



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

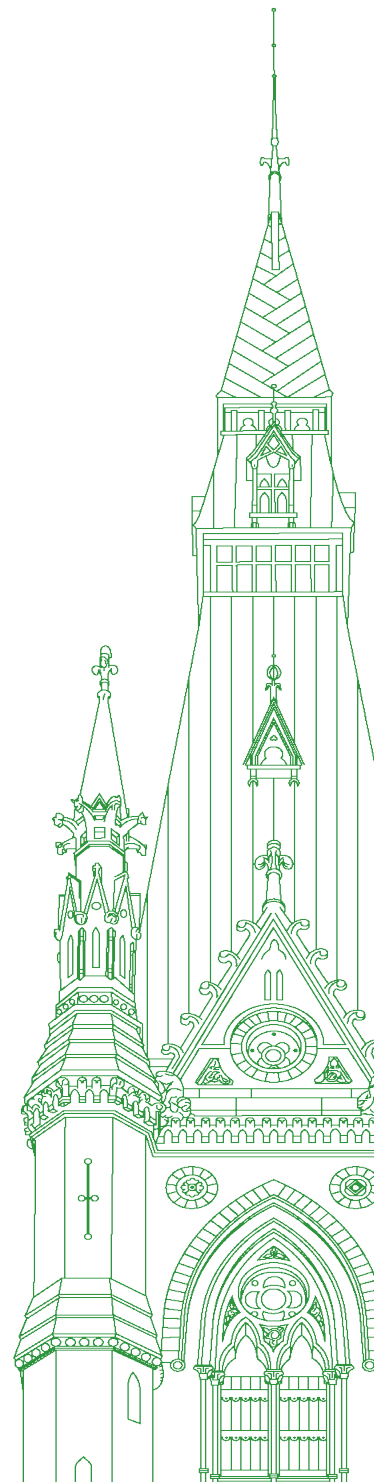
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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September is a month that we devote to awareness of FASD, or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. FASD is the leading cause of neurodevelopmental disability in Canada, affecting 4% of Canada's population, touching all socio-economic categories of Canadians. This year's awareness month theme is "Building Strengths and Abilities". Access to diagnosis and the right supports can help people with FASD live full active lives.

The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society of Yukon, or FASSY, works with Yukon communities to raise awareness and to support individuals and families with FASD. One program, called Landlords to End Homelessness, now supports 11 previously homeless people with FASD. It is proudly supported by participating landlords.

As Canadians and as members of Parliament, I hope we all take advantage of FASD awareness month to educate ourselves as to what more we can do to prevent FASD and to ensure those affected live to their full potential.

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VISION CARE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Greg Wiens. Greg is well known in my riding as a pastor at Westwood Community Church, but today I would like to recognize his work as the outreach coordinator at Global Vision 2020.

Globally, billions of people live with vision loss and almost every single person on earth will need eye care services during their lifetime. That is where Greg and Global Vision 2020 come in. They provide thousands of prescription eyeglasses to people who normally do not have access to vision care in developing countries. They do this with the USee Vision Kit, which identifies their prescription in under five minutes.

When I met Greg a few weeks ago, he made the glasses I am wearing right now so quickly I could not believe my eyes. Global Vision 2020 has clinics in developing countries all over the world. With 125,000 glasses to be deployed this year alone, this technology has the potential to provide clear vision to millions.

I thank Greg for bringing the gift of clear vision to so many.

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PAUL DAVID WYNN AND STEVEN FURNESS

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the morning of July 25, residents in our community awoke to an emergency alert. It was only the second time it has been used in British Columbia. This alert was the result of a series of targeted shootings that occurred throughout the night of July 25 in parts of the Langleys.

This tragic event left two people dead and two people injured. My heart goes out to the family and friends of Paul David Wynn and Steven Furness, who were killed in these senseless shootings. Our community continues to mourn the loss of these two individuals, who were sons, brothers and friends to many.

These shootings highlighted the ongoing danger the vulnerable and homeless population faces. When one person is forced to live on the streets, we are all diminished. Homelessness is a reality for too many Canadians and a challenge for every Canadian community. We must continue to work together with all levels of government, NGOs, indigenous partners and communities across Canada to increase support for vulnerable groups.

Through the Reaching Home strategy, I am pleased that many organizations in my community have received support for these vulnerable populations, but more work must be done. Only by working together can we end chronic homelessness for all Canadians.

Statements by Members

● (1405)

*[Translation]***CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IN DEUX-MONTAGNES RCM**

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour of acknowledging the 60th anniversary of the creation of the chamber of commerce and industry in Deux-Montagnes RCM, also known as CCI2M. With hundreds of active members, the CCI2M has become a key player in economic and business development in the Lower Laurentians over the decades.

It is no accident that, in 2010, this particular chamber of commerce and industry received the honorary title of chamber of commerce of the year in Quebec. Its major achievements include creating the Cercle des Gouverneurs and the Gala Les Monarques, which celebrates entrepreneurial excellence, spearheading numerous buy-local campaigns and establishing a youth branch to support budding entrepreneurs.

It was the unrelenting and diligent work of women and men committed to creating wealth for their community that earned them that honour. Sixty years of dedication to regional economic development and to representing the interests of a community of entrepreneurs—it deserves to be recognized.

On behalf of myself, the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and the Bloc Québécois, I would like to wish a happy 60th anniversary to CCI2M.

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JEAN-LOUIS FRANCHI

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to pay tribute to a man who spent his life serving the Parliament of Canada. The passing of retired constable Jean-Louis Franchi on September 2, 2022, at the age of 58, is a great loss for the Parliamentary Protective Service.

Born to Italian immigrants who came to Canada in 1967, Jean-Louis Franchi began his career in Parliament in 1982 as a messenger. In 1986, he became a constable with the House of Commons security service. On October 22, 2014, the day of the parliamentary precinct shooting, Constable Jean-Louis Franchi was the first officer to protect the Prime Minister in the caucus room until the RCMP arrived on the scene.

I would like to offer my sincere condolences to his family and friends. I also want to thank the members of the Parliamentary Protective Service, who work hard every day to ensure the safety of those participating in our parliamentary democracy.

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*[English]***CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is exciting to see Canadians with a renewed sense of hope and optimism because of our new Conservative leader. His courageous vision and common-sense message of freedom can unite our divided country.

I am reminded of the words in the book of Proverbs that says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish”, and when a nation is led with “understanding and knowledge”, there is stability. Canadians are desperate for a prime minister and a government in whom they can once again trust to look out for their best interests and those of this great nation, a government for the people, not of the people, a government with a strong servant leader who cares about those he serves, someone who understands that what makes Canada great is its people.

Canadians only need two things to survive and thrive: freedom and good government. I cannot wait for the next election when Canadians will have both.

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CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Cancer is the number one disease-killer of Canadian children. Too many children have been lost to this dreadful disease, kids like Carson Clapham who loved superheroes, Ayverie Caster who loved basketball and Teagan Walsh who loved animals. Terry Fox was still in his teens when he was diagnosed and was motivated to change the face of cancer research by the kids he saw in the cancer ward.

I am hopeful because of people like Sick Kids' Dr. David Malkin, who is leading groundbreaking and life-saving research as part of the precision child health initiative, and Jessica Rosenbloom, a two-time pediatric brain cancer fighter, nursing student and advocate for childhood cancer, who is documenting her journey as “onetough-cookieclub” on Instagram.

Our government recognized the need for investments in childhood cancer research by investing \$30 million in budget 2021. Give Jess a follow this month to learn more about childhood cancer and its impact on Canadians like her.

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● (1410)

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege for me to speak about the ongoing community initiatives in my riding of Richmond Hill.

I am thrilled to see the continued valuable impact of the Canada summer jobs program on our passionate and ambitious youth. This summer, I had the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of over 200 Canada summer job students in my riding. Our youth are the centre of change, and I am inspired by their efforts to make a positive difference in Richmond Hill.

I would also like to recognize the outstanding work done by the Queen's Platinum Jubilee pin award nominees. Their tireless, philanthropic efforts in areas such as eradicating homelessness, establishing mental health services and enhancing the well-being of seniors, women and youth at risk have made Richmond Hill stronger as a whole.

To our admirable youth and community leaders, I extend my wholehearted gratitude for everything they do for Richmond Hill every day.

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NATIONAL FOREST WEEK

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in celebration of National Forest Week, the Forest Products Association of Canada's annual Awards of Excellence is an incredible program designed to recognize the dedicated professionals who work in Canada's forest sector and the academics, community leaders and professionals who work hard to advance the environmental and economic benefits of Canadian forestry.

I am honoured to rise in the House of Commons today to celebrate Clara Reinhardt, mayor of Radium Hot Springs, the beautiful mountain town of Kootenay—Columbia, for being recognized as a recipient for the Community Champion Award. The forest sector is critical for Kootenay—Columbia and Canada. It is important to recognize the dedication, sacrifice and hard work of community-minded individuals like Clara, who is on Parliament Hill today. I thank the Forest Products Association of Canada.

On behalf of members of this chamber and the constituents of Kootenay—Columbia, I thank Clara and all the recipients for their service to the community and offer them congratulations on their recognition as community champions.

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MEDAL WINNERS IN WRESTLING

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not one to shy away from a fight, but when it comes to these great wrestlers from Surrey and the valley, I will definitely think twice.

I want to recognize and congratulate Amar Dhesi and Nishan Randhawa for their gold medals and Jasmit Phulka for his bronze medal at the 2022 Commonwealth Games held in Birmingham, England. I also want to recognize police constable Jessy Sahota for taking home gold in men's heavyweight wrestling at the World Police and Fire Games. In addition to taking home gold, Constable Sahota has been recognized with the prestigious International Association of Chiefs of Police 40 Under 40 Award.

I congratulate all the talented athletes for their accomplishments. Canada is proud of them.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put people first: their retirement, their paycheques, their homes and their country.

Statements by Members

The housing crisis overlooked by the government kills any hope for home ownership by youth and newcomers. Thirty-year-olds, who did everything we asked of them, such as getting degrees and working hard, are living in their parents' basements because housing prices have doubled. More and more young Canadians are considering moving to other countries, where owning a house is not just a dream.

The reason for all this is the lack of action by the government, which has no plan to address these issues. We have a solution. A Conservative government will restore the hope of home ownership. We will co-operate with local governments to remove the gatekeepers and speed up building permits. We will sell off thousands of underutilized federal buildings and turn them into housing. We will introduce programs that will work. We will rekindle the hope that people's paycheques and savings can buy them a home.

Enough of the false promises and failed agendas. It is time for real change. Let us start building homes for Canadians.

* * *

COST OF LIVING

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put people first: their retirement, their paycheques, their homes and their country.

The government's high energy taxes and proposed fertilizer cuts will drive food production abroad and cost hard-working Canadians their jobs. Food prices are already skyrocketing. Food is up over 10% year over year. Four out of five Canadians are changing their eating habits because of rising food prices. Stories of people who did not need a food bank and are suddenly in line have become all too common.

A Conservative government will repeal these taxes and fertilizer mandates to get out of the way and off the backs of our farmers so we can grow affordable food, feed our people and be the breadbasket of this world.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

MARIETTE CARRIER-FRASER

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great emotion that I rise today to recognize another extraordinary woman whose loss is being mourned by the Franco-Ontarian community. After losing Gisèle Lalonde, who passed away on July 27, 2022, we were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Mariette Carrier-Fraser on September 15. Mariette was another pioneer of the francophonie, a grande dame, a friend and a passionate Franco-Ontarian.

Statements by Members

Mariette worked tirelessly throughout her distinguished career. Whether in key organizations or as an assistant deputy minister in the Ontario government, she strengthened the education system for Franco-Ontarians and was an unshakable force in improving access to French-language health care in Ontario. Her wise counsel will forever mark the francophone community across the country. We want to express our sincere condolences to her family.

As we celebrate Franco-Ontarian Day this Sunday, let us remember people like Gisèle Lalonde and Mariette Carrier-Fraser who dedicated their lives to defending and advancing the French fact in Ontario and Canada.

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[English]

ALEXA MCDONOUGH WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CENTRE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are all in this chamber for different reasons, but quite literally we are here because of our mothers. As many know, my mother was the former member of Parliament for London—Fanshawe.

Last week, my incredible mother became the new president of the Douglas Coldwell Layton Foundation. The DCLF launched the Alexa McDonough Women's Leadership Centre this June.

McDonough made history as the first woman to lead a major political party as leader of the Nova Scotia NDP, and later served as leader of our federal party.

Under my mother's leadership, the centre will produce new research to empower the next generation of strong women in our fight to reclaim our rights. I thank my mother, Alexa McDonough and the DCLF for their work in our fight for women.

Women's rights continue to be under attack here and around the world, and I will continue to fight for women against gender-based violence, for pay equity, for a safe workplace, for our right to choose, for gender-based health access, for our place in this House and for future generations.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day of Peace.

We are marking this day but not celebrating it, as peace is an ideal that seems increasingly elusive in the world's current state. We mark this day by thinking in particular of the Ukrainian people who, better than anyone else, are now tragically aware of what it means.

We remember the suffering of the Tigrayans and Palestinians, and the plight of those displaced, mainly women and children, by the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. We again condemn the Uighur genocide, which this government still refuses to acknowledge in a pathetic demonstration of political cowardice.

On this day of peace, let us all reiterate Quebecers' support for nations around the world who are not fortunate enough to know not

just peace, but a lasting peace. Let us also underscore the importance for the Quebec nation, a peace-loving nation if ever there was one, to fully assume its rightful role on the international stage in bringing empathy and solidarity to the world.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader is putting people, their retirement, their paycheques, their homes and their country first. Right now, Canadians lose wages because we import 130,000 barrels of oil every single day, mostly from dictators, even though Canada has the third-largest supply right here at home. The Liberal government prefers dictator oil over clean, responsible Canadian energy.

Conservatives will repeal the Liberal anti-energy laws and replace them with ones that protect our environment. We will consult first nations and get things built.

We support Newfoundland and Labrador's plan to increase oil production to replace imported oil. Within five years, our goal is to kick dictator oil out of Canada altogether. Europe needs Canadian energy. Instead of helping Putin sell his gas to Europe to finance his illegal war, a strong Conservative government will support projects like GNL Quebec.

Here is a choice: Give dollars to dictators, or get paycheques into the pockets of Canadians. As a proud Albertan and Canadian, the choice is very clear to me.

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● (1420)

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on July 8, 1959, Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His late Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, arrived in Sault Ste. Marie for a day-long stop on their 45-day tour of Canada.

Sault Ste. Marie, home to the best hospitality in the world, provided Her late Majesty with a day I am sure nobody could ever forget. They toured Bellevue Park, which lives up to its name, and had a luncheon at the Windsor Hotel, where they were prepared a seven-foot-long sponge cake in the shape of their ship, the *Britannia*.

As well, they toured Algoma Steel and explored some of the city's most renowned tourist attractions. These past few weeks, there have been many emails, phone calls and in-person messages of condolence to be sent to His Majesty and the royal family, and there have been so many encouraging, hopeful and grateful stories shared about Her late Majesty's trip to the Soo, and the role and meaning she had in the lives of so many.

With the loss of a great sovereign, we are able to look toward the leadership of His Majesty King Charles III. Let me take this opportunity to invite His Majesty The King to visit Sault Ste. Marie as well.

God bless the late Queen, and God save the King.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the percentage of Canadians who have their own home is at its lowest level in 20 years. It was after this Prime Minister came to power that housing prices doubled.

When he came to power, the average family could pay monthly home-related bills with 32% of their paycheck; now it is 50%. The government wants to make matters worse by increasing taxes on paycheques, fuel, groceries and heating.

Will the government cancel these tax increases so that Canadians can buy or keep their own home?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to begin by congratulating the new leader of the official opposition.

This week, which began with Her Majesty's funeral, was an opportunity for us to take a moment to reflect on the benefits of the Westminster style democracy. A loyal opposition is an essential element of our political system.

It is clear that we disagree on many points, but I hope that we can all—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for her kind words and her congratulations. I look forward to being able to congratulate more young families on the ability to buy their own homes. It is nice to be in the House, but it would be nice for them to be in a home. Unfortunately, house prices have doubled under the government's policies. In fact, the share of the average Canadian's paycheck needed to pay the average monthly bill on housing has gone from 32% to 50%, and the government's solution is to raise paycheck taxes, gas taxes and other taxes.

Will the government not cancel the tax hikes so Canadians can pay their—

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have just heard EI premiums mentioned, so I want people to guess what EI premiums were in 2015. They were \$1.88. Guess who was the minister in charge? It was the current Conservative leader. Guess what EI premiums will be next year? They will be \$1.63. That is 25¢ lower. The leader of the official opposition needs to tell Canadians if he was misguided then or he is misguided now.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer is neither. Guess what Canadians paid in 2015 in EI if they earned \$60,000? It was \$930. Guess what they pay now? It is \$948. That is an increase. Furthermore, if we look at total payroll taxes, they have gone from \$3,400 to \$4,100 under the government. That is a \$700 increase, and the government plans to raise EI premiums, that is the paycheque tax, on January 1, along with other taxes.

Why will the government not cancel these tax hikes so Canadians can pay their bills?

• (1425)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the leader of the official opposition of something he should have figured out when he was the responsible minister. The CPP and EI contributions every working Canadian makes are how we all pay for our retirement and how we create a safety net for every Canadian in case we lose our jobs. These contributions do not go into general government revenue.

At a time of global economic uncertainty, it is the height of irresponsibility for the Conservatives to suggest that we, as a country, stop putting money away for our retirement and a rainy day.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, EI premiums do go into general revenues when they go into surplus, and that is what the government plans to do. It plans to raise both EI and CPP premiums, the paycheque tax, right at a time when we are facing 40-year highs in inflation, all-time highs in increased housing prices, 40-year highs in food price inflation, and record food bank use. This is the last time that anyone should be raising any tax.

Will the government back down from its planned tax hikes on paycheques and on energy?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the economy, expectations matter, and that is why it is so irresponsible for the Conservatives to talk down the Canadian economy. Yes, things are hard right now, but Canada is better positioned than any country in the world. We have the strongest economic growth and the lowest deficit in the G7. Employment is at historic highs. Inflation is lower in Canada than the U.S., the U.K. and the eurozone, and it has now come down for two months in a row. We will get through these tough times together.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now the Liberals would have Canadians believe they have never had it so good. I guess if one is jetting around the world singing songs in a beautiful lobby, that might be true, but the 30-year-olds stuck living in their parents' basement because the Liberals have doubled housing prices might disagree. Those who cannot fill up their tanks with gas might disagree. Those who are among the four in five families that have cut their diets because they cannot afford food might disagree.

The last thing they would want is a tax hike on their paycheques and their energy use. Will the Liberals therefore cancel those tax hikes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for Canadians who are struggling today to make ends meet, the last thing they are going to want to do is trust these highly irresponsible Conservatives. After all, just this spring their new leader described crypto as a way to “opt out of inflation”. Since then, Bitcoin has crashed by 56%. A Canadian who invested in Bitcoin according to the reckless advice of this new leader would have seen her life savings destroyed. That is irresponsible and Canadians are smart enough to know it.

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[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, now that he has sat down, I want to congratulate the new leader of the official opposition. I also want to congratulate the member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

I jotted down the address for the House of Commons on a piece of paper and I was thinking that maybe someone could give it to the Prime Minister. If the Prime Minister wants to join us in the House, I suggest that he return to Canada via Roxham Road. It is much faster, since no one is monitoring that point of entry.

