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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 21, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

REQUIREMENT OF A ROYAL RECOMMENDATION FOR BILL C-290

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today because the Chair asked parliamentarians to share their views on the requirement for a royal recommendation to accompany Bill C-290. I would like to give my party's opinion on this matter, as well as my own.

In our view, there is nothing in the bill that proposes the use of public funds. Nothing in the bill would result in direct costs, which, as we know, is at the government's discretion.

In his speech on September 28, 2022, the sponsor of the bill and member for Mirabel argued that clause 5 of the bill “specifies that the chief executive must provide support to a public servant who makes a disclosure.” The bill does not specify the nature of the support, but there is absolutely no indication that it would be financial.

The member for Mirabel explained this by adding the following:

The support referenced in clause 5 would involve, rather, things like information, referrals, guidance or advice, all of which are part of the normal duties and functions of executives. In short, we need to ensure that when public servants see wrongdoing, they know their rights, they know where to go, and they are not left to fend for themselves.

I agree with what he said, and I am concerned about too narrow an interpretation of the word “support”, which is absolutely not limited to financial support. In this case, the bill before us contains no mention of financial support, and it should not be interpreted as such.

I think the government's obligation not to terminate a contract or withhold payment following a disclosure falls into the same category. This provision would not generate any new government spending. All it does is prevent the government from taking a reprisal by withholding already payable funds.

The guidelines governing royal recommendation for private members' business are summarized in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 1125, as follows:

The *Constitution Act, 1867* and the *Standing Orders* require that bills proposing the expenditure of public funds must be accompanied by a royal recommendation, which can be obtained only by the government and introduced by a Minister. Since a Minister cannot propose items of Private Members' Business, a private Member's bill should therefore not contain provisions for the spending of funds.

I think it is important that the need for a royal recommendation be interpreted in a direct, targeted fashion. Any form of legislation can have indirect impacts on government spending. What is being asked for here is that the direct commitment of public funds be accompanied by a royal recommendation. That is why, in my opinion, Bill C-290 does not meet that criterion and consequently does not require a royal recommendation.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

JUDGES ACT

The House resumed from June 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Judges Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-9 would amend the Judges Act, and I know that many of my constituents will be wondering what exactly the act does and what the government is proposing to do.

Over the past few years, I think many of our democratic institutions and civic institutions have come under stress, such as different courts of law, given how the process works. I think what the government is doing here, to its credit, as I will give it credit sometimes, is shoring up an institution, the federal courts in this country, which I think need a little shoring up to ensure that my constituents can continue to have faith in them. The judges would be held accountable, but I note that the bill goes a bit beyond judges and would impact others who are federally regulated.

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If we look at the summary of the bill, and a couple of points at the back end of the bill, there are provisions for a new process that would apply to “persons, other than judges, who are appointed under an Act of Parliament to hold office during good behaviour.” The bill actually goes a little beyond judges to provide a process to make sure that those people are held accountable for their behaviour while they hold office. Whenever someone does something wrong, rather than forcing them to completely resign, if they have not done something so bad they need to resign, it would allow for their careers to be salvaged through better education, with perhaps a public reprimand or a public apology. I like to think that in public life a little grace given to people is a good thing.

How judges work today has drastically changed, as the judicial council that oversees them was created back in 1971. I was not alive back in 1971. My family was not even in Canada at the time and neither were my parents. I would say that the way judges behaved in communist Poland would fall far short of the expectation of fair behaviour in Canada nowadays. However, a judge's work today includes things like case management, settlement conferences, judicial mediation and frequent interactions with people who want to self-represent, the litigants who do not believe they need the assistance of a lawyer to have proper counsel and to be properly represented before the court.

I will say, as I have said before in the House, that I have not been burdened with a legal education, which allows me an opportunity to see beyond what the law says. I apologize to all the lawyers in the House, those who have joined the bar, but I think those of us without a legal education can perhaps weigh in on the worthiness of certain matters.

Some of the responsibilities that judges have invite further consideration with respect to things like ethical guidance. In the same manner, the digital age, the phenomenon of social media, the importance of professional development for judges and the transition to postjudicial roles all raise ethical issues that were not fully considered 20 years ago. Social media especially, and its implications, apply to all of our jobs, all of our institutions and the behaviour of, for example, large multinational, publicly traded corporations as well. Everybody has a different responsibility when it comes to behaviour online and what we are posting and sharing. Whom we are sharing it with is, I think, equally important.

Judges are expected to be alert to the history, experience and circumstances of Canada's indigenous peoples and to the diversity of cultures and communities that make up this country. It is in this spirit that the judiciary is now actively involved with the wider public, both to enhance public confidence and to expand its own knowledge of the diversity of human experiences in Canada today.

The Canada of 50 years ago, when the council was first set up, is very different from today's Canada. There are many more laws that have been created by Parliament. If we look at the statutes of Canada, there are reams and reams of laws that are joined with regulations, which are even longer. Oftentimes, I find in this place that we defer a lot to the administrative state, and I have complained about this multiple times since the 42nd Parliament. I probably sound curmudgeonly at my age, but I will say that we legislate too much through regulation and allow the cabinet to set regulations. The state therefore gets to decide things, and civil servants in our

departments have an incredible amount of leeway to set the rules. I do not know if that is the best we can do for Canadians in the House, and we could amend bills in a better way.

However, Bill C-9 would bring about new changes. There are 41 members on the council, which is headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, and it is supposed to provide guidance and discipline to judges who fail. By my count, there were about eight cases, and one was being reviewed in Quebec, but I have not been able to catch up on the outcomes.

• (1010)

The proposed changes in Bill C-9 would affect federally appointed judges, who are the judges of the Supreme Court of Canada, the federal courts, the provincial and territorial superior trial courts and the provincial and territorial courts of appeal. This would not impact provincial justices in any manner, but it could set, perhaps, an example for them.

At the time this legislation was first proposed, which I think was in the Senate, it was called Bill S-5. That was dropped because an election was called. I will judge harshly the member for Papineau, the Prime Minister, for making that decision, because it was mostly an administrative exercise. It is also about priorities of the government. It kind of showcases what is important to the government and the types of legislation that it elects to have tabled before the House but also moved for debate. I will mention that it is on a Friday that we are debating this particular piece of legislation.

At the time that Bill S-5 was being debated, the position of victims ombudsman was still vacant. I do want to mention that the government finally appointed one. I think it was just a few weeks ago; I have the press release right here. It was Sept 27 when it appointed a federal ombudsman for victims of crime.

I will say that in a previous life, I worked for the Hon. Steven Blaney, who is not a member of Parliament now so I can say his name. He was a great mentor to me at the time. He hired me because my father happened to have been a shipyard worker in communist Poland and was a shipyard worker at the Sorel shipyards near Montreal. Thanks to the Sorel shipyards, he was able to stay in Canada. When the Sorel shipyards went on strike, my father was one of very few workers on the floor who voted against it. He is a contrarian and that is probably why he became a Conservative.

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The bill for this ombudsman for victims of crime was one of the pieces of legislation that Steven Blaney worked on, and I worked on it as his legislative assistant at the time, trying to make it work. It is gratifying to see so many years later that the government has filled the position, although it was late and many victims' rights groups were saying that the position needed to be filled right away. There was a federal ombudsman, I believe, for federal offenders, and that position, when it became vacant, was filled immediately the day after it became vacant, again due to priorities. I would look to the Minister of Justice to ask why those were the priorities he set. Perhaps he will rise in the House to correct the record and tell me why that decision was made.

I have a Yiddish proverb, as I always do: What will become of the sheep if the wolf is the judge? It is about judicial behaviour and judgment. It sounds way better in Yiddish than it does in English, but no one wants to hear my Yiddish. I think the expectation from judges has changed over the last 50 years. I think it is unfair to judges to say that as soon as they make the smallest of mistakes or transgressions, the only solution is to fire them.

The proposals in the legislation, short of dismissal, are in proposed section 102 of the legislation:

If the review panel does not refer the complaint to the Council under section 101, it may dismiss the complaint or take one or more of the following actions if it considers it appropriate to do so in the circumstances:

In a previous life, as I have mentioned in the House a few times now, I used to work for a professional association for human resources. It was a voluntary professional association, and as part of it, I was a staff assistant to the disciplinary committee. We had an excellent chair who used to work for Syncrude. He was an excellent gentleman who really knew how the process should work. I think he had at the time a 25-year career in human resources and labour negotiations. He really knew his stuff.

What I am glad to see in this bill are things as simple as a public expression of concern from a supervisor to an employee so that everybody knows they transgressed but not to the level of being terminated. There is also a public warning and a public or private reprimand. Under proposed paragraph 102(d), we can “order the judge to apologize, either privately or publicly, by whatever means the panel considers appropriate in the circumstances”, and under proposed paragraph 102(e), we can “order the judge to take specific measures, including attending counselling or a continuing education course”. This one is oftentimes what professional associations do, and I think it is perfectly reasonable for us to introduce it into law.

I am going to segue into a previous private member's bill from a former member of Parliament whose name I can say in the House, the Hon. Rona Ambrose. I am sure she is happy in her retirement in Calgary.

As I said, that is oftentimes what professional associations do. When there is a shortcoming and a disciplinary hearing, often these disciplinary panels say that what was done is just an indication that judges need better training, better education or a refresher. Even at my age, I sometimes need a refresher on basic economics, Excel spreadsheets or even how Outlook works. I know the House has had trouble of late with its IT systems and we all had to reset our

passwords. It is infuriating to have to do once someone forgets which password they are using at any one time. I see a bunch of members smiling who know it is true. It happens to all of us.

● (1015)

There are a lot of good ideas in proposed section 102 that would offer the public an opportunity to see judges go through what other professionals, such as engineers, nurses, doctors, surgeons, optometrists, chiropractors, human resources professionals and labour negotiators, go through with their professional associations. I think it is perfectly justified.

I want to draw everyone's attention to something interesting I found at the back end of the bill, which is that removal is justified under proposed section 119, “Removal justified”. It states, “If the full hearing panel determines, on a balance of probabilities, that the judge's removal from office is justified, it shall make a decision to that effect.”

I would like to draw members' attention to the wording of “balance of probability” because it is not beyond a reasonable doubt. The final decision-making will be on a balance of probabilities, which is 50% plus one. Whether a reasonable person would believe this to be true is not the metric we are using. It is 50% plus one.

Could this happen and, without using the term “reasonable”, would a person looking at the facts of the case say, yes, this probably happened on the balance of probabilities? That is a lower threshold than what is used in the Criminal Code. It is actually a lower threshold in many civil cases involving large amounts of money. That should give the public some certainty that Bill C-9 is not a piece of legislation that seeks to protect judges, but simply seeks to update the system that governs how judges are disciplined, the oversight body, as I mentioned, and what the oversight body was going to be.

Proposed division 3, as I mentioned at the beginning, is the request concerning office-holders, the removal from office of those who are not judges but appointed by an act of Parliament. It goes into some detail. There are several sections that will govern their behaviour, such as leave of absence with salary, and orders and reports laid before Parliament. Usually those officers are the ones who would provide them to Parliament, and if those positions are not filled, who would physically provide us the reports, electronically in this case?

There are provisions for removal from office and establishment. The bill reads, “The Minister may request that the Council establish a full hearing” to review someone. The reasons for a removal would be:

- (a) infirmity;
- (b) misconduct;
- (c) failure in the due execution of their office;

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(d) the person has been placed in a position that a reasonable, fair-minded and informed observer would consider to be incompatible with the due execution of their office.

I raise that because it is timely and, back to the Yiddish proverb, what would happen to the sheep if judges are in wolf's clothing. I do not think the word "sheep" is being used necessarily in the derogatory sense here, because I would be one of them.

Those in power have a special responsibility to those over whom they have power. We are all servants of the people, servants of our ridings especially. That is what public service is supposed to be about. It is duty and sacrifice. The reason we call it "service" is because there is a portion of sacrifice in it. We know that our jobs and roles are not forever, and we are simply stewards for the next person.

This brings me to the RCMP commissioner and the Globe and Mail article that just made public yesterday an audio recording of a meeting she had. The RCMP commissioner has a special responsibility before parliamentarians to always tell the truth. At the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security many months ago, the RCMP commissioner said one thing, and this audio recording proves it was the complete and utter opposite. There is no other interpretation one could have.

My interpretation is that the commissioner lied before the parliamentary committee. That is a heavy word to use in the House, but I certainly believe it. That is the only way I can interpret that audio recording. If the audio recording is truthful, if it is an accurate reflection and has not been modified in any way, I do not believe there is any other way one could look at it, except to believe that she misled the members of that committee who are trying to get at the truth.

Parliamentary committees are like the House of Commons. They are the grand inquest of the nation. The reason that courts and judges have all these powers is because we delegate those powers to them. The House of Commons has all of those powers. Every parliamentary committee has the power to not only invite witnesses, but also summon witnesses. They can be told to take oaths to force them to tell the truth.

People cannot deny a committee of the House of Commons the truth by saying they will self-incriminate themselves. That is actually an American concept that we do not have here in Canada. People must tell the truth the way they know it, even if it may be harmful to them. The House of Commons can offer that protection, like the courts do. They can provide measures for witnesses to give evidence and have their identities protected.

● (1020)

That very famously was done multiple times in the province of Quebec during the 1990s. I remember when the Sûreté du Québec and the government were pursuing organized crime, and very effectively I might add. Oftentimes they were extending protections for those who were coming forward with critical information but needed to be protected, and later on many of them made it into the witness protection program. I have actually met one person who was in the witness protection program, and her story of how she made it into the program and her experience therein was just incredible to listen to.

I did mention I would go back to just one point about judges and training especially. It was a former leader of the Conservative Party, the hon. Rona Ambrose, who introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-337, back in 2017. What I like about Bill C-9 is that some of those ideas are being embedded in here. At the time, that private member's bill passed here, and it went through the Senate on the second try, when Rona was not here anymore. It made it so judges needed to get specific sexual harassment and sexual assault training.

I have known people in my life who have been assaulted or sexually harassed, and it is incumbent upon judges to not use common stereotypes when judging these cases. We do expect more from them because they are in the public service. They are weighing facts and situations. What I like about this change in Bill C-9 is that a lot of the ideas embedded in Bill C-337 are now going to be made broader and available for all types of situations that might apply, where a judge could be told after a panel hearing that they should get more training.

The panel could say that a particular judge has erred in law, in a particular situation or maybe in dealing with a particularly difficult litigant, and they could say that they need some more training. It could be four, five or six courses or a half-day mediation, whatever that is, and I think that is perfectly reasonable. It is actually a good thing, and it will improve sexual assault trials. It will improve the system. It will improve outcomes for victims. It will make sure women are heard. That cannot be a bad thing. It is only a good thing, so I am pretty happy to see portions in there.

I know I am getting short on time, so I want to make sure I briefly go over the government's priorities now. Bill C-9 is a good piece of legislation. I am hoping when it gets to committee members will be able to do further reviews, and if any errors are caught in the bill that they can be corrected at committee. My experience has been that sometimes there are errors in legislation. The French and English sometimes do not quite match up, and sometimes there are new ideas that come forward when witnesses testify before the committee that things could be made better.

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The Canadian Bar Association is supportive of this bill. It thinks it is fair and reasonable in terms of its process. What I want to talk about in my last few minutes is the government's priorities. The gun grab against lawful firearms owners is going to do nothing to stop the shootings in our cities. It is happening in Calgary, and it is happening in Vancouver, Surrey, Toronto, Montreal and Laval. We have had three police officers murdered in the line of duty just in the last 10 days. More needs to be done against organized crime. Lawful firearms owners are not the problem. A gun grab, where provinces now are refusing to set aside provincial resources to support the federal government's actions, should the blinking red light telling the government it has erred and is on the wrong track.

The Minister of Justice, over the last two Parliaments I have been here, has hybridized many offences. Some of them are heinous offences that should never be hybridized but eligible for a summary conviction, where someone could get fined or a couple of months in jail. It is not enough. The minister repeats that serious crimes will get serious time. I do not believe that, not based on his track record. That is not the case at all. Crime is up in our country. Violent crime has only been going up since 2015.

I think he still lives in Mahogany, but the president of the Calgary Police Association lives in my riding. There are many police officers who live in my riding. Policing is a difficult line of work to be in, just as it is a difficult line of work to be a judge. The Parliament of Canada, our legislators, should be supporting frontline officers by ensuring we put the criminals behind bars and keeping them there to keep the public safe.

I support Bill C-9. I welcome questions.

● (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the first thing that comes across my mind is the Canadian Judicial Council had a semi-annual fall meeting. It was held in the province of Alberta, and what came out from part of that discussion was a sense of disappointment. There was a sense of disappointment that the legislation the member is talking about is still going through the parliamentary process. While always wanting to respect the independence of our courts and Parliament and keeping them separate, as it was hoping to see it speed through maybe a bit faster.

