote it.

I like to think there is some uniqueness we all love. I was a big Montreal Habs fan, for example. Well, today it is the Winnipeg Jets, but when I was growing up we did not have the Jets. I do not want to betray my own city. I also like poutine. Maple syrup, and I believe poutine, originate out of Quebec. Poutine is a great dish, and maybe I have it a little too often at times.

The point is we have seen so many artists come out of Quebec, and a lot of the pride that stems out of provinces ultimately leads to superstars around the world. We should do what we can to support it, which is one of the reasons I have been very supportive of other government pieces of legislation.

Having said all of that, I am also a fairly strong advocate of the role the CRTC plays. Sometimes it frustrates me. Sometimes there are things happening in Manitoba in particular, where I maybe would have liked to see more competition of sorts, but more programming to deal with the diversity of our communities. At the end of the day, I recognize it already does an extensive amount of consultation. I know provinces will often intervene with the CRTC when there are decisions being made.

• (1825)

When I think of the CRTC into the future, I see its role ultimately expanding. If we compare 30 years ago to today, there is now the

Internet and a whole area that is fairly new. I believe the CRTC plays an important role in many forms of communication nowadays. However, when it comes to our culture and heritage, and making sure that we do what we can to promote and preserve it, I would suggest that it is important that we make sure there is a consultation that continues on.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have time to complete his speech when the bill next comes to the House.

[*Translation*]

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

The House resumed from November 8 consideration of the motion.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

I think it is really important to have this debate at this particular juncture, given that Canada's ability to meet its greenhouse gas emissions targets and the heft and might of its climate strategy will come under scrutiny at the COP climate conference in the next week or so.

The report is kind of an indictment on the government's ability to undertake concrete action to implement policies, procedures and strategies that would materially reduce greenhouse gas emissions production within the government's own scope of operations. The recommendations contained herein, given the amount of public money that I am sure has been expended on the activities contained here, which were audited, should give every member of the House pause for thought and certainly some level of concern in terms of the government's ability to deliver results when it comes to climate change.

I want to use this opportunity to talk about two things. The first is the government's inability to meet Canada's climate targets, and what I think it should be doing at the junction and intersection with the activities of the government that are contained within this report. Also, I want to talk about how the government needs to look at its operations and structures on different initiatives that are purportedly designed to meet Canada's greenhouse gas emissions targets but that are not getting the job done.

A couple of weeks ago, ahead of a fairly significant vote in the House on removing the carbon tax on home heating for all Canadians, I wrote a piece entitled “Canada’s carbon tax isn’t working. It’s time for it to go”. The subheading I used was “Monday’s vote on ‘axing the tax’ on home heating should be viewed as a critical opportunity to innovate.” The reason I put that subheading in there is that there were new reports that were showing that the government, in spite of having the carbon tax in place, was really not on its way to meeting Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. At the same time, the economy, according to data we saw today, is shrinking. Canadians are having a really hard time making ends meet, and we are not meeting our targets. This should prompt the government into rethinking its approach.

The piece reads as follows:

Ahead of a Wednesday morning caucus meeting, and as winter temperatures begin to set in across the country, [the] federal Conservative Party leader...announced that his party would force a vote in the House of Commons...to extend a three-year carbon tax exemption that was announced by [the] Prime Minister...for Atlantic Canadian heating oil to all forms of home heating in every part of Canada.

The temptation for the Liberals and their NDP coalition partners will be to continue to toe the line [the Prime Minister] took...which was that no additional carve-outs on the carbon tax would be forthcoming, and vote against [this Conservative] motion.

This is what the Liberals and the NDP did. Actually, I am not sure, but the Liberals definitely voted against it. The article continues:

But that position is a mistake, both politically and morally. If the Liberals and NDP care about public support for climate policy, the inflation crisis, and their jobs, they should vote in favour of [this] motion.

Here’s why.

While inflation and cost of living remain the top concerns of Canadians, a very recent survey by Leger suggested that about 70% of Canadians are worried about climate change. However, support for keeping [the Prime Minister]’s signature climate policy, the carbon tax, only registers with the support of 18% of Canadians. The reason for the vast delta between public concern for addressing climate change and support for the carbon tax is something that few Liberal intelligentsia have considered. That blind spot is now both politically biting them in the rear and is likely preventing Canada from meeting its emissions reduction targets.