After that, however, will the minister ensure that the rule of law is reinstated—

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

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that our asylum and immigration systems are strong. We are working closely with stakeholders on the border situation.

We are working with our U.S. counterparts on issues related to our shared border, including the safe third country agreement. We

always work closely with all of our partners to meet our national and international obligations.

• (1430)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, maybe we could get the Prime Minister's attention by suggesting that he sing his answers. He could sing us a tune about why his government is allowing human smuggling into Quebec and Canada.

Is the Prime Minister intentionally letting tens of thousands of people cross at Roxham Road because he knows that Quebec cannot sustain efforts to integrate them in French?

Is the Prime Minister doing this on purpose, knowing what will happen? If not, will the government immediately suspend the safe third country agreement and devolve immigration powers to Quebec?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I spoke with a lot of business owners across the country this summer, including business owners in Quebec. They told me that immigration is essential to our economy, in Canada and in Quebec.

As Minister of Finance, I fully support Quebec having its own immigration targets. Last year the province welcomed more than 50,000 new permanent residents.

I hope that all members in the House will work together to welcome immigrants to Canada and Quebec. We need them.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the cost of groceries is up on average 10%. Bread is up 15.4%. Fresh fruit is up by 13.2%. Do members know what else is up? It is corporate profits. The corporate profit for the Sobeys corporation is up by 20.2% when we compare 2021 with 2020.

We know that corporate greed is driving up the cost of living, so what is the government going to do to tackle “greedflation” caused by corporate greed?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians know very well, our government is deeply committed to ensuring that everyone in Canada pays their fair share.

We are permanently raising the corporate income tax by 1.5% on Canada's largest, most profitable banks and insurance companies, and we have introduced a recovery dividend of 15% on the excess profits of these institutions during the COVID pandemic. We also implemented, effective September 1, a 10% luxury tax on private jets and luxury cars worth more than \$100,000, and boats and yachts worth more than \$250,000.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, times are tough with the rising cost of living. On average, the cost of groceries has gone up by 10%. For example, cooking oil prices have gone up by 27%, while pasta has gone up by 32%. At the same time, big grocery chains have seen their profits increase. Loblaw's profits grew 65% when comparing 2021 and 2020.

No one can deny that their greed played a role in inflation.

How is this government going to address the greed of these big grocery chains?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been, and we remain, committed to ensuring that everyone pays their fair share.

We are permanently increasing the corporate tax rate by 1.5% for the largest banks and insurance companies. We also introduced a 15% recovery dividend on the excess profits these institutions made during the COVID-19 crisis.

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TAXATION

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the National Payroll Institute, 85% of Canadians are worried about inflation and rising interest rates. Furthermore, 37% of them are living from paycheck to paycheck and have to spend everything they earn or even more than they earn. Things are starting to look bad.

This government could not care less. It is not interested in coming up with a concrete plan to help these people.

Once and for all, will the government pledge not to raise taxes again?

• (1435)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a AAA rating and the lowest deficit in the G7. That is fiscal responsibility.

The other thing we need is compassion. That is why we are going to double the GST tax credit, create a \$500 housing benefit and launch a dental program for children under 12.

Canadians can afford to be compassionate, and we will be.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is looking through rose-coloured glasses.

The reality is that inflation is eroding Canadians' morale. The cost of food is up 10.8% over last year, the largest increase in the

last 40 years. Parents are struggling to feed their children properly and have to make agonizing choices.

This government, however, wants to raise taxes for taxpayers who are already stretched to the limit.

The question is very simple. Will the Prime Minister give Canadians a break, yes or no, and promise not to raise taxes any further?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives really want to help Canadians, they should support our plan.

Do they really think that a family of four earning only \$35,000 would not benefit from roughly \$500 to help them buy groceries? Do they think that a low-income essential worker who is struggling to pay the rent could not use an extra \$500?

We believe that if the Conservatives really want to help Canadians, they should support our plan.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day I hear heartbreaking stories from my constituents struggling to put food on their tables and keep a roof over their heads. People are at their breaking point. They have nothing left to give, but the government wants to take more. It is set to raise taxes on paycheques, home heating, groceries and gas.

Why will the government not stop making things worse and cancel its punishing tax hikes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that if the Conservatives really cared about hard-working Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet, they would support our plan. Do they really think a family of four earning just \$35,000 a year could not use around \$500 this fall to help buy groceries? Do they really think a six-year-old should not go to the dentist because her parents cannot afford it? Do they think a low-income essential worker struggling to pay her rent could not use an extra 500 bucks?

I think Canadians deserve this support. I wish the Conservatives would agree.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly do not support the Liberals' plan to raise taxes on the paycheques of Canadians, raise taxes on their gas, raise taxes on their groceries and raise taxes on their home heating. We will never support that plan. Grocery prices are up 10%. Gas now costs over two bucks a litre in the Lower Mainland of B.C., and housing now eats up 50% of Canadians' paycheques.

Why will the Liberals not stop making things worse and cancel their punishing tax hikes on Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives used to be a party that had a few core economic principles. They used to believe in saving for retirement. They used to believe in fiscal responsibility and in a well-funded EI system. In fact, when the current Conservative leader was the minister responsible for EI, he actually presided over an EI premium that was 25¢ higher than the one that will go into effect next year.

The Conservatives need to pick a lane. What do they really stand for these days?

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's tax increases are causing a national unity crisis, and those tax hikes will target those who can least afford to pay. The Prime Minister knows that more carbon tax increases will divide our country further and make life even less affordable, but the Prime Minister has taken the same approach all along: to raise taxes on working people, put basic necessities like transportation and food out of reach and then try to politically exploit the division that results.

Will the government change course and cancel its planned tax increases on Canadians' paycheques?

• (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I spent some time in Alberta this summer, and I have some very clear views on who is trying to divide Canadians. I have a question for the members opposite when it comes to the price on pollution, because the reality is that we are putting money back into the pockets of Canadians. Will the Conservatives ask Ontario families to pay back \$745 this year? Do they want Alberta families to pay back \$1,079 this year, or Saskatchewan families—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is this real life? I ask because that answer was pure fantasy. We have inflation landslides and no escape from poverty. When will the Prime Minister open up his eyes and see? He is not a poor boy, but he should have some sympathy. For too many Canadians, opportunity had just begun and now the government is going to throw it all away.

Money is not easy come, easy go in this economy, so when will the government cancel its planned tax increases on gas, home heating and groceries and spare us from this inflation monstrosity?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a little shocking to me that an MP from Alberta would be wanting to spare Alberta families a cheque for \$1,079, which is what they are getting because of our carbon pricing scheme. I also want to remind the member opposite that it was an Albertan—

The Speaker: I am just going to interrupt for a moment. I am having a hard time hearing and I am sure many other members in the chamber are having a hard time hearing as well. I know everyone is excited to be back, but this is the second day back so I am sure everybody will calm down. We do not want to repeat the question, but I will ask for a repeat of the answer.

From the top, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, what I would like to ask you and, through you, all Canadians is whether the member opposite, who is an Alberta MP, is really suggesting that our government stop paying \$1,079 to every family in Alberta this year. I think the people in the member's riding could really use that support and would appreciate it. I think they remember that it was Preston Manning who advocated strongly for a price on pollution.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, there was yet another shooting in Montreal, at the Georges-Vanier metro station, leaving one man dead and two others seriously injured. How many people have to be injured or killed before the federal government realizes that its measures to combat illegal gun trafficking are not working? There have been more shootings, more illegal guns and more victims, not fewer. Those are the facts.

Can the minister look Quebecers in the eyes and tell them today that there are fewer illegal weapons and fewer shootings in Montreal thanks to the federal government? If not, when will he take real action?

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are taking the strongest action in a generation to keep communities safe from gun violence. We are working closely with the Quebec government and municipal leaders such as Mayor Plante to make communities in Quebec safer. We have directed \$46 million to support law enforcement in Quebec and \$42 million to Quebec to steer youth away from a life of crime. We also continue to invest in hardening our border to prevent illegal gun trafficking.

When it comes to protecting Canadians and Quebecers, we are the party Canadians can trust to enforce the law and keep Canadians safe.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): It is frustrating, Mr. Speaker. Every Quebecer can see that there are more illegal weapons than ever in Montreal. They also see that the government that is supposed to control these weapons at the border is the same government that is responsible for passports, airports and Roxham Road, the same government that is telling us that everything is fine. It has been one failure after another, so no, Quebecers do not believe this government when it says that it is doing everything it can to stop gun trafficking. Quebecers will believe the government when they see results instead of shootings.

When will the government take this seriously?

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fighting gun violence means cracking down on smuggling at our borders, and that is why we are doing just that. Last year, CBSA seized a record number of illegal firearms at the border, more than double the seizures in 2020. This year alone we invested over \$321 million into the border for more X-ray scanners, detector dogs and specialized training.

When it comes to protecting our borders, we are the only party Canadians can trust to enforce the law and keep Canadians safe.

* * *

● (1445)

TAXATION

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the price of food, gas and housing continues to go up, yet the government wants to brag about a one-time \$500 rent cheque, which will almost certainly be vaporized by inflation, and we now know that on January 1 next year, the Liberals will increase paycheque taxes on anyone making \$60,000 by over \$1,000.

Will the government cancel its planned paycheque tax increases?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadians who are watching and listening to us today want one thing above all from us all, and that is compassion. They want us to understand that things are tough. They want to know we have a plan to get through it, and they want to know we are going to support them. That is why I just do not understand why the Conservatives will not support us in giving about \$500 to families struggling to buy groceries, \$500 to Canadians struggling to pay their rent.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians want is more money in their pockets. Canadians are actually choosing between affording housing and food. They are people like Michelle and Steven in my riding, who are struggling to put food on the table for their three kids. They do not want more government hand outs. They simply want to be able to afford to pay their bills and buy their groceries. In fact, one in five Canadians have taken on more debt and more loans just to afford the basics.

When will the government cancel its planned paycheque tax increases?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the Conservatives are wrong. There are no tax increases. We are talking about EI and CPP, and we are helping families. In fact, families in Alberta, including in that member's riding, are already receiving a 50% reduction in child care fees.

Economist Ricardo Tranjan said today that this is helping families pay for the high cost of living. It is helping them pay for groceries, and it is making sure they have the things their children need. We are delivering for Canadian families every single day.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with basic essentials getting more and more expensive, Cana-

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ans continue to feel the crunch of sky-high inflation. Families are barely getting by, or worse, they are just hanging on, and the government is going to punish them further by raising their paycheque taxes on January 1.

Canadians simply cannot afford the Liberal government anymore, so will the government cancel its planned tax increases on Canadians' paycheques?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know one of the big differences between our government and the Conservative members opposite? We know that Canadians are smart. We know that Canadians understand the difference between taxes and paying their EI premiums and paying into the Canada pension plan. Canadians know that saving up for our retirement and creating a fund to be sure that we get support if we lose our jobs are smart policies.

We know Canadians need support. That is why we have a plan to give it to them.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the big difference is that we would leave money in Canadians' pockets. With rising inflation, Canadians cannot afford any more taxes. Paycheque taxes are heading toward an all-time high for Canadians. As of January 1, the paycheque taxes of a Canadian making \$60,000 a year will have increased by almost \$1,000 since the Liberal government took office.

Will the government listen to Canadians and cancel their planned tax increases on Canadians' paycheques?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the sad reality is that, in pursuit of populist partisan talking points, the Conservatives have become the party of fiscal irresponsibility. The other real shame is that they are unwilling to set partisanship aside and join with the rest of the House to help the Canadians who need it the most, with \$500 to pay their rent, the doubling of the GST tax credit and help for kids who need to go see a dentist. It is hard to understand.

Oral Questions

● (1450)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, today Statistics Canada confirmed that one-third of people in Nunavut are living in overcrowded houses that are in desperate need of repair. That rate is three times higher than it is for non-indigenous Canadians. In 2017, the government promised an indigenous housing strategy, but no one has seen one since. The Liberals are failing indigenous peoples.

Will the Liberals commit to putting in place a “by indigenous, for indigenous” national housing strategy before the next budget?

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, that is a very important question. In all my travels in the north and the Arctic, both virtual and real, housing is the issue that comes up the most often. However, our government has been making historic investments in distinction-based housing. Budget 2022, as an example, invested \$4 billion in indigenous housing, including \$845 million alone in Inuit Nunangat.

We realize there is a lot of work to do, and we are committed to getting that work done, but we are going in the right direction.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a disgrace that indigenous peoples are 11 times more likely to use a shelter. One in five Canadians cannot find housing they can afford, and home ownership is out of reach for too many young people.

The Liberals continue to allow corporate landlords to treat housing as a stock market and not a basic human right. The government should not be in the business of financing corporate landlords to renovate people from their homes. When will the Liberals stop the financialization of housing to keep rent affordable for families that are struggling to keep a roof over their heads?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that we have been very much focused on putting in place cutting-edge programs, such as the Canada housing benefit, which is now in place in 10 provinces and three territories, and on delivering direct rental supports right into the pockets of Canadian renters in vulnerable situations. On top of that, we have been building affordable rental units from coast to coast to coast.

I want to remind the hon. member that the rapid housing initiative alone has delivered almost 41% of the units to indigenous communities.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that working-age persons with disabilities in Canada are twice as likely to live in poverty as those without. That is why we have taken action to build a Canada that is disability inclusive. In 2019, we passed the groundbreaking Accessible Canada Act, legis-

lation that aims to realize a barrier-free Canada. Yesterday, Bill C-22, Canada Disability Benefit Act began second reading.

Can the Hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion please share with the House how the Canada disability benefit will help lift working-age persons with disabilities out of poverty?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we took a major step forward in creating the groundbreaking Canada disability benefit, a federal income supplement for working-aged persons with disabilities.

With the Canada disability benefit, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to lift hundreds of thousands of people out of poverty. We have the opportunity of a lifetime to send a message to our citizens with disabilities that they matter, and that we will no longer sit by and let them struggle. I hope everyone understands the moment we have in front of us. I hope we will celebrate this together and work to pass it as quickly as we can.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the price of groceries is rising at a forty-year high, and the Liberals are fuelling food inflation with nonsensical fertilizer policy and tax hikes on farmers. Food security and affordability are critical issues for Canadians, and our farmers offer a solution by growing affordable and sustainable food. Instead, the Liberals are attacking our producers with nonsensical fertilizer policy and tax hikes on fuel.

Grocery prices are up 10%. Canadians are struggling to put food on the table. Why are the Liberals making the food affordability crisis even worse by hiking taxes on our farmers?

● (1455)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure members that we are there to support our farmers. Last year, we had the biggest budget in the history of the agriculture department. It was more than \$4 billion. Recently, we have invested \$1.5 billion in agri-environmental programming because our farmers know that the biggest threat to their production is climate change. The biggest threats to food security are droughts, floods and climate change.

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Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the biggest threats to Canadian farmers are the Liberal government and its devastating policies.

The minister is misleading Canadian farmers in the House, and she knows it. For example, the Liberals said that the carbon tax would be revenue neutral, and they know that it is not for Canadian farmers. In fact, a Grain Farmers of Ontario study showed that they get less than 20% of their carbon tax back with the Liberal rebate. Even its finance department knows it, saying that the average farmer gets \$800 back through the carbon tax rebate. They spend tens of thousands of dollars a year on inputs, and that is one day in a combine.

With the food affordability crisis where it is, will the Liberal agriculture minister defend Canadian farmers and oppose any new taxes on—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am here, and we are here, to support farmers day and night, all year long. We are investing in our farmers. We are investing in the agriculture sector. I will talk about the clean technology program, as one example, because we know that farmers need equipment, and they need new technologies to be more energy efficient to be able to do precision agriculture to fight against climate change, which is the real threat to food security.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 45-year-old Jake makes \$30 an hour and has put in over 200 hours of overtime this year, but he is still struggling to make ends meet for his family. The Liberal government is planning to triple the carbon tax on gas, heat and everything else. It is the most expensive government in history, and the more it spends, the more things cost, and the more Canadians like Jake continue to hang on by a thread.

Will the Liberal government give Canadians like Jake a break and cancel its planned tax increases on Canadian paycheques?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are totally focused on addressing the affordability challenge for Canadian families.

I know that in my home province of Manitoba many families are struggling, and that is why I am so heartened to hear about the measures that have been introduced by the finance minister. That is why it is important that the price on pollution and the climate action rebate will put more money in people's pockets. Eight out of 10 families will be better off. The good news is that these cheques will arrive in the mail in October. It will be orderly, and that will help with cash flow and affordability.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was an insulting answer to Canadian families everywhere.

This affordability crisis is a mental health crisis. When one cannot afford to put food on the table for one's family, that is a mental

health crisis of anxiety, depression and suicide. That is compassion when one can pay to feed one's family.

This Liberal government has doubled our national debt, adding more debt than all previous governments combined, yet it is planning to increase taxes on gas, heat and groceries. I will ask it again: Will this government cancel its planned tax increases on Canadian paycheques?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just because the Conservatives repeat something does not make it true.

We are not raising taxes. In fact, this government has given more money back to families than any previous government. Let us talk about the Canada child benefit. That could return up to \$7,000 for children under the age of six for low-income families. That is different from the \$100 in cheques the Conservatives sent every month to millionaires. Let us talk about child care and the 50% reduction in fees by the end of December. That is thousands of dollars for Canadian families. That is real help that is going to help real Canadians.

We understand things are difficult, and we are there—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister was given the mandate of overhauling employment insurance this summer and she did not do it. On Sunday, the temporary measures will come to an end, and the minister will leave 60% of workers to fend for themselves. On Sunday, she will put them back into the same old program and 60% will not have access to it. The system must be overhauled.

In the meantime, could the minister at least extend the temporary measures? No one should suffer because she failed to do her job.

Oral Questions

● (1500)

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the changes to the EI system put in place during the pandemic were in response to extraordinary economic circumstances, shutdowns, lockdowns, job losses and record high unemployment rates. We are not there anymore thanks in great part to the work of our team on this side of the House. We are proud of the work we have done.

We are winding down our temporary measures, but there is good reason for that. I can assure every worker in Canada that they will still have access to a robust, modern and excellent EI system that will be there for them.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was supposed to be done this summer; it may be coming at the end of the year. Her government has been promising EI reform since 2015. For seven years the government has been putting it off. For seven years the minister has been meeting with workers who have paid their premiums their entire lives and now find themselves penniless. Today, she is again putting off the reform.

Does she realize that workers who lose their jobs cannot put off their financial problems?

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not have time in 35 seconds to lay out all the impressive changes we have made to the EI system over the past seven years, but let me highlight an upcoming one.

By the end of this December, workers will have access to 26 weeks of sickness benefits instead of 15. I am looking forward to working with the member opposite as we modernize the EI system and as we allow better access and more adequate benefits for our workers. I can assure her and everyone that by the end of year, they will know what the vision for EI is.

* * *

*[Translation]***TAXATION**

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the price of food keeps going up in our country. Instead of addressing inflation, this government wants to keep saddling Canadians with higher grocery bills. The planned carbon tax increase will only make it harder for farmers to put food on the table, not to mention raising the price of transporting these products. Canadians are having a tough time, and they want to see a light at the end of the tunnel.

Will the government cancel these tax hikes on Canadian farmers?

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the Conservative leadership race over the last number of weeks, the party is still debating whether climate change is real.

That is not surprising since the Harper Conservatives did absolutely nothing for 10 years on the climate file.