The government agenda is fairly full. There is a lot of stuff out there, so it is not like we are in a position where we can call Bill C-9 every day. It has been a while since it was brought forward, and there is a need to see it pass. Given the member's comments on the bill itself, and all we want to see it go to committee, does the member also agree with me that it is important we see this bill go to committee, and the sooner the better?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, this bill would have been passed, had the Prime Minister not called an unnecessary election back in August 2021. Bill S-5 would have likely passed the Senate. I do not want to prejudge the work that it would have done, but it likely would have passed. Many of us had been looking at the bill beforehand, and I am sure it would have gotten due review in the House.

As the member knows, the Speaker can recognize any member who stands up and wants to speak to a bill on behalf of their con-

stituents, just like I did. I would never want to stop members from speaking up on behalf of their constituents.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I am not sure if he is looking for his headset, but I know that he speaks excellent French.

He spoke about section 102 and what the review panel can do if it dismisses a complaint against a judge. The panel can take several actions, which include ordering the judge to attend counselling or to apologize publicly. To come back to the member's proverb about sheep and wolves, it seems to me that, in this case, unfortunately, no one is thinking very much about the sheep. When a complaint is filed, it is because someone has been the victim of something.

When the panel dismisses the complaint but actions such as therapy, counselling or a public apology are imposed on the judge, should the victim who filed the complaint be more included in the process? Should the inclusion of the victim in the complaint process be one of the things discussed by the committee following second reading of the bill?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the member is quite right. It would be interesting to take a closer look at clause 102, which deals with dismissal of the complaint and other actions that can be taken.

There are perhaps two possibilities. The victim could be present when the decision is handed down, to find out what happens to the judge. We could also do what professional associations sometimes do and call on a member of the public. That individual, who would have no ties to the profession, the company or the employees involved, would attend and have the right to vote either way when decisions were being made.

I used to belong to a professional association that had members of the public on our steering committee and disciplinary committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a huge amount of respect for my colleague. He talked about police officers and tackling real crime, and I really appreciate him talking about those who are on the front line.

We have heard from the police chiefs association. We have heard from police. I have travelled the country, going to 12 cities for my bill regarding the toxic drug crisis. They are very clear and unequivocal that criminalizing people and charging people who have small amounts of drugs is causing more harm.

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Does my colleague agree that we should fast-track this legislation, because it is a pretty non-controversial bill? Does he agree we should proceed quickly, so we can create more reforms to the justice system to help us tackle the toxic drug crisis and actually work on the important reforms to the justice system that need to take place, and to address systemic racism as well?

• (1030)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, it is an interesting question. Fast-tracking bills in the House, in my experience, has usually led to more work at committees. Oftentimes, members bring forward quotes, citations, references to articles, documents and reports that are then used by the committee to do its work.

Any member of the House who wishes to rise and speak on behalf of their constituents should be allowed to do so on each and every single bill. I have spoken many times on standing order debates and on making changes. That should be the norm for all bills, including private members' bills.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Calgary Shepard opened by saying that he was, perhaps, a bit too curmudgeonly, and that he was not around in 1971, so I do not know where that puts me, because I was around in 1971, so I may be on the other side of that. What we do share is that we are not burdened with a legal education, although one of my four daughters reminds me that perhaps I would benefit from her education, which is of a legal background.

My question is more along the lines of the dynamic of federal-provincial relations. This act is addressing federally appointed judges and similar things. He mentioned at one point that perhaps provincial jurisdictions could benefit or could look at this, yet we also have the dynamic right now where provincial jurisdictions are pushing back on a federal initiative of a gun buyback.

Could he comment on that dynamic between the federal government and the provinces with legislation and on the adaptability or the lack of suitability on different pieces of legislation?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the member asked an Alberman what he thinks about the federal government and, like in conciliatory or co-operative federalism, we have not seen a lot of co-operation, especially from the western provinces, with this federal government. I am sure my colleagues from Quebec, from all parties, would agree.

Oftentimes, I find myself on the opposite side from members of the Bloc, for instance, but I know my colleagues from the Conservative caucus who are from Quebec agree on this too: The province has jurisdiction over its judicial course, and it can decide what to do. However, sometimes the federal government, through its amendments to legislation, puts forward a reasonable model that a province could adapt and vice versa. Sometimes the province is responsible for changes to its legislation, for how it operates, that are beneficial and should be adopted federally.

We use this here quite often, but things like more virtual hearings for some of the preliminary work would expedite people's ability to access the courts. On the gun-grab issue, my province has been very clear: It will not support the federal government. It will not provide any resources on the ground, which I think is a very rea-

sonable expression of provincial jurisdiction and provincial control over its own policing resources.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments my friend and colleague from Calgary made. I would invite him to expand, specifically on the interplay between the federal government and the province, especially when it comes to issues related to areas where there has been some tension as of late.

How does that play into what many Canadians and members of the government have pointed to, which is an erosion of trust generally in some of our institutions? Can the member for Calgary Shepard comment on that?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. Shoring our civic and democratic institutions, like I mentioned at the beginning of my intervention, comes in two ways. It comes by actions. The government can amend legislation to provide more transparency, better accountability and different mechanics. That gives certainty to the public that we are watching out for them. The judges are not the wolves. They are just sheep with little stilts. They are a bit higher, to make a decision that everybody can live more peacefully with. Peace, order and good government, POGG, as we often call it, is in the Constitution.

The other way to do it is through words and deeds. Shoring our institutions is the responsibility of all public officials, both provincial and federal, to watch the terminology. I spend a lot of time trying to convince people and explain that our electoral system, for example, is one of the best in the world. We do not use machines. It is a paper ballot into a box. If someone does not like the outcome, I invite them to scrutineer an election. They can go and help out, and work or volunteer for Elections Canada.

For words and deeds, the deeds part is the Government of Canada, a private member's bill on the opposition side, but the words part is shoring up institutions and explaining to people how they actually work. I cannot tell members how many times I have run into people who are still confused about how members of Parliament are selected, how legislators are generally selected, and whether there is a test we have to take.

I was asked two parliaments ago whether it was an upgrading system, if we were first on a municipal council and then a provincial legislature, and then became a member of Parliament. That would seem to me like a doomed career path. Lucky are those who have gone through that path, but that is too much for me.

The member asked an interesting question. Democratic institutions are shored up by those two things.

• (1035)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to be able to rise in this place and enter into a discussion on the many important issues facing our constituents, our provinces and of course all Canadians.

If you would permit me just a bit of latitude, it is an honour to not only stand today to debate Bill C-9, and I will get to the substance of that bill in a moment, which is an amendment to the Judges Act, but today represents three years since I and the class of 2019 were elected and had the honour of being able to take our seats in this place. Even as I was reflecting on that this morning, on Google Photos there were memories that came up. Looking back to this day in 2019 with so much appreciation, if you would permit me just a moment of my time to share again a couple of thank yous, these are similar thank yous to when I rose in my maiden speech back in 2019.

On this day, I would like to thank my loving wife Danielle and my three boys. I did not have three at the time, but I do now. I am so thankful for the love and support they have given me. They are on the road right now, going to a funeral of a dear friend who passed away back in my constituency. I would have loved to be able to go with them today, but of course I am here in this place.

I also thank my larger family, my parents, siblings, grandmothers and those who have poured into my life over the last 30-plus years.

I also thank my staff. As I know you and all in this place know, we cannot do what we do unless we have good people. I often joke that the best way to be successful in politics is to hire people who are smarter than us to help us do our job. Certainly, I am so thankful for both my Ottawa office staff and my constituency office staff. I have a great team, and I am so blessed each and every day to be able to not just have them work for me, but to work with them as we serve the people of Battle River—Crowfoot.

Then, of course, there are our EDAs and campaign teams. This is a shared experience, I am sure, with every person in this House. An election does not happen because of the person whose name is on the ballot—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Hold on for one second, please. I would ask members to have their conversations in the lobby and not in the House.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, as I was sharing, we all have EDAs and campaign teams. Although it is our names on the ballots, there is a huge group of people, and I count almost 200 volunteers over the course of my last three or so years in politics, who have helped fight for the cause. I am so thankful and blessed because of my EDA and campaign team and all those people who have worked so hard to fight for the principles that I am so proud to stand in this place to represent.

When it comes to the reason we are all here, I often joke when I speak with classes in my constituency that there are only three job qualifications to be a member of Parliament in Canada. Just three; that's it. Number one, we have to be Canadian. Number two, we have to be over the age of 18. Number three, we simply have to get more votes than the other guy or gal. That process, that participation in our democratic system that each parliamentarian has, with, at least in the current standing, 338 different paths, different types of individuals, different parties represented, different backgrounds, different experiences and different professions, brings a unique cross-section of Canadians to this place.

Government Orders

I cannot thank the people of Battle River—Crowfoot enough for the last three years. I have spoken over 400 times in this place, being up in question period, giving speeches, speaking over 500 times in committee, being part of interparliamentary groups, meeting with delegations and being a part of international trips, representing the people of Battle River—Crowfoot here in Canada and around the world, voting almost 400 times, jointly seconding private members' bills, and all the various ways of communication.

Last night we talked about mental health and being able to break some of the stigma surrounding things like mental illness. There are things like constituency communication, social media outreach, more than a dozen mail-outs and visiting 63 communities. I represent a constituency that is about the same size as the province of Nova Scotia and has about 60 or so self-governing municipalities. I have visited each one of those communities over the last three years, some more than once, and attended hundreds of events, doing dozens of town halls and helping when it comes to the base of what being an elected official is about: helping people and taking thousands of calls, helping with practical issues regarding case work or the Phoenix pay system, helping veterans and members of the military, and helping people with passport issues or immigration or whatever the case may be.

There is so much that goes into what we do in this place. The headlines always grab the big news items of the day, but as I reflect on the last three or so years that I have had the honour of taking my seat in this place, looking back at my experiences, those who helped me get here, my family and the impact this has on them, and those who mentored me, I truly am very blessed and thankful for the opportunity to serve in this place.

I appreciate the latitude given me for a moment to share some thoughts on three years of being able to serve in this place.

To the substance of Bill C-9 before us, I would note that this is the sort of bill that should have been passed a while ago. I know there have been a few questions asked about why Conservatives are speaking to this bill. I am speaking for myself, and I think for many of my colleagues, when I say we like to do our jobs to make sure that we comprehensively look at, evaluate and examine everything that comes forward in this place.

When the government talks about this bill in particular, I believe it was Bill S-5 in the last Parliament, and there is a constitutional intricacy that the government, especially, likes to dismiss or not elaborate on when it blames Conservatives for somehow obstructing the democratic process by doing our jobs. Bill S-5 was something that died on the Order Paper when an unnecessary election was called in the summer of last year.

Government Orders

● (1040)

I could certainly get into the many aspects of that, with our returning to this place with almost an identical makeup, the frustrations that were felt by so many Canadians and the erosion of trust in our institutions. I will expand on that a bit more. I would share with the member for Durham how many of those frustrations manifested themselves over the course of that last campaign, with the selfishness of a Prime Minister who tried to use what seemed to be a few polls bending in his direction, even when he promised to do the exact opposite of what he did.

The reason I bring that up today is not only to highlight the hypocrisy of government members. They seem to want to blame everybody but themselves for some of these things. I suggest they would be best positioned to look in the mirror to truly self-evaluate some of the reasons we find ourselves in those places.

This is a bill that addresses a very practical issue, which is that over the course of the evolution of our legal system we have the need for changes to be made. Specifically, Bill C-9 addresses that there would have to be a review process, even though a judge is and should be a lifetime appointment. Certainly we see the consequences of when politics are injected into the selection of judges and some of the challenges associated with that, but there could be the need for a review. We saw that need in the case that brought this whole conversation forward a number of years ago, when a judge made some very disparaging comments that certainly called into question the integrity of his ability to oversee that specific court case. There has to be a process. There has to be the ability to discipline individuals on the bench.

Of course, we all need to have accountability and integrity checks within each of our professions, whether it be in this place as members of Parliament, in Canada's Senate or in our judicial branch of government. We have created many instances of this with the Ethics Commissioner, the Lobbying Commissioner, reporting requirements and all of those associated things. Bill C-9 is just a practical response to ensure that we address one of the key aspects of where we have seen what I alluded to earlier, which is that erosion of trust in our institutions.

There are many reasons for that erosion of trust, certainly some of which are very political and some of which are very practical. Many of which, I would suggest, need to be unpacked so that we can truly get to the bottom of them. Because this is a justice bill and specifically relates to the Judges Act, I am going to focus on some of my constituents' experiences when it comes to how they perceive the justice system.

I have been asked a number of times by the Minister of Justice and other Liberal members why I do not trust judges. This bill actually speaks to why there has to be firm parliamentary oversight. In the Westminster system. Parliament is supreme, and I am thankful for that. That is one of the things that makes our system of government the best in the world: that Parliament and the voices of the people ultimately have that final say.

One of the comments that is often made to me is that we do not have a justice system anymore, but we have a legal system and that legal system is failing. That is not my perception. That is the per-

ception of many constituents who share with me those feelings and their experiences associated with it.

I mentioned before that there are 338 different paths to get here, but I have no doubt that each and every person in this place will have heard from constituents who have had their own experiences when it comes to the way that the legal system, Canada's justice system, is not serving them well. I am going to highlight a few of those instances from the perspective of being a rural Canadian.

● (1045)

I mentioned in my observations of being in Parliament for three years that I represent a large rural area. My constituency is 53,000 square kilometres of what I would suggest is the most beautiful countryside in the world. When somebody asks me what the area I represent is like, I say it is a lot like cowboy country. It is the beautiful rolling hills and wheat fields as far as the eye can see. The only thing dividing one piece of land and the next is a simple barbed wire fence, and even then sometimes it is hard to find those with how vast the space is. I think about the many people who live there, and although sometimes it is sparsely populated, it would work out to be about two individuals per square kilometre. That is the density of my constituency, approximately.

We have some significant challenges. Specifically when it comes to our justice system, we see how the dynamics associated with rural crime have changed significantly in the last number of years. From both when I was elected in 2019 and also my work being involved in politics in the community prior to that, I have seen the crime severity index increase dramatically.

It is astounding, some of the stories I hear from constituents, members of the community and law enforcement officers who are on the first line. There are crimes that just a few years would never have been thought possible to be committed in a small town of only a few hundred people, yet with the Internet and access to gangs, drugs and all of these associated things, some of the things that happen are astounding. Then, there is the revolving door of the justice system.

Before I get to the revolving door of the justice system, I will share that I was invited to attend a town hall in a small town. It was about 200 people in this community. There were about 100 people who came to the town hall. It was on rural crime, organized by the mayor and council. They had invited their member of Parliament and their MLA, who was not able to make it, but also their local law enforcement, the RCMP.

I got there and, as is often the case, the RCMP had planned to be there but got a call, so they were not able to be there when the town hall started. I listened for probably an hour to story after story, and we were not just talking about hypotheticals. We were talking about real lived experiences and tragic instances where people's homes were broken into and where individuals were terrorized, and after multiple instances of calling the police, somebody would be arrested and taken away, but a few days later they would be back in that same community terrorizing the streets again.

Government Orders

There were dozens and dozens of examples, and there was a lot of frustration there. There was a lot of frustration at lawmakers and there was a lot of frustration at local law enforcement. It was one of the things I endeavoured to highlight during that time, and I was thankful that the RCMP came for the last third of the meeting. I would suggest it was providential that, when I stood up and said, to the room of about a hundred people, to be sure not to blame those men and women in uniform for some of the challenges and that they were working as hard as they possibly could, only a moment later the Mountie who serves the area, in a detachment with only three officers, walked into the town hall.

I was happy to cede the floor to him, and it was amazing. We could see in the eyes of many that they were frustrated, because sometimes it would be a four- or five-hour response time after calling 911. With something like a serious break-in with a firearm, it could be four or five hours before a police officer even got to somebody's door. We are talking about serious stuff here, but that Mountie started to unpack what his days looked like and some of the rules and restrictions he, as a law enforcement and peace officer, was forced to abide by.

I saw after that instance many others like it. I highlight specifically that town hall in the community of Amisk, but there have been many other instances like that, where we see that erosion of trust taking place within specifically, because we are talking about the Judges Act, the legal system in our country.

• (1050)

Therefore, when the Minister of Justice stands up and says something like those who do serious crimes in this country will serve serious time, it is almost laughable. It is laughable I would suggest in a tragic way, because the experience of so many of my constituents speaks to the exact opposite of that.

When I look back as a political observer, although I would have been quite young when there was a change from a past Liberal government to a Conservative government, I know that crime was a big issue. One thing that was interesting is this. The Liberals like to blame Stephen Harper somehow for imposing mandatory minimums. However, some of the mandatory minimums of Bill C-5 that the justice minister blames Harper for have actually been around significantly longer. I believe some of those were put into place by former prime ministers, including Chrétien, Mulroney and even Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

Often the demand for mandatory minimums is something that comes from a true frustration from the public. I would suggest that if we are not careful, we will end up seeing that erosion of trust take place to the point where people may end up taking the law into their own hands. I do not think anybody in this place, regardless of party, wants to see that happen. When we see a government focus more on demonizing law-abiding firearms owners than dealing with smuggled guns coming across our border, that is a problem and it is demoralizing for those who have been robbed by a firearm or been the victim of a crime that should involve serious time.