● (1830)

And that reason is that the carbon tax is failing to move consumer preferences away from high-carbon products and practices in the way [the Prime Minister] promised that it would, and Canadians know it. And in the middle of a generationally high cost of living crisis, all Canadians—even those very concerned about climate change—are unwilling to pay for a policy they consider ineffectual.

Said differently, people will only choose alternatives to driving and heating their homes with carbon-based fuel if other options exist, are available, and are affordable. Those circumstances might be partially available in other, more temperate, highly populated regions of the globe, but not so across much of Canada. So even though [the Prime Minister] is increasing the price of carbon fuel with his tax, Canadians aren’t choosing to purchase alternatives because in most parts of Canada, they don’t yet widely exist, or are completely unaffordable.

Even within the government’s own scope of operations, that principle is clearly shown within this report.

It continues:

This concept is simple to grasp for even the most politically disconnected Canadians, particularly when they fill up their car and pay a carbon tax but have no public transit alternatives or pay a carbon-based home heating bill for six months of brutal cold with no other option.

And a decade of Liberal rule has also shown that their government isn’t particularly good at getting these alternatives built—

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This is very much evidenced in this report.

—which has further added to the failure of the carbon tax to shift demand for carbon fuel. Few Canadians now believe the Liberals can do things like actually build out the infrastructure needed to pull gas-powered cars off the road, for the simple fact that they’ve failed to do so after nearly a decade in government.

That is again evidenced in this report.

This was two weeks ago, but it goes on:

And this week’s serious whistleblower allegations regarding wrongdoing at a federal government agency—

This of course was SDTC.

—that was supposed to spur the development and deployment of emissions reduction technologies will undoubtedly further erode public trust in the Liberal government’s capacity to provide lower cost alternatives to carbon fuels.

These facts are laid bare in recent government reports that show that even with the tax, Canada will still probably miss its 2030 emissions targets by close to 50 percent.

We are not even in the universe of getting close to meeting those emissions targets.

It continues:

There’s proof of these facts in recent political trends, too. [The Prime Minister’s] capitulation on the tax on heating oil should have been viewed as an inevitability by even the most lay observer—the signs have been present for months. For example, in August, a Nova Scotia provincial riding that has been a safe Liberal hold for time immemorial was flipped by provincial conservatives due mainly to the unpopularity of the federal Liberal carbon tax. Within [the Prime Minister’s] federal caucus, there has also been [a lot of] dissent over the issue, likely due to the sustained, precipitous dip in polls in the traditionally safe-for-the-Liberals electoral territory that is Atlantic Canada.

These incidents followed nearly a year of high-profile messaging by my party, the Conservative Party, on these points, with “a message that was easy to grasp for millions of Canadians already grappling with increased living costs in the inflationary crisis.” It continues, “Now, that same crisis has overlaid onto the tax and means millions of Canadians face the prospect of choosing between heating and eating, never mind considering investing in expensive or”, as is the case is in most parts of Canada, “non-existent alternatives to carbon fuels.”

Again, I draw members’ attention to the finance minister’s very tone-deaf comments in Atlantic Canada earlier this year when she talked about how easy it was for her to get around in her downtown riding after being asked about the impacts of the carbon tax on Prince Edward Island’s car-based tourism economy.

The report continues:

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Further, [the Prime Minister's] late-stage, partial capitulation on removing the tax only for heating oil but not for other carbon fuel also risks creating perverse incentives like the one mentioned by the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, Bruce McLaughlin, who suggested that [the Prime Minister's] partial tax exemption may generate demand for higher emitting heating oil in certain circumstances. Keeping the tax with regional inequities also will further divide the country at a time when the federal government should be working towards unifying policy.

This report really shows that the government makes a lot of promises when it comes to climate and has not delivered. Canadians are poorer and our greenhouse gas emissions have risen. I really hope the government takes the recommendations in this report writ large, looks at them, goes back to the drawing board and develops policy that does not harm Canadians and lowers our emissions.

• (1835)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have been very clear in terms of the price on pollution.