While the Conservatives are stuck in the past, we are looking to the future. We are building the economy of tomorrow and the clean jobs of tomorrow, and we are working for affordability.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the proposed carbon tax will increase the cost of home heating fuel by 80%, as pointed out by Liberal Premier Furey. Seniors in my riding of Cumberland—Colchester, such as Catherine, June and Carol, reach out to my office every day because they are in dire straits. Sadly, Carol had to sell her wedding rings to pay for food.

On their behalf, will the government cancel new taxes on gas, home heating, groceries and their paycheques?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think all sides of the House are concerned about affordability and our citizens. One party on this side of the House is doing something about it, and that is why our climate plan is designed so that the majority of Canadians receive more in climate action incentive payments than they pay at the pump. The hon. member will also know that as the carbon price increases, so do the climate payments. They will now be paid quarterly to help with both cash flow and affordability.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, I think we know from the PBO that the carbon pricing plan is a failure. We also know that almost 40% of Atlantic Canadians currently experience energy poverty, by far the highest rate in the entire country, which is vocalized by all of the Atlantic premiers. Clearly, Atlantic Canadians are being priced out of their own lives. They cannot afford to house themselves, heat their homes or feed their families.

The government needs to commit today to cancelling tax increases. The question is simple: Will it do this, yes or no?

• (1505)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House realize that there are unique affordability challenges in Atlantic Canada. That is why the Minister of Environment, just last week, announced \$120 million from the low carbon economy fund to help Atlantic Canadians transition away from heating oil to cleaner energy.

We have a plan for the environment. We have a plan for affordability. Every time that plan comes to the floor, the Conservatives vote against it. They have no plan.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2017, our government accepted all the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report and committed to implementing the 94 calls to action.

One of the main recommendations was that the government establish a permanent, independent, indigenous-led national council for reconciliation to monitor and evaluate progress on reconciliation at all levels of government and in civil society.

Could the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations tell the House what measures the government has taken to establish this council and support its operations?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his important question about the national council for reconciliation.

Today we are set to begin second reading of Bill C-29, a bill that will establish an independent, permanent and non-political council to monitor long-term progress on reconciliation and implement the commission's 94 calls to action.

Bill C-29 fulfills calls to action 53 to 56. I urge all parliamentarians to support this bill and take concrete steps toward reconciliation.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, LaRue's Haulage in Keswick has served the community of York—Simcoe for over 75 years, but the future is looking bleak for small businesses like theirs because of the carbon tax. LaRue's has paid more than \$65,000 in carbon taxes since May, and that is with just 20 trucks on the road. They are holding on by their fingernails, but with the carbon tax tripling, local businesses like LaRue's could go under. This is happening right across the country.

The carbon tax is crushing Canadian small business. Will the Liberals scrap this tax?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we

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have put a price on pollution, indeed, but we have also introduced a number of measures that will build the future economy as well as create jobs and make life more affordable for Canadians. Perhaps the hon. member has heard of our emissions reduction plan, which is going to get us to our 2030 targets. It has broad support, from environmental groups to industry to farmers.

Unfortunately, every single time this comes to the floor, the Conservatives vote against it. They have no plan for the environment. They have no plan for the economy.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how is the tree planting going?

Before the pandemic, half of Canadians were within \$200 of not being able to pay their bills. During the pandemic, the Liberals increased taxes on home heating, gasoline and workers' paycheques. Now, when Canadians are falling further and further behind, they want to triple the tax on home heating and gasoline and take more money from workers' paycheques. Canadians cannot afford this.

Will the Liberals finally listen to struggling Canadians and cancel these punishing taxes?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, carbon pricing is widely recognized by nearly everyone except Conservative politicians as the most economically efficient way to reduce emissions while also driving clean innovation.

I wonder if they could talk to their colleague from New Brunswick Southwest, who says his province should go back to using the federal carbon price because at least it comes with rebates. We agree with that hon. member.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, inflation is causing headaches for Canadians across the country. Interest rates are wreaking havoc on mortgage renewals. The price of gas, groceries and consumer goods is skyrocketing, yet the government is still looking to increase taxes.

While the Prime Minister is busy serenading people overseas, will the Liberals listen to the Conservatives and cancel all the tax increases on workers and seniors?

• (1510)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives really want to help Canadians, I have an idea. They can vote in favour of our plan, which will truly help those who need it, the less fortunate among us.

Oral Questions

We are going to double the GST credit, providing families in need with up to \$500. We have established dental care for children under the age of 12 and created a benefit—

[English]

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many seniors in my riding of St. John's East rely on their pensions and on benefits like the OAS and GIS to help make ends meet. They have expressed real concern about being able to cover their rent while living on a fixed income.

Could the Minister of Seniors please update the House on what our government is doing to focus on affordability for Canadian seniors?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her advocacy.

We recognize the challenges that seniors are facing, and our government has been there for them. Now, to help seniors who are struggling, with our affordability plan we are doubling the GST tax credit. That means vulnerable seniors will receive \$700 in their pockets. Nearly two million low-income renters who are struggling with their rent will receive \$500. We also increased old age security for seniors aged 75 by 10%. That means \$800 more for a full pensioner.

On this side of the House, we are going to continue to deliver for seniors.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not getting the care they need in our health care system. This is not surprising. The government has failed to offer real solutions to fix what the Canadian Medical Association is calling an “unprecedented health crisis”. This failure of leadership is paving the way for the Conservatives, who want to privatize health care, putting profits over patients.

Health care workers and Canadians are counting on the federal government to protect their public health care system. When will the Liberals act to rebuild health care in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for that question. The member pointed to a health care crisis. We have a health care crisis because we have a health care workers' crisis. We need to support them through the very hard time they are going through, with the investments we have already announced and implemented, including the \$2-billion investment we are making now to support a reduction in surgeries and the additional \$1-billion investment to reduce the pressure on long-term care, health care workers and patients. We are going to continue that because we are there for patients and health care workers.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, last week, a new study reviewed those points of no return called tipping points: stalled ocean currents, permafrost collapse and forest dieback. The conclusion was that even at 1.5°C global heating, irreversible and globally damaging thresholds are exceeded. The nine most dangerous have among them the loss of the Labrador current, which looms large. This is dangerous for Canadians. We can avoid this, but only with urgent action.

When will the government wake up and cancel TMX and Bay du Nord?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we share the member's concern about our climate future. We hear about it every day, every week, from our constituents. Just to remind the hon. member, we have an ambitious sector-by-sector path for Canada to reach its 2030 targets and to move to net zero by 2050. It is a very practical road map. A couple of examples are incentives in infrastructure for electric vehicles, energy retrofits for greener homes and buildings, reducing oil and gas emissions, and supporting our farmers.

● (1515)

The Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, there seemed to be some confusion on the government's part during question period, so I would like to seek unanimous consent to table a document showing that combined CPP and EI premiums have gone up almost \$700 under the current government. I would like to be able to—

The Speaker: I believe we are getting into debate on that one. I do not believe we have unanimous consent. I can hear that very clearly.

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[Translation]

MAHSA AMINI

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to acknowledge the hon. member for Willowdale, who wanted to introduce a similar motion.

There have been discussions among the parties, and I think that you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House offer its condolences to the relatives of Mahsa Amini, from her Kurdish name Jina, a 22-year-old woman who died after being arrested in Tehran for "wearing inappropriate clothing" by the Iranian morality police, and offer its solidarity to the women of Iran who are fighting for their rights and freedoms.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent to table this report. In question period, the House leader of the official opposition, the member for Thornhill and others cited a March 2022 report by the Parliamentary Budget—

The Speaker: I believe we are starting to get into debate and I do not think we have unanimous consent, so we will just calm that one down. It might be part of a further discussion down the road.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

IMPROVEMENTS TO LONG-TERM CARE

The House resumed from June 22 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:17 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 47 under Private Members' Business in the name of the member for Avalon.

The question is on the motion. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1530)

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

(Division No. 175)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney

Block
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brassard
Brock
Cannings
Carrie
Chagger
Chambers
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cooper
Coteau
Dalton
Dancho
Davies
d'Entremont
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dong
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Ellis
Erskine-Smith
Falk (Provencher)
Fergus
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Gallant
Garrison
Généreux
Gerretsen
Godin
Gould
Gray
Hajdu
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Jeneroux
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Kelly
Khera
Kmiec
Kram
Kurek
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lantsman
Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Lewis (Essex)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKenzie
Maguire
Martel
Masse

Private Members' Business

Blois
Boulerice
Bragdon
Brière
Calkins
Caputo
Casey
Chahal
Champagne
Chen
Chong
Collins (Victoria)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Damoff
Davidson
Deltell
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Doherty
Dowdall
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Ferreri
Findlay
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garneau
Gazan
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gourde
Green
Hallan
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Johns
Julian
Kelloway
Khalid
Kitchen
Koutrakis
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lapointe
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lehoux
Liepert
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen

Routine Proceedings

May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean	McLeod
McPherson	Melillo
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Miller
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Muys
Naqvi	Nater
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzner
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Poilievre	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Ruff
Sahota	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seebach	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
Sorbara	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Virani
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Wagh	Webber
Weiler	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi — 288

NAYS

Members

Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Bérubé
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Brunelle-Duceppe	Chabot
Champoux	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Fortin	Garon
Gaudreau	Gill
Larouche	Lemire
Michaud	Normandin
Perron	Plamondon
Savard-Tremblay	Sinclair-Desgagné
Ste-Marie	Thériault
Therrien	Trudel
Vignola	Villemure — 30

PAIRED

Members

Carr	Guilbeault
Hoback	Joly
Lake	Lobb
MacAulay (Cardigan)	Ng
Pauzé	Sajjan
Simard	Small
Vecchio	Wilkinson — 14

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1535)

[Translation]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to subsection 94(2) of the Access to Information Act and subsection 72(2) of the Privacy Act, to lay upon the table the reports of the Auditor General of Canada on the administration of these acts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), these reports are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, entitled “Canada and Radioactive Waste Management: Important Decisions for the Future”.

[English]

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

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): 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, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions on Thursday, September 22, 2022, the House shall briefly suspend and thereafter resolve itself into a committee of the whole in order to welcome the players of Team Canada 1972, and, during committee of the whole, a member of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party may make a statement for not more than five minutes to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Summit Series, provided that:

(a) the Speaker be permitted to preside over the committee of the whole;

(b) at the conclusion of the time provided for the statements or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the Speaker may make welcoming remarks on behalf of the House;

(c) the names of the players present be deemed read and printed in the House of Commons Debates for that day;

(d) only authorized photographers be permitted to take photos during the proceedings of the committee;

(e) when the proceedings in the committee of the whole have concluded, the committee shall then rise; and

(f) the time taken for the suspension and the proceedings in committee of the whole be added to the time provided for Government Orders on that day.

[Translation]

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

[English]

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

CIVILIAN SPOUSES AND PARTNERS OF MILITARY MEMBERS

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present petition e-3978 that calls on the Friday before Mother's Day to be henceforth known as civilian spouse or partner of a military member appreciation day. We know there are over 50,000 civilian spouses of serving military members and reservists and this is a way to ensure that we are properly recognizing those who serve alongside the serving military member. It is particularly appropriate that I am doing this the same week that we are celebrating Military Family Appreciation Day.

● (1540)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling this petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This bill has passed the Senate twice and the House once in its current form. It is currently stalled before the foreign affairs committee and petitioners hope that this will be passed soon. The families of victims of forced organ harvesting and trafficking have now waited almost 15 years for Canada to pass this legislation. Let us end the delays and let us get this work done.

HERRING FISHERY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table e-petition 3965 signed by 707 signatories. They are petitioning the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, whom they cite aims to restore Pacific herring stocks to enable this keystone species to play its vital role in sustaining Pacific salmon populations and the marine ecosystem.

The undersigned citizens call upon the minister to, first, postpone licensing any further shellfish aquaculture facilities located in or near herring spawning and rearing habitat in Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel until an ecosystem-based assessment is completed on the impacts of this industry's activities on the herring stock, and this industry establishes a record of effectively managing its

Routine Proceedings

gear and equipment and pays for the cleanup of the tons of plastic debris it produces annually. They also ask the minister to develop, with first nations, a co-management plan for Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel that is area-based and ecosystem-based, and respects and recognizes unceded traditional territories and this location's unique value as an ecologically and biologically significant area and important bird and biodiversity area with 21 salmon-bearing creeks and herring spawning and rearing grounds.

OLD GROWTH FORESTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise here and present a petition that has a number of points. I will try to summarize them briefly.

In general, this petition calls on the government to act to protect endangered ecosystems, particularly old growth forests. The petitioners specifically mention Fairy Creek on southern Vancouver Island, but the petition is broader in its scope.

It is looking for the Government of Canada to work with first nations and provinces to protect such endangered old growth ecosystems right across Canada; to fund the long-term protection of old growth as part of Canada's climate action plan; to support value-added forestry initiatives, creating jobs and particularly working with first nations; to ban the export of raw logs so our logs go to sawmills, creating jobs; and, last, to ban the use of forest products in Canada for wood pellet biofuel production, a false climate solution.

OPIOIDS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today, presenting a petition with approximately 900 signatures on it. These individuals are calling on the government to take a different approach to current drug policies than what we have.

In particular, the petitioners are asking for the government to look at decriminalization as a form of treating the opioid epidemic that exists in our country right now. They note that, between January 2016 and June 2021, there have been roughly 25,000 deaths in Canada related to this particular problem. They also note that over 30 countries have implemented some form of decriminalization and studied the impacts. The petitioners also note that Canadian health, human rights and law enforcement sectors have endorsed decriminalization options. Therefore, they are calling on the government to take a different approach and decriminalize the use of drugs for personal use so that this can be treated as a health crisis.

Routine Proceedings

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present a petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. The bill has passed the Senate twice and the House once in its current form. It is currently stalled before the foreign affairs committee and petitioners are hoping that this bill will be passed through the committee soon.

Families of victims of forced organ harvesting and trafficking have now waited almost 15 years for this legislation to pass, so let us end the delays. Let us work to get this done.

• (1545)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling this petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This bill has passed in the Senate twice and in the House once in its current form. It is currently stalled before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, and petitioners hope that it will be passed soon.

The families of victims of forced organ harvesting and trafficking have now waited almost 15 years for Canada to pass this legislation. We need to end the delays and get this done.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table a petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It has passed in the House once in its current form and twice in the Senate. It is currently stalled before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the petitioners who signed it are hoping that it will pass soon.

For 15 years the families of victims of forced organ harvesting have waited for Canada to pass this legislation. Let us end the delays and get the work done.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, stand to table a petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. We certainly owe it to victims and those affected by this abhorrent practice.

Specifically, I would note the work that the late Hon. David Kilgour did to forward this important issue. The House should lend its support to this important cause and simply get this bill passed in honour of Mr. Kilgour and so many others who have been fighting for this cause and in recognition of the victims of this abhorrent practice.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also am pleased to rise to table a petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. The bill has passed in the Senate twice and in the House in its current form. It has been before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of this House for some time, and the petitioners hope that it will pass soon.

The families of victims of forced organ harvesting and trafficking have now waited 15 years for Canada to pass this legislation, so the petitioners ask that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs get on with the work, study the bill, amend it, pass it, do whatever it

needs to do from that study, and send it back to the House so we can finally pass this bill and get the job done.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This bill has passed in the Senate twice and in the House once in its current form. It is currently stalled before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the petitioners hope that it will be passed soon.

The families and victims of forced organ harvesting and trafficking have now waited almost 15 years for Canada to pass this legislation. Let us end the delay and get this work done.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions to table today.

First of all, I stand in solidarity with my many colleagues who are tabling petitions in support of Bill S-223. For those who do not know, this is a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This bill has actually passed the Senate twice and the House once in its current form, but it is currently stalled before the foreign affairs committee, and petitioners hope that it will be passed soon.

The families of victims of forced organ harvesting and trafficking have now waited almost 15 years for Canada to pass this legislation. Let us end the delays, and let us work to get this done. I will commit to colleagues that the petitions will stop when the bill is passed, but not all of the petitions, just the ones on that particular topic. There will be others, no doubt.

UKRAINE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I am tabling has a number of asks with respect to the ongoing, illegal, genocidal invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

The petitioners begin by noting the various facts surrounding the invasion, including the fact that Ukraine was initially invaded by Russia back in 2014 and that what we have seen this year is a further invasion that really builds on and is consistent with the long-running, violent behaviour of the Putin regime.

The petitioners want to see the Government of Canada stand with the people of Ukraine against the threat faced in terms of their sovereignty and territorial integrity, and work with the international community to take decisive action, including banning Russia from various international organizations. They want to see sanctions swiftly imposed and applied to Russia, no doubt without the kinds of exemptions that we have seen this government introduce. They want to see a complete boycott on Russian oil and gas imports into Canada and Europe and secure energy supply agreements with western partners, with Canada fuelling our partners instead of having them rely on Russia.

Also, the petitioners ask the government, as it relates to calls from the Ukrainian government just recently, to increase the supply of military equipment to protect the territory and human rights of the Ukrainian people, to provide humanitarian assistance, to provide vital assistance to refugees impacted by the conflict in Ukraine and to allow Canadians with family members in Ukraine to urgently bring family members to Canada for as long as this conflict persists.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition that I am tabling highlights the ongoing detention of Mr. Huseyin Celil, who is a Canadian citizen in China.

The petitioners note that they are pleased to see the release of the two Michaels, but they want to see this government advocate for Mr. Celil and other detained Canadian citizens with the same level of intensity that was applied in terms of advocacy for the release of the two Michaels.

In particular, the asks of this petition are, first, that the Government of Canada demand that the Chinese government recognize Huseyin Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services in accordance with international law; second, that it formally state that the release of Huseyin Celil from Chinese detention and his return to Canada is a priority of the Canadian government of equal concern to the unjust detention of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor; and third, that the government appoint a special envoy to work on securing Mr. Huseyin Celil's release. The petitioners also want the government to seek the assistance of the Biden administration and other allies around the world in obtaining Mr. Celil's release, again similar to the practice used in the case of the two Michaels.

The next petition highlights concerns about minority rights in Pakistan. It notes that the 2021 report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom stated that Pakistan's blasphemy law has contributed egregiously to human rights abuses and fostered an overall atmosphere of intolerance for religious minorities, often leading to violence and discrimination.

The petitioners particularly note the case of Notan Lal, the owner and principal of a private school in Ghotki, Pakistan, who was detained and charged under the blasphemy law after being falsely accused by a student. In 2020, 20% of those accused of blasphemy were Ahmadi Muslims, and 5% were Hindus and Christians. The arrest of Mr. Lal led to riots and the ransacking of a local Hindu temple.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has also noted the abduction and forced marriage of women and underage girls from minority communities, in particular Hindu girls from the Sindh region of Pakistan.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to call upon the Government of Pakistan to combat the abduction and forced marriages of women and girls in minority communities, to condemn the imprisonment of Notan Lal and demand his release, and to condemn Pakistan's blasphemy laws in general, which disproportionately target minority communities.

Points of Order

• (1550)

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): The last petition that I will table today then relates to an Order Paper question that I put on notice yesterday about the situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Some of the specific acts in this petition are somewhat dated, although we have seen the resumption of conflict, so it is relevant again.

Petitioners want to see and are calling for an immediate end to violence and for restraint on all parties involved in the conflict in Tigray, immediate humanitarian access to the region, and independent monitoring being allowed. They want the Government of Canada to engage directly and consistently with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments on this conflict, and to call for immediate international investigations into credible reports of war crimes and gross violations of human rights law.