Therefore, when it comes to Bill C-9, we need to do everything we can to ensure that we address some of the erosion of trust within our institutions and, in this case, make sure there is a mechanism to

ensure that those on the bench are held to a high account, as Canadians expect us to do.

I believe we should expect those who are appointed as judges to be held to that higher account, and Bill C-9 is part of a practical mechanism to ensure that.

• (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first off, I would echo some of the comments the member made with respect to our RCMP. The institution and the members of the force have contributed so much to public safety, so I would just like to acknowledge and express our appreciation for the service they provide our nation.

I would like to ask the same question I had asked the previous member with respect to the Canadian Judicial Council, which had a semi-annual meeting in the province of Alberta. It expressed some disappointment that the legislation has not been moving forward and not passed to date. I wonder, given the fact that it appears the Conservative Party is supporting at least its passage to go to committee, if the member would agree that today would be a good day to see this bill sent to committee. It does not limit debate, but allows, fosters and encourages more debate at second reading, as well as at the third reading stage that would follow.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I would simply say this. If the member was so concerned about this bill being expedited through the process, back in the summer of 2020 he should have suggested it to his leader, who hoodwinked Canadians with his promise at the beginning of June to not call an election and only a couple of months later did exactly that, resetting the legislative agenda and sending this bill back to the drawing board.

I know the member and I have had disagreements about the significant delays brought forward by the Prime Minister's calling for a prorogation that just happened to coincide with the release of what, certainly I think as a member of the ethics committee at the time, would have made him look really bad. He happened to prorogue Parliament the day those documents were to be released.

Therefore, if the member wants to talk seriously about the legislative agenda, it is within the government's prerogative to do so. However, it should be quick to look at itself for the reasons why we find ourselves in a situation where realistically we could be years behind with respect to some of the things it now claims are the priorities of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Aside from the very specific subject matter of Bill C-9, he talked about a few things that can sometimes contribute to a loss of public trust in our institutions, particularly legal and judicial institutions.

Given that Bill C-9 deals with what happens further downstream, that is, after judges are appointed, I wonder if my colleague could comment on what happens upstream, in other words, how judges are appointed.

Statements by Members

Would this not have been a good opportunity to review the judicial appointment system, so we will never again have to talk about the notorious “Liberalist”?

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, the member brings up a good point. There have to be checks and balances in the process to ensure that we are appointing good people to the bench.

Let me take advantage of this opportunity to share not just my concern when it comes to Liberal donors being appointed to the bench and how that seems to be a conflict of interest, but also some of the real challenges when it comes to the erosion of trust in our institutions in general. Many Canadians are not aware that when somebody is granted bail, it does not involve cash bonds anymore. In many cases, when a bond is set, only a fraction is required compared to the consequence if a perpetrator who, for example, has allegedly committed a crime and is charged ends up not showing up in court.

There is a whole host of issues that need to be addressed here, and Bill C-9 addresses one small aspect of them related to a terrible instance. There are so many other things that have to be addressed to restore the trust in our institutions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[*English*]

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we are coming to the end of Small Business Week, let me take members on a very quick tour of the incredible small businesses in my community of Ottawa Centre.

There is Devinder Chaudhary, owner of the Aiana Restaurant Collective in downtown Ottawa, who is changing the restaurant industry by paying his staff a living wage. Then there is Paula Naponse of Beandigen Cafe in Lansdowne Park, who is reinventing the coffee house model with an indigenous spin. I can also mention Justyna Borowska of Wedel Touch of Europe in Westboro, who is bringing authentic European cuisine to Ottawa. There are so many more examples of small businesses like these in my community of Ottawa Centre.

I am proud to see new spaces emerging across my community to support small, local entrepreneurs from equity-deserving communities. Over the past year, we have seen the Black entrepreneurship knowledge hub at Carleton University's school of business and the ADAWE indigenous business hub to support young indigenous entrepreneurs.

I congratulate them all.

* * *

BOOK PUBLICATION CONGRATULATIONS

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I want to welcome and

give congratulations to one of my constituents, Theresa Bailey, and her co-author, Terry Marcotte of Ottawa, for their recent publication of *Hockey Moms: The Heart of the Game*.

This book is a collection of insightful stories from the perspective of Canadian hockey moms and celebrates the foundational strength that these women provide to families and hockey programs across Canada. This book is shifting the narrative of hockey in Canada to the potential ahead that results from diversity, inclusion and the common thread we as hockey moms and all Canadians value and share: the love of our children and the love of the game.

I trust the House will join me in congratulating Theresa and Terry for this monumental milestone. Having grown up in Madoc, I know Theresa has made Hastings—Lennox and Addington very proud.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind members that the use of props is not allowed, for future reference.

The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we reach the end of Small Business Week, I want to thank our local small business employees and recognize that although Small Business Week is coming to an end, their work is continuing.

These entrepreneurs and their teams are the backbone of our communities and local economies. While supporting financial well-being, they also bring community together and support local initiatives, even providing emotional well-being at times.

In my riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, we are so fortunate to have small businesses to do just that. There are so many, but recently I had the pleasure to visit Jay at The STEAM Project in Richmond Hill, Penny at Zena Salon, Rosa at Royal Rose, Phiona at Coconut Village Nails Spa and Naiyer at Future Gadgets.

Our government has supported these businesses and so many others through the pandemic. As part of our plan to build a robust economy that abandons no one, creates good-paying jobs and greens our economy, we will continue to support small and local businesses. We are committed to growing the economy today and tomorrow for all Canadians—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

* * *

ROBERT EVANS SKELLY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, this summer, we lost Robert Evans Skelly, a great parliamentarian and a fearless champion for the rights of women and indigenous and working people.

Bob's legacy will be everlasting. He was elected to the B.C. legislature five times as the NDP MLA for Alberni and to the House here as the member for Comox—Alberni for one term. He succeeded Dave Barrett as the leader of the NDP in British Columbia, a role that he filled with dignity and vigour. In his maiden speech in 1972, he called for the province to recognize the rights of indigenous people, and he carried the same message to the House of Commons when he arrived here in 1988.

Bob died of Parkinson's disease, which was first diagnosed in 1998. I am sure I speak for all members in expressing our deepest condolences to Bob's wife, Alex, and to his family. May he rest in peace.

* * *

• (1105)

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House to mark Small Business Week. I also want to thank Claude Thériault, owner of Thériault Électronique, and Claude Desjardins, owner of the Desjardins convenience store. I had the opportunity to work at both of these small businesses when I was young.

Hard work and customer service are two values I learned at these businesses that have stayed with me to this day. Our small businesses came through the pandemic, and it was a tough time for some of them. At the 2022 Gala of Excellence on the weekend, we recognized the contributions of several businesses. I would like to congratulate all of the finalists.

Congratulations to the winners, including Arboris, Aventures Ahoy!, Brasserie Tuque de Broue, L'Original Packing, Garden Path Homemade Soap, Studio Shanthaly, Impressions Design, Lamarche Electric, MiniJeux gonflables Chartrand, Brasserie Brauwerk Hoffman, and, finally, congratulations to Yves Berthiaume on winning the emeritus award.

Let us continue to encourage our small and medium-sized businesses by buying local.

* * *

GÉRARD LALIBERTÉ

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I want to honour the memory of Gérard Laliberté, who passed away on October 11.

Mr. Laliberté lived a very full life on both a personal and professional level. He had deep roots in Honfleur, where he lived his entire life with his wife, Rose. They had five children who gave them 33 descendants.

Gérard Laliberté was the son of a farmer and he followed in his family's footsteps by taking over his father's farm and expanding it. His farm is both prosperous and a model of cleanliness and order. He also had a large sugar bush operation. His farm was so well run that he was awarded the medal of the Ordre national du mérite agricole, a feat not many of his colleagues can boast about. His example was so inspiring that his three sons became farmers.

Statements by Members

Ensuring the success of his business and the well-being of his family was not enough for Gérard Laliberté. He also dedicated himself to his community. He was mayor of Honfleur, a town in the middle of Bellechasse, and he was also a judge for the Ordre national du mérite agricole.

Today, I want to highlight everything he accomplished in his lifetime. Mr. Laliberté used to say that his ancestors were visionaries—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

* * *

[English]

DIWALI

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, happy Diwali. Diwali is a wonderful celebration across Canada from coast to coast to coast. Many will recognize Diwali as a festival of lights. Let us think in terms of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.

Canada is a diverse nation, second to no other in terms of our heritage. I encourage members, and in fact all Canadians, to take a moment to note that on October 24, we celebrate Diwali, and I encourage people to participate in whatever way they can in this wonderful festival.

* * *

HAZARAS IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on September 30, a suicide attack in Afghanistan killed 54 people, mostly girls and young women, and injured another 120. These were students belonging to the Hazara community who were sitting for a practice university exam.

The Hazara community in Afghanistan is subjected to multiple forms of discrimination, negatively affecting its economic, social, cultural and human rights. A report by British parliamentarians stated that as a religious and ethnic minority, the Hazara community in Afghanistan is “at serious risk of genocide”.

Since the Taliban came back to power, Hazara community members have been killed through targeted bombings of Hazara schools and places of worship. I call on Canada to condemn these killings and ask the authorities in Afghanistan to protect the Hazara community.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, people are worried about how they will get to work, heat their homes and put food on the table.

Statements by Members

Douglas wrote to me about the cost of diesel: “I couldn't believe that diesel in Lindsay ranges from \$2.16 to \$2.40. With diesel being so high, grocery prices will rise even more and make it more unaffordable for the low and middle class to buy food. When will the federal government lower the tax at the gas pumps?”

At the end of her rope, Kathy expressed her anxiety to me in a long email: “I work hard for the little money I get and soon will have to figure out what to purchase—fuel, groceries, or heat. I know the Prime Minister doesn't have to worry about those things.”

It is clear that Canadians cannot afford the Prime Minister and his costly coalition with the NDP. The new Conservative leader will put people like Douglas and Kathy first: their paycheques, their savings, their homes and their country.

* * *

● (1110)

NOKIA CANADA

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on Monday, Nokia Canada announced its intention to redevelop its 26-acre campus in the Kanata North technology park into a sustainable, accessible mixed-use corporate, residential and commercial hub. The new R and D hub will help secure Canada's position as a global leader in the green digital future by broadening expertise in 5G, cybersecurity and AI.

Kanata is already home to one of Nokia's largest R and D sites, with more than 2,300 employees. With this redevelopment and a \$340-million investment, an additional 340 high-paying jobs will be created in my community.

I am proud of our government's commitment to support this important project with up to \$40 million in strategic innovation funding, which means more jobs and more Canadian IP. The future is digital and it is happening right here in Canada's largest technology park, in Kanata.

* * *

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, inflation is at record highs, and this month food inflation has jumped to over 11%. This is something that we are feeling especially across northern Ontario. In communities in my riding, people are now having to choose between heating their homes, filling their vehicle's gas tanks or putting food on their tables.

In Sandy Lake, one individual can of beans is now costing five dollars. That is even after the government has applied the nutrition north subsidy. It is all a creation of the government's policies. It is clear that Canadians can no longer afford the current Prime Minister and his costly coalition with the NDP.

It is time for a Conservative government that will put the people first, cut taxes, reduce spending and give those struggling across northern Ontario some much-needed relief.

FIREARMS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday, at the public safety committee, Edmonton police chief Dale McFee said that the Liberals' handgun freeze is not only a bad idea but will undermine public safety by increasing smuggling and black market activity. He said that, instead, the focus ought to be on targeting the criminals who pull the trigger.

Chief McFee's approach is in stark contrast to the Liberals' approach with their soft-on-crime, do-no-time Bill C-5, which eliminates mandatory jail time for serious gun crime. This all the while the Liberals target law-abiding firearms' owners with not only a useless but potentially harmful handgun freeze.

The Liberals should heed the advice of Chief McFee, go after the criminals and leave law-abiding firearms' owners alone.

* * *

KRISHNAMURTI DAKSHINAMURTI

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with sadness that I announce the recent passing of a dear friend and beloved Manitoban, Dr. Krishnamurti Dakshinamurti.

Born in 1928, in Vellore, India, he was a student activist and an early follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Dakshinamurti later channelled this life-changing experience by founding the Mahatma Gandhi Centre of Canada to promote human rights. He earned a Ph.D. in biochemistry and became a world-renowned scientist and scholar, inspiring and mentoring generations of students and doctors. He was a pillar of numerous cultural organizations, including the Manohar Performing Arts of Canada and was a passionate humanitarian who worked on countless fundraising campaigns for local and international disasters. In 2020, for his distinguished service, he was awarded the Order of Manitoba.

My deepest sympathies to Dr. Dakshinamurti's family, as well as to his legions of friends and followers, who are gathering on October 25 to honour the life of a great soul.

* * *

● (1115)

HOUSING

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, last week I had the honour of attending a groundbreaking ceremony at the largest affordable housing development in London's history. Vision SoHo is a coalition of six non-profit affordable housing providers convened by the London Community Foundation, and they will build more than 650 units as a mixed-use community.

This is needed more than ever in my community as Londoners are priced out of their neighbourhoods. In the last few years, the average home cost has more than doubled in London. Home ownership is now only a dream for too many. The city's list of individuals using homelessness supports grew tenfold, and more than 6,000 people are now on our social housing wait-list.

The financialization of housing in Canada has caused a crisis in my community, which of course started because the Liberal government cancelled the national affordable housing program in 1993. However, I want to thank my NDP colleagues for pushing for a study of this financialization in the HUMA committee.

I call on the government to take the real action needed to make housing a right, not a commodity.

* * *

[Translation]

HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS NIGHT

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, homelessness awareness night is an event to raise awareness about homelessness and the poverty and social alienation associated with it. A growing number of Quebeckers are struggling with these issues. Today marks the 33rd annual homelessness awareness night, which is being held in more than 21 municipalities across Quebec. This year's theme is "no roof and no options".

Single mothers, people with mental health issues, seniors, youth, the most vulnerable people in our society find themselves on the street because they lack adequate support and are facing a lack of safe and affordable housing.

Today, I would like to highlight the superb work of the various people and groups who help these individuals. I would like to acknowledge the work being done throughout Quebec, but especially the work of those in Longueuil, who support these people with a compassion and tenacity that affords them more dignity. I would like to say a huge thank you for their remarkable dedication and their exceptional commitment to their mission.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

* * *

[English]

2020 SHOOTINGS IN NOVA SCOTIA

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday, recordings were released of the infamous April 28 phone call with RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki and her subordinates. We had been told that these recordings were destroyed, but a partial copy was found.

In that recording the commissioner admits that she was working closely with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety to release confidential information on an active investigation into the Nova Scotia mass shooting.

Earlier this summer, Commissioner Lucki testified to Parliament that she was "not directed to publicly release information about weapons used by the perpetrator to help advance pending gun control legislation". The recordings contradict her testimony.

Oral Questions

In fact, she admitted that the minister's office requested her to release this information. She admitted that she needed to apologize to the Prime Minister and the minister because she failed to get this information released.

Political interference into the RCMP investigation by the government and the commissioner are unacceptable. It is time for accountability. When can we expect a resignation?

* * *

DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, I rise to wish everyone celebrating in Brampton East and across Canada a very happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

It is a time when South Asian communities come together to celebrate the victory of good over evil. During this time, friends and family come together to light diyas, gather for fireworks and visit local gurdwaras, mandirs and temples to pray and seek blessings.

During this time, and many festivals throughout the year, organizations such as the Seva Food Bank, the Peel Regional Police, along with local grocery stores, come together to support those most in need. I send a huge thanks to their teams for their dedication to serving our communities.

My family and I look forward to being with the community at the local gurdwaras and many events over the coming weeks. I know Ayva and Maya are excited about the unlimited prasad. We all enjoy the company of the community and connecting with neighbours during our visits.

I ask everyone in the House to please join me in wishing everyone celebrating across Canada a very happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday, we heard a recording of a phone call that shows the commissioner of the RCMP was under political pressure, not only from the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, but also from the Prime Minister himself, with respect to the investigation into the largest mass shooting in Canadian history, which resulted in the death of 22 people.

It also contradicts statements made here in the House of Commons by the Minister for Emergency Preparedness.

Will he resign?

Oral Questions

• (1120)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me first reiterate our government's sincere condolences to those who lost loved ones in this unbelievable act of violence. I am keeping them in my thoughts.

The independence of police operations is a key principle of our democracy and one that our government deeply respects. At no point did our government attempt to interfere with police operations.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness said, "At no point did our government pressure or interfere with the operational decisions of the RCMP, including their communications strategy." However, only 10 days after the biggest mass shooting in Canadian history, the commissioner of the RCMP was recorded saying, "it was a request that I got...from the Minister's office."

Furthermore, she said that she was waiting for a call from the Prime Minister so that she could apologize for not having released the information that the politicians wanted out. They wanted this information out so that they could advance their partisan agenda.