Could the member give a clear indication of whether she envisions a world in which the Conservative Party of Canada would ever actually support a price on pollution?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, for a carbon tax to reduce consumer reliance or get consumers to switch from a high-carbon consumer product or practice such as, let us say, filling up a gas-powered car, there has to be affordable substitute goods for them to purchase.

If the member opposite came to my riding in Calgary, he would see that the federal government has failed to build out light rail transit, for example. Light rail transit could conceivably pull 50,000 cars off the road every day, but that does not exist because the government has not been able to build these things out.

What happens is that, no matter how high the price of gas is or how much tax there is, my constituents still have to fill up their cars. Therefore, the carbon tax does not work.

It is price inelastic because there are no substitute goods. That dogmatic adherence to a pricing instrument that does not work is bad public policy and the government should abandon it.

* * *

• (1840)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, with amendments, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House to speak to the concurrence motion on a public accounts committee report, which concerns the greening of government buildings. I find myself concerned that the government

is not really interested in the greening of our buildings, but in the greening of pockets, specifically the pockets of Liberal insiders and their appointees.

I am, of course, referring to the latest Liberal scandal, one that culminated with the head of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, Leah Lawrence, resigning. The abrupt end to her tenure came amid severe allegations of mismanagement and corruption, directed not only at her, but also at her executive.

These allegations were brought forth by whistle-blowers who reached out to both the government and the Privy Council Office. These complaints resulted in an inquiry into the matter conducted by Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, which I will refer to as RCGT.

It confirmed that the whistle-blower complaints were grounded in fact, finding several instances of corruption. The most damning of these allegations came in the form of unethical contributions to companies owned by the executive of the SDTC board. The RCGT report states that these contributions did not appear to be consistent with the requirements of SDTC's contribution agreements with the government and that the payments do not require project cost eligibility or monitoring and reporting. In other words, it did not meet any basic requirements that any responsible government would put in place on the oversight of taxpayer dollars.

To compound the issue, the government somehow ignored these findings and continued to fund this organization after it knew what was going on. This scandal is sordid and complex, so please buckle up and bear with me as I lay out some of the facts in what could be called the anatomy of a scandal.

What is the SDTC? It is a federally funded non-profit founded in 2001 that approves and disburses millions in funds annually to clean tech companies. Its latest mandate was to disburse a billion dollars over five years, ending in the 2025-26 fiscal year.

In 2015, the head villain of the story, Leah Lawrence, was hired to be the CEO of SDTC. This is the foundational piece. Under her leadership, the institution soon started to decline. It essentially turned into a green slush fund for her and her friends. A key player in covering up her behaviour, seemingly her partner in this, is Annette Verschuren, who was appointed chair of the board through the government's order in council in 2019.

Annette then used her position as the chair to protect Leah, the chief executive officer, and they teamed up to create new funding streams, which were ineligible by the very nature of the provisions of the creation of SDTC. They did this to supposedly help SDTC meet its funding targets. What happens when these funding targets are hit? It triggers bonuses for the executives and the members of the board. These bonuses were then used by board members to fund their own businesses interests. The entire board then also partook in the scam.

Furthermore, subcontractors on the projects were often affiliated with the chief executive officer. The problem was so bad that Annette Verschuren had her own companies funded to a staggering rate of \$220,000. Clearly in the wrong, the board tried to cover its tracks by contracting an outside legal opinion that said it was okay to fund their own companies with the bonus money. However, there was a major flaw with that opinion because it came from Ed Vandenberg, who happens to be a paid SDTC member, which is just another conflict of interest in a long line of many.

• (1845)

Once again, we know all of this because of the whistle-blowers who came forward. One of them had secretly recorded conversations with Doug McConnell, the assistant deputy minister at Innovation, Science and Economic Development, who is also a man who had a lot of interesting things to say about the fund and its sickening levels of graft. He said, "There's a lot of sloppiness and laziness. There is some outright incompetence and, you know, the situation is just kind of untenable at this point".

He also referred to the original investigation by the board as a whitewash and said that the RCGT report implicated the board in terrible ways, like by not following process, by not following the conflict of interest regime and by not being prudent fiduciaries. He said that they have missed out on so many and that it is just the board failure altogether. He also said that, in that case, they were briefing it and that was how it was well understood by them and the deputies. He thought it was understood by PCO as well because, according to him, it was not the first time they have seen this kind of situation, so they knew that they had to get people out of there.