With that I commend all of these petitions to the consideration of my colleagues.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

• (1555)

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers also be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

NOISE IN THE CHAMBER

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to raise an issue that occurred during the opening prayer and the minute of reflection we have in this place. It was almost during the singing of "O Canada". At various points in time this morning, as well as yesterday, there has been noise in the courtyard because of how this place was built to house the interim chamber. It is difficult to hear what members are saying. It happened today during the petition tabled by the member for Kingston and the Islands. I actually had difficulty hearing the petition because there were so many people speaking outside the chamber.

Government Orders

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you could again call attention to this to make sure that more signs are posted and there is stronger enforcement by the PPS, so that there is less noise and we can do our work on behalf of Canadians in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to thank the member for his intervention. I intervened twice yesterday on the same issue, and I believe we talked about it last week. When we have especially solemn issues here in the chamber, we need to try our best to keep the noise from bleeding into the chamber. I think that the House leaders and their desks will continue to work hard to talk to their members, especially when they are walking on the back side of the chamber.

I see that the hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach would perhaps like to intervene on this point of order.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out to my hon. colleague that, of course, that noise has been growing very loud. Members on this side of the House would agree with him that the noise is quite loud. It is very difficult to hear just the length of even your comments, Mr. Speaker.

One recommendation that might be helpful for this would be to post signage, similar to when pictures are being taken, in places where members should be silent or at least moderate their speech, tone or volume. I think that signage would at least help to notify members and the public that that noise does carry into this place.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for that intervention as well.

What we will do is have a look to see if there are some possibilities of putting some signage up just for a reminder.

I would ask the House leaders and whips to bring this back to their respective desks to see if there is an opportunity to maybe keep those doors closed during the session. I know it gets hot in the lobbies.

There are a number of things that I think we can do as members of Parliament to keep it quiet as we are walking in the silent areas. It actually says “silence” on the back sides of the chamber. We will continue to work with the parties to see if we can come up with a reasonable way to keep the noise down when we are here in the chamber. I am saying that and we are hearing noise right now.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was just going to point out that, even as you were making those comments, I was having a hard time hearing you because of the background noise out there.

It seems like every time this issue comes up, we just talk among ourselves about it, but the message never gets out there. Perhaps there is a way. I would never want someone to not be able to hear my petition being tabled, as was indicated by another member. Perhaps there would be a way to have the appropriate staff deal with this, so that it can actually get outside of the walls of the chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. Thank you for that.

I am going to look to my Sergeant-at-Arms right now. He can go remind folks who are being noisy out there. We will endeavour to

work together to find a way to keep the noise to a very, very minimum outside the chamber, but also remind folks that inside the chamber there is some decorum that we have to follow as well.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 14 minutes.

* * *

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): moved that Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, there have been consultations among the parties, and I am hopeful that you will find unanimous consent to allow my colleague, the member for Sydney—Victoria, to share my debate time today.

● (1600)

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge, before I begin, that we are speaking here today on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

As we begin the second reading debate on Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation, I think it is important to highlight that since locating unmarked graves at former residential schools a year and a half ago, Canada's relationship with first nations, Inuit and Métis has evolved and often in a painful way. Survivors, their families, communities and all indigenous peoples across the country were heard as they shared the violent truth of residential schools.

It is our moral obligation as a country and as people to honour survivors and pursue the truth. It is also our responsibility to support all of those suffering from intergenerational trauma in their search for truth and closure. Addressing these ongoing impacts is at the heart of reconciliation and at the core of truth-seeking and the renewal of the relationship with indigenous people, particularly those who attended these horrible institutions.

This summer, after years of advocacy by first nations, Inuit and Métis, His Holiness Pope Francis visited Canada and offered a formal apology for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the abuse of indigenous children at residential schools. Although this apology was seen as a step in the right direction by many people, it is important to recognize the systemic nature of this harmful legacy and the ongoing impacts of the trauma at residential schools that was both instigated and perpetuated by the Government of Canada and religious institutions.

[*Translation*]

A few weeks ago, I joined the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to raise the survivors' flag on Parliament Hill. This flag honours the survivors and those affected by residential schools. It represents our individual and collective responsibility and also our commitment to advancing reconciliation.

At the flag-raising ceremony, the Prime Minister reminded us that reconciliation is something for every person in Canada and all levels of government to participate in, and that includes every member present in the House today.

We are coming up on the second National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which is observed on September 30 pursuant to the passage of Bill C-5 last year, and I recognize that there is still much work to be done. Canadians understandably want to see more tangible progress. In particular, we must respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The national day responds to call to action 80.

As we move forward, we need to be able to measure our progress so that the government and Canada are held accountable for our commitments to indigenous peoples. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission wrote in its final report, progress on reconciliation at all levels of government and civil society organizations needs vigilant attention and measurement to determine improvements.

However, as many partners, particularly indigenous organizations, have pointed out, the government cannot evaluate and grade itself when it comes to reconciliation. Independent oversight is necessary and appropriate. That is why, in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission asked the Parliament of Canada to create a national council for reconciliation, which is exactly what Bill C-29 will do if it is passed. It will establish a national council for reconciliation as an independent, non-political, permanent and indigenous-led organization. The council would monitor the long-term progress being made toward reconciliation here in Canada and evaluate and report on the implementation of the 94 calls to action set out in the commission's report. That is in keeping with what many indigenous leaders have been calling for for many years: greater accountability, greater transparency and a way of holding the Government of Canada to account for the role it plays in reconciliation and the search for the truth.

[*English*]

If passed, this bill will enable the creation of the national council for reconciliation, immediately fulfilling call to action 53. It would also respond to calls to action 54, 55 and 56, which expand on the funding, responsibilities and expectations of transparency for the

Government Orders

council and the federal government. The bill would ensure that Canada responds formally to the council's annual report.

I would like to take some time to reflect on the genesis of this legislation. The road to get here required collaboration and a lot of work. Bill C-29 has been in the making for many years.

In 2019, an interim board composed of six notable indigenous leaders, including Dr. Wilton Littlechild, one of the commissioners from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, made recommendations based on their extensive research and public engagement on the council's mandate, governance and operations, which were the basis for a consultation legislative framework. They also recommended the appointment of a transitional committee to advance this initiative.

Last December, I was pleased to announce and support the establishment of this transitional committee. The committee members reviewed the draft framework, engaged with indigenous and non-indigenous technical experts and provided our government with further recommendations that led to the bill we see before us today.

The bill is a culmination of substantial work and many years of advocacy by indigenous leaders, experts and communities in particular. Therefore, establishing the national council for reconciliation is one of the best opportunities to guide us in achieving truth and reconciliation in this country.

The proposed bill defines the process for establishing the council of nine to 13 individuals and sets out parameters to ensure that a diverse range of people are appointed to the first board of directors. The bill states that at least two-thirds of the board must be indigenous and must include the voices of first nations, Inuit and Métis; indigenous organizations, including a nominee each from the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council; youth, women, men and gender-diverse people; and people from all regions of Canada, including urban, rural and remote regions.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

The council will be tasked with advancing efforts for reconciliation in Canada, including by monitoring and evaluating the government's progress on all of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

Government Orders

This means that the council must have access to the relevant information on how governments are fulfilling their own commitments. Our government will have to develop a protocol for disclosing Government of Canada information, not unlike the disclosure of documents regarding residential schools to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in order to hold the government accountable and better understand the legacy of residential schools. I will be responsible for ensuring that the council has the information it needs to do its job. That is imperative.

I also want to point out that the council will be fully independent from the government and will be managed similar to a not-for-profit organization. This means that it will not have any ties to the government or the Crown. The Government of Canada will provide an endowment and initial funding in accordance with call to action 54.

If it is set up as a not-for-profit organization, the council will be required to report annually to Parliament on the progress made on reconciliation in Canada and to make recommendations for advancing reconciliation efforts. It will have to provide annual reports and financial reports to which the government will have to respond. The government will have to respond to the report every year. These reports would help the government set objectives and develop plans to advance reconciliation based on the council's recommendations. This reporting mechanism set out in Bill C-22 will ensure transparency and accountability as we make progress on the calls to action.

[English]

Finally, the bill outlines the purpose and functions of the council. The mission of the council would be to hold the government accountable on reconciliation and the calls to action. The council would be responsible for developing and implementing a multi-year national action plan to advance efforts on reconciliation. The council would also conduct research and engage with partners on the progress being made toward reconciliation in all sectors of Canadian society and, crucially, by all governments. This includes monitoring efforts to implement the calls to action.

The bill is not exhaustive; rather, it is intended to be a flexible framework. The council would have the authority to pursue other measures it deems important and necessary to achieve its purpose.

[Translation]

In closing, I want to emphasize one last important point: We must pass this bill as soon as possible. It has been seven years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission published its final report and its calls to action. It has been 16 months since the first unmarked graves were discovered in Kamloops. It has been three months since Bill C-29 was introduced in the House.

[English]

With each passing moment, survivors, elders, knowledge-keepers and families are getting older. Many survivors have already passed away without having seen the full scope of our efforts to advance reconciliation. I ask hon. members here today to press forward and support the establishment of the council as quickly as possible. We owe it to the survivors, indigenous peoples and all Canadians.

Finally, I want to thank all residential school survivors, once again, for sharing their truths and their experiences, and I honour those who continue to suffer in silence. Without them, we would not be here today. We see them. We hear them. We believe them.

• (1610)

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister consistently avoids accountability by sending his ministers to answer the hard questions. Bill C-29 is no different. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 56 clearly calls on the Prime Minister to respond to the national council for reconciliation's annual report, yet according to the bill, in subclause 17(3), the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations is to respond to the national council's annual report.

Yesterday at the technical briefing, the minister stated that Bill C-29 would only answer calls to action 53 to 55. That is actually true, because in the bill it is not the Prime Minister who responds to the national council's report.

Why is the minister blatantly disregarding call to action 56, protecting the Prime Minister and allowing the Prime Minister to abdicate his responsibility of answering to the national council's report?

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note that this bill actually responds to calls to action 53 to 55. Obviously, call 56 would follow after the establishment and passing of this law.

Clearly, this is a comment the member opposite is free to put through at committee so the committee can study it and give it due consideration. I think all of us are responsible to answer for the calls to action, and notably, the Prime Minister has stood on many occasions to hold himself and the government personally accountable for the calls to action and the responsibility to fulfill them.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think for this legislation to have real meaning for indigenous people, it is important to know that the process itself, even in this chamber, is done with full participation of indigenous stakeholders. I myself have had conversations with indigenous people from across the Prairies, in particular Alberta, who said they were not consulted on this legislation and feel as though the government and the minister are trying to ram this down their throat without any prior consultation.

I know the legislation makes note of a few national organizations the government has continuously consulted, oftentimes without consulting any other non-affiliated group. Will the minister commit that through this process, those who are not belonging to the three national organizations will have a chance to have input on this with the minister?

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, that is an important question being posed by the member opposite, and I think it is important for this House to consider the work that has been done by the interim board in doing broader outreach as Bill C-29 was put forward. That was the task given to the interim board, and it included a broad swath of indigenous representation. I have a list of specifically notable people who were consulted during this initial process. There was also an open ability, which the interim board controlled, for people to submit their feedback.

Now that the bill has been proposed to Parliament, there is a process that we also follow, and the representation and leadership the member opposite is referring to are free to appear at committee. Indeed, as a government we do not dictate how the committee does its work, but they should look to the committee if they want to further provide their input, and provide it back to my teams as well in a more informal fashion.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, the Bloc Québécois is a vocal advocate for nation-to-nation relations between Quebec, Ottawa and indigenous nations.

The bill, as we understand it, would give indigenous peoples a stronger voice and allow them to be heard. In that sense, we should finally be able to make more realistic progress on reconciliation. We have been talking about it for ages. I remember talking about it in 2015. We were still talking about it in 2019. It is now 2022.

Could the minister tell us whether his hope is that the 94 recommendations will be implemented more quickly with this bill?

Hon. Marc Miller: Establishing an independent, non-political council is crucial to holding the government to account. The government has had the unfortunate habit of saying that 80% of the calls to action had been honoured or were being honoured. However, it was not necessarily subject to review, and other entities were saying that the government had only honoured two or three.

In the future, there will be an official board that can sit independently, with the evidence and information needed to ensure that we are on track. Obviously, progress has been slow over the past two years, but we still hope to pick up the pace.

• (1615)

[English]

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *kwe*. Hello.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words today as we gather to debate this important bill. Part of the shameful and racist colonial policy of residential schools was to forcibly remove indigenous children, first nations, Inuit and Métis, from their communities and deny them their families' languages and culture, all while they endured widespread abuse. Many of the children, we know now, did not come home.

Government Orders

The root of many of the inequalities we see today can still be traced back to the loss of culture, identity and family connections, and the abuse perpetrated by the residential school system. The harmful legacy of this system continues to affect survivors, family and indigenous communities to this day. We see it in the high rates of violence, incarceration and suicide, and in the high demand for mental health and addiction services across Canada for indigenous people. We must take action to reverse this legacy.

The creation of the national council of reconciliation, through Bill C-29, would be an important step toward enhancing reconciliation and strengthening the relationship between indigenous people and the Government of Canada, a relationship based on respect and recognition of rights.

As we begin to debate this bill, I would like to step back and look at the bill from a broader historical perspective. Canada had a system of residential schools starting in the 1830s and lasting until the final school closed in 1998. The aim of these residential schools was to kill the Indian in the child.

In the 2000s, survivors of the system organized a class action, bringing light to the abuses suffered in the residential schools. I recall during my time at the Assembly of First Nations, as part of the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council, witnessing first-hand the leadership of survivors, such as former national chief Phil Fontaine, who was one of the first leaders to courageously share publicly his experience at residential school.

I am also reminded of the late Mi'kmaq advocate Nora Bernard, whose tireless pursuit of justice led to a class action lawsuit on behalf of the survivors in Nova Scotia. It was direct action and courage from indigenous survivors that led to a legal settlement with residential school survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives, the federal government and church representatives.

In 2008, the resilience of survivors led to Canada making a formal apology to survivors for Canada's role in the residential school system. A very important part of that settlement agreement was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which had a crucial mandate to inform all Canadians about the truth of what happened in Indian residential schools.

The commission's great work from 2007 to 2015 helped bring the truth of residential schools to light and begin the work of reconciliation among former residential school survivors, their families, their communities and, indeed, all of Canada. During this time, the commissioners conducted interviews and hearings with survivors and their families to document what had happened at these residential schools. Their work was extensive. They hosted seven national events, countless regional and community events across Canada and conducted more than 6,500 interviews, which resulted in the 94 calls to action we now discuss today.

Government Orders

These 94 calls to action laid the groundwork to the further reconciliation between Canadians and indigenous people. It is clear reconciliation might mean different things to different people, but the commission gave us a point to start from. It gave us a way of solidifying a complex set of ideas, bringing them together in a blueprint for addressing systemic racism in this country.

It describes reconciliation as an ongoing individual collective process that “will require commitment from all those affected including First Nations, Inuit and Métis former Indian residential school students, their families, communities, religious entities, former school employees, government and the people of Canada.” This involves all of us, and this journey of reconciliation is one we must take together.

In relation to the bill before us today, calls to action 53 to 56 directly call upon the government to do what the government plans to do with Bill C-29 today, which is to establish a national council for reconciliation.

• (1620)

Among the 94 calls to action, our government has already taken steps along this journey. We have created the first Indigenous Languages Act. We have for the first time an indigenous languages commissioner, and we have passed legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Bill C-15. Next week, we will be celebrating the first anniversary of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. While I am proud of these accomplishments, there is more work that needs to be done. It needs to be done at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. Bill C-29 would ensure that we stay committed to this important work.

Some of the functions of an independent national council for reconciliation would be to develop and implement a multi-year national action plan to advance efforts in reconciliation, conduct research on promising practices that advance efforts for reconciliation, educate the public about indigenous peoples' realities and histories, stimulate dialogue and address all other matters that the independent council determines are necessary to advance reconciliation.

Education is an important part of the work we need to do moving forward. In my previous role as a treaty education lead in Nova Scotia, I presented many times on reconciliation, and it was only then did I realize that most Canadians were not getting the entire history of Canada. Truth and Reconciliation commissioner Murray Sinclair, who is also a former senator, said it best when he pointed out, “While Indigenous children were being mistreated in residential schools being told they were heathens, savages and pagans and inferior people — that same message was being delivered in the public schools of this country.”

All levels of government and the Canadian public have a responsibility to educate and create awareness of our shared history, not only the things we are proud of as Canadians, but also the dark chapters in our history. We must do so by taking steps to decolonize our structures and education system and putting an emphasis on indigenous knowledge and indigenous voices. When we listen to indigenous voices and knowledge to work hand in hand with our indigenous partners, we create better, more inclusive legislation. That

is why this proposed legislation has been led, at every step of the way, by indigenous voices.

From the interim board to the transitional committee, legislation has been led by indigenous leaders, such as former commissioner Dr. Wilton Littlechild, who was an integral part of the interim board, and the work he is currently doing gives continuity to the valuable work that had been done already. I will emphasize that this bill responds to the voices of indigenous leaders who worked closely with survivors, families and communities affected by residential schools. They led a process to build the resources and the space to try to heal, as well as build understanding between indigenous people and other Canadians.

The Government of Canada has respected that process and looks forward to advancing this bill with members' support. In doing so, we are directly responding to TRC calls to action 53 to 56 and the recommendations of the interim board and transitional committee.

In this important historical context, I call on all members of Parliament to join me in supporting this important bill and continuing to advance reconciliation.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago my colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River asked a question of the minister regarding what we feel on this side of the House is a flaw in the bill, and that is call to action 56, which we feel is not properly addressed in this piece of legislation. The minister responded that the opposition should propose an amendment to the call to action we think is flawed through the committee process.

That call to action actually states that the Prime Minister should answer the national council's annual report, not the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. Given that the parliamentary secretary is a member of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, would he support such a motion?

• (1625)

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, as always, the member knows I am open to all kinds of suggestions from all parties on how we can improve this bill.

I want to be clear on call to action 56. It requires the Prime Minister to respond to the national council for reconciliation's state of aboriginal peoples. It is important to realize that, as we are in the process of determining how to move forward with this council and those calls to action, the only part the Prime Minister could only respond to is what we have placed before it and what we are currently trying to do. It is kind of putting the horse before the cart.

I would encourage members to bring this up at the INAN committee, where we hope to strengthen this bill and make sure it serves the purposes for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Although we are in favour of very good relations between indigenous nations and the people of Quebec, we have to wonder why the government has presented a bill that will ultimately only produce recommendations instead of much more meaningful actions, such as addressing the drinking water issue on reserves.

Why, in 2022, is the government introducing a bill that asks committees to make recommendations, instead of presenting something much more solid and compelling?

[English]

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, a lot of that good work is continuing. It is what we are focused on. Bill C-29 is really focused on the calls to action that were determined by survivors all across the country, and we owe a responsibility to those survivors, my family members included, who have called upon the government to do a certain amount of things. This is what the truth and reconciliation calls to action were about. It was about hearing from those survivors about what they wanted to see from our government and putting it in the format of the 94 calls to action.

We have plenty of work to do on all facets of indigenous issues across this country, but one of the things that we must keep in mind when we are talking about the truth and reconciliation calls to action is that these are directly from the survivors, and there are thousands of them across this country. This is what they have called for from us, and this is what we have committed to enacting.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really interested in my hon. colleague's point on roots of inequity because inequities are systemic. They are not accidental. They are built into the system. We can talk about Jordan's principle. I stood with the family of Jordan River Anderson in 2007, and 15 years later, they are still fighting for justice.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the fact that we are now seeing that speech pathologists, and those working with indigenous children, are being denied payment for services for Jordan's principle. One can refuse to pay for indigenous children to have service, or one can just ignore the bills. If one just ignores the bills, then indigenous children continue to suffer from what the government has found is willful and reckless discrimination.