Will they resign?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite knows really well that one of the most fundamental principles of our democracy is that politicians do not interfere in police investigations or police operations.

Let me be absolutely clear. We believe that this is a sacrosanct principle of our democracy and at no moment, ever, has our government interfered in police investigations or police operations, nor will we ever do so.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, yet a recording from the commissioner of the RCMP shows that this is exactly what they did. She said, "it was a request that I got um, from the Minister's office. And I shared with the Minister that um, that it in fact it was going to be in the uh, in the news release and it wasn't." She continued, "I already have a request sitting in my phone that the minister wants to speak with me".

She says further, "I'm waiting for the Prime Minister to call me so I can apologize", apologize for not releasing sensitive investigative information to advance the Liberal Party's partisan agenda.

With this revelation of falsehoods stated by the minister in the House, will he resign?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me repeat, once again: At no point did our government attempt to direct or otherwise interfere with police operations. Let me quote what the commissioner herself stated as testimony to parliamentarians. She said:

Let me be clear. I did not interfere in the investigation, I did not receive direction and I was not influenced by government officials regarding the public release of information and, more importantly, on the direction of the investigation. I ensured that operational independence was maintained in all my interactions with government, as I do today.

This is a direct quote from—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, that contradicts another quote in a recorded conversation, so she, too, has stated one thing here and the opposite there.

Similarly, with the \$54-million ArriveCAN scandal, we see the government saying things that contradict the facts. They released a document to the House of Commons saying that ThinkOn Inc. had received a \$1.2-million contract for experimentation on mobile QR scanning, yet the CEO said yesterday that he never received any money and, in fact, they do not even work in the field.

If his company did not get the money, who did?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in all matters, obviously, the government ensures that contracts are handled to the highest standards. There are questions about this contract that are being looked at. Certainly, we want to make sure that there are answers, but I will say that what we did, when the country was in a situation of crisis and when the opposition was calling for the border to be closed, was ensure that we brought forward an app that allowed for the movement of people safely during that crisis and that is something that worked and was extremely effective.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was extremely effective at making somebody rich. We just do not yet know who.

The government released a document to the House of Commons saying that ThinkOn Inc. got \$1.2 million in ArriveCAN contracts. Yesterday, the CEO said, "We have received no money from the CBSA." He further said, "We're not even remotely in that space."

In other words, they do not even do the work that was paid for. This company did not get the \$1.2 million. I have two questions. Who got the money, and where is it now?

• (1125)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, CBSA is looking into this matter. It is aware of concerns with respect to the contract. I can assure the hon. member opposite that in all matters with respect to contracts, we adhere to the absolute highest standards and demand those standards in every interaction of the government.

Again, I would point out the imperative nature of the action that the ArriveCAN app was able to facilitate. We were in a situation in which the opposition was calling for the border to be closed. We wanted to make sure Canadians could travel safely. We introduced an app that facilitated that in a time of crisis and made sure that Canadians could travel.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, Radio-Canada is reporting that the federal government is hunting down journalistic sources in order to punish a whistle-blower. It wants to know who disclosed that the federal government was appointing a unilingual English speaker as CEO of the Canadian Museum of History. What the government should have done was take a hard look in the mirror and ask why it continues to make unilingual English appointments. No, instead it searched the emails and phone records of 82 employees to find out who had spoken out.

Why is it that the government's problem is not the appointment of a unilingual person, but the fact that everyone knows about it?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

I would point out that the president of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec himself stated in an interview for that article that federal public servants are not supposed to use their office equipment to disclose information that is supposed to remain internal to the government. Of course, we are working to advance the cause of French. When I was heritage minister, I worked hard to ensure that we invested more than any other government to support art and culture across the country, and particularly in Quebec.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec spoke out against the government's source hunting. It fears that Ottawa is discouraging whistle-blowers when it should in fact be protecting them. It is concerned, and rightly so, because Canada has the weakest whistle-blower legislation in the world. According to the International Bar Association, Canada ranks 50th out of 50.

That is why the Bloc Québécois has introduced Bill C-290 to better protect public servants who blow the whistle.

Will the government support our bill instead of basically going on a witch hunt trying to track down sources within its own ranks?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is one of the most transparent countries on the planet. Just look at the annual reports of Transparency International. We are one of the countries that gives journalists the most freedom. We have very important procedures when it comes to disclosing information, and we are extremely proud of that. We will continue to work on being one of the best in the world.

Oral Questions

HEALTH

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, this Liberal government's lack of leadership on the health file is putting children's lives at risk. The emergency room at the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Centre in Montreal is in chaos. Due to lack of space, children are waiting all alone in the hallways before being treated. Health care workers are overwhelmed. According to doctors, the quality of care is deteriorating. It is urgent that this Liberal government take action.

When will the Liberals show leadership and finally provide the health care funding needed to save lives now?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that I am being asked this question, and I thank the member for that. Health care workers are in crisis across the country. They are exhausted, and many have quit their jobs. Many are ill and are thinking about leaving their jobs in the next few months or years.

First we must acknowledge that there is a crisis. Then, we have to work with the provinces and territories to address it. That is why, over the past few months, we have invested significant amounts to that end, and there is more to come. We look forward to working on this in collaboration with all our colleagues and health ministers across the country.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, they need to start funding health care now.

Nova Scotians lost loved ones and an entire community was devastated by a mass shooting. People deserve honest answers from the government. Yesterday, in recordings released by the commission, it is clear that the former minister of public safety and the RCMP commissioner's stories do not add up.

If the Liberal government interfered with an investigation into the worst mass shooting in Canadian history for its own political gain, Canadians need to know. Who is telling the truth, the minister or the RCMP commissioner?

• (1130)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to remind the member opposite again, and I am sure he is aware of this most important principle in our democracy. Politicians do not interfere in police operations. They do not interfere in police investigations. That is a sacrosanct principle that our government will always live by. At no point ever did the minister or the government interfere in a matter of police operation or investigation; nor will it ever do so.

Oral Questions

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, the newly released audio recordings of the RCMP commissioner confirm that the minister pressured the commissioner to release sensitive information about the ongoing investigation into the worst mass killing in our history. By requesting this information be released to further the Liberal political agenda, the minister politically interfered in the RCMP investigation, and he misled a parliamentary committee about it. For this, the minister must resign. Will he resign today?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will restate this really important principle, because it is worth repeating. In our democratic system, politicians do not interfere in police operations or police investigations. At no point did our government instruct anyone to release any information, because we would never violate the sacrosanct principle of non-interference in a police investigation or police operation, as was the case in this circumstance.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, the former minister of public safety misled a parliamentary committee, on the record. He said he was not aware that the commissioner would release sensitive information, and he said he never asked her to reveal that information, but both claims are now proving to be completely misleading with the new audio recording. Worse yet, the minister knew the release of this information would jeopardize the investigation into the worst mass killing in Canadian history. This was all for Liberal political gain. He must resign today. Will he resign?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at no point did our government attempt to direct or otherwise interfere in the police operation that was taking place after that tragic incident that took place in Nova Scotia.

Let me quote again what the commissioner said in a parliamentary committee on July 25. She stated, "Let me be clear. I did not interfere in the investigation, I did not receive direction and I was not influenced by government officials regarding the public release of information and, more importantly, on the direction of the investigation. I ensured that operational independence—"

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, Commissioner Lucki told the Nova Scotia RCMP that she wanted the details of the makes and models of the weapons used in Canada's most deadly mass shooting released. Why? It was because the minister pressured her to do so. We know they spoke about it. He knew it would jeopardize the investigation, but the minister had legislation coming and this was part of a communications exercise for him. It was not about the investigation, the victims or public safety. He played politics with a mass-shooting investigation. At what time today will he resign?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the independence of police operations is a key principle in our democracy and one that our

government deeply respects. At no time did our government attempt to interfere in police operations. That has never taken place. It is a sacrosanct principle of our democracy and we will always live by it.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, in an accountable democracy, a recording of an RCMP commissioner working with a minister to cover up the politicization of the biggest mass killing in Canadian history would result in immediate resignation. Not only did the minister mislead the House about knowing what we have all heard on tape, but he was advised that releasing this information would jeopardize the investigation and he asked for it to be done anyway. He put politics above the safety of Canadians and then covered it up, so at what time today will he resign?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what happened in Nova Scotia by way of the mass shooting is an absolute tragedy. Innocent people lost their lives. Our focus has been to ensure that through this inquiry—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Can we listen to the answers the same way we listen to the questions, please?

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Our focus, Madam Speaker, through the inquiry, has been to make sure we learn the lessons on how to prevent such mass shootings ever taking place in any part of Canada. That investigation was led by the RCMP. The government did not interfere in that investigation, because that is a fundamental principle of our democracy. Politicians do not interfere with police operations.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is a very serious issue. The government has always said that it never interfered in the judicial process regarding the tragic murder of 22 people in Halifax. That is completely false.

Yesterday, a recording was made public of a meeting that took place a few days after the tragedy. It clearly shows that the government was in up to its neck in the judicial process.

At that meeting, the commissioner said, and I quote: "I flew it up the flagpole because it was a request that I got from the minister's office. And I shared with the minister that in fact it was going to be in the news releases, and it wasn't."

When will the minister resign?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the independence of police operations is a key principle in our democracy and one that our government deeply respects.

At no time did our government attempt to interfere in police operations.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to repeat the testimony that was made public yesterday: “I flew it up the flagpole because it was a request that I got from the minister’s office. And I shared with the minister that in fact it was going to be in the news releases, and it wasn’t.”

She told the minister. Moreover, we later learn that the RCMP commissioner was waiting for the Prime Minister to call her so she could apologize. This makes no sense in a self-respecting democracy.

When will the minister resign?

[English]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member. In our democracy, politicians do not interfere in police operations or police investigations, and they did not do so in this matter. We did not interfere in a police operation or a police investigation. That was confirmed by the commissioner herself when she testified before a parliamentary committee in July of this year. She clearly said she was not asked to direct the investigation and she worked hard to maintain the independence of that investigation.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the truckers’ occupation of Ottawa dragged on because the federal government blocked any possibility of intervention for three weeks.

We know that when the City of Ottawa asked for reinforcements of 1,800 police officers, the federal government did not grant the request. However, we also learned from the commission that the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, repeatedly asked the federal government to appoint a mediator. This request was also refused. For three weeks, there was no police reinforcement, no mediation, no progress.

Why did the federal government block any possibility of intervention for three weeks, while residents were being held hostage?

[English]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can tell members that the federal government was engaged in ensuring that we ended the illegal occupation of Ottawa and the illegal closure of our borders as well. We worked very closely with local police authorities that were responsible for providing policing here, in the case of Ottawa for instance, by providing resources as they were needed. At the end of the day, we needed to invoke the Emergencies Act because things were not getting done, and the result is that the occupation came to an end.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is not true. Crisis management is about hours, maybe days. Not three weeks.

After three weeks of inaction, it was not the emergency measures that brought an end to the siege of Ottawa. It was the police. It was

the 1,800 or 1,900 additional police officers that the City of Ottawa had been calling for all along.

The moment the city got those reinforcements, an operation was launched, and less than 48 hours later, the streets of Ottawa were empty. It was the police who ended the siege of Ottawa.

Why did the federal government sit on its hands for three weeks, doing nothing to mobilize and coordinate police officers?

[English]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can tell members from first-hand experience, as the local member of Parliament for the area, that the occupation and downtown Ottawa were extremely distressing for the residents who live in the downtown core, and for many businesses. The federal government worked extremely closely with the municipal government and its provincial counterparts to make sure all the resources that were needed were provided, so we could end the occupation as quickly as possible.

We all wish that the occupation had not lasted for three weeks, and that is why we had to invoke the Emergencies Act, to put an end to the occupation and to make sure our borders were not blocked.

* * *

● (1140)

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday The Globe and Mail revealed that the Liberals are claiming millions in payments to vendors for their ArriveCAN boondoggle that never actually happened. It was a \$54-million app, with millions unaccounted for. Canadians are left wondering if there are more fake ArriveCAN payments listed. First it was ThinkOn Inc., then, later in the day, Ernst & Young came forward to say the government is claiming false billing.

Do the Liberals want to revise the figures they signed off on?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I answered this earlier. I am happy to do so again.

The CBSA is taking a look at the contract. It is aware that there are questions. The Government of Canada, this government, in all contracts, conducts itself to the highest standard and demands the highest standards.

With respect to the ArriveCAN app, I would point out that the members opposite wanted to close the border, did not support the app and, frankly, were not helpful during that period of time in constantly changing their positions. We ensured that people were able to enter the country and that goods and services were able to flow in a time of crisis. We will continue to be there for Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, what Canadians do not find helpful is that the Liberals have no intention of telling the truth, so here are some facts for them.

They said the app would cost \$80,000, and it ended up costing \$54 million. Then CBSA and the Liberals, the ministers, signed off on payments, saying that companies like ThinkOn Inc. and Ernst & Young received payments from the government. These companies never received a dime, so money is missing.

I have two questions for the Liberals: Who is lying, and who got rich?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, here are the facts. During an unprecedented time when the country was being rocked by COVID, we needed to be able to make sure that people—

An hon. member: It does not matter. It is the public's money.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, they are saying it does not matter. It absolutely does matter that people were able to cross the border, that we were able, on an urgent basis, to create a system that kept them safe and ensured that they were able to continue to have mobility.

In every step of the pandemic, whether or not it is in supports or whether or not it's in mobility, we were there for Canadians. As crises occur, our government will respond, and will always do so to the highest standard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, urgent action does not mean spending taxpayers' money. This government has given us many reasons to doubt its integrity. First it was the former Liberal MP's ventilators and the land at Roxham Road. Now it is the ArriveCAN app, which cost \$54 million. Experts say they could have done it for \$250,000. Is the government mocking us?

Worse still, the government gave \$1.2 million to a company, but the company did not get any of it. Here is a simple question: Who got the \$1.2 million?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have already explained, the agency responsible for contracts is well aware that there are questions. In every situation, in any situation, we will ensure that we are fully accountable. We will answer questions. We will monitor the situation to ensure that our system is working properly.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, the ArriveCAN app cost Canadians a fortune and is not worth the \$54 million that it cost. A good computer programmer could have easily done the job for under \$250,000. It is Liberal incompetence with a \$54-million price tag, once again.

Why does this government keep tumbling into one scandal after another?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member across the way asked his question in an interesting way, but I will answer it direct-

ly. It was a very difficult situation for the country. There is the cost around the software, but there was more to it than the cost of the software. There was a lot of support required for the software. It was essential at the time for the government to act quickly and effectively, and that is what it did.

* * *

• (1145)

[*English*]

HEALTH

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, hospital emergency rooms in Port Hardy, Alert Bay and Port McNeill have been closing repeatedly for the past few months because there is not enough staff to keep them open. Residents of North Island are extremely concerned that the emergency rooms will not be there when they need them. Underfunding of health care by both Conservative and Liberal governments has left rural communities behind.

Will the government provide significant, stable and long-term funding for health care and address this crisis?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are obviously very focused on and mindful of the severe difficulties health care workers across the country, including in the member's riding, have been facing for a long time. They have been exacerbated during COVID-19. That is why we are going to work together to continue to do that with increased—

Ms. Rachel Blaney: They are shut down all weekend. What do residents do when they have no emergency room?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will just interrupt the hon. minister. Does the hon. member want to listen to the answer from the minister?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I would like him to answer the question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The minister is trying to provide an answer to the question. If members keep interrupting, I will skip to the next question.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I am sure the member wants to hear the answer because she is very focused on the problems in her riding. I congratulate her for that. That is why, over the last few weeks and months, we have been investing increased resources through an additional \$2-billion investment to reduce backlogs and another \$1 billion to support health care workers in long-term care settings—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Oral Questions

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, people in Canada do not need more talk. This week, the media reported that the emergency wait times at Edmonton's Stollery Children's Hospital has reached 17 hours. One ER doctor revealed that patients are dying in the waiting room.

It is unacceptable that the Liberals avoid taking any responsibility for this crisis. They are standing by while Conservative premiers are underfunding the health care system that Canadians need. To make things worse, in Alberta, Danielle Smith is musing about scrapping public health care in our province.

Canadians' lives are at risk. When is the government going to take action?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, all Canadians, and certainly Albertans, need and deserve the support of the federal government, including support for health care workers in Alberta and across Canada. We are obviously very mindful of the pressures, intentions and sometimes the actions around privatizing our health care system. Canadians want access to Canada's public health care system in a manner which is supported by the principles of accessibility, affordability and universality. These are all principles that all Canadians, including Albertans, want us to support together.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Madam Speaker, everyone in Canada should have access to safe, clean drinking water.

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services update the House on the recent progress made in lifting long-term drinking water advisories in first nations communities?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Northwest Territories for his advocacy and hard work.