What does that imply? It implies that the minister knew, and it implies that the Prime Minister knew. Even more damning, Mr. McConnell was quoted saying the scandal "is almost a sponsorship scandal-level kind of giveaway."

Despite Doug McConnell's disgust, and the hopes of his fellow whistle-blowers for action from the government, the SDTC management team and board of directors remained in place months later. This clear lack of action demonstrates a strange passivity within the government in the face of substantiated allegations of corruption.

On the question of what kind of workplace environment this corruption and ineptitude has caused, almost half of the fifty-person staff is on its way out. Four of them are on sick leave, and 20 are in the process of resigning or quitting. This is unacceptable and kills morale among the hard-working, honest people in our departments. This fact was acknowledged by Doug McConnell who stated that the workplace was now toxic. The problem was even worse in 2018, where the rate of turnover could be factored at over 75%.

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During Leah Lawrence's tenure, whistle-blowers made allegations that loyalties were constantly being tested by petty executives who pressured subordinates to write fake reviews online to inflate workplace review scores. What should be expected of a group of executives who were that corrupt? They could not even take responsibility for their actions.

In a statement responding to the RCGT report, the SDTC executive and board said, "the report found no clear evidence of wrongdoing or misconduct at SDTC and indicated that no further investigation is merited." This out-of-touch statement is not only ludicrous, but also a disconnect from reality.

Recently, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada has announced that it will be investigating this scandal. This is a welcome announcement, but we need to ensure accountability in the long term. This type of graft over the last eight years has been noticed internationally, with our standing on Transparency International's corruption perceptions index falling precipitously over the last few years. In fact, our descent down the rankings is among the fastest in the world. Canada's whistle-blower protections have been criticized, and our access to information legislation is out of date. It is time that we move on. There is a long list of scandals that I could talk about for hours.

• (1850)

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "That" and substituting the following:

"the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presented on Tuesday, February 14, 2023, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the committee with the instruction that:

(a) It take note of the resignation of the CEO and Chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC) over allegations that funds were used improperly, namely that SDTC has been accused of giving grants to start-ups and accelerators with ties to their senior management, as well as making payments inconsistent with the requirements of their agreement with the government; and

(b) In keeping with the Auditor General's observation at Treasury Board, which is responsible for the supervision of SDTC, has not provided oversight, as well as SDTC's mission statement claiming it is 'committed to full transparency', the committee add to its recommendations an invitation to Annette Verschuren former CEO and Chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada and the whistleblowers who exposed this scandal to appear before the committee."

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The amendment is in order.

There being no further members rising for debate, pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion are deemed put and recorded divisions are deemed requested.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 66, the recorded divisions stand deferred until Wednesday, December 6, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, in my November 1 question to the government, I pointed out that 24 Liberal MPs supposedly represent ridings in the city of Toronto. However, we would never know it from their deafening silence on issues of extreme importance to the city.

The Minister of Rural Economic Development said the quiet part out loud when she said other parts of the country should elect more Liberals if they want a carbon tax deferral, like Atlantic Canadians had received. Toronto has 24 Liberal MPs and they have been unwilling or unable to stand up for the city and get people, including refugees who have been forced to sleep on the city's streets, the help that they need.

The missing 24 MPs were missing in action when it came to the government honouring its promise to help Toronto with its COVID-created budget shortfall. This winter, Torontonians will be struggling to heat, and hopefully keep, their homes. Others are unable to find housing due to inflation and high interest rates. They would all like to receive a carbon tax deferral, too. However, their Liberal MPs did not show up to defend the people's interest and get a tax holiday. The two Liberal MPs from Alberta can hold their regional caucus in a phone booth, so they can be forgiven for not being very effective in getting the government to do anything, much less in bringing about a carbon tax holiday.

However, in my question to the Right Hon. Prime Minister, I asked if he could explain how his "Toronto 24" colleagues disappeared from their responsibilities to represent the city's interests. It is, indeed, odd that two dozen MPs vanished and their faces never even made milk cartons.