Will the member commit to ensuring that, for any child who is eligible for Jordan's principle payments, their therapists, doctors and dentists are going to receive the payment that should be paid out, so these children are not denied service?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, it is important that we do everything that we can, as a government, to implement the calls to action. Call to action number three talks about the full implementation of Jordan's principle. Our government knows that it has been, for generations, underfunding a lot of areas for indigenous communities. Jordan's principle is one of those.

Government Orders

That is why I was really happy to see, in January, an agreement in principle that our government has worked out with the Assembly of First Nations. It is a historical \$40 billion to ensure that we are not only compensating those who have suffered in Jordan's principle, but also fixing the system that has been broken for much of our time.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Health; the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, Climate Change; the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Infrastructure.

[English]

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I humbly ask for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

• (1630)

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, while it is always an honour to rise in this place and speak on behalf of the people of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, this week as we return to Parliament, especially as a member from northern Saskatchewan, I come with a heavy heart. As I begin today, I want to acknowledge the recent tragic events in northern Saskatchewan in the communities of James Smith Cree Nation and Weldon. As the healing journey begins for so many, it is important that in the days and weeks ahead we do not allow our focus to be lost from what is going to be a long and difficult journey for many. Often as the media attention diminishes, so can the help and support. The heavy burden these communities will carry will require a resolve, a resolve to continue to be there for family, friends and neighbours. We must not allow them to walk this journey alone.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I rise to speak on Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. The work of truth and reconciliation needs to be viewed as a journey rather than a destination. Relationships are not easy, especially ones that have a long history of distrust. That distrust is the reason why a bill like Bill C-29 deserves to be looked at through a lens that focuses on a consensus-building approach. This will create better legislation. It is what is needed and, quite frankly, deserved.

Government Orders

Bill C-29 attempts to honour calls to action 53 to 56 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by creating an accountability mechanism on the progress of reconciliation across the country. Our party supports accountability. In fact, as the party that established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we welcome it. We will support this bill to go to committee and work there to make improvements.

With the purpose of building better legislation and in the advancement of reconciliation, there are a few matters that I feel should be addressed, some concerns, some questions and some suggestions we will make. I would like to take the next few minutes to speak to some of those concerns.

The first concern I will address is around the appointment process of the board of directors of the national council for reconciliation, its transparency and its independence. To help explain this, I want to speak to some of the steps and timelines that led up to Bill C-29 being tabled in the House.

In December of 2017, the Prime Minister announced that he would start the process of establishing a national council for reconciliation by establishing an interim board of directors. By June 2018, only six months later, the interim board of directors presented its final report, with 20 very specific recommendations. It is worth noting, and it was confirmed by the technical briefing last night, that those 20 recommendations were the basis for the draft legal framework. One of those recommendations also included setting up a transitional committee to continue the work that was started.

I want to read a quote from that final report. It states:

As indicated in our interim report, the interim board believes it is important that a transitional committee be set up to continue the work proposed in the interim and final reports. During our tenure, we have heard from various organizations and community members that we need to move forward with speed and maintain the momentum to establish the NCR.

However, inexplicably, it took three and a half years, until December 2021, for the minister to finally get around to appointing the members of the transitional committee. Again, let us be clear. The development of the basis for the legal framework of Bill C-29 was already finished in June 2018. Why the delay?

The current government, time and again on indigenous issues, makes big announcements, holds press conferences, takes photographs and then proceeds to ignore the real and difficult work. Now we fast-forward to June of 2022, when the minister finally tabled Bill C-29, with just two days left in the spring session I might add. That is four years after the recommendations.

It is not just the unacceptable time frames, but the lack of independence and transparency of the selection process that is concerning. From the interim board of directors to the transitional committee to the board of directors of the council, the process of selecting members has been at the sole discretion of the minister. In June, while Bill C-29 was being introduced, there were indigenous organizations that were very public with their own concerns about this process. These concerns are valid, because according to the TRC's call to action 53, the national council for reconciliation is supposed to be an independent body. I have a simple question. How is it independent if, per clause 8 of this bill, the first board of directors is "selected by the Minister"?

• (1635)

Does the government really expect us to believe, based on its history, that it deserves the benefit of the doubt, and that it would never put forward any undue pressure to get what it wants? Finally, there are the minister's own words when explaining how this oversight body is needed. He said, "It isn't up to Canada to be grading itself."

I think the concerns around the selection process require the minister to be very clear in the House and, more importantly, to indigenous peoples on why he is comfortable in having so much direct control and influence on a body that will be tasked with holding his own government to account on advancing reconciliation.

My next concern is that there is nothing in Bill C-29 that has anything concrete as far as measuring outcomes. Quantifying reconciliation is difficult, I admit, but a close look at call to action number 55 will show that it includes several items that are, in fact, measurable. I will give a few examples: the comparative number of indigenous children to non-indigenous children in care and the reasons for that; the comparative funding for education of on- and off-reserve first nations children; the comparative education and income attainments of indigenous to non-indigenous people; progress on closing the gap on health outcomes; progress on eliminating overrepresentation of indigenous children in youth custody; progress on reducing the rate of criminal victimization in homicide, family violence and other crimes; and, finally, progress on reducing overrepresentation in the justice and correctional systems.

The concern is that, if we want to measure accountability, we must set targets that determine success from failure. Like the axiom, what gets measured gets done.

The PBO recently released a report in response to a Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs request that was very critical of the departments of ISC and CIRNAC for spending increases without improvements in outcomes. I am going to quote from the report: "The analysis conducted indicates that the increased spending did not result in a commensurate improvement in the ability of these organizations to achieve the goals that they had set for themselves." That paragraph ends with, "Based on the qualitative review the ability to achieve the targets specified has declined."

Maybe this is what the government is afraid of. Not only is there a lack of measurable outcomes in Bill C-29, but the wording seems to be purposely vague, just vague enough to avoid accountability. Chief Wilton Littlechild, who sat on both the interim board of directors and the transitional committee, when referring to the bill, told CBC News that the wording needs to be strengthened.

For example, the purpose section of the bill uses the text “to advance efforts for reconciliation”, but Littlechild said the word “efforts” needs deletion. He says the bill should instead say, “advance reconciliation” because it is building on work that has already laid a foundation. The preamble of the bill states that the government should provide “relevant” information, which Littlechild says leaves the government to determine what is important or not. “We could’ve taken out those kind of words,” he said.

When added all together, it seems that there is a pattern of reducing the risk of accountability in the wording of the bill and in the lack of measurable outcomes that would require the government to follow through on its words and actions.

My final concern is around who responds to the annual report issued by the national council. Subclause 17(3) of the bill states that the minister must respond to the matters addressed by the NCR’s annual report by “publishing an annual report on the state of Indigenous peoples that outlines the Government of Canada’s plans for advancing reconciliation.” This does not honour the TRC’s call to action number 56, which clearly and unequivocally calls on the Prime Minister of Canada to formally respond.

The Prime Minister has consistently said that, “No relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples.” Actions speak louder than words and the Prime Minister should be the one responding directly, not delegating that responsibility to the minister.

In closing, as I stated earlier, our party will support Bill C-29 and, in the spirit of collaboration and in response to the minister’s own words of being willing to be open to “perfecting” the bill, will work with the members of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs and will offer some amendments that we believe will make this bill better.

It is now our duty to ensure that Bill C-29 is a piece of legislation that truly advances reconciliation.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his dedication and passion as a member of the indigenous and northern affairs committee. He is incredibly dedicated and collegial, and I think that is needed in this space when we talk about such important things.

Unfortunately, that has not been your party’s historical approach to indigenous peoples. I will highlight, as a measurable outcome, the creation of the Idle No More movement under the Harper regime. I am wondering if you can point to an example of how your new leadership will perhaps change his own beliefs and some of the comments he has made about indigenous people in regard to residential schools. Can we expect to see a shift in the rhetoric and a more supportive tone from your Conservative bench?

• (1640)

The Deputy Speaker: I really have to say that members need to speak through the Speaker and not directly to other members. With the usage of “you” and “your” and those kinds of things, are you questioning my authority? I am seeing some questioning.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have your back, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: There you go.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the opportunity to work at committee to make some improvements and add some teeth to this bill. I have several ideas that I would like to propose when we get there.

I would like to remind the member that it was actually the Conservatives who established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. If it was not for that, we would probably not be having this debate today. If it was left to the Liberal bench to establish the TRC, we would have probably witnessed more announcements, some press conferences and more studies instead of moving on real progress.

I can assure the members that our new leader is committed to advancing reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for his very thoughtful speech and his statement. I really appreciated it.

I do agree with the member that there are some gaps in this bill and I think we are going to need to make sure amendments are made. I wonder if the member could share with us whether one of the gaps is that it does not take a rights-based approach to ensuring that indigenous rights are being protected and better served in Canada?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work my colleague and I do together on committee. I look forward to the work we can do.

Our team has a number of ideas that we are going to put forward as amendments. We are going to be listening. If you have some ideas, we are more than happy to consider those and work together to improve this bill.

Let us be fair; this is a good starting point. There are some ways we could improve this bill and move it a little farther down the road to advance reconciliation for all people across our country. I am happy to work with you on any of the ideas you would put forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Again I am going to remind folks to work through the Chair. On the usage of “you” and speaking directly to other members, just do not do it quite as much.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I have been here for some time. I had very dark hair when I first came. I think the importance is in making sure that we are not referencing each other or actually referencing young sheep, because I am not sure, when they keep talking about “you”, whether it is “you” plural as we would say in northern Ontario or “ewe” the little sheep.

Mr. Speaker, could you please clarify the importance of speaking through you so there is no misunderstanding. People might be thinking we are talking about little sheep. I would, if I was referring to the Conservatives say “youse guys” because that would be more the second person plural, but I am not going to do that. I would speak through you.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for that clarification to work through the Chair and on the usage of “you”. It is probably best not to use “you” when we are dealing with questions and answers in this chamber.

We still have some time for 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, we have a very significant day coming up next week. It is a statutory holiday. It is part of truth and reconciliation. There is this expectation that maybe there is something that we could do here. I believe there is.

When we take a look at the support that seems to be implied in the comments and questions, it would be a wonderful thing to see this legislation pass. Would the member provide his thoughts on the significance of the legislation in terms of its passage before the statutory holiday next week?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, my understanding would be that the legislative calendar is controlled by that side of the House, not by us. I have not been here that long but that is my understanding of how this works.

I have been very clear about my desire and intention to have some conversations about this at committee and about proposing some amendments that we think would improve the bill. I guess I would throw that back at the other side of the House. It is on them, not us, to determine the schedule.

● (1645)

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-29, the national council for reconciliation act. This bill is the government's attempt after six and a half years to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 53 through 56. Indeed, since 2015, the Liberal government, for all its rhetoric on reconciliation, has only fully implemented 11 out of the 94 calls to action and only eight of the 76 calls that actually fall under its jurisdiction.

Bill C-29 is long overdue, and the rush by the government to implement something has produced a flawed bill. If we are to continue down the path of reconciliation with indigenous people, a robust and inclusive response to calls to action 53 to 56 is needed. Unfortunately, the government has failed to produce that response. Bill C-29 provides a framework for the implementation of a national council for reconciliation, but the foundation is cracked and will need some care and attention at committee if the government hopes to provide a workable council that is respected by all indigenous leaders, communities and organizations across Canada.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended that the government establish a national council for reconciliation in call to action 53. Bill C-29 would address this through the creation of a not-for-profit corporation that would have between nine and 13 members who would monitor and report the progress of the government on their efforts for reconciliation with indigenous people. The council would not be an agent of His Majesty in the right of Canada, nor would it be governed by the Financial Administration

Act. It would be, in every practical sense, an independent body, or at least it should be.

Here we find the first of several issues I have with Bill C-29. How independent would this council be if the members of the board are picked by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations? The bill stipulates that the first board of directors would “be selected by the Minister in collaboration with the transitional committee”. However, let us not forget that the transitional committee was selected by the minister in December 2021. Why is this important? First, the board would have the vital task of establishing the articles of incorporation and other founding documents that set aside how future boards would be elected and who would constitute a member. In other words, the minister and his hand-picked transitional team would determine the future of this so-called independent council, and its job would include taking the minister to task over their failed record on reconciliation.

Call to action 54 calls on the government to provide multi-year funding for the national council. The government did so in budget 2019 through the allocation of \$126.5 million, yet the act would not require any accountability on the expenditure of this money, and not one financial report would need to be filed by the council.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recognized the importance that relevant and timely information be provided to the council for it to actually do its work. This was enshrined in call to action 55, where all levels of government are required to provide annual reports and current data on a wide range of areas related to indigenous matters, including but not limited to child care, education, health, incarceration rates, criminality and victimization rates. It would be interesting to hear from provincial and municipal authorities how they are able to implement this requirement. I hope, for the council's sake, that a lot of the work to streamline these requests has already taken place between the crown-indigenous relations ministry, including Northern Affairs Canada, and their provincial counterparts. I also hope that there will not be any undue burdens placed on our already taxed municipal governments with respect to extra reporting requirements.

Call to action 56 calls on the government, the Prime Minister in fact, to formally respond to the report by issuing a state of indigenous peoples' report that outlines the government's reconciliation plan. Bill C-29 utterly fails here, designating the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, rather than the Prime Minister, to make the response.

● (1650)

One of the most glaring issues with Bill C-29 is the lack of representation on the national council for reconciliation. The bill sets aside three seats for the AFN, ITK and MNC, three national organizations that the Liberal government almost exclusively deals with when it comes to indigenous issues, yet they are not the only national indigenous organizations in Canada. In fact, large swaths of urban and poor people would be ignored. There is no representation of women or children designated on the council. There is no acknowledgement of the work of the on-the-ground community organizations that do the work day in and day out for indigenous people.

The Liberals will argue that those organization could get elected by the membership, and sure they could, but why do some organizations get guaranteed spots and not others? Why have important national organizations, such as the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples or the National Association of Friendship Centres, been designated as second-class organizations by the government? Where are the other Métis and indigenous voices?

What about organizations focused on the important work of economic reconciliation? I often hear in meetings with indigenous leaders about the importance of economic reconciliation, not just to address their own issues with their own resources, but to also to return a sense of self-sufficiency and honour to people who have had it stripped away by a paternalistic, archaic, and irreparably broken Indian Act.

If the government of Canada is serious about true reconciliation, we need to address the elephant in the room. I believe that we need to immediately, and in partnership with indigenous leaders, do a comprehensive review of the Indian Act with the intent of removing the legislative barriers to participation in Canada's economy and developing a long-term plan to fully transition away from the Indian Act.

Some indigenous communities are already there. Some are in the process, and some are not ready for that conversation. That is why we need a cautious approach to supporting the abolition of the Indian Act by providing indigenous communities that are prepared for self-government with the legislative avenues to do so, while also ensuring that a robust and national dialogue on the plan for what is next is held inclusively with indigenous and non-indigenous people and ensuring that any new legislation is based on consultation relating to autonomy, taxation, transparency, accountability and property rights.

At the same time, it is my belief that we need establish a national dialogue with indigenous leadership and organizations to remove the bureaucratic barriers to economic prosperity that exist at Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, with the goal of phasing out these government bureaucracies all together. There is no reason why indigenous communities and organizations cannot deal directly with finance or health or any other government entity without consulting the gatekeepers at those two ministries.

We need to modernize the land treaties system to initiate economic prosperity for indigenous communities; provide the tools for

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indigenous communities to determine their own destiny while balancing the rights of Canada; ensure the need for certainty and finality of terms, so as not to impede the overall governance of the nation; and provide future certainty for governments, industry, and indigenous and non-indigenous people.

The existing model of federal public servants determining who is and who is not ready for self-governance needs to change. Reconciliation must be centred on the future of indigenous people, not what is in the best interest of this Liberal government. By modernizing our approach to indigenous partnerships through the eventual abolition of the Indian Act, we modernize Canada, and we usher in a new age of economic prosperity and equality for opportunity.

Bill C-29, which disregards the important counsel of organizations devoted to indigenous people, women's and children's issues, urban and poor first nations, and self-sufficiency and equality is a symptom of a much larger issue. Conservatives support reconciliation with indigenous people, and we are ready to have conversation.

● (1655)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would love to comment on the member's approach here, which was very constructive. Many great things were put forward. I sincerely look forward to working with the member again on the indigenous and northern affairs committee to work through some of these issues.

I, too, want transparency and accountability for indigenous peoples across this country. I wonder if the member could comment briefly on the complex nature of the TRC calls to action and this incredible work that we need to do. Perhaps we cannot oversimplify this work, but really need to go slowly and make sure that it is done properly, while also recognizing the urgency.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's work on the committee.

Yes, obviously we want to ensure everything is done properly. It is why my colleague from northern Saskatchewan and I just outlined in our speeches some improvements we would like to see made. At the same time, there are less than nine calls to action under federal jurisdiction that have actually been completed, and we have been at this for a great number of years.

There is a lot of work that can be done faster. We know how the government likes to drag things out. We want to push it a little more to actually get the job done, and that is what we will continue to do.

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Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to make an interesting note about one of the comments the member made about abolishing the Indian Act. This was something proposed by the other bench by the then prime minister Trudeau Sr. A strong activist and indigenous leader from my province of Alberta named Harold Cardinal responded by saying that we should not demolish and do away with the Indian Act until such time as we have a proper and measurable response to indigenous claims of rights and land.

Would the member agree that indigenous people need to have a pathway to sovereignty and recognized rights before we contemplate abolishing the Indian Act?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, yes, it is exactly what I pointed out in my speech. We should first of all be ready to have this conversation, and there are many who are ready to have this conversation. Many acknowledge the barriers the Indian Act has imposed upon communities right across the country.

There are communities, as I mentioned in my speech, that are ready for this conversation now. There are some considering it, and there are some that are not willing to have this conversation. That is why we are very cautious to say that maybe we can have this conversation with the inclusion and the very real input of indigenous communities, but also provide the off-ramps for those who are ready to have this conversation today.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-29 states that the purpose of the council will be to monitor the progress being made towards reconciliation in all sectors of Canadian society and by all governments in Canada. That is a broad scope.

Which sectors does my colleague think should be prioritized? Should the monitoring be limited to federal institutions? Should the council also monitor federally regulated private companies?

I would like to hear his thoughts on that.

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, we want to, as I mentioned in my speech, respect the various jurisdictions, such as provincial and municipal governments, and work with them in partnership when there is an opportunity to do so. We also do not want to overstep and be the federal government that knows best.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I realize the Conservatives are very passionate about seeing call to action 56 implemented.

I am wondering if he could speak to me about any of the other calls to action he would like us and his new leader to fast-track so we can prepare to move forward in a faster way to get these calls to action done.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, we have talked about the slow response to the TRC calls to action. We have done that many times in committee. We have questioned the minister over and over again about the slow response to these calls to action.

Right now we are talking about Bill C-29, and we are pointing out flaws and things the government has missed in its bill. As I said in my question to that member opposite a few minutes ago, we want to see an amendment to call to action 56 that would include the Prime Minister making the response to the council's report.

● (1700)

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I am speaking on behalf of the Bloc Québécois about Bill C-29, which provides for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

I am especially grateful for the opportunity to participate in this debate because I am a member of the Huron-Wendat nation, the first Huron-Wendat to be elected to the House of Commons. Like the minister, I too was present when the survivors' flag was raised on Parliament Hill a few weeks ago. With us was my colleague from Manicouagan, who is the Bloc Québécois's indigenous affairs critic. We are still a very long way from having fully measured the tragic consequences of a vicious colonial regime.