Just last week, Sachigo Lake lifted its long-term boil water advisory. This is a testament to its dedication and hard work, and, of course, our commitment. Since 2015, 136 boil water advisories have been lifted. There are 31 more to go, each with its own project team and plan. We will not rest until we lift those water advisories. This is important to all Canadians.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness repeatedly told the House that, "At no point did our government pressure or interfere with the operational decisions of the RCMP, including their communications strategy."

Audio recordings of Commissioner Lucki reveal she said, "it was a request that...I got from the minister's office. And I shared with the minister that...it was going to be...in the news releases, and it wasn't."

The minister directly interfered in an RCMP investigation for the purpose of advancing the Liberals' political agenda. When will the minister resign for misleading Parliament?

• (1150)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the members opposite can ask the same question as many ways as possible. The answer remains the same. In our democracy, one of the fundamental principles is that we, the government, do not interfere in any police operation or police investigation.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, Commissioner Lucki told Parliament that she, "was not directed to publicly release information about weapons used...to help advance pending gun control legislation."

We now have audio recordings where the Commissioner states, "Does anybody realize what's going on in the world of...guns". She then continues, "they're...trying to get a legislation going." The commissioner pressured her subordinates, under direction from the minister, to advance the government's political agenda. In her own words, she didn't "come through for the minister".

The commissioner misled Parliament. When will the government demand her resignation?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do want to again stress the fact that the commissioner testified to parliamentarians at a committee in July, where she said, "I did not receive direction and I was not influenced by government officials regarding the public release of information". She is stating exactly the practice, which is that politicians do not interfere in police operations or police investigations. Our government abides by that really important principle, and at no time did the government interfere in a police investigation.

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TAXATION

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister and the costly coalition with the NDP is making life more expensive for all Canadians. People in British Columbia are deeply concerned about the rapid rise in the cost of living and now of home heating fuels. The last thing Canadians need at this time is more inflationary taxation.

Will the Liberal government cancel its plans to triple taxes on home heating this winter?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the leader of the official opposition said that countries that are running higher inflation than Canada are dumb. That list includes the U.S., Italy, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the entire eurozone.

Oral Questions

Right now, when we are in a time of global crisis, when people are finding things hard, it does not matter that Canada has one of the lowest inflation rates in the world. We have to do everything we can to help Canadians, and that is why I ask the member opposite why they will not support dental care for families who need that support. Why will they not support help for those who are low-income and renting? Why do they refuse to support it? Worse, why do they not even let it pass through the House?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government is making life more expensive for everyone. I have heard from seniors living on a fixed income who are struggling to put food on the table. I received an email from a constituent concerned that the prices at the local grocery store are skyrocketing but portions are being decreased.

Winter is coming, and homes need to be kept warm. Canadians are cash-strapped. Will the Liberal government give Canadians a break and cancel its triple taxes on home heating?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what I find most unfortunate is that, at a time of global turmoil, when people across the world are facing the impacts of not only inflation but also climate change, the government, which is taking action, faces an opposition in the Conservatives that is raising and amplifying people's anxiety instead of providing solutions.

What are their solutions? To take something they know gives more money back than it takes to fight climate change and to stand up against dental care for those families who need it and support for low-income families who are renting. That is not responsible.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, with the new pro-oil and pro-gas doctrine that Canada announced in Washington, chances are good that the Prime Minister will once again be appointed the oil companies' point man. This is just like in March 2017, when the oil companies invited the Prime Minister to Texas to give him the prestigious global energy and environment leadership award. Shell, BP, ExxonMobil and all the other oil companies were swooning. He was their man.

Five years later, with the announcement of the new doctrine in Washington, does the minister think that his leader has a head start to win the award again this year?

• (1155)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to tell my colleague that the very important international magazine National Geographic named the Prime Minister of Canada man of the year for the work Canada is doing to protect nature.

It is no coincidence that the United Nations turned to us to organize the next international UN conference on biodiversity.

When this conference could not be held in China, the UN turned to Canada because it is one of the countries that is doing the most to protect biodiversity and fight climate change.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, there are some strange similarities between China and Canada. This reminds me of Canada's announcement in Washington. We saw the Prime Minister being honoured by oil companies in the past. Meanwhile Equiterre and the Sierra Club are suing the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for approving the Bay du Nord project, and the Deputy Prime Minister just announced to the world that Canada is going to fast-track oil and gas projects, even if it means losing political capital.

Should we believe what this government does or what it says?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that, in the last year alone, we invested \$15 billion in the electric battery and electric vehicle sector. That money went to 10 different projects, including several in Quebec.

The German chancellor came to Canada to announce a project to produce green hydrogen from offshore wind power. When my colleague talks about what we are doing in Canada, that is it. That is exactly what we are doing. We are making a green shift and investing tens if not hundreds of billions of dollars in Canada's green transition.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada is experiencing an affordability crisis where 60% of Canadians are struggling to put food on the table and 20% of Canadians are dependent on food banks. Food inflation recently hit a 40-year high, at 11.4%. Bread is up 22%; cereal, 17.9%; and baked goods, 14%. The cause of this inflation is hundreds of billions of dollars of reckless spending, most of which was not related to COVID.

When will the Liberal government finally abandon its irresponsible policies of tax and spend, and let Canadians have a full belly when they go to bed at night?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what is irresponsible is pretending that a global problem we have to take seriously is a problem that just exists in Canada. The Conservatives might as well promise that the wind will stop blowing at our coastal borders if they were in government.

The reality is that we face global challenges, just like every other country, and it does not matter that we have one of the lowest rates. We need to take action. We need to provide support. It does not matter that we have lifted 2.7 million people out of poverty in the last five years. We have to do more. It does not matter that this House has adopted legislation to help those who are in need with \$500 in a GST credit.

Where are they on dental? Where are they on housing?

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, what does matter is that the more the government spends, the more things cost. I would say that the government has spent like a drunken sailor, but quite frankly, that would bring intoxicated mariners into disrepute.

After a wild bender of spending, the government has gotten up from a ditch and said it has seen the light of fiscal restraint. Excuse my incredulity, but I am sure that millions of Canadians share my skepticism.

Will the government reassure Canadians, fully commit to the Leader of the Opposition's plan and legislate "pay as you go"?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition called the U.S., Italy, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the entire eurozone "dumb" because they have higher inflation rates than we do. What action was he was taking while those "dumb governments" were attempting to deal with global inflation? He was recommending that people take their precious savings and invest in Bitcoin. Those people would have lost absolutely everything.

I am quite sure that international leaders have more tact and dignity than to share their opinions about the leader of the official opposition.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister, in his costly coalition with the NDP, is making life more expensive for Canadians. Media reports say that Canadians who pay for natural gas or electricity can expect their bills to go up by 50%, 100% or even 300% this winter. I do not know about my colleagues, but everyone I know uses electricity and needs to heat their family home.

Let me be clear: Warmth during a Canadian winter is not a luxury. Will the government cancel its plans to triple the taxes on home heating?

• (1200)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is just like the Conservatives to believe that inflation is something that can stop at Canadian borders and that we will not be affected by it. They also say that we caused it. That is how ridiculous and preposterous their positions are.

That is also their position on climate change. They want to pretend that climate change is not going to cost tens or hundreds of bil-

lions of dollars. In fact, over the next 100 years, perhaps it will be trillions of dollars.

We just watched what happened in Atlantic Canada. We just watched what happened with Fiona. We need to take responsible leadership to protect this planet and, at the same time, make sure life is more affordable for Canadians. That is exactly what we are doing.

* * *

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is Small Business Week, which gives us the opportunity to celebrate the contributions of small Canadian businesses that are the pillars of our economy and our communities. To help them prosper, we must reduce the burden of regulations that are no longer required.

Can the President of the Treasury Board update the House on Bill S-6 and how it will help Canadian businesses?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Saint-Laurent for her question and her hard work in her community.

Annual regulatory modernization bills are a key element of the government's efforts to improve efficiency while maintaining protections for the environment, consumers, health and safety.

Bill S-6 makes 45 common-sense changes to reduce the administrative burden for businesses, facilitate digital interactions and simplify regulatory processes.

I hope that all parties in the House will agree to help facilitate the work of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Beauce.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, food banks are no longer meeting demand in my riding and across Canada.

Mr. Boutin, from La Source in Beauce, told me that the demand is skyrocketing, and winter has not even hit yet. The impact of inflation is already being felt, especially for young families and seniors. With high grocery prices, ever-increasing interest rates and a recession just around the corner, we want a real answer.

When will this government suspend all new taxes? Enough is enough.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to reassure my colleague. The federal price on pollution does not apply to Quebec, because Quebec has kept its own cap-and-trade system, which operates in a completely different way from the carbon pricing system.

Oral Questions

In Quebec's case, emissions are reduced through the cap component of their system, not a price increase. That is how it works. There will be no increase in Quebec.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government ballooned our debt by over \$100 billion even before COVID, and then by \$500 billion during COVID, \$200 billion of which had absolutely zero to do with the pandemic. Now the finance minister has seen the light, taken the advice of our leader and brought in a “pay as you go” policy.

Canadians know they cannot trust the finance minister and this costly coalition with the NDP when it comes to fiscal responsibility. Is that not right?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the finance minister has been seeing the light all through this crisis while the Leader of the Opposition was in the darkest corners of the Internet searching for solutions with Bitcoin and recommending such things.

We have actually been driving economic growth. I would point out there was 3.3% growth in the second quarter for Canada, and that France's was 2.2%, Germany's was 0.6%, the U.K.'s was 0.9% and the U.S.'s was -0.6%. I would also point out that we have seen a growth of 400,000 jobs from where we were before the pandemic began.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety said the following with respect to the placement of defibrillators in RCMP vehicles, which would save 300 lives per year: “If the hon. member had a private company that wanted to donate AEDs to all RCMP vehicles, I would be happy to work with him on that.”

My question is this. In the event that one or more outside parties agrees to pay the necessary \$10 million, will the government finally place AEDs in all RCMP cruisers as I have been asking it to do for the past six years?

• (1205)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the former executive director of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, I could not agree more with the thrust and intent of the member's question, which is that AEDs save lives. I would encourage everybody to get trained in CPR and make sure they know how to use AEDs.

The government continues to look at how we can support public health efforts across the country to make sure there is knowledge about defibrillators, CPR and AEDs. As the government has in the past supported the placement of AEDs, it can look for ways to do so in the future.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government has been there for Atlantic Canadians every step of the way as we recover from the devastation of hurricane Fiona. Small craft harbours are the lifeblood of the economy for communities across Atlantic Canada.

Can the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans share with the House how our government will continue to be there for fish harvesters and Atlantic Canadians?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Avalon for his leadership and hard work.

I have had the chance to see the damage from Fiona's destructive powers first-hand and I have heard just how critical our small craft harbours are for people and their communities and economies. That is why I announced \$100 million of federal support for immediate work to clean up harbours and recover lost fishing gear.

DFO officials are working hard to make sure that harbours are operational when fishing seasons begin, and we will not stop until the job is done.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hosted a housing town hall in my community of Edmonton Griesbach last week, and my constituents told me that big real estate companies are buying up their homes and treating the housing market like a stock market, all while evicting regular working Canadians.

The Liberal government has done nothing to close tax loopholes. These investors have saved a combined \$1.5 billion, taking money from taxpayers, while in my community, Edmontonians are losing their homes. On the other hand, we have the Conservatives, who continue to buddy up with big corporations with no end in sight.

When will the government act to stop renovations and—

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

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that speculative investments in real estate are contributing to pushing housing prices higher. That is why we have legislated an annual 1% tax on the value of non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential real estate, and a two-year ban on foreign investment in Canadian residential properties. We have also committed to reviewing the tax treatment of real estate investment trusts.

We are committed to making housing affordable by doing our part to tackle the financialization of housing.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, a report by economist Ross McKittrick has exposed the true cost of the government's clean fuel standard. This second carbon tax would increase per-household energy costs up to 6.5% a year. That is an extra tax of \$1,277 annually. With food inflation at 11.4% and families struggling to afford basic necessities, the government is going to make things worse, a lot worse.

The government says this tax would reduce Canada's carbon intensity footprint. Will the government admit that it would be minimal at best and achieved on the backs of Canadians working in the bleak economy predicted by the finance minister?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the last three years, we have had the most costly forest fires in the history of Canada, the most costly floods in the history of Canada and now the most costly tropical storm in the history of Canada. Climate change is costing Canadians billions of dollars, and this is just the beginning unless we act.

Unfortunately, the Conservative Party has no plan whatsoever. In fact, it wants to make pollution free and wants to pay polluters even more.

On this side of the House, we will work to fight climate change and we will work to support Canadians.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED MISLEADING OF HOUSE BY MINISTER OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege concerning misleading comments made in the House by the Minister for Emergency Preparedness.

In late June, it came to light, in evidence presented at the Mass Casualty Commission, that the Liberal government was heavily involved in the RCMP's communications about the April 2020 Nova Scotia tragedy, which, as things would turn out, was followed, mere days later, by a firearms announcement by the Prime Minister on May 1, 2020.

Privilege

That involvement came to a head in a hastily arranged teleconference between RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki, other top brass at RCMP headquarters and several Nova Scotia RCMP members, where those Nova Scotia officials were called out onto the carpet.

Contemporaneous notes of that teleconference taken by Chief Superintendent Darren Campbell, well-trained in documenting conversations, as any veteran police officer would be, recorded that Commissioner Lucki spoke about a promise she had made to the minister and had linked its importance to that forthcoming order in council announcement. Understandably, the former minister of public safety was vigorously questioned about those events here in the House.

On June 21, he said, on page 7,094 of the Debates, "no direction on an operational matter was given to the commissioner of the RCMP by me or any member of this government." The following day, the minister said, at page 7,140 of the Debates, "At no point did our government pressure or interfere with the operational decisions of the RCMP, including their communications strategy."

On the last day of the spring sitting, June 23, he added, at page 7,242 of the Debates, "neither the Prime Minister's Office nor the Minister of Public Safety's office had any role in interfering or pressuring the RCMP to make any operational decisions with respect to the investigation or with respect to RCMP communications around the investigation."

The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security and the Mass Casualty Commission itself heard from several witnesses over the summer months about their recollections of that teleconference. For his part, the minister doubled down on his own position, saying, unequivocally, at the committee on July 25, at page 1 of the evidence, "I did not ask them to release any specific information, nor did I receive a promise for them to do so."

Later, in the meeting, at page 5 of the evidence, the minister reiterated, "I did not ask her to release that information. It wasn't required."

In other evidence at the committee and commission, we heard Commissioner Lucki's claim that the minister's chief of staff was curious as to whether the types of firearms involved would be named in a press conference and, in turn, the RCMP commissioner dutifully inquired whether that would be the case. She asserts that she was so informed and passed the information back.

When it did not come to pass, we are supposed to believe that she felt embarrassed for having given the minister wrong information and convened the teleconference with senior Nova Scotia RCMP officials to address the miscommunication.

Privilege

Subsequently, it was revealed that this conference call had been recorded by Dan Brien, an issues management adviser with the RCMP and a former long-time Liberal staffer, including serving as communications director to the previous public safety minister, Ralph Goodale. Lo and behold, those recordings had gone missing. Nonetheless, they were recovered somehow. Just yesterday, the recordings of this conversation and transcripts of them were published by the Mass Casualty Commission. That has shed a much brighter light on the infamous April 28, 2020, teleconference.

In the transcript, titled “Audio file 3 of 3 - Recorded: 2020-04-28 8:48:57 PM”, the commissioner is quoted, at lines 15 to 17 on page 1, as saying, “the little one line that I needed to be put into Darren’s speaking notes; how did it get to me that that one line was going to be in his speaking notes and it wasn’t?”

The keywords there are “one line that I needed to be put in”. It is pertinent because, as we know, the claim had been made that innocent questions had been asked by or on behalf of the minister.

In fact, the commissioner offered this explanation of the minister’s interest in this issue in the following exchange with the Liberal member for Fleetwood—Port Kells, at page 24 of the evidence for the public safety committee of July 25 meeting. This is the question: “A critical piece here is, when the question was asked, was the question asked ‘if’ it would be disclosed, or did they ask ‘for’ it to be disclosed?”

• (1210)

Commissioner Brenda Lucki responds, “To my recollection, like I said at the very beginning, it’s ‘if’ the weapons information would be included.”

Clearly, it was not mere curiosity whether the guns would be named. It was a line the commissioner “needed to be put in”, to use her own words. Was it at her own behest, or on behalf of someone higher up?

We must recall that the minister told the House on June 23 that the government had not played “any role” with respect to RCMP communications. Turning back to the transcript, I would refer the Chair to lines 19 and 20 on page two: “yet I got hit again, um, not being able to come through for the Minister, um on - on the simplest of requests”.

Lest we might think it is ambiguous from that question whether the commissioner may have been meaning to simply do a big favour for the minister, this next quote should leave the House with no doubt. I will now cite the transcript entitled “Audio file 1 of 3 - Recorded: 2020-04-28 8:34:52 PM”. At lines 11 and 12 on page one, we read the commissioner saying, “Flew it up the flagpole because it was a request that I got...from the Minister’s office.”