In attempting to answer my question, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing waxed poetically from speaking notes that did not address my question's salient points: one, helping Toronto with its housing issues and, two, living up to the federal promise to assist the city with its COVID-created budget shortfall. Indeed, the parliamentary secretary indicated that I had failed to mention the Toronto MPs who allegedly pushed the government to invest money in the city. It is hard to mention things that no one has seen. Perhaps they are not missing. Maybe they are just shy and, in an astounding world first for politicians, they just do not want to tell anyone about their hard work and success.

National failures have local consequences and because of the Liberal government's failure, Deb, who I spoke to earlier today, and other constituents living by Clarence Park are being overwhelmed by a tent encampment. They do not feel safe walking through the park. A neighbour was assaulted this week while walking her dog.

Others in Fort York saw a fire break out at an encampment two days ago and there is a new facility at 75 Elizabeth Street forced on local residents directly across the street from a day care and a children's playground. Unfortunately, we also cannot forget the low-

barrier respite, now a shelter, being forced on Niagara and King West residents at 629 Adelaide Street West.

Therefore, I am forced yet again to stand up for not only my constituents but all Torontonians who are being failed by their 24 Liberal MPs. Since local Liberal MPs cannot or will not do it, I am here to ask: Will the federal government help Toronto with its housing issues and, in the process, finally honour its 2021 election promise to assist the city with its COVID budget shortfall, yes or no?

• (1855)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's concern for Torontonians, and I agree that we need to be there for our constituents. However, I strongly disagree with the allegation and assertion that the 24 Liberal members of Parliament who reside in Toronto are ineffective.

They are extremely effective. They have great relationships with Toronto's mayor, Olivia Chow, and the previous mayor, John Tory. Those relationships are strong and deep. Toronto council members regularly contact their members of Parliament, and we have consistently been there for the city of Toronto, whether on housing, on adictions, on crime or on any issue at all.

I would remind the member of Parliament for Spadina—Fort York that he was elected because of our strong relationship with the city of Toronto and our strong reputation as a party that represents Toronto very well. I would repeat that if his name had not been on Liberal signs, he would not have been elected in the city of Toronto.

The government shares the firm belief that everybody in this country, regardless of income, deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. We understand that the challenges we are facing are complex and multi-faceted. Homelessness is one of the most complex and difficult problems to solve, and these things have been in the works for years. There are no single solutions. There are no quick switches that any government can flip to solve the challenges represented by homelessness. It is also a nationwide issue that can only be solved with close co-operation between partners in every sector, just like the close relationship that our government has with the city of Toronto.

The city of Toronto is on the front lines of the housing crisis, and we are not just eager to work with those in Toronto; we have been working with them. The Government of Canada has been making historic investments to tackle chronic homelessness, and we are working closely with communities and service providers to deliver on those commitments. It is hard work that will not happen overnight, and it has certainly been challenging, but if we work together, set aside differences and leverage our strengths, we can make a real difference, as we have been.

What the government has done recently is nearly doubled the funding for Reaching Home. That is Canada's homelessness strategy, which is at almost \$4 billion now. This initiative is specifically designed to help prevent and reduce chronic homelessness. Reaching Home is a crucial part of this government's historic national housing strategy, one that understands the values of local community organizations, which are best placed to understand their communities' unique challenges. Reaching Home gives them funding to support that vital work. I am proud to share with this House that since we launched that program in April 2019, it has already improved outcomes for the more than 121,000 people who have received homelessness prevention support through its projects, and for the nearly 70,000 people it has helped to find stable and consistent long-term housing.

Reaching Home is working. It is creating real, positive results right across Canada, and as we speak, Toronto is no exception. From 2019 to 2024, we have invested more than \$252 million through Reaching Home to tackle homelessness in Toronto. That includes \$45.5 million over the last two years, starting in 2022, to keep up the funding boost we provided throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, as my colleague mentioned. Of course, we are also making historic efforts to boost Canada's housing supply in order to create more options for stable, affordable housing in the long term.

Our government will always be there for the city of Toronto. Members of Parliament are extremely engaged in their communities, and I will not stand here and listen to anything to the contrary.