We need to acknowledge a historical fact. The meeting of two worlds, of indigenous nations and European empires, heralded a brutal culture shock, to say the least. In the name of introducing peoples deemed inferior to the glories of civilization, nations were expropriated and crushed. For those nations, the freedom promised by westerners was actually, more often than not, oppression.

The bill before us today responds to calls to action 53 to 56 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was established through a legal agreement between residential school survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives, and those responsible for creating and running the schools, in other words, Ottawa and religious authorities.

The commission's mandate was to ensure that all Canadians were aware of what happened in residential schools. The commission has documented and provided us with a great deal of new information about survivors, their families, communities, and anyone else who was ultimately directly affected by the residential school experience, including former students who were first nations, Inuit, or Métis, as well as family members, communities, churches, former residential school staff, government officials and other Canadians. A tremendous amount of investigative and research work was required.

Let us not forget that from 2007 to 2015, Ottawa paid money, \$72 million, to support the work of the commission. The commission members spent six years all across the country to hear more than 6,500 testimonies. They also held seven national events in different regions of the country to mobilize the Canadian public, raise public awareness about the history of residential schools and the scars they left, and share and commemorate the experiences of former students and their families.

In June 2015, the commission held its closing event in Ottawa, at which time it released the executive summary of its final report in several volumes. The summary outlines 94 calls to action and recommendations to promote reconciliation between Canadians and indigenous peoples.

As is the case in many bills, the intention is often commendable, but at times the devil is in the details. In this case, I would like to say from the outset that the Bloc Québécois is voting in favour of the principle of Bill C-29.

The Bloc Québécois is a vocal advocate for nation-to-nation relations between Quebec and first nations. Giving indigenous peoples a stronger voice and allowing them to be heard during the reconciliation process is entirely in line with our position. Remember, the Bloc Québécois is a political party that supports Quebec's independence. In our opinion, this is the best way to achieve a new partnership between nations: a new regime that will no longer have any ties to the racist system of the Indian Act, whose very name is insulting. In fact, my status card says "CERTIFICATE OF INDIAN STATUS". This is not a card from the 1950s. It is from 2012 at the earliest, not that long ago. Do not be fooled. That term is as insulting and disrespectful as the N-word and, yes, they are absolutely comparable.

• (1705)

The term Indians is just as insulting to first nations. For the Bloc, international relations start at home, in our own country. The Bloc Québécois is working with indigenous nations at the federal level to strengthen and guarantee their inherent rights. It is ensuring that the federal government applies the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in its entirety in federal areas of responsibility. The Bloc has also come out in support of indigenous nations receiving their due, and we will continue to apply pressure on Ottawa to ensure it responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

On June 21, 2021, the Bloc secured the unanimous passage of a motion to ensure that indigenous communities have all the resources needed to lift the veil on the historical reality of residential schools and to force the churches to open their archives. We could say that this bill works towards that and it is one reason why we will support it.

We also announced that we want to ensure that there will be predictable and sustainable funding for programs to help residential school survivors heal, such as the health support program that was specially designed for that purpose. This bill would establish a council to provide ongoing follow-up for this file.

The bill provides for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation, an independent, non-political, permanent organiza-

tion. The minister stressed that earlier. This organization, whose mission is to advance efforts for reconciliation with indigenous peoples, must be led by indigenous people. It responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action 53 to 56. I am going to read them, because they are important.

Call to action 53 reads as follows, and I quote:

We call upon the Parliament of Canada, in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to enact legislation to establish a National Council for Reconciliation.

That is a good start.

Call to action 54 reads:

We call upon the Government of Canada to provide multi-year funding for the National Council for Reconciliation to ensure that it has the financial, human, and technical resources required to conduct its work, including the endowment of a National Reconciliation Trust to advance the cause of reconciliation.

Call to action 55 reads:

We call upon all levels of government to provide annual reports or any current data requested by the National Council for Reconciliation so that it can report on the progress towards reconciliation.

Call to action 56 reads:

We call upon the prime minister of Canada to formally respond to the report of the National Council for Reconciliation by issuing an annual "State of Aboriginal Peoples" report, which would outline the government's plans for advancing the cause of reconciliation.

Naturally, we are fully and firmly in favour of these calls to action. Earlier, the minister thoroughly explained the organization's mission, its mandate, its governance structure and representativeness on the board. That was all well explained, and the bill is fairly straightforward. We also applaud the obligation to table a report in Parliament and the government's obligation to respond to that report. We approve of all that and have no issue with any of it.

Nevertheless, some questions remain unanswered, and I urge the House to pay close attention to these issues. The first is funding. The 2019 federal budget included an envelope of \$126.5 million to establish the national council for reconciliation, including \$1.5 million in first-year operational, or start-up, funding, but we have no information about ongoing funding or how long that envelope is supposed to last. Details about how this is actually supposed to work are lacking.

Another lingering question is that of the scope. One thing that recurs frequently in this bill is all the entities the council will monitor in order to make recommendations. We can see that the council's current purpose is to "monitor...the progress being made towards reconciliation in all sectors of Canadian society and by all governments in Canada" and to "recommend measures to promote, prioritize and coordinate efforts for reconciliation in all sectors of Canadian society and by all governments in Canada".

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• (1710)

First of all, what does that mean? We would like to understand what is meant by “all sectors of Canadian society”. Crown corporations, surely, would be included. There are Crown corporations in Canada that could be scrutinized by the council, and government departments, too.

Will federally regulated private businesses also be subject to monitoring and investigation? Would an independent airline, for example, be included in the mandate to monitor and make recommendations?

The scope is very broad. It is perhaps a little too vague in the bill. The bill gives the council a great deal of latitude in its activities. This is not a problem in itself, but it could also undermine the council's effectiveness, because we think it could narrow its focus on government entities, rather than on private businesses. This is not to say that private businesses should be ignored, but rather, if there is one thing that should be looked at, it is the government, because the government needs to be held to a higher standard. Focusing on the government, then, only makes sense.

The other thing we need to keep an eye on is the monitoring of all Canadian governments. The bill refers to “governments” in the plural, so we see that there is a desire to monitor the provincial and territorial governments. Although indigenous affairs currently falls under federal jurisdiction, the challenges affecting first nations also relate to many provincial jurisdictions, such as health and education. We see here that the government wants to disregard jurisdiction and allow the council to monitor all government activities in Canada, including those of the provinces and Quebec.

I must admit that that is an irritant for us because we cannot support a federal council that would seek to put Quebec on trial. We are going to keep a close eye on that aspect of things, even though we are in favour of the principle of the bill, as I said earlier. This aspect does not change that support, but it is something members should be aware of.

The Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec, otherwise known as the Viens commission, was put in place to determine the underlying causes of all forms of violence, discrimination and differential treatment of indigenous men and women in the delivery of certain public services in Quebec.

In his report, the commissioner made 135 recommendations to the Government of Quebec. The report contains 142 recommendations in all, but seven of those were not for the Government of Quebec. We are left with 135 recommendations involving the Government of Quebec. These calls to action apply to all of the services that the government provides to indigenous peoples, such as justice, correctional services, law enforcement, health care, social services and youth protection.

The Government of Quebec announced \$200 million in its 2020 budget to implement the commission's calls to action. Since October 2020, \$125 million has been invested in enhancing, ensuring the sustainability of and improving public services, in addition to implementing cultural safety measures.

In the interest of independent and impartial monitoring, the Quebec ombudsman was given the mandate to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec. The Quebec ombudsman has established an advisory committee that includes first nations and Inuit people in order to promote collaboration and ensure that the Viens commission's calls to action are translated into measures that meet the needs of first nations and Inuit representatives.

Another committee, made up primarily of university researchers and people from civil society, was also created to independently document the implementation of these calls to action. It operates out of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, and its first report was published in 2021. This is a great model to follow, in our opinion. We applaud all of Quebec's efforts in this area.

• (1715)

Getting back to the current bill, it could be said that despite what I just stated about what Quebec has already done, we may be seeing the establishment of another body to provide oversight and make recommendations in addition to the two that already exist in Quebec. Therefore, we can wonder if there will be overlapping jurisdictions, meddling in jurisdictions by Ottawa, or if the council will focus just on federal issues in Quebec by analyzing only matters under federal jurisdiction.

The council will be responsible for providing oversight and making recommendations. To that end it will need investigators and analysts. For the committee to properly carry out its responsibilities in this era of labour shortages, it will also be interesting to know the number of staff that this council will need. In short, despite our support, there are many grey areas as I have just mentioned.

In conclusion, it is time to leave behind the rhetoric, crocodile tears and symbolic acts and to take action. Quebec's motto is “Je me souviens” or “I remember”. Today, let us remember. We owe it to the victims of these repugnant acts that in many respects we have barely uncovered or understood.

I will end my speech by saying *tiawenhk*, which means thank you in the Wendat language.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to the debate, particularly from Conservative members, but my question is for this member. When the Conservatives try to give what I would argue is a false impression and make a simple statement by saying that *x* number of calls to action have been implemented, it is somewhat deceitful. There are numerous recommendations, a high percentage of those calls to action, that are being acted on. It is not just solely the federal government, and this leads to the question I have for my colleague across the way.

Would my colleague not agree that, when dealing with the calls to action and in the spirit of reconciliation, there is a need for governments to be working together to address the injustices from the past and to try to work collaboratively in order to achieve many of those calls to action?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly in favour of collaboration.

As I said, we are taking part in a democratic debate. I have expressed reservations, but we agree on the fundamentals. We will look at ways to improve the bill and see what kind of answers we get to our questions. Then we will make up our minds.

Clearly we need a collaborative approach to the duty to remember. That goes without saying. One thing we know is that the story does not belong to any one person, it belongs to everyone. That is what informs our position today.

[English]

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my friend from the Bloc. Once the council is operational, and he referred to it in his speech, the bill would require all levels of government to submit any requested data to show progress on reconciliation, as set out in call to action number 55.

Does the member have any concern with the lack of consultation with the provinces during the process of developing this council, which will impact all levels of government?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, obviously, I am concerned about that. I talked about it specifically and at length.

Quebec did an amazing job creating oversight committees. Now it is observing the potential creation of another federal committee that may encroach on its jurisdiction. Of course that worries us, and that is why I talked about it.

• (1720)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I was particularly interested in the member's statement about Quebec as a nation agreeing that reconciliation with indigenous peoples is very important. I know that all of Canada, including Quebec, is founded on indigenous lands and that all of Canada is land settled by settlers, including people from Quebec, but I wanted to ask a question about reconciliation and how important indigenous languages are.

Does he agree that the council will also have to monitor the protection of indigenous languages in all of Canada, including in Quebec?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not against the idea, but we have to be careful not to expand the council's role too much. As I was saying earlier, its mandate is quite broad. Perhaps it should focus more on the government itself, on the public organizations or agencies that are the responsibility of the Government of Canada.

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That being said, when it comes to promoting indigenous languages, I was fortunate enough to take Wendat lessons a few years ago. It is quite complex. I would not say I speak it, but it is a fascinating language. The first nations want to preserve their culture and their language.

However, I would never be in favour of a plan that encroaches on the realities of the provinces.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot on his speech.

My question for him is the following. Back in December 2017, the Prime Minister announced the creation of an interim board of directors to make recommendations on the creation of a national council for reconciliation. The following year, in June 2018, another interim board of directors presented the minister with its final report, which contained precisely 20 recommendations.

We see that there are a lot of consultations and recommendations, but not a lot of action. My colleague talked about that. I would like him to tell us more about what he would advise the government to do in order to more effectively address the problems that the first nations are facing.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, let me give a broad answer. The Indian Act, which is a completely racist piece of legislation, must be replaced through real dialogue with first nations, with indigenous peoples. Any model we identify must be based solely on dialogue with the first nations and on their will.

That is the first thing that must be made clear. It is appalling that an act with such a name is still in force. A system based on ghettoization is degrading and has no place in today's world.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Edmonton Griesbach.

The Deputy Speaker: A request for unanimous consent to share time has been made. Are we all agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to first thank my constituents in Nunavut for putting me here, for putting their trust in me. I will continue to work hard to ensure their needs are being met and to ensure their voices are being heard.

I also extend a warm welcome back to all the MPs. I hope they had a good summer, and I am hopeful that we will make changes that will have positive impacts for indigenous peoples and for Canada, in general.

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I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the New Democrats on Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. The basis of this bill stems from important recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. I honour it for its work. I truly believe that when the commission made its calls to action, it did so founded in the knowledge that systemic changes would be made.

This bill has the potential to advance reconciliation efforts for Canada and for people who call Canada their home. However, the language of this bill requires amendments for clarity. The wording of this language is not strong enough for the important role it has. It does not reference the important legal obligations enshrined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and case law.

There seems to be a disconnect between indigenous-led recommendations and how the government will implement these changes. Without a clear process in place, communication and actionable change can fall through the cracks, as they have done for decades. New Democrats will propose changes so that indigenous peoples take the lead on reconciliation and the government, to implement recommendations made by the council that will be created. The government needs to hear the voices of indigenous communities and implement changes based on the solutions offered to it.

Indigenous peoples know what changes need to be made. Indeed, the Government of Canada has been told where the disconnections are. Canada must now continue to reconcile its relationship and perceptions with indigenous peoples. Indigenous people have completed a lot of research and advocacy on reconciliation. The government's response must acknowledge this work and be guided in its actions going forward. The many areas requiring reconciliation demand that this council be created so that reconciliation is acted on, measured and maintained.

Before I turn to some of these areas, I will share a personal story. I have spoken in this House about government interference in my life. This summer, I was reminded of some of this interference. I was contacted by a former teacher, and she emailed the following: "Did you attend grade 5/6 at Maani Ulujuk School in Rankin Inlet for part of the school year? I taught grade 5 and 6 and had a student in my class, a lovely little girl, who one day was suddenly called to the office by social services and put on a plane with her mother (and maybe brother) and sent somewhere, if I recall, Pond Inlet. I never heard after what happened to her. Was that you? It would have been 35 years ago." The sad fact, in addition to this, is that this was not the first time I was taken out of a class to be flown to yet another community.

Having shared this, I ask members, what does reconciliation mean? Unfortunately, my story as an indigenous person is not unique in Canada. Unfortunately, my story is too common among indigenous peoples.

• (1725)

Compensation for the confirmed discrimination against first nations children in the foster care system continues to be fought by the federal government. Changes in housing accessibility and affordability, employment opportunities based on their existing

strengths, and language accessibility for federal services are areas of great concern.

Mental health services need to be highlighted across Canada. Processes that have worked and proved to be successful are those run through indigenous practices, and they could be acknowledged. Social justice support for victims of crime and funding in support of such services can be acknowledged through this process. The needs of indigenous persons are important. They are the needs that they see and speak to.

There need to be mechanisms for stronger language and incorporating indigenous laws. Many Canadians recognize the two official languages of Canada as only French and English. With many federal and territorial services being translated into only these two languages, many people are left out of conversations. These conversations are essential and need to include those who speak languages that are indigenous, including Inuktitut.

The public should learn more about indigenous cultures through their viewpoint, which is critical to educating the next generation to prevent future atrocities like those that have occurred here in Canada. By learning history through indigenous perspectives, there is a bright future in which Canadians can know and learn from the past.

We support the passing of this bill to help support indigenous-led reconciliation. Bill C-29 would offer support in facing what has happened here in Canada. Too long has Canada ignored the voices of indigenous peoples. Too long has there been inequality in safe, accessible housing and meaningful infrastructure.

The Government of Canada must take a rights-based approach to ensuring that efforts toward reconciliation have positive impacts on indigenous peoples. We will, at debate, push for the use of such instruments.

There are 94 calls to action. These calls to action must be used as a framework for reconciliation.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be implemented in all its intents. Many elements of UNDRIP are incredibly important when speaking about reconciliation within Canada. In particular, I want to highlight the focus on education, health, and social and economic security. Article 21 states:

Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including...housing, sanitation, health and social security.

Finally, another instrument that must be drawn upon is the landmark Supreme Court decision in Haida Nation. This important case stated that reconciliation must be enacted honourably. Haida Nation states:

The controlling question in all situations is what is required to maintain the honour of the Crown and to effect reconciliation between the Crown and the Aboriginal people with respect to the interests at stake.

I have tried to respond to the former teacher who reached out to me. I was so touched by the fact that my long-forgotten memory of such government interference was indeed real. It felt so long ago that I wondered if it was a memory that I had made up.

• (1730)

I now stand here among members, having been elected by my constituents in Nunavut. As an indigenous MP, with my unique experience and voice, I stand among members as an equal. I plead for us to be the parliamentarians who stop the deprivation of indigenous people's rights and who respect, protect and govern based on indigenous people's strengths.

In creating this council, the federal government must implement its recommendations. With a clear plan and process in place, Canada can start to move in a new direction, a direction that acknowledges the past and seeks justice for the future—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize to the hon. member, but we are well beyond time.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

• (1735)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I realize that the member was cut off in the delivery of her speech. I wonder if she would want to conclude with some thoughts and if she could direct her thoughts to the portions of the TRC calls to action around education that she supports. Does she think that the education that we currently have is satisfactory in terms of what Canadians are learning about indigenous history?

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqagtittiji, I just had one sentence left, which is basically that Bill C-29 is one of many ways that reconciliation can be stewarded.

In terms of education and the calls to action, I go back to the calls to action quite frequently, because it is such an important document. When we talk about education, we must ensure that the education is not just among first nations, Métis and Inuit communities. All Canadians must be taught about Canada's history, because all Canadians have been robbed of that history as well.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my hon. colleague. When she speaks, I listen.

The concern I have is that this would become just another Liberal-appointed or government-appointed board, and then we would have the same inaction that we are faced with today. I wonder if the member has concerns about the appointment process in terms of who would be there, and whether perhaps she has some guidelines as to how we can make that a better process.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqagtittiji, I share the same concerns about the appointment process. I have seen gaps in the text in terms of who could make appointments. At this point, I struggle to share ideas of how that can be improved, because I know that Canada, as a diverse country, has many first nations, Métis and Inuit communities that we must ensure are heard through this whole process. I am sorry, but I cannot answer that question at the moment.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech.

I would like to know whether she thinks the council should also have a mandate in relation to indigenous languages. How could it support indigenous language learning so that each language eventually becomes the common language in the territories where that is possible?

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqagtittiji, I thank the member for that excellent question.

Indigenous peoples have been oppressed through language laws and making sure that we lose our language through residential schools. It has to be a measure, absolutely, to make sure that as a part of reconciliation there are better protections and practices to ensure that indigenous languages can be revitalized.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her excellent speech and her excellent presentation in the House. I represent the region that is just south of hers, and we share some of the same beautiful waterways.

Nunavut is established as its own region, but in other parts of the country the struggle for self-government is the key. There is a lot of symbolism, there are a lot of promises and we hear a lot of nice language, but in my region, say with Treaty No. 9, the right of communities to self-determination and the right of communities to decide how health dollars are spent and what resources are developed or not developed is still something that is not respected or understood.

Would my hon. colleague have some thoughts on how we have to move towards real reconciliation, which is self-determination?

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqagtittiji, absolutely there has to be a full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We cannot just keep paying lip service to it; we need to make sure that all of us, as parliamentarians, are doing what we can to ensure that UNDRIP is respected in Canada.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Nunavut, for outlining what I think is a really important message to all parliamentarians.