There we have it. The request came from the minister’s office, but we might ask what that request was, that one line the commissioner needed to have added. It was to pre-position, as communications folks would say, for the May 1, 2020, Liberal firearms announcement.

Referring to the transcript entitled “Audio file 2 of 3 - Recorded: 2020-04-28 8:42:48 PM”, we read at lines 10 to 15 on page two, “Does anybody realize what’s going on in the world of handguns

and guns right now? The fact that they’re in the middle of trying to get a legislation going”. That is the key point. That is the quote from that testimony, and I will read it again very quickly: “Does anybody realize what’s going on in the world of handguns and guns right now? The fact that they’re in the middle of trying to get a legislation going”.

There is the direct link between the government’s partisan political agenda and the interference in an active investigation into a tragic shooting that left 22 innocent Canadians dead. The RCMP on the ground had reason not to release that information. The government was putting political pressure on those officers to release that information, which could have jeopardized their ongoing efforts to track the events that led to the tragic shooting.

This June, the minister asserted there was no direction, interference or pressure. If the minister were to come down to the House and say that what I just quoted to the House does not add up to that, the next quotations I will offer should remove any ambiguity about the nature or tone of that so-called request from the minister’s office.

Members will recall that at the July 25 public safety committee meeting, the commissioner tried to brush off the urgency of these details coming out. Answering the Liberal member for Fleetwood—Port Kells when he asked why it was important this information be released at page 25 of the evidence, she said, “It wasn’t important whether or not it was released.” The commissioner may have been on message with the minister’s own committee statement, but the teleconference recording would prove them both wrong.

At lines 31 to 33 of page two of the transcript of audio file three, Commissioner Lucki is documented saying, “I already have a request sitting in my phone that the Minister wants to speak with me, and I know exactly what it’s gonna be about. And I can’t even, you know, I can’t uh, I – I – there’s not much I can say except that, once again, I dropped the ball, so that’s gonna be the fourth time I’m gonna say that to him”. She had already made one apology to the minister about her dropping the ball on pre-positioning for the Liberal gun announcement.

At lines 39 to 41 of page one of the transcript of audio file one, the RCMP commissioner says, “it’s pretty difficult when you have to tell, I have apologized to the Minister; I’m waiting for the Prime Minister to call me so I can apologize”. She is apologizing for not including that information the Liberal government decided would help it in a partisan way, despite the impact it may have on an ongoing police investigation.

It turns out that it was very important that the firearms information be released, despite what both the minister and the commissioner told the committee.

Let me put all these pieces together into one succinct summary. The RCMP commissioner is now on tape saying she “needed” a line to be put in. There are press conference remarks about an RCMP investigation in order to be able to “to come through for the Minister...on the simplest of requests” to accommodate information relevant to soon-to-be announced firearms laws.

• (1215)

Not having succeeded and not being satisfied with one apology, the minister was on the line looking for accountability because the commissioner had dropped the ball. The minister's comments to the House in June simply do not hold water. There is no other way to put it. He has misled this House, and he and the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have both misled the public safety committee.

It is a well-established principle here that to make out a prima facie case of privilege in relation to a claim of misleading the House, three elements must be established.

First, it must be proven that the statement was misleading. The recordings and the transcripts taken in their entirety baldly contradict the minister's own assertions on the floor of the House in June.

Second, it must be established that the member making the statement knew it to be misleading. The RCMP commissioner herself said in these recordings that the minister had asked to speak to her and she said, “I know exactly what it's gonna be about.” We know exactly what it was about.

Third, the misleading statement must have been offered with the intention to mislead the House. In June, when the revelations about this conference call first broke, the minister was under a political firestorm here in the House. He was in full-on damage control mode. In the circumstances, there is no way to view his comments other than as an attempt to be a wet blanket to smother yet another political scandal of the current Liberal government, interfering in police criminal investigations for political advantage.

It is my respectful submission that the three-part test concerning misleading the House has been satisfied. As Mr. Speaker Milliken ruled on February 1, 2002, at page 8,581 of the Debates:

I believe that both the minister and other hon. members recognize that two versions of events have been presented to the House.

...On the basis of the arguments presented by hon. members and in view of the gravity of the matter, I have concluded that the situation before us where the House is left with two versions of events is one that merits further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air.

The air here certainly needs to be cleared. The stench must be purged, even if the minister heeds Conservative calls to resign.

Finally, before concluding, there is one potential hurdle the Liberals might try to identify that I want to address up front. That is that the Mass Casualty Commission's recordings and transcripts have not yet been formally placed before the House. However, I would refer members to the decision of Mr. Speaker Jerome on December 6, 1978, at page 1,856 of the Debates, where a prima facie case of privilege was established in relation to misleading information on the strength of evidence that was given before the Commission of Inquiry Concerning Certain Activities of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, also known as the McDonald commission.

Privilege

Today's circumstances are, frankly, no different. In both cases, we have evidence from an RCMP commissioner given to a royal commission established under the Inquiries Act that contradicts the information which is before the House. Just as Mr. Speaker Jerome was prepared to find a prima facie case of privilege then, I believe that the Speaker can and must find one in the present circumstances to allow the House to address the misleading claims of the Minister of Emergency Preparedness.

I would just remind the Speaker, and I remind all hon. members, that we are not expecting the Speaker himself to make this determination. We are not expecting the Speaker himself to rule unilaterally that the minister is in contempt of the House or that the minister deliberately misled the House. All we are asking the Speaker to do is to allow the House to come to that decision and to make its own decision on this issue. The role of the Speaker is not to make this determination on his own. The role of the Speaker is to decide whether this rises to the level of allowing the House to study the matter and the House itself to pronounce on whether the minister is in contempt or has deliberately misled the House.

The gravity of this situation should not be forgotten. We are not simply pointing out a time when the minister was caught up with a contradiction about a minor issue or got some details wrong. We are talking about the allegation that in the middle of an ongoing investigation, mere days after a tragic shooting, the government was putting political pressure on the RCMP communications around the issue.

The RCMP officers who were conducting the investigation felt that releasing the specific information around the firearms that were used in the shooting could jeopardize their ability to find out where these firearms came from or other details around the case. It was the officers' discretion and their expertise that led them to the conclusion that they should not divulge that information at that time in the investigation.

• (1220)

For its own partisan political purposes, the government broke all bounds of decency and violated that independence between the executive branch of government and our national police force. It was all for political gain. That is why the situation rises to the level of justifying a finding of, at least at first glance, a breach of privilege.

Should you find that we are correct in this assertion, Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I thank the House leader of the official opposition for raising this issue. The Chair will examine the matter and come back with a ruling on it.

Routine Proceedings

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader wishes to comment on the matter.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will have the opportunity to peruse what the member has put on the record and get back to the Speaker in a timely fashion.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The member for New Westminster—Burnaby would also like to speak to this.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Congratulations on your appointment, Mr. Speaker.

NDP members also feel that this is an important issue. We would like to look at the Hansard. If we cannot do that in the next two hours, we will do it at the next meeting of the House of Commons.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): That is noted.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise in this place and present petitions from concerned Canadians about a whole host of issues.

I am pleased to once again stand and address something that I think has special relevance to be presented at this point in time, because of the recent revelations associated with the Communist Party of China and its conference that has been taking place. Certainly there are very concerning things, and I have heard from constituents about that.

Specifically, the petition that I once again have the honour to table in the House today draws the attention of this place to the genocide taking place against the Uighur people in the People's Republic of China. Without going into too much of the preamble, the petitioners call on the House of Commons to take the following actions to address this very important situation: One, formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide; and two, use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, known as the Magnitsky act, to sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people.

It is of the utmost importance that Canada stand with peoples who are being persecuted, specifically when it comes to ethnic and religious minorities who are facing persecution, so it is an honour to stand in this place on behalf of many Canadians who wish to draw the attention of the House of Commons to this very important issue.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from Canadians who have pointed out that the impacts of climate change are accelerating in Canada, that Canadian greenhouse gas reduction targets are inadequate, that the efforts of this government are inadequate and that the subsidizing of fossil fuel production is not compatible with the stated goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Therefore, the petitioners ask that the government undertake a just transition off of fossil fuel that leaves no one behind, eliminates federal fossil fuel subsidies and halts the expansion of fossil fuel production in Canada.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present on behalf of Canadians.

The first petition is with regard to ensuring that we acknowledge the Indian government's discriminatory anti-minority laws, the rising threat of genocide against Muslims and the prosecution of Christians, Dalits and other minorities in India.

Additionally, the petitioners want to include human rights experts in all trade and bilateral agreements with India to safeguard the freedom, justice and human rights of prosecuted minorities there.

• (1230)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on behalf of parents and individuals in Alberta who are concerned about an incident that took place in April 2010, when the superintendent on the board of an Alberta school division moved to permanently ban Métis students from attending nearby Alberta public schools.

These families and their children have faced immense levels of barriers since this time, including an inability to graduate from high school, in addition to collateral damages related to their mental health and well-being.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you likely are aware, there is a significant ongoing petition campaign, collecting thousands and thousands of signatures. Many members of Parliament have brought it forward. It is with regard to the illegal and unethical harvesting of organs.

The petitioners recognize that the Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline, which consists of meditation, exercise and moral teachings based on principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. The people of that faith and others who signed this petition are asking parliamentarians to do what they can, which would include things such as supporting a private member's bill to deal with the issue.

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.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

JUDGES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Judges Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Resuming debate. There were five minutes left for questions and comments on the speech by the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about the Judges Act, Bill C-9. A very important principle in western democracy is judicial independence, the independence of the criminal justice system. In Canada today we are hearing shocking news that the government is willing to interfere in an independent police investigation.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on the importance of judicial independence.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, like many in this House and I hope many from all parties in this House, am disappointed and disgusted that the evidence that has been found in the Mass Casualty Commission has demonstrated somebody was lying. As we talk about Bill C-9, which has to do with restoring some confidence in our judicial process, it is absolutely fundamental that this place acknowledge that it is not acceptable for there to be that judicial interference.

What is worse is that this is not the first time the Prime Minister and the Liberal government have been caught doing so. We can think back to a number of examples that include Jody Wilson-Raybould, the former attorney general and minister of justice, not bending her will to that of the Prime Minister. There are a number of other examples, and most recently, using the largest mass shooting in Canadian history for the Liberals to further their narrow political interests.

Judicial independence is fundamentally important, but so is accountability when it comes to leaders who would put those principles at risk in our democratic system.

I share the concern of my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove that we are seeing something incredibly disturbing. I do not even think disturbing is a strong enough word when it comes to the erosion of trust taking place in our institutions.

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We need to all work together in this place, including the Minister of Public Safety, the current and the former. There has to be work done to ensure that trust is restored, because I hear often from constituents who say they simply cannot trust our institutions. They are losing faith, and not just in the Prime Minister. To be honest, I do not think any of my constituents, or certainly not very many, have ever had much trust or faith in the Liberal Party or the Liberal government.

What is most incredibly disappointing is that we are seeing, and I am hearing this from many Canadians, a loss of trust in the very institutions of our nations. We can look at many examples of the Liberal government directly contributing to that, and that has to change.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how relevant that would have been, but given the member wants to talk about the importance of judicial independence, let us take a look at what the Judicial Council has said. I posed this to the member before.

The Judicial Council is wanting to see this legislation pass. There was a high sense of disappointment. As opposed to trying to go back to 18 months or two years ago and saying “this and this” and “but this” and “but that”, why will the Conservative Party today not acknowledge that the reason it is not going to committee is that the Conservative Party has made the decision to continue the ongoing debate.

When the member talks about the independence of the judicial system, maybe he could lend some credibility to that statement by acknowledging that the Conservatives should let the bill go to committee. It would not limit debate. There is still going to be a lot more debate to come.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that he said he does not want me to talk about 18 months ago, when the reality is this bill would have been passed probably about 12 months ago had it not been for the Prime Minister's going against his word and against his public commitment by calling an election.

We have seen numerous examples of something being fast-tracked in this place and the government denying the opportunity to members to meaningfully engage on a subject. This is regarding bills not just related to the Judges Act but on a whole host of other issues. If we do not have the thoughtful, fulsome debate in this place, if things do not get sent to and from committee and the Senate for their good work, if that is not done here there are mistakes that get made, and that ends up delaying the process even further.

I am sorry it offends the Liberals that we are simply doing our jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak today on Bill C-9, right after my friend, the member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

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I want to begin by entering this debate midstream and responding to some of the comments that I was hearing in the questions and comments period immediately prior to my speech, before shifting into some of the other comments I want to make specifically about this legislation.

A favourite subject of the member for Winnipeg North is legislative timing and the processes of the House, and I must confess that it is a subject I enjoy engaging in dialogue about as well. However, I think he is always selective in his presentation of the story when it comes to the timing or process of legislation. There are a number of different aspects to that. In particular, he is essentially telling my colleague that we should not be debating this bill because he wants the bill to move forward on a certain timeline.

It is important for everybody listening to know that it is the sole prerogative of the government to schedule the legislation it is moving forward for debate in the time slots we have for presenting it, which is the vast majority of the parliamentary calendar. The government needs to set aside some time for opposition days, where opposition parties put forward motions, and there is the possibility for members to move concurrence of committee reports. However, those are quite constrained given the time that those debates take. Of course, there is also Private Members' Business.

There are therefore some opportunities outside of government for legislation, policy or motions to be put forward for debate in the House, but the vast majority of the time is available to the government to schedule at their sole discretion. It is the government that makes decisions about which bills are priorities and which bills to put forward. If it wants a bill to advance, then I think it has an obligation to schedule it for enough days of debate so that debate can be brought to a conclusion. That principle applies for Bill C-9, as it does for any other bill.

What we often see the government do is fail to prioritize a bill within its own allocation of time. Then it acts mystified about the fact that it is not moving based on some artificial timeline that it has set. We saw this with Bill C-22, where the government scheduled it for one day of debate, did not schedule it for weeks afterwards and then asked why the bill was not moving forward. Of course, debate concluded the next time it was scheduled, but it would have moved forward faster if the government had chosen to prioritize it.

I detect the same string of argumentation again here from my friend from Winnipeg North. He is keen to see Bill C-9 move forward, apparently, but not keen enough to have successfully lobbied his House leader to schedule this bill and put it forward on a larger number of days. Friday is a very short day relative to the time we get.

I wanted to spend a few minutes on that particular point because I know it comes up again and again, and to pre-empt, in a sense, what I suspect will be a question from my friend from Winnipeg North, although I will say that I did appreciate him tabling a petition relating to Bill S-223 on organ harvesting. I hope that is a bill the foreign affairs committee will prioritize for deliberation and move forward, because as members know, it has been a long time.

Having responded to that, I want to add my voice to the comments by my friend from Battle River—Crowfoot pertaining to the larger issues of trust in our institutions and independence. We are talking today, in the context of Bill C-9, about certain circumstances, events and comments that have impacted trust and faith in the judiciary, and I think we need to affirm the importance of institutions.

● (1240)

We want to see that our institutions are trusted, but we also want our institutions to be worthy of that trust. Sometimes what we hear from some members is a call to trust institutions without being willing to note when there have been significant problems in the conduct of individuals in those institutions. I think the issue raised by the opposition House leader today with respect to interference by the government in a criminal case is another important issue in the ongoing conversation about trust in our institutions and the actions of government. Acts of interference by the government certainly do have an impact on how our institutions are perceived and the degree to which they are trusted. These matters of interference and the independence of institutions are important in their own right, but they are also important in terms of how they contribute to the level of trust that Canadians can reasonably have, in light of the facts, in the institutions that are so critical for holding our public life together.

Bill C-9, the piece of legislation we are debating today, is, on the face of it, a relatively technical piece of legislation, although as members know, every technical piece of legislation has interesting philosophical issues and questions underneath it. The legislation is about making changes to the mechanisms or processes that are in place around judicial discipline, or the discipline of judges. I will just read the summary. It states:

This enactment amends the Judges Act to replace the process through which the conduct of federally appointed judges is reviewed by the Canadian Judicial Council. It establishes a new process for reviewing allegations of misconduct that are not serious enough to warrant a judge's removal from office and makes changes to the process by which recommendations regarding removal from office can be made to the Minister of Justice. As with the provisions it replaces, this new process also applies to persons, other than judges, who are appointed under an Act of Parliament to hold office during good behaviour.

It creates mechanisms by which individuals who have been appointed to hold office, pending "good behaviour", could be considered not to have fulfilled the standards required around good behaviour and could therefore be removed from office and/or face other mechanisms of discipline. I think the details and mechanics of these mechanisms are extremely important, and are things that will be important not only for the House to consider but for committee to go into further.

After reading through the legislation, one thing I found quite interesting was the presence of a review panel of lay people who, by design, cannot have any legal background. It is always interesting to me when there is this balance where, on the one hand, there are aspects of our judicial system where we demand a certain level of expertise, and then on the other hand, there are certain places where, I think for good, understandable reasons, we demand a lack of expertise formally and in practice as a means of saying that we want some people involved in the decision-making who are non-experts.