• (1900)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, it is true that when the Liberals asked me to run, I accepted the invitation, because heaven knows, the government needs people who know how to roll up their sleeves and get stuff done, as opposed to focusing on photo ops and announcements. The reality is that people cannot feed their families with an announcement or heat their homes with an announcement, nor can they live under a photo op or an announcement.

It is frustrating, because there are people struggling to heat their homes and put enough food on their table, yet we hear again that the Liberals have done tons; they have done a lot. The reality on the ground, once the parliamentary secretary leaves his ivory tower or leaves this chamber and walks the streets, is that there are people sleeping on the streets. What will it take for the Liberal government to finally honour its promise, step up and do something to prevent anyone from freezing to death?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, we know that homelessness and addictions are closely tied into the very challenging network of issues that contribute to homelessness. That is why I was really disappointed last week to hear the member for Spadi-

na—Fort York perpetuate stereotypes in this House about people who suffer from addictions. It was very consistent with when the Conservative leader released a video on social media condemning safe consumption sites and the safe supply of drugs. He claimed that tax dollars will be used to fund dangerous drugs, and he was immediately met with resistance from all sides of the political spectrum.

I was really disappointed to hear some of that rhetoric come from the member for Spadina—Fort York last week. Not only do safe consumption sites and safe supply save lives, but research shows that not focusing on harm reduction and treatment is costing billions of dollars. As I did after the member's comments, I would urge him to go by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and hear from some experts.

[Translation]

SPORT

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, today I rise with a mix of concern and profound disappointment, even a bit of cynicism because of this government's continued inaction toward athletes. I am talking about victims who courageously called out the heinous acts committed against them by their coaches and were received with indifference by the heads of 16 national sports organizations. That is what we have learned over the past few years.

Canada even won the ignoble award for integrity in sports and, to date, the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity still refuses to launch a public and independent inquiry. The minister's predecessor, the member for Brome—Missisquoi, publicly promised to launch an inquiry into abuse and mistreatment in sports. That plan makes perfect sense because it allowed us to raise crucial issues, demand answers and call for transparency on behalf of a fair justice system in which we could trust. That is what we are talking about.

We have been waiting for too long for a public inquiry to be launched, one that would shed light on all of the systemic problems that persist behind the scenes in Canadian sports. What is the reason for all of these stories of sexual misconduct against our athletes and the number of qualified coaches who have been found guilty of committing obscene and unforgivable acts? Unfortunately, the mystery surrounding the government's apparent reluctance to act raises legitimate questions about this government's real intentions and whether it is perhaps seeking to protect the interests of certain people or associations to the detriment of the common good and especially to the detriment of the interests of children. In our society, no one has the right to choose which individuals they will stand behind.

The minister said the following at a press conference on May 11. I will read it in English, because that is the language that she used.

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● (1905)

[*English*]

She said, “I would like to reiterate my commitment and clear any doubts that may remain. I will respond to the requests from athletes and survivors for a national inquiry.”

[*Translation*]

She obviously used “inquiry” in the English sense of the word.

[*English*]

She continued, “This is a legitimate request and I’m working to be able to announce this as soon as I can.”

[*Translation*]

In response to a question from reporter Émilie Bergeron, she said this is the first step. She said not to worry because she would be very happy to do something so long-awaited. Those words carry weight. I asked her about that at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage this morning. I felt that she reiterated the commitment she made and was not personally opposed to the government acting on that.

I think it is high time we made our collective voice heard and demanded answers. That takes an independent public inquiry. We must not accept the government’s continued inaction. We must demand the truth. We must demand justice. We must remain vigilant in our pursuit of a society in which transparency and accountability are steadfast values. The Olympic movement should not be this way.

I would add that the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity promised to participate in the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage’s study on sport. We got confirmation today that she is supposed to attend on December 12. I am definitely going to ask her again about her responsibility and the commitment her predecessor made on behalf of the government.

May our commitment to ethical and transparent governance guide the actions we must take to protect victims of abuse and mistreatment in sport in this country. In closing, I would ask my colleague, the hon. parliamentary secretary, when she plans to launch an independent public inquiry. The question is no longer how, but when. Urgent action is needed.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak with my friend and colleague about this very important issue and to have the opportunity to address the House of Commons this evening.