With respect to this file, I have sympathy for the government and even the official opposition. This is a very difficult topic, understanding indigenous people, who are so absent from this place, and the ways we can create laws to have a better outcome. There is a deep irony in that.

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When I was first elected I knew, coming from my position as the national director for the Métis of Alberta, that my experience there would in many ways influence my experience here. The conclusion I came to, when deciding whether or not my presence in this place would in fact be beneficial for the outcome of indigenous peoples, I returned to what I learned from folks who were houseless living in Edmonton Griesbach. That was the idea of harm reduction, that for every form of violence or oppression that could be committed by this institution to impact people there is also an ability for it to restrict its ability to harm people.

Where I come from in Alberta this actually happened. To make a quick reference, I was born in a small place called the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement. It is unique in Canada. It is the only place where Métis people have a land base still today. I should note, just to one of the official opposition member's comments, that the people were not consulted, nor are they planning to be consulted on this, which is a huge red flag.

However, returning to the point, indigenous people often see that if we can reduce the level of unilateral impact this place can have on our nations, that is a good thing. Therefore, when I decided finally that it would be a good decision for me to be in this place, it was to understand and share that message with all parliamentarians, through you, Madam Speaker, that we have a role. It is not just to make laws and to govern, but to have a responsibility to reduce harm where we see it.

This piece of legislation is important. It will seek to do that work. The government has tabled what has been a call to action by many survivors and many indigenous nations for a very long time, codified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. I really commend the government for its ability to table this legislation, but I agree, in many ways, with many of the speakers who have made mention of the criticisms and failures of the bill as drafted.

One is that the government may unilaterally, by the minister's discretion, appoint two of the board members it feels would be appropriate to sit there. That is a huge concern when we think about the mass diversity of indigenous peoples in Canada. There is no one body or one function that can truly represent the interests of the many nations and the many people who live in Canada who are indigenous. That is a huge concern that I think the current government should be willing to address.

What I heard from the government today is that it is willing, through committee, to listen to these very important aspects presented by both the official opposition and the New Democratic Party. It is important that we understand that consultation, when we do it wrong, creates a generation of people who feel left out. It is my greatest caution to the government that it not replicate the systems that have excluded people for so long.

I invite the minister to come to Alberta and seek permission from indigenous peoples in all provinces, ask what a national body toward the implementation of these TRC calls to action means for them, and do it in a way that is public and transparent so that Canadians can join the conversation. Right now, this happens behind closed doors. Canadians do not know what is happening. Many indigenous people do not know what is happening.

I know my time is limited and I will have another opportunity to speak on this in the future. I just want to make sure that we can do this work at committee. I encourage the government to work with members of the opposition to do that.

● (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:44 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 9 consideration of the motion that Bill S-206, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (disclosure of information by jurors), be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-206, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding disclosure of information by jurors, because it interests me. Last June, I listened carefully to my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord's speech on the subject, followed the debate and asked a question.

I am the vice-chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and I have substituted on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security and even the Standing Committee on National Defence when they were dealing with very sensitive issues, such as rape and other types of sexual violence, so I understand the effect that this type of speech can have.

That being said, Bill S-206 amends the Criminal Code "to provide that the prohibition against the disclosure of information relating to jury proceedings does not apply, in certain circumstances, in respect of disclosure by jurors to health care professionals". The bill would enable jurors to disclose information that they heard during a trial or jury proceedings when consulting with a health care professional, whether it be a psychiatrist, doctor or psychologist.

The Bloc Québécois's position could not be clearer. We fully support this bill. Jurors take on a very big responsibility, and that responsibility itself can affect people who have a hard time being forced to make decisions that could change several people's lives. The juror may then be exposed to horrific testimony or evidence, compounding the trauma.

Today I want to speak from a legal perspective. I will be talking about the help that jurors need to cope with what they hear and about the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder in some cases.

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I remind members that these people do not choose to become jurors. They are selected and have a legal obligation to fulfill that duty. They are not always prepared to live with what they hear. The legislator must help make this duty as painless as possible. Some jurors have their lives upended and are left to deal with their trauma alone. The government has a responsibility to these people.

Furthermore, if the juror feels the need to consult a professional who can help them overcome the trauma they have experienced, that professional is also bound by professional confidentiality requirements. Currently, section 649 of the Criminal Code makes it a criminal offence for jurors to disclose non-public information about the trial they are sitting on. The section states:

Every member of a jury, and every person providing technical, personal, interpretative or other support services to a juror with a physical disability, who, except for the purposes of

(a) an investigation of an alleged offence under subsection 139(2) in relation to a juror, or

(b) giving evidence in criminal proceedings in relation to such an offence,

discloses any information relating to the proceedings of the jury when it was absent from the courtroom that was not subsequently disclosed in open court is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

The jury secrecy rule, also known as “Lord Mansfield’s rule”, is a cornerstone of common law and the British criminal justice system, which I heard about while studying law. The rule not only protects members of the jury, it also protects the integrity of the deliberation process and the validity of the decision.

Jurors’ contribution to a trial is an important one. It strengthens public trust in the justice system because decisions are not made in an insular fashion by a single individual mechanically interpreting the law. The jury’s importance has been noted and commented on in many different rulings, but one of the most eloquent was written by Justice L’Heureux-Dubé, who neatly summed it up as follows:

The jury, through its collective decision making, is an excellent fact finder; due to its representative character, it acts as the conscience of the community; the jury can act as the final bulwark against oppressive laws or their enforcement; it provides a means whereby the public increases its knowledge of the criminal justice system and it increases, through the involvement of the public, societal trust in the system as a whole.

Lord Mansfield’s rule is guided by three principles. There are three main rationales for the jury secrecy rule.

The first rationale is that “confidentiality promotes candour and the kind of full and frank debate that is essential to this type of collegial decision making. While searching for unanimity, jurors should be free to explore out loud all avenues of reasoning without fear of exposure to public ridicule, contempt or hatred”.

The second rationale is “the need to ensure finality of the verdict. Describing the verdict as the product of a dynamic process, the court emphasized the need to protect the solemnity of the verdict, as the product of the unanimous consensus which, when formally announced, carries the finality and authority of a legal pronouncement”.

• (1745)

Similarly, the rule also seeks to ensure that the “deliberations remain untainted by contact with information or individuals from outside the jury”.

The third rationale is “the need to protect jurors from harassment, censure and reprisals...This in turn is dependent, at the very minimum, on a system that ensures the safety of jurors, their sense of security, as well as their privacy”.

Allowing a juror to consult a mental or physical health professional is not likely to violate any of these principles. This was also the view expressed by Vanessa MacDonnell of the Canadian Criminal Lawyers’ Association while testifying before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in 2018. We have been discussing this for four years. She specifically said: “For many of the concerns that animate the juror secrecy rule, such as the desire for decisions to be final, the desire to preserve the integrity of the deliberation process, and preventing jurors from being subsequently harassed, none of those concerns are really at play if you create a narrow exception”. That argument is even stronger should the therapy take place after the trial has ended.

Bearing in mind the importance of helping jurors, the strongest argument in favour of relaxing the jury secrecy rule is the fact that physical and mental health care professionals are members of professional associations and are bound by the professional confidentiality obligations set out in their association’s codes of conduct.

Quebec’s Professional Code, chapter C-26, sets out strict guidelines for professionals who are likely to come in contact with personal and confidential information. Division III of this legislation reserves the titles of certain professions for registered members of the relevant professional order who have a valid permit. This is the case for social workers, psychologists, human resource advisers and psychoeducators.

Section 60.4 of that legislation states that every professional must preserve the secrecy of all confidential information except in certain circumstances. If a professional is being sued by their client, they can sometimes disclose information that is required for their defence, even if such information is confidential. Furthermore, a professional can disclose confidential information “with the authorization of his client or where so ordered or expressly authorized by law...in order to prevent an act of violence, including a suicide, where he has reasonable cause to believe that there is a serious risk of death or serious bodily injury threatening a person or an identifiable group of persons and where the nature of the threat generates a sense of urgency”.

In all of these scenarios, the professional can disclose only information that is relevant to the situation at hand.

It would be surprising if highly specific details of witness testimony or court proceedings had to be shared in the case of any of these exceptions. The legislation specifically states that the “professional must furnish and at all times maintain security to cover any liability he may incur because of any fault committed in the practice of his profession”.

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Additional privacy protections are also included, namely the fact that the “professional must respect the right of his client to cause to be corrected any information that is inaccurate, incomplete or ambiguous with regard to the purpose for which it was collected, contained in a document concerning him in any record established in his respect. He must also respect the right of his client to cause to be deleted any information that is outdated or not justified by the object of the record, or to prepare written comments and file them in the record”.

There are similar codes of conduct in the other Canadian provinces, including Ontario, Manitoba and New Brunswick. There is also a Canadian code of ethics that takes into account the provinces' legislation and regulations.

Let us talk about post-traumatic stress disorder. There have been countless media reports about jurors developing PTSD after sitting through gruesome trials. The case of young Victoria Stafford is one example.

In conclusion, I am well aware that the trauma jurors go through can lead to PTSD. Jurors themselves have said the horrific cases they heard left them scarred. There is also the case of Mark Farrant, who was a juror on a murder trial involving a young woman who had been severely burned.

As a student at the CEGEP de Jonquière in 2011, I researched PTSD in the armed forces. The consequences can take a toll on family members, in the form of alcoholism, violence or mental health problems. We need to realize that and take action as a society.

• (1750)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would normally say that I am happy to rise to speak on a bill such as this because it is a fairly simple bill. We have a rule against exposing deliberations of jurors for very good reasons: to make sure those decisions are final, to make sure there is no harassment of jurors and to preserve the rights and integrity of that deliberation process.

Bill S-206 would create a very narrow exception. It would allow those who have suffered post-traumatic stress and other mental health challenges as a result of serving on juries to disclose details of that experience to mental health professionals. It is a simple bill, one that is very necessary.

I want to take a moment to thank the former jurors who have spoken out on this issue, and in particular Mark Farrant for the work he has put into bringing this to the attention of those of us in the House.

Why am I not happy? Well, I am not happy because sometimes when we agree on something that needs to be done and agree that it is a good thing, and we do all agree, it seems to take us a very long time to get the job done.

There was a study at the justice committee, with a unanimous report tabled in 2018. All parties supported taking this kind of action and other actions to support former jurors. This was then introduced as a private member's bill in October 2018 by the member

for St. Albert—Edmonton. It passed the House on April 12, 2019, with all-party support in the 42nd Parliament. Here we are, two Parliaments later, and we have not gotten this job done.

That is the reason I am not really pleased to be standing to speak to this bill today. In fact, I had hoped we might actually finish with this bill today, because if no one stands to ask for a recorded vote, this would be done. I know there are those who believe there are good reasons to have a recorded vote, and I will be happy to see the virtually unanimous support that I expect in this House for the bill. However, I have to say that what I really believe is that we need to get on with this and get it done. Let us not delay further former jurors who have suffered mental health challenges from being able to seek the professional help they need and deserve as a result of doing their civic duty.

I am proud to support this bill. I urge us all to finish with it as quickly as we can.

• (1755)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to provide a quick warning before I speak. My testimony today contains a lot of graphic facts, and I may struggle getting through it.

I ask my colleagues, my friends and Canadians who are listening to stop for a moment and close their eyes. We can imagine we are a new RCMP constable in northern British Columbia. We are in our car on a dark isolated highway. It is late November, it is cold and it is just past 9 p.m. There is a light dusting of snow that covers the road in front of us as we drive down the dark deserted highway. Spruce and pine trees line the side of the road, illuminated only by the glow of our headlights.

Just up ahead, coming out of an old abandoned logging road, we see another set of lights, an old GMC pickup, and they veer onto the road in front of us. It picks up speed and is driving erratically. We wonder where it was. Why was it down there? Who is in it? Where is it going, and what was it doing down that road? As the questions flood into our minds, suspicion gets the best of us. It is probably a poacher, we think. We make the call, decide to pursue and then pull them over. It is a routine stop on a dark deserted road in the middle of the winter. We cannot possibly imagine that we are about to stumble upon one of Canada's most notorious serial killers.

On November 27, 2010, at approximately 9:45, a rookie police officer by the name of Aaron Kehler was patrolling off of Highway 27 when he noticed an old pickup truck pull out onto the highway from an old remote logging road. Constable Kehler knew there was nothing down that rugged road and thought it was odd that somebody would be down there late at night in the middle of winter. Seeing the truck veer, speed off and drive erratically, Kehler decided to pull the vehicle over. Constable Kehler's routine stop would lead to the arrest and eventual conviction of Canada's youngest serial killer, Cody Legebokoff.

Legebokoff was convicted of killing four women in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George. When the RCMP pulled him over, the first thing they noticed was the blood smears on his chin. A quick examination of the cab of the truck revealed a pool of blood on the floor. Searching the vehicle, they found a bloody wrench, a multi-tool, a monkey backpack and a wallet that contained a children's hospital card with the name Loren Leslie on it.

When the officers asked Cody about the blood on his face, he said he was hunting deer and had clubbed one to death. RCMP called a wildlife conservation officer with tracking skills. They followed Cody's tire tracks and then his footsteps into the bush. They made a horrifying discovery. It was not the body of a bleeding deer. It was the body of a 15-year-old girl. It was the body of my friend's daughter, Loren Donn Leslie.

I will fast-forward to four years later.

We can picture ourselves in a small, cramped courtroom filled with media, the victims' families, the accused and 11 of our peers. We can try to imagine listening to the gruesome details of what I have just discovered, of how Legebokoff raped and brutally murdered 15-year-old Loren, 23-year-old Natasha Montgomery, Jill Stuchenko and Cynthia Maas. The trial lasted almost four months. We can imagine sitting through that, day after day of gruesome testimony: brutal blunt force trauma, penetrating knife wounds, a broken jaw and cheekbone.

Jurors heard testimony that one of the victims was found with her pants around her ankles and that she died of blood loss and blunt force trauma. All four women were badly beaten before they died. DNA from one of the victims was found on a pickaxe inside Legebokoff's apartment. Natasha Montgomery's body has never been found, yet her DNA was found 32 times in Legebokoff's apartment, on clothing, on bedsheets and on an axe.

Jurors in this trial listened to the unspeakable acts. They listened for days, weeks and months. When the trial ended and Legebokoff was convicted, they had no where to turn. They had no one they could legally talk to. They had no help to deal with the trauma they experienced reliving these horrific crimes.

I want to commend Senator Boisvenu and my honourable colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton for their work on Bill S-206. I agree with the hon. colleague who spoke earlier and said this bill has taken too long.

• (1800)

For decades, mental health issues have been pushed to the back burner. Men, women and our society in general have viewed mental health through a skewed lens. We have been raised to believe that mental health issues are a weakness of character, a weakness of person and a weakness to be hid and swept under the carpet. Thankfully, in the past few years we have all come to realize that this is not true and that mental health is just as important as physical health. Without mental health, we have no health.

Although we are slowly making progress, there is more that can be done. My latest motion to create a national easy-to-remember three-digit suicide hotline, 988, has finally been approved by the CRTC and will be up and running by fall of next year. However,

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988 is just one tool in the tool box. It is not a panacea for all the problems facing us.

The bill before us today is another instrument that can and will help those who often suffer in silence. As the law currently stands, jurors are bound by the jury secrecy rule. They can never reveal what was said and what evidence they were subjected to. They have nowhere to go and nowhere to turn. If they are having trouble dealing with the psychological trauma they have been subjected to, the law forces them to suffer alone. This is not right.

During a study of this issue in the 42nd Parliament, the justice committee heard testimony from another friend of mine, Mark Farrant. Mr. Farrant was called to serve as a juror for another very graphic murder trial here in Ontario. He was subjected to autopsy photos, detailed photos of the victim and the crime scene and detailed photos of the wounds. It was a very incredibly violent homicide.

In his testimony, Mark explained:

As a juror, you are extremely isolated. You cannot communicate with anyone in any form about the events in court or even really with other jurors. I would leave the court in a trance, not remembering even how I got home. I would stare blankly into space during meetings at work or at home while my three-year-old daughter tried desperately to engage with me. My then pregnant wife, who had such an engaged husband during her first pregnancy, now had an emotional zombie in me, unable or unwilling to communicate.

I expected these feelings to subside as I left the courthouse on the day the verdict was delivered. I expected to experience a period of re-acclimatization as I re-entered my life, and then I would be fine. I expected that there would be a thorough discharge and debrief prior to being dismissed, and that perhaps a counsellor would be present who could direct us to services or mental exercises, or indeed talk to us. There was nothing.

My feelings didn't subside. They intensified and deepened. After the trial, I cut off communication with all friends and family, only interacting with colleagues at work, and then only superficially. I became hypervigilant around my kids, refusing to let them walk alone, even a few steps in front of me. I became unable to handle crowds and public spaces. My diet changed. I was unable to look at and prepare raw meat without gagging, something that persists to this day.

Images would haunt me day after day, an unrelenting bombardment of horror. My daughter's red finger painting would hurtle me back to the scene of the crime and I would stare transfixed, seemingly out of space and time. Sometimes I would just start to cry for no reason at all. Intimacy with my spouse was impossible, and I found myself either sleeping downstairs on some kind of vigil, or sleeping in my children's rooms at the foot of their doors, if I even slept at all.

What Mark went through was life-altering. What Mark and his family went through is unacceptable. What Mark and thousands of jurors have endured should never happen again.

Bill S-206 would end this. Bill S-206 would carve out an exception to the jury secrecy rule. It would allow the disclosure of the deliberation process by jurors to a health care professional bound by confidentiality.

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Jury duty is a core component of the Canadian justice system and enshrined in our charter and Criminal Code. Jurors are core to the administration of justice. Jurors will continue to serve our communities and must witness graphic evidence and horrific crimes as part of their civic duty, but we must afford jurors access to the same mental health support and quality of care available to first responders, health care professionals, legal counsel and even judges. Sadly, in some provinces and territories, jurors are offered no support at all or the bare minimum of care.

This is long past due. We need to pass this legislation now. It will save lives.

• (1805)

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 the issue at hand. In listening to members speak on the legislation, there are a couple of thoughts specifically that come to mind.

Many years ago, I was a justice critic in the province of Manitoba. I want to highlight the fact that we have discussions in Ottawa and come up with some very good, tangible ideas. As was pointed out, this issue was well debated, discussed and studied in one of our standing committees. Members of the House have already referred to the 2018 standing committee that did a study on this issue. One of the things that Parliament can do and does well is when it identifies an issue on which we can build consensus. Often I will stand and challenge members to support specific pieces of legislation.

This is a bill that does deserve and merit the support of all members of the House of Commons, but we need to recognize the idea of jurisdictional responsibility. Yes, it is in the Criminal Code, but as some speakers have alluded, whether it is in the study process or even during the debate on this bill or previous bills, we need to recognize that the provinces also play a critical role in this. In fact, I suspect that even if the standing committee did not look at it, which would surprise me, what we would find in Canada is a patchwork system.

Some provinces provide more support than other provinces. In certain areas, and I suggest this is one of those areas, passing this legislation would go a long way in showing national leadership on this important issue and, hopefully, at the end of the day, we would see a more consistent system throughout Canada. I believe we owe that to our jurors.

When we think of the foundations of our nation, we can talk about Parliament or the independence of our judicial system, the rule of law and the fundamental pillars that hold that up. When we talk about the jury process, it is not like people go to court saying, "Pick me, pick me, I want to be a juror." There is a process by which jurors are selected, and there is an obligation on our residents to fulfill that call to be a jurist when they are put in that position. The member before me referred to a particular incident, a horrific incident. Sadly, we see far too many of those types of incidents in all different regions of our country.