I recall a quotation from former British prime minister Clement Attlee, who talked about how he wanted his ministers not to be experts on the subjects they were ministers of. I know that is a bit of a parenthetical question, but it is one that has been debated over the years regarding various kinds of appointments.

In any event, this legislation includes a specific, designated role in the termination process for lay people. I want to note as well the justifications by which a judge could be removed from office. Proposed section 80 says, “For the purposes of this Division, the removal from office of a judge is justified only” for these reasons:

- (a) infirmity;
- (b) misconduct;
- (c) failure in the due execution of judicial office;
- (d) the judge is in a position that a reasonable, fair-minded and informed observer would consider to be incompatible with the due execution of judicial office.

● (1245)

These are, in some ways, notionally objective criteria, but naturally there is going to be some level of subjectivity in how they will be applied.

There is a history to the consideration of this issue, and there is a history to the discussion of judicial misconduct that touches on some very important and sensitive issues. In my time as a member of Parliament, there has been a fair bit of discussion specifically around the issue of comments by judges dealing with cases of sexual assault. There was a judge who made some very offensive and outrageous comments in the context of a sexual assault trial that he was presiding over. That provoked a lot of conversation about the reality that someone is not rendered all-knowing and all-virtuous simply by the fact that they have received a judicial appointment, and that maybe there is a legitimate place for saying that someone, by their comments or lack of understanding certain things, is no longer fit to be a judge.

How do we preserve the principle of judicial independence, the principle that judges should be making decisions based on the facts of a case and the law rather than making decisions as democratic legislators do, based on other factors, including public opinion? How do we preserve that principle of judicial independence and also say that there are certain societal norms and values that we would like to see reflected in the conduct and statements of judges? There is a point at which a person can go beyond the pale and simply no longer be suited to that position as a function of some of their comments.

There have been a number of ways of getting at this issue. One was from former Conservative leader Rona Ambrose, who put forward a private member's bill, in 2016 or the first half of the 42nd Parliament, that sought to promote judicial education around sexual assault. That is one way of dealing with comments like this: We can say that maybe it is simply about a lack of knowledge and education.

That bill did not pass in Parliament, but a similar bill was put forward and was passed in the 43rd Parliament. As I said at the time, I think we need to recognize the importance of education around these issues, but also recognize that education is not always the full solution. I think there is a lot of data to suggest that when we man-

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date certain kinds of training courses, for some people it is a meaningful opportunity for them to learn about the matter at hand, but for other people it is just a matter of checking the boxes that are required. Whether it is a meaningful engagement exercise or a box-checking exercise depends somewhat on the way the material is presented, but a lot of it will depend simply on the disposition of the individual and how willing the individual is to substantively engage with the matter at play.

My conclusion is that the proposal from Rona Ambrose about judicial education was very important and worthwhile, but it does not solve the whole problem of either judicial misconduct or potential issues where a judge is making comments in the context of a trial that are very offensive to the victim and to society at large.

That is some of the history of the issue, but there are also other potential issues. This is not just about comments judges make in trials; it could also be about concerns over personal corruption and other things that could be at play in the context of judicial discipline. This is a piece of legislation that, coming out of that long-running public discussion, seeks to make refinements to the processes around judicial discipline.

● (1250)

One thing I would like to note about this discussion is that it presumes the personal fallibility of judges. Maybe it should be fairly obvious, but with the way some of our Canadian debates have proceeded, maybe it is not so obvious that judges are human beings. They have the potential to develop great expertise, great virtue and commitment to their work.

Judges also, like any other human beings, have the potential for grave errors in reasoning, as well as moral errors of various kinds, including misconduct or corruption. They are human beings, are fallible and can make mistakes in various kinds of situations or ways. The heavy criticism of former justice Robin Camp, some of the subsequent discourse and arguments for judicial education the government has supported, and the very existence of this legislation, affirm the reality of judicial fallibility. However, at other times when we are having debates about criminal justice issues and how we respond to particular kinds of charter litigation, the discourse in the House seems to presume something else, which is the infallibility of judges.

It was very striking to me, when I was first elected as a member of Parliament, that we were, on the one hand, dealing with this whole question of former justice Robin Camp and the issues around judicial fallibility, but on the other hand we had members making comments about at the time Bill C-14, which followed the Carter decision of the Supreme Court, where it was repeated that this was a unanimous court decision. Therefore, our goal as a legislature should simply be to interpret the wisdom we were given from this wise council's vision.

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I have a great deal of respect for the role the Supreme Court plays in our democracy, but I also think it is legitimate to disagree with decisions that the courts have made. Part of the process of democratic deliberation is recognizing that, if judges can be personally fallible regarding their own conduct, fallible in the sense of making inappropriate comments in a sexual assault case, then they can also be fallible in their determinations about the appropriate sentence and balance of rights that emerge from a series of arguments about how to interpret given facts in light of the charter.

The fact there is diversity in courts of dissent underlines the potential fallibility of judges, and I think we should, in our Canadian democratic discourse, seek to affirm the importance of judicial independence, and the respect that is owed to that institution, while also recognizing that judges make all kinds of mistakes and that Parliament has a role to deliberate about substantive questions of justice and human dignity and to engage in a constructive and healthy back and forth when it comes to decisions, legislation and how we respond to that.

I could cite other cases that brings this issue to the fore, but I see that I am up against my time to some extent. Therefore, I am grateful for the opportunity to address the issues around Bill C-9, to share a bit of the history, and to underline that, for me, one of the lessons coming out of this is to let us acknowledge that judges are human beings. They have an important job to do, but it is legitimate to disagree with and debate the determinations that are made, and to use constitutional tools that affirm the rights and the role of the legislature when it comes to establishing and advancing common values that are determined through democratic deliberation.

● (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sure the member will not be surprised by my question. Here we have Bill C-9, a bill for which no doubt there is a great anticipation. I made reference to the council at its semi-annual meeting felt discouraged that it has not passed to date. Whether in respect to the pandemic or inflation, we have a heavy legislative agenda. That means that for the legislation that everyone is supportive of, it would be helpful if we could pass that in a timely fashion.

Does he not agree that, given that peers and all political entities in the House are supporting the legislation and allowing it to go to committee, which would not prevent additional debate as there is still third reading, and a lot of debate takes place at committee stage, when would he like to see the bill go to committee?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, on the final question of when I would like to see this go to committee, I think it will depend on the wishes of other members speaking to the bill. I clearly do not intend on speaking to it again having spoken to it now, which is the way this place works. Members only speak once to a bill. I have had the opportunity to do so, but there may be other members who wish to have an opportunity too. It is incumbent on the government to schedule bills in accordance with priorities.

I will respond to this idea that there is a heavy legislative agenda this fall. Let us go back over the last two years while this general concept of shifting the process has been under discussion. We had a prorogation of Parliament. We had the suspension of Parliament

much beyond what was warranted by the pandemic. We had an early election, which cancelled a bunch of legislation that was working its way through the process.

These are the things the government has to be accountable for. It creates an artificial urgency and then blames the opposition, which is not reasonable.

● (1300)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by recognizing that this bill has been studied in the Senate already, having been introduced there back in May 2020. When I reviewed the debate in the House from June, parliamentarians, at the time, agreed there was fairly unanimous support for the substance of the legislation, and there was not significant or contentious subject matter.

From our conversations today, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is the third Conservative speaker to speak for 20 minutes, rather than a shorter 10-minute intervention, with speakers given some amount of latitude in each case, as is appropriate. It gives me an indication that all other parties are fairly satisfied to have this round of debate on Bill C-9 come to a close and move on to other pieces of legislation of interest to Canadians.

My interest, for example, would be to see legislation addressing the cost of housing, the climate crisis and the poisoned drug supply, just to name a few. All of which have a substantial impact on my neighbours.

I would be interested in hearing further reflections from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan on other elements he feels more debate is required on this legislation before study follows at committee after a second reading.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member mentioned what some of his legislative priorities would be for discussion in the House. We are both members of opposition parties, and it is the government that decides which legislation to present and bring forward. I would have opposed the early election, the prorogation, the grand suspension during the pandemic and some of these other circumstances that have made it more difficult to bring forward and advance some of these legislative items.

I would also say that I do not quite agree with the framing of parties speaking to this or not. I think this is something that his party has championed as a concept. We all come into this House, fundamentally, as individuals. Individuals will wish to speak to legislation or not, depending on what the issues are that they want to raise. I think it is clear from my intervention that there were some specific things I was interested in raising and highlighting during this discussion. Hopefully, that intervention is helpful to the House.

How many colleagues from other parties want to do this? Personally, I do not know. It is important for individuals to have those individual rights as members to speak to legislation affirmed on an individual basis, not on a party basis.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to pick up on the comments by my colleague from Winnipeg North when he said we should move forward with Bill C-9.

One of the things that has surprised me a lot since being elected is the way the government imposes closure on very important bills. It did that last week with Bill C-31. That being said, I am also surprised by the way the opposition wastes our time sometimes. A few months ago, the Conservatives made us lose an hour to vote on which member would speak. I could not believe that anyone would do such a thing.

Would my colleague agree with banning this type of dilatory move that wastes our time and setting up a committee to clean up these unnecessary things? What does my colleague think?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, there are aspects of the House calendar that should reflect the rights of individual members to bring forward issues of concern, but there are also many aspects of the House calendar that are shaped through dialogue among House leaders and an effort to have give-and-take in negotiations. We all understand that there are some tools available to the opposition that the opposition sometimes tries to use in order to engage with important priorities to create some degree of balance in this place between government and opposition.

It is a legitimate conversation that the member raises about possible reforms to Standing Orders. Any changes to the Standing Orders need to preserve an appropriate balance between government and opposition. There may be ways of shifting that balance while preserving it.

When this issue was raised at the procedure and House affairs committee two Parliaments ago, Conservatives said we should have the discussion, but we want to have the discussion with the recognition that changes to the Standing Orders should proceed on the basis of agreement among parties and not be unilaterally imposed by the government. That is an important principle for Standing Orders reforms, so I will say yes to the discussion, but it needs to proceed in a collaborative fashion.

● (1305)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, earlier in the discussion on Bill C-9, there was emphasis on the importance of judicial independence for our judges.

I want to focus on another important principle, and that is the principle that judges should be aware of community values. Canadians were shocked earlier this year when the Supreme Court of Canada actually let a person off the hook who had assaulted somebody because he was too drunk to know what he was doing at the time. They used the defence of extreme intoxication. People were shocked to hear that. Could the member comment on the importance of judges being aware of community values?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is a very important question. Judges obviously have to think about the wider aspects of the context. I profoundly disagreed with that decision on multiple

levels. I also think decisions like that just underline the importance of the legislature stepping up and asserting its role.

At times, when it has been convenient, the government tries to treat the Supreme Court as if it is some infallible body protected from error and that it is simply our job as legislators to understand the minds of our Supreme Court and work things out as directed. Sometimes, that is the tone of the rhetoric that we hear from government members. Not only is that not philosophically defensible, but that is not in keeping with our constitutional tradition.

We have tools, including the notwithstanding clause, whereby the legislature can engage in dialogue with the courts in a way that disagrees and says that the legislature thinks the court got it wrong. That back-and-forth needs to proceed on the basis of rule of law of course, but it is important for us to do our job as legislators and not buy into this false narrative of judicial infallibility.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a great honour to rise in this House on behalf of the people of Timmins—James Bay. Today I am particularly thinking about the Cree communities in upper James Bay, Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Peawanuck, Kashechewan, Moosonee and Moose Factory, plus the people who have been spread across Canada, all of whom connect back to a horrific institution called St. Anne's residential school.

It is important, as we talk about the act to amend the Judges Act to reflect on one of the darker decisions of the Supreme Court, its refusal to look at the miscarriage of justice that was committed against the children at St. Anne's, giving no reason or explanation. When we talk about amending the Judges Act, I think of a great parliamentarian, Rona Ambrose, who spoke up about the need for judges to get basic and legal education in dealing with sexual assault, because we have seen a number of really bad decisions, which have been referenced here. However, it is also important that our judiciary understands the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the obligations of Canada, and that includes the courts, to address issues in terms of the equity and rights of indigenous peoples.

If we look at the cases of St. Anne's residential school, it is clear that any indigenous person looking at this would wonder how it is possible to get justice in Canada. It is not a complex issue. I will talk about a really powerful woman, Evelyn Korkmaz, who suffered horrific sexual violence as a child at St. Anne's, and the collusion of the Grey Nuns, who covered it up.

When she went to the hearings to tell her story, the first thing the adjudicator told her was that he was a proud member of the Knights of Columbus. They were there to adjudicate crimes against the Catholic Church and the first thing she was told by the adjudicator was that he was a member of the Knights of Columbus. Then he told her he knew the nuns of St. Anne's, that he knew that order and that they were good women. She said she knew right then that she was not going to be believed.

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In any other court process, that case would have been thrown out, but not in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. One of the reasons the adjudicator did not believe Evelyn Korkmaz's story of the horrific sexual violence was that the other defendant in the case, Canada, had the legal obligation in the hearings to prepare the evidence. The adjudicator looked at the evidence supplied by the Department of Justice Canada and it said one line: that there were no known incidents of sexual abuse at Fort Albany Indian residential school. What was not told to the adjudicator was that the justice department had 10,000 pages of police testimony and witness names of rape, torture, violence and forced abortions on children in that evil institution.

I think of this man who goes by the name of H-15019. He suffered horrific sexual violence. He went into the hearings to expose Father Lavoie and the justice department lawyers said he was not believable because Father Lavoie was not in the institution when the man claimed he was. As proof, they presented a two-page person-of-interest report, which was their legal obligation, on all the known potential perpetrators. A two-page person-of-interest report said Father Lavoie was not there. What the justice department was sitting on were 2,472 pages on a sick evil man who, through four decades, raped multiple generations of children.

The case of H-15019 was thrown out, and when they tried to have his case reopened, the justice department and the federal government forced this case to the B.C. superior court, even though this happened in Ontario. Why would they do that? They did that because they knew that the survivors did not have the money to go to the B.C. superior court. How could anyone claim that this was a just process? What happened in that case was that, after the justice department decided to suppress the evidence, it shut the hearings down and denied justice. This is not a very complex issue.

• (1310)

Multiple legal battles went on for 10 years and, finally, Parliament called on the government to settle with the St. Anne's survivors. The former minister sent, on March 18, 2021, a request to have the cases of St. Anne's reviewed. We thought, finally, there would be justice. That is all the survivors wanted. They wanted to review what had happened with the suppression of evidence.

However, if we read the report, the request for direction sent by the federal government, it did not ask the courts to review this to get justice for children whose rape and torture had been suppressed. It did this because it said that people speaking up about St. Anne's was making the government look bad. It is right there in its request for direction. Do we know who it blamed for making the government look bad? It blamed former senator Murray Sinclair, because he said that there cannot be reconciliation without justice for St. Anne's, as well as Dr. Pamela Palmater, who raised issues about what happened at St. Anne's.

Edmund Metatawabin, the survivor of the abuse, who speaks for the survivors, his name is in the government request for directions, saying that he is making the government look bad for the abuse that he suffered. Interestingly, of course, I am in there for about 30-some pages, but I do not mind that.

However, Osgoode law professor Jennifer Leitch was named by the government as making them look bad because she wrote, "The

government's non-disclosure raises significant concerns about the scope of the information available to the adjudicators; the claimants' abilities to establish abuse allegations and the scope of the compensation." A professor of law said that this is a flawed process.

The instructions given to Justice Pitfield to look at this excluded many of the horrific cases and he was directed that he was not to talk to the survivors. What kind of justice system is that? He examined 427 cases and he came back in his preliminary and he said that 81, at least, had a serious need for re-examination. That is 20% of those cases falsely adjudicated.

However, in the final report, he said, no, it was just 10, student on student, with no blame to clergy, no blame to staff, no blame to government and no involvement with survivors. Of course, the survivors took this to the Supreme Court.

When I talked to the survivors yesterday about the fact that the Supreme Court would not hear their case, they said that they were not surprised because this was a never a fair fight. They went with pro bono lawyers. There were days where they could not afford their own bus fare to get to the hearings, yet Canada spent millions of dollars on lawyers to shut this down. It was never a fair fight.

This is why I refer to this when we are talking about Bill C-9. I am not questioning the wisdom of the Supreme Court. I am questioning the lack of understanding of the obligation, in this time, to understand the obligations under truth and reconciliation to say that we have a higher level of justice to attain here.

One of the fundamental arguments of the government was that the survivors were not entitled to procedural fairness. Procedural fairness has been ruled by the Supreme Court as a fundamental right. What it meant was that the fact that they did not bother to supply any evidence and they lied in hearings, that was okay, because the survivors were not entitled to the basic principle of procedural fairness. If we look at the evidence that the government brought forward as to why procedural fairness was not a right, they put it under sealing orders so that people could not see it. What is this, Soviet-style justice?