[*English*]

Our government strongly believes that Canadians deserve a sport system that reflects and celebrates our Canadian values of equality, fairness and inclusion, a sport system that is safe for kids and all Canadians.

I might just add on a personal note that one of the first times I came to the House of Commons in a work context was two years before I got elected. That was to work on the first iteration of

Canada’s new safe sport policy. It is hard to overstate how much I care about this issue.

I was on a national team for 18 years, and sport is very special to me. It is something that transcends borders and a lot of issues. In order for it to do its great work, it needs to have integrity. I am here as a member of Parliament for a lot of reasons and for a lot of people, but this issue is one that I care deeply about.

[*Translation*]

We have heard loud and clear about the need for systemic change in sport. Sport systems in Canada and around the world are going through turbulent times, and indeed it is a time when trust in our leaders and our sports organizations has collapsed.

[*English*]

In recent years, we have made some really important advancements. It is so important we recognize progress when we see it. In the hopes of allowing victims to come forward without fear and intimidation, we have taken some really tremendous steps. We are indebted to the survivors who have bravely come forward, and I want to thank them. We acknowledge their courage, and we hear them loud and clear. While they should not have had to come forward, their advocacy has really turned this into a national conversation and a sincere priority.

[*Translation*]

A key element of our response has been the development of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, or UCCMS. This is a primary example of the positive momentum that can be created when our government works closely with its partners. In this case, I am referring to national sports leaders and experts.

The result of this collaboration, the UCCMS, is the basic document that establishes the harmonized rules adopted by sports organizations that receive funding from the Government of Canada to ensure a respectful sport culture that delivers high-quality, inclusive, accessible, welcoming and safe sport experiences.

● (1910)

[*English*]

Since its establishment in June 2021, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner has been responsible for administering the UCCMS and overseeing complaints of maltreatment. The office uses trauma-informed processes that are compassionate and efficient and that provide fairness, respect and equity to all partners involved. The office functions independently and without any influence from the Government of Canada or Sport Canada.

[*Translation*]

These measures are part of the solution. All leaders in the field must share responsibility for ensuring a safe sporting environment. Our government will continue to engage its provincial and territorial partners in promoting harmonization, which is essential for the change of culture that we all want to see.

[English]

We are committed to ensuring that all Canadians experience sports environments free of all forms of maltreatment. Since 2018, we have worked to ensure safe, welcoming and inclusive sport environments for all by requiring that federally funded organizations take measures—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue has the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, the fact that there has been no significant movement toward launching this public inquiry raises concerns about the government's actual desire to ensure access to justice for all the survivors.

We can legitimately ask ourselves whether the government is protecting its little friends at the expense of the truth and justice that we, as citizens, deserve. The number of people responsible for this mess who have resigned from sports organizations and Sport Canada is alarming.

There is a crisis in the world of sport, and everyone knows it. Frankly, the survivors deserve greater consideration from people in the Liberal government who are responsible for sport. Athletes and their families are making an urgent appeal for recognition of how serious the situation in the world of sport is, especially as the 2024 Paris Olympics draw near.

The Bloc Québécois is calling for immediate action and urging the minister to be humble while at the International Centre for Human Rights in Geneva next week. What is keeping her from publicly expressing outrage when new scandals come to light? What is keeping her from launching an independent public inquiry?

Adjournment Proceedings

We need answers. I will keep hounding the government about this.

[English]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I will reiterate that we are committed to ensuring that all Canadians experience sport environments that are free of harm and all forms of maltreatment. Since 2018, we have worked to ensure that safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone by requiring all federally funded sport organizations take measures to prevent and address maltreatment, and the results speak for themselves. The reality is that it is a very, very challenging environment, but we have done some extraordinary work, and athletes I have discussed this with have recognized that the progress is there and that there is more work to be done.

As I have mentioned before, ensuring that the safety of sport is maintained is a joint responsibility, and that is why we are committed to having a formal process to do this, one that is trauma-informed, supports survivors and focuses on a broad sport reform. We will be releasing the details of the process very soon. It is an important step forward in ensuring that all athletes and participants have somewhere to turn when reporting incidents of abuse, but it is also worth noting that they currently have that; it is built into every single athlete agreement with every national team.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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 7:13 p.m.)

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