There was a time when mental health, as the previous speaker referenced, was kind of pushed to the side. It is only in the last decade or so that we have seen mental health put front and centre in

terms of the need for government policy. When we put that lens on the issue of justice, there are certainly areas that could be clearly amplified, and this is just one of those areas. For all of the reasons the example was cited, one can only imagine the many different horrific examples that have taken place in the last number of years alone that we have asked our fellow citizens to sit and listen to in great detail.

• (1810)

I have never sat as a juror, but I can imagine some of the things that a juror has to go through to ultimately provide that decision, and that decision is absolutely critical in terms of being part of the foundations of our judicial system. I understand and I believe that the vast majority of people would understand and appreciate why it is so critically important that a juror or a jury has to keep what is said within in a very confidential manner.

As I know members of the Liberal caucus do, I suspect, based on the discussions that I hear and the type of support received by previous legislation and the unanimous support of that standing committee I made reference to, that all members of the House understand the issue of mental health and what it is that the individual juror has to go through to reach that decision and fulfill that obligation.

As a society, we are very dependent on that. Given that, and if we take into consideration the issue today of mental health, one would expect we need to be more open to the post-traumatic experiences that many jurors have to deal with as a direct result of their being a good citizen of Canada and participating in our judicial system.

This bill, Bill S-206, is not proposing, as the standing committee is not proposing, that a juror would be able to go out and about and have a press conference and say, "Here is what we dealt with when we went and talked about this case," prior to conviction or no conviction. What is being suggested here is fair and reasonable. From my perspective and, I believe, the perspective of virtually all members of the House, it is recognizing the needs of that juror, who has had an experience as a direct result of doing the right thing and being there for our nation and supporting our judicial system and who is having a very difficult time coming to grips with what he or she witnessed during the trial.

I think there is an obligation on the government, whether it is the federal government or the provincial government, to take the actions necessary to provide that support. In doing so, we should be thinking about how we maximize the effectiveness of our juries. We have to ensure that the proper supports are there. By doing that, we are minimizing the negative consequences of a juror having to participate.

We are saying, in essence, this: Let us look at ways in which we can allow for that juror to be able to talk to a professional health care provider to seek the counselling and the services that are necessary to support our system and, in particular, that juror.

I think there is an obligation to do that and I believe that is the reason the bill has received the universal support that it has. I suspect that, ultimately, when it does come to a vote, it will be of an unanimous nature.

• (1815)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak for what I trust will be the last time on Bill S-206, legislation to support juror mental health.

The idea of this bill came about as a result of a study at the justice committee on juror support, the first of its kind. It was initiated by the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I am very proud to say that the member has been a seconder of this bill and a champion of it.

Five years ago, former jurors came before the justice committee and told their stories of going through difficult trials and of how their mental health suffered as a result. During the study, we learned that former jurors are uniquely impeded in their ability to get mental health supports as a result of something called the jury secrecy rule. Section 649 of the Criminal Code actually makes it a criminal offence for a former juror to disclose any aspect of the deliberation process with anyone for life, even a medical professional.

From a mental health standpoint, how can one get better? How can one get the help they need if they are unable to talk about what is often the most difficult aspect of jury service, the deliberation process?

However, there is a solution to this challenge. That solution is to carve out a narrow exception to the rule so that former jurors can confide with a medical professional about all aspects of jury service bound by confidentiality. It was a key recommendation of our unanimous justice committee report.

Too often in this place, we undertake studies on important topics, produce reports with valuable recommendations and then those reports proceed to be put on a bookshelf where they collect dust. Having regard for the impactful testimony of the former jurors who courageously came before the justice committee to tell their stories, I did not want to see that happen in this case. That is why I put forward a private member's bill to carve out this exception and make that the law.

The bill received unanimous support. Four bills and three Parliaments later, we are on the cusp of seeing this legislation pass into law. From a process standpoint, it highlights the real difficulty in getting a private member's bill across the finish line, even one with unanimous support.

There are a number of people I would like to thank, but unfortunately I do not have the time to do so in the time allocated to me. However, I will thank three people: Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu for introducing this bill in the other place and successfully championing it through the other place; Senator Lucie Moncion, herself a former juror who suffered from mental health issues arising from her service and who played an integral role in seeing the passage of this bill in the other place; and Mark Farrant of the Canadian Juries Commission, himself a former juror and one of the former jurors who came before our committee. Mark is a leading champion today of juror mental health supports.

Jurors play an integral role in the administration of justice in Canada, often at a considerable personal sacrifice. Jurors deserve to get the help they need when they need it. This bill would help for-

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mer jurors do just that. After five years, let us get this done. Let us get it passed. Let us make it the law.

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and so indicate to the Chair.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 28, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this evening to discuss some of the changes that seem to be taking place following the election of a new leader of His Majesty's official opposition and Canada's Conservatives. The member for Carleton was elected, and it is drawing a lot of reaction from the government benches. I know that the Liberals are also so excited that there is now a leader in this place who will help give Canadians control of their lives back, a leader who will focus on Canadians' retirements and Canadians' paycheques. That is exactly what we have.

We also have in the member for Carleton, the leader of Canada's Conservatives, a member who is a leader who has been very focused on a pain point for Canada's economy. We have heard from border mayors, from our tourism industry and from trade groups such as the Frontier Duty Free Association the pain caused by the failed ArriveCAN app, as well as the unscientific border measures that have been left in place long after there was a public health justification for them. We have now heard through media reports, as the government attempts to scramble to get as much time and distance between it and these failed policies, that the government is finally going to scrap that app and the mandate that goes along with it.

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However, there has been a lot of damage done in the intervening period. Jobs were lost and the economy suffocated. Visitors were turned away from Canada, not feeling welcome and being told that they were not welcome. Canadians who could not, would not or did not comply with the failed ArriveCAN experiment were fined \$6,255. I am not just talking about any one type of individual. I am talking about Canadians who were unvaccinated and Canadians who had one dose, two doses, three doses, four doses and more of a COVID vaccination being fined \$6,255 by the government.

The contention was that this was to enforce compliance or to make folks safer. We have heard from epidemiological experts who said that this app and the restriction were doing nothing to keep Canadians safe long after all the provinces and territories had moved in a different direction. They have moved forward. Therefore, it is time, when now the government is recognizing the obsolescence of these policies, that it also needs to make right what is wrong. What is wrong, of course, is that Canadians have paid and been fined or just received notice of this \$6,255 fine. Some families had multiple people in their vehicles or in their travelling party. Fines in excess of \$6,000 per person is an amount that is not manageable for any Canadian family.

We are calling on the government to forgive these fines and to return any of the funds that it has taken from Canadians as a result of these failed policies. Will the government do that?

• (1825)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate having the opportunity tonight to talk about the Government of Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In June, the Government of Canada suspended—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Can we have some order? The hon. parliamentary secretary is answering the question.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, in June, the Government of Canada suspended the vaccine mandate for federally regulated transportation sectors and federal employees. Compared to when the mandates were first introduced, Canada has higher levels of immunity from both vaccination and infection. There is a wider availability of antiviral drugs, and we are better equipped now to effectively manage the COVID-19 pandemic and reduce pressure on the health care system.

In Canada, we have seen case counts declining in recent weeks. While there continues to be regional variability, the peak in the latest wave of COVID-19 activity appears to have passed. However, we must remember that, worldwide, the virus continues to circulate, and the pandemic is not over. That is why we need to take some precautions, including staying up to date on our vaccinations.

Recently schools have welcomed children back to in-person learning and more people are going into the office. In addition, with summer coming to a close, we are spending more time indoors. These factors could contribute to renewed activity and the possibility of new variants remains.

[Translation]

We must stay up to date with vaccination. It is one of our best defences and an absolute priority.

[English]

This applies to COVID-19 vaccines as well as other vaccine-preventable diseases, as we are seeing outbreaks in the circulation of measles, polio and meningococcal diseases in other countries.

[Translation]

It has been almost two years since Health Canada approved the first vaccines for COVID-19 in Canada. Since then, more than 87 million doses have been administered in Canada and billions of doses have been delivered around the world.

[English]

Vaccine effectiveness data shows that COVID-19 vaccines provide strong protection against the most severe outcomes of the disease, including reducing the risk of hospitalization and death due to COVID-19.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our government has implemented policies and public health measures to help reduce its impacts. We have provided access to vaccines to minimize serious illness and death. We have worked hard to preserve the health system capacity and to reduce transmission to protect high-risk populations.

As we move forward, we will continue to base our measures on analysis, expert opinion and science. We will also consider emerging variants of concern, the value and impact of public health interventions, and the impact of vaccination and vaccine effectiveness.

Our measures have evolved hand in hand with the epidemiological situation and public health advice over the past two and a half years. Unlike the Conservatives, who have been wrong about the pandemic at every single turn in the last couple of years, the health and safety of Canadians has always been our top priority and will continue to be our top priority, now and into the future.

I hope the member opposite enjoyed my answer to the question. I could not hear myself because he was talking the whole time.

• (1830)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, it should not have been hard for the parliamentary secretary to simply read the response that was printed for him by the department instead of actually answering the question, which was if the government was going to make right what it did wrong. It fined Canadians who followed all of the rules. He seems awfully quiet about it now.

People who followed all the rules were fined \$6,200 per person. Does the parliamentary secretary think it is reasonable or acceptable for Canadians to get tens of thousands of dollars in fines in their vehicles when they followed all of the directions that the government gave? Maybe they made a simple mistake at the border, and then they were hammered with a \$6,200 fine.

It is absolutely wrong. It is no way to treat Canadians. It is unacceptable. The government needs to make it right, give the money back and apologize.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, public health experts use the latest scientific evidence available on effectiveness, availability and the uptake of vaccines when providing guidance and advice regarding vaccine mandates.

The original question that the member asked does not resemble the one that he presented tonight. If he would like to talk about this, he has my phone number. I would be happy to chat any time.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the carbon tax is an absolute failure, and we know that because there are two metrics by which we can measure the carbon tax.

The first metric is to ask if it reduces emissions. Emissions under the government have gone up every single year. It has not met a single emissions target ever, so the first metric is whether the carbon tax is an effective way to reduce emissions. The answer to that question is absolutely not. But wait, there is a second part. This is like one of those late-night television shows with “But wait, there’s more”. There actually is more.

The Liberals said that more people will get more money back in their pockets as a result of paying this tax, but they did not. The Parliamentary Budget Officer made that abundantly clear in a report. In fact, when we factor in the effect of the carbon tax throughout the economy, because it does affect the economy, most Canadian families end up paying more in carbon taxes than they get back. This is not baseball, so they do not get three strikes and they are out. This is the real world, so two strikes and they are out. The carbon tax is an absolute and utter failure.

I swam on the Canadian national team a long time ago, and when we were training, the big thing our coaches always said to us was “no pain, no gain”. It is kind of the mantra. The Liberals tried to get that. They heard about it somewhere, but they got it wrong because the carbon tax is all pain and no gain.

I had a question for the Prime Minister, and it is even more relevant today than it was in the last session of Parliament. Canadian pocketbooks are running dry. We have an affordability crisis going on in this country. Many Canadian families are a couple of hundred dollars away from not being able to pay their bills at the end of the month, yet the government is going to jack up the price of the failed, miserable carbon tax, making life even more unaffordable for Canadians.

My question tonight, a reiteration of my question in the last session, is this: Are they going to scrap the carbon tax, or at the very least stop the increase in the carbon tax? By every metric, it is an absolute failure.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for being a very thoughtful and constructive member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, which I have the good fortune to serve on. However, I am not sure his question is so constructive tonight.

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Canadians know taking ambitious climate action today is not just a scientific imperative but an economic one as well. That is why Canada set an ambitious and achievable emissions reduction target of 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050.

Reaching our climate goals will also help ensure the conditions are right to build a strong, resilient economy for generations to come, with environmental gain and economic gain.

Since 2016, the Government of Canada has taken swift and ambitious action to fight climate change, grow the economy and keep life affordable for Canadians. The 2030 emissions reduction plan is Canada's road map to meet achievable greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets to fight climate change and create a sustainable, strong economy for the future.

With investments of over \$9 billion, the 2030 emissions reduction plan, or the ERP, includes concrete actions across every sector of the economy. Many of these measures will reduce emissions while addressing affordability for Canadians. The Royal Bank of Canada, for instance, suggests the clean economy could create between 235,000 and 400,000 new jobs in Canada by 2030. That is economic gain.

Today there is a major market evolution taking place, and Canada has the opportunity to be a world-class leader in clean, net-zero options. Further, the 2030 ERP commits billions of dollars to make life more affordable for most Canadians through the climate action incentive, which puts money back in the pockets of families while ensuring homes and buildings are energy efficient to help Canadians save money on their monthly bills.

The plan commits \$1.7 billion to extend the incentives for zero-emissions vehicles, which will make it easier for Canadians to purchase a zero-emissions vehicle and help keep the cost of fuelling their vehicles down. The plan also invests an additional \$458.5 million in the Canada greener homes loan program to help Canadians reduce emissions and of course reduce their energy bills. I hope the hon. member will agree Canada's oil and gas sector has the potential to be the cleanest global producer, and the 2030 emissions reduction plan will help us get there.

In addition to support for workers and a plan to cap oil and gas sector emissions, the 2030 emissions reduction plan also announces a new tax credit for carbon capture, utilization and storage projects. I think it has support on that side of the House, and this is supported by an investment of \$2.6 billion in budget 2022.

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To counter one of the hon. member's statements, I would like to point out that since 2016, the Government of Canada's efforts have been able to reverse the upward trend of emissions. In 2015, Canada's emissions were on a steep climb because the Harper government did absolutely nothing for 10 years and were projected to be 12% above 2005 levels by 2030. According to the 2022 national inventory report, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions decreased—

• (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, the Liberal government has a different definition of ambition than I do and most Canadians do.

When I swam on the Canadian national team, my ambition was to qualify for and go to the Olympics. I came very close. I came third at one of the Olympic trials. If I had used the Liberals' definition of ambition, I would not have even jumped in the pool to compete in my event.

The carbon tax is not ambitious. It does not work. Emissions go up. Canadians pay a tax, and they get less money in their pockets. When they say that it is ambitious, I think the member and the government do not actually understand what the term “ambitious” means. He can talk about all kinds of things, but if he actually read the report from the PBO, and I know it is hard as it is 20 pages and a lot of reading, but appendix A, on page 18, 19 and 20, show that most Canadians get less—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that a cornerstone of Canada's carbon pollution pricing system is ensuring affordability for households through the return of the funds collected. Under the federal backstop system, the majority of households in jurisdictions that receive climate action incentive payments get more money than they pay in fuel charges. That is the Parliamentary Budget Officer speaking. Direct payments to households not only help make the price of carbon pollution affordable, but also enable households to make investments to increase energy efficiency and reduce their emissions.

• (1840)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, just before we rose for the summer break, I asked a question about climate adaptation, about being better prepared for the increasingly destructive climate disasters that are affecting our country.

We have had a series of terrible years of catastrophic weather in Canada. Last year was a terrible year in my home province of British Columbia, with a heat dome that killed 619 people in metro Vancouver, a series of fires that destroyed the town of Lytton and many other rural areas, and then a rainfall event that destroyed all of the highways through the Coast and Cascade ranges. It flooded a huge area around Abbotsford and the interior communities of Princeton and Merritt.

This year brought the derecho storm in May that devastated the Windsor-Quebec City corridor, with winds of up to 190 kilometres

per hour, intense thunderstorms and several tornadoes. The damage to the power system from that storm was greater than that of the 1998 ice storm. It was the sixth-costliest weather event in Canadian history, with insured losses of \$875 million.

This fire season in B.C. was quieter than last year. One fire on the edge of my riding evacuated some rural communities and destroyed one house. Another just over the hill from my house gave me and my neighbours some nervous moments, but the heat was in many ways longer lasting than last year and there is still a series of fires burning in coastal forests in British Columbia that rarely face that threat.

Now the east coast is bracing for Hurricane Fiona, one of the strongest storms in years to threaten the Atlantic provinces, with wave height predictions of up to 30 metres. That is 100 feet. It is clear that we are not talking about the impacts of climate change in the future tense anymore. This is happening now.

At present, Canadians, whether governments, businesses or individual citizens, spend more than \$5 billion every year to repair the destruction from weather events. This is predicted to balloon to \$40 billion by 2050. The federal government has been covering less than 10% of these costs. It is time that we faced up to the costs of climate change and made significant investments with provinces and communities to minimize the impacts that we know are coming. The federal government has to be a better partner with communities, especially small, rural communities that cannot pay for these costs themselves or even put up front a significant portion.

Princeton and Merritt, which were flooded last year, had to face 20% of cleanup costs. That was more than double their annual tax base. Grand Forks, a community in my riding that was flooded in 2018, faced costs of \$60 million to repair the damages. The federal government promised \$20 million, but even now, four years later, there was a year delay in getting the first payment to the municipality. Ten public servants consecutively handled the file, each requiring the submitting of claims and supporting documentation that had been lost or not passed on. The federal government provided claim template forms, only to have completed forms returned with requests for additional details that were never originally requested or required, and despite a clear contribution agreement signed in 2019, federal infrastructure officials have repeatedly and unilaterally changed the scope of allowable expenses.

The government must do better to support communities and their citizens who are being forced to deal with the impact of climate disasters.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague raises the issue not only of the importance of infrastructure, but of the causes and impacts on infrastructure of extreme weather events and climate change and adaptation. I share his concern. We share the concerns on the needs for infrastructure to create more resilient communities.

I recognize the frustration he raised with us this evening about some of the application processes. I would like to commit to all hon. members, and this member in particular, that we are in fact looking at how we can make infrastructure projects and programs more accessible, whether it is with communities, community groups, indigenous communities or rural and small communities. We recognize that not every municipality has a full-time staff to apply for infrastructure programs.

I cannot get into all the details in this short time, but I commit to working with the hon. member opposite. We have increased program funding for more resilient communities, but in every infrastructure program we are working on, we are looking at how to make improvements to ensure that every community is better protected to deal with climate change and extreme weather events, and to be more resilient. I will continue to work with the communities impacted and with the hon. member to better ensure that Canadians can withstand these extreme weather events.

• (1845)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, if the parliamentary secretary could get her minister to respond to the two letters I have sent about this issue over the last few months, I would appreciate that.

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It is great to hear announcements of government investments in climate adaptation. In B.C. there have been projects jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments this year amounting to almost \$30 million, but that is in stark contrast to the after-disaster rebuilding funding announcements this year in British Columbia, with the federal government funding over a billion dollars to help communities rebuild after floods and fires.

Some of these funds are simply advances; the final cost will be higher. If my math is correct, that is about 30 times difference between the investments before a disaster and the payouts after. We need to significantly increase those investments in climate adaptation in Canada. This would not only save communities from future disasters but lower the future costs of rebuilding after these events.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I will commit to ensuring that the member's letters are responded to, and I would also agree that building more resilient communities and investing in infrastructure that can withstand climate change and extreme weather events before they happen is actually much cheaper and helps prevent the disasters, the job loss and the damage to people's homes and livestock that we have seen throughout this country in these extreme weather events.

We agree that we must have funds to support communities that have experienced these sorts of disasters, but investing in infrastructure up front to deal with climate change and the realities we face as a result is going to be a better way to ensure communities remain safe and protected as climate change and these extreme weather events unfortunately become more frequent.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It now being 6:48 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:48 p.m.)

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