Phil Fontaine, who signed the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, wrote that they would never have signed this agreement if they were giving away fundamental legal rights under this process, which would give them fewer rights than they would get in court. Of course, Canada ridiculed Mr. Fontaine's response and said that this issue of procedural fairness was completely irrelevant.

It is completely relevant.

On this day, the day after the Supreme Court has shrugged and said that, whatever happened at St. Anne's, whatever happened with judges who misread the reports because they were lied to by the justice department, whatever is said about perpetrators of horrific abuse, and we have many of their names, such as Bishop Leguerrier and Arthur Lavoie, those men got away, and the survivors are still living with injustice. They deserve better in this country.

They never asked for huge compensation. They asked the government to sit down and recognize that what was done to them was one of the most horrific, evil acts ever committed against innocent children. Those innocent children have had their legal rights undermined time and time again by a system that wanted to shut this process down.

• (1315)

If we are talking about amending the Judges Act, we have to look at what happened at St. Anne's and why there was no understanding on the judge's part of the need to hold this government and the justice department of Canada to account.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member and thank him for sharing his thoughts on what is no doubt a very important issue. Some of the personalities we all know, whether it was the former senator or someone I classify as a good friend, Phil Fontaine, and there are some deep-rooted concerns there.

However, my question is in regard to seeing if what is brought forward would provide the tools necessary to ensure there is a higher level of accountability and at the same time respect judicial independence. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts in terms of moving toward change, and if what is being proposed within the legislation is, in fact, something that will move us closer to a higher sense of accountability within the judicial system.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I guess when I began working with the St. Anne's survivors 10 years ago, I had this naive belief that Canada's justice system would work. I believed that the justice department of Canada would follow the law. It was the decision by justice department lawyers to obtain the evidence, prepare their defence and know who all the perpetrators were but then black the names out and not turn over those documents that undermined this process. I think it is hard even for judges to believe that this could have happened, so they accepted the justice department's excuses. It is political at the first level.

On the issue of reconciliation that we talk about, there is no possibility of reconciliation without justice for St. Anne's survivors. There needs to be an understanding of what went wrong in that process and what has gone wrong in other cases dealing with indige-

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nous people before the courts so that the judges understand the need to have a broader view of their roles and responsibilities.

• (1320)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member opposite for his comments on Bill C-9, an act to amend the Judges Act.

The member gave some heart-wrenching stories about people who feel that they were not treated fairly by our justice system. However, a very important principle in Canadian justice is the independence of our judges and our justice system. Does Bill C-9 find the right balance there?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, the fact that we are looking at amending the Judges Act is a positive thing, because we see, certainly in the United States, where questions about the judiciary has really raised questions about the legitimacy and trust in the overall democratic process. We have an independent judiciary in Canada, and that is very important to maintain.

However, as I said, Rona Ambrose brought forward a bill to make education mandatory, because some judges just simply do not understand the dynamics that women face against the power of male sexual violence, and that is a massive disproportion. We cannot go into a courtroom and say that both sides are equal sometimes. We have to understand the larger dynamics, which was Rona Ambrose's push for change.

If we look at what happened at St. Anne's residential school, and I think it will be studied in law for years to come, we need to make sure that our system is there and that the judges know the appropriate grounds so that we get better judgments in the end.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for his speech.

I would like to hear what he has to say about the fact that, in the bill before us, the voices of victims are not really heard when the review panel decides to dismiss a complaint. The review panel may propose actions, such as therapy or an apology letter, and can impose certain sanctions on the judge. However, we never hear about the participation of victims. Could they be consulted more? I would like to know whether that is an improvement that could be considered when the bill is studied at second reading stage.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

It is important to ensure that the system protects the rights of victims. In the case of survivors of St. Anne's and other residential schools, the problem is that the government established an alternative process, an alternative tribunal. In this system, there are no tools to give the victims and survivors recourse if the court's decision is problematic. As a result, the court must protect the rights of survivors within the tribunals for Indian residential schools, which are part of an alternative system.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, we live in an era of mistrust and distrust, which is at the same time sad and disturbing. It is sad because Canadians would like Canada to be a place where we trust each other. It is disturbing because the erosion of trust in our society causes friction and discord. We have to wonder where it will end, and whether we can continue to function as a society if we do not have any trust or respect for each other.

As a Conservative, I find it easy to mistrust the Liberal Party. It has a track record of actions and politics that I think are detrimental to Canadian society. At the same time, I acknowledge that the members opposite, despite their political affiliation, all put their names forward for election because they had, and all still have, a strong desire to serve Canadians.

Last year, in a Maru public opinion poll, members of Parliament ranked at almost the very bottom of the list when it came to respect for their profession. We can take little pleasure in being more respected by Canadians than owners of social media platforms or car salespeople and advertising professionals. The lack of respect for politicians is a sign of the times, but I think honest reflection would be that all too often the practitioners of politics have behaved in a way that loses them the respect of the people they serve. Once again, I find that sad.

I bring up the matter of trust because that is the purpose of the legislation we are debating today. In the poll I referred to earlier, firefighters, nurses, doctors and farmers were all high on the list. Judges were in the middle of the pack. Judges command the respect of the majority of Canadians, but perhaps not as much as they used to.

Bill C-9, with its amendments to the Judges Act, is an attempt to strengthen an integral component of our Canadian system of justice. This bill would amend the Judges Act to replace the process through which the conduct of federally appointed judges is reviewed by the Canadian Judicial Council. It establishes a new process for reviewing allegations of misconduct that are not serious enough to warrant a judge's removal from office, and it makes changes to the process by which recommendations regarding removal from office can be made to the minister of justice.

As with the provisions it replaces, this new process also applies to persons, other than judges, who are appointed under an Act of Parliament to hold office during good behaviour. Bill C-9 modifies the existing judicial review process by establishing a process for complaints serious enough to warrant removal from office, and another for offences that would warrant other sanctions, such as counselling, continuing education and reprimands. It seems to me that there is a benefit to outlining this process.

The bill also states the reasons a judge could be removed from office, including infirmity and misconduct. I am looking forward to when this legislation goes to the justice committee to be examined in greater detail.

As well, I would like to hear the opinion of Dr. Benjamin Roebuck, the new federal ombudsman for victims of crime on frustrations victims have had with the judicial review process. I wish to

congratulate Dr. Roebuck on his new position, which he takes up this coming Monday.

It is a pity though that the Liberals took more than a year to fill such an important position. A cynic might suggest they do not think the rights of victims are a priority. I am not a cynic. I know the Liberals do care about the victims of crime. Perhaps the delay in finding a new ombudsman for the victims of crime was because so many government resources were devoted to the ArriveCAN app that no-one remembered to put up the job posting.

I think it is fair to say that Bill C-9 is about increasing trust in an age of mistrust. I do not want to live in a society where the very institutions of democracy are threatened because they have lost the trust of the people. Canadian judges already enjoy a high level of trust. However, as I noted earlier, they do not top the list. If this legislation would indeed help increase the public's trust in the judiciary, then it is worthy of our support.

● (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 1:29, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1330)

[Translation]

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON HOUSING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH NON-VISIBLE DISABILITIES

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should continue to work in consultation with representatives of the provincial and territorial governments, the Federal Housing Advocate, Indigenous governing bodies, service providers to people with disabilities, housing providers, and other relevant stakeholders, in upholding a federal framework to improve access to adaptable affordable housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities, which should:

- (a) consider the presence of an expert on persons with visible and non-visible disabilities to the National Housing Council, and that the expert provides advice to the ministers on the application of the National Housing Strategy (NHS) to persons with disabilities;
- (b) consider amending section 4 (Housing Policy Declaration) of the National Housing Strategy Act to include a recognition of the additional barriers to housing faced by persons with disabilities;
- (c) prioritize the creation and repair of accessible units through NHS programs; and
- (d) ensure that the right to adequate housing is applied equitably across all vulnerable populations, specifically persons with disabilities, both mobility and other.

She said: Madam Speaker, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to rise today to address the House for the first time as the member for London West who was elected for the first time last year in 2021.

[English]

It is an honour for me to be able to speak to this motion. What a privilege to be able to come into the House of Commons and move a motion that would transform the lives of the people who actually sent me here to move that motion.

On that note, I want to take the opportunity to thank my family for allowing me to come here every week. I leave them behind in the riding to do the work that I do, which has such a tremendous impact on Canadian lives.

I also want to thank the good people of London West. When I was on city council, I was their voice on affordable housing. I was talking about accessible housing. They gave me the opportunity to come here to the House to continue to do that work, so I thank London West.

On that note, I want to thank my team. We have been working for a whole year to come to this motion. It has been a long journey. It has been a lovely journey. I also want to thank every single partner and stakeholder who advised me, spoke to me and held my hand through the writing of this motion.

Access to affordable housing and accessible housing is one of the challenges encountered by many individuals living with disabilities. As legislators, we need to do more to ensure these issues are addressed with tailored legislation. That is why I am excited to present Motion No. 59. I am honoured to speak for the first time in this House on the motion to seek a federal framework on housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities to ensure that persons living with disabilities have access to inclusive, affordable and adequate housing facilities.

Disability is often seen as a barrier to obtaining housing and maintaining a stable residence. As part of the consultation I conducted with people who are affected by these realities, I had a chance to hear from Yvonne. Yvonne is a resident of my riding in London West, and she told me the challenges she usually faces when trying to access housing and how non-inclusive it is for her, especially because she has a non-visible disability. In her interaction with me, she mentioned the lack of funding to pay for rent as the price for the units outweighs the amount she can spend, and also the difficulty in finding a place that is accessible for a person living with a disability. Yvonne talked about the importance of having all levels of government working together to address this issue.

About 100,000 Ontarian adults have an intellectual disability. An estimated 40%, or 40,000 of these individuals, have a concurrent mental health diagnosis that many are not able to see.

I got to hear from the Reena Foundation, an organization that works with individuals living with developmental disabilities, and it reiterated to me the challenges faced by its members, such as long wait times for accessible housing. In Ontario alone, at least 16,000 people live with developmental disabilities and are waiting for housing supports. There is a projected 40-year wait time, and that is unacceptable.

In the last two years, COVID has financially affected many Canadians. In the case of persons living with disabilities, they were highly impacted due to some not being close to their families or

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lack of community supports. The most recent figures show that in Canada more than 13% of the population lives with a disability. That is about four million Canadians who live with a disability. Out of those people, more than 400,000 adults with more severe disabilities are considered to be in core housing need.

Every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home, including Canadians with disabilities. Findings from our partners, such as Inclusion Canada, have found that people working in shift and contract work and struggling to pay their bills are often faced with discriminatory practices by some landlords.

● (1335)

[Translation]

In 2017, the Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society and eight other organizations presented a report to the United Nations about human rights issues related to housing for people with disabilities in Canada. In it, they pointed out that many people with disabilities have a hard time holding steady employment, particularly higher wage jobs. The rate of poverty among these working-age adults with disabilities is twice as high as among able-bodied Canadians, or 20% versus 10%.

[English]

This also highlights the constrained housing options that make affordable housing prices, tenure options and locations more restricted at lower incomes. Over 30% of adults with disabilities live in rental housing, and almost 45% of that group now live on low incomes, compared to 25% of renters without disabilities.

Among lone parents, we found that people with disabilities are much more likely than people without disabilities to have low income. The reality is that homelessness is another challenge faced by people living with disabilities, and we have to do everything to address that.

On any given night here in Canada, about 35,000 people are homeless and living in shelters. On an annual basis, there are about 235,000 people who are homeless in Canada, and an estimated 45% of our homeless population are people living with visible and non-visible disabilities.

The government has been working to ensure that access to housing is equitable and accessible for all Canadians. Since 2015, we have invested over \$30 billion for affordable housing and brought in Canada's first national housing strategy, our more than \$72-billion plan, which has already helped hundreds of thousands of Canadians get the housing they need.

Through the national housing strategy, we have helped create, maintain and repair more than 36,000 units of accessible housing across the country. This is certainly good work, but more needs to be done, and we recognize that.

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Housing is at the heart of budget 2022, with investments such as a new housing accelerator fund to help speed up housing projects, a more flexible first-time homebuyer incentive, a rent-to-own program that helps renters become homeowners, and a measure to prevent renoventions.

I am proud of the work that the government is doing, but I also recognize that more needs to be done, especially when it comes to our Canadians who live with disabilities, especially non-visible disabilities. That is why I am moving this motion today.

I am happy to call on the government to have the presence of an expert on persons with visible and non-visible disabilities on the National Housing Council to provide the best possible advice to relevant government ministries on the best approaches the national housing strategy can use to benefit persons with disabilities.

It is clear that the housing policy declaration in the National Housing Strategy Act as it currently stands showcases the government's commitment to a human rights-based approach to housing policies. This certainly applies already regarding the government's policy when it comes to accessible housing for persons with disabilities, both visible and non-visible.

• (1340)

We have to ensure that every Canadian has access to barrier-free housing that meets their needs. In this motion I am asking that the government consider amending the housing policy declaration under the National Housing Strategy Act to add an emphasis on the recognition of additional barriers to housing faced by persons with disabilities, which would strengthen the government's commitment to a human rights-based federal housing policy in regard to persons with disabilities, including for future governments.

The reality is very different for racialized persons with disabilities. It is much more complex and challenging, and they face compound disadvantages. When layered with disability stereotypes, racialized minorities are faced with more barriers in accessing housing.

One of the ways to address this issue is to prioritize the creation and repair of accessible units through our ongoing national housing strategy programs, as this would contribute to more available accessible housing units that would be provided to those who need them, regardless of their social status.

It is my sincere hope that this motion can bring all parties together to support it because this is exactly what Canadians sent us to this House to do. I have spoken to many people who have no disabilities, but as I think we can agree, every single one of us in this room, given the four million Canadians who live with visible and non-visible disabilities, knows one of those people.

I am asking my fellow members of this House to help me move this motion forward. I am asking that we do this for the benefit of Canadians. Let us vote together in support of this framework that would ensure accessible, affordable housing for persons living with disabilities.

I urge all members of this House to join me in supporting the motion, and I look forward to any questions and debate that my colleagues may have.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a group of people in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove who had been working on a large affordable rental project, but because of higher interest rates, it has now become unviable, at least within the affordability range. I wonder if the member for London West could comment on the importance of the government understanding the fiscal and monetary dynamics that lead to inflation and higher interest rates and that make housing affordability so much more complicated.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, inflation is a situation that the whole world is experiencing, and our government has committed and continues to commit to building affordable housing.

This motion is an extra layer that seeks to support all the bills we have passed to support Canadians who are in need. Now I am putting forward particular language that supports Canadians with non-visible disabilities. I really hope my colleague on the other side will support the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her meaningful motion. As we know, housing is important. For people with visible or non-visible disabilities, it is very important.

I would ask a question on a different topic, however. Bill C-31 raises certain issues with regards to housing. The government is giving \$500 to people who make less than \$20,000 and put more than 30% of their income towards housing.

Unfortunately, with the current wording, 87,000 people living in social housing in Quebec are excluded from this assistance. They are low-income individuals, but they will not be eligible for this assistance.

When the federal government withdrew from housing in 1993, Quebec took charge. We set up programs, and because we acted in this area, now we will be penalized. The federal government will send money to the rest of Canada, but will not help the poor people who need help in Quebec.

I would like to know if my colleague would agree to remove the 30% criterion that is in Bill C-31, which is an obstacle at this time.

• (1345)

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, I will start by thanking my Bloc Québécois colleague for his question. I really appreciate the passion for affordable housing that he brings to the House.

As I said earlier, budget 2022 is built around affordable housing. That has been proven. It is in our report. We have invested a lot of money in the affordable housing system.

Once again, as I said earlier, the motion I moved today seeks to help people with disabilities. That is what I am trying to do here, and I hope that the members opposite will support this motion so we can adopt it.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would really like to thank the member for London West for highlighting some of the gaps in the national housing strategy and for putting forward this motion. It really does go to show why it is so important to have folks who have worked with housing in community.

My question is around the mention of repairing housing, and I just wondered if the member could expand a bit on how the government can do more of that.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, I equally appreciate the member on the other side, her policies on housing and the work she has done in her community. I am very happy to sit in the House with her.

I am calling on the government to repair the units with a lens to including access to non-visible disabilities. We have programs, many programs. In my riding I can mention a number of them that the national housing strategy has responded to, and I am asking in this motion that we begin to repair those housing units in the national housing programs to be able to include non-visible and visible disabilities.

I hope she will also join again in supporting this motion, so we can pass it, because this is critical for a lot of Canadians. I heard their voices.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in the House of Commons to represent the constituents of Peterborough—Kawartha. Today I rise to speak on Motion No. 59 put forward by the member for London West. I appreciate her passion and initiative on this motion. The motion calls on the government to work with all relevant stakeholders in upholding a federal framework to improve access to adaptable, affordable housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities.

We have an intersection of crises in this country. We have a mental health crisis. We have an addiction crisis. We have an affordability crisis, with interest rates on the rise. We have a definition of affordable housing that is 80% of fair market value. That is not affordable to most people. We have a housing crisis and we have a homelessness crisis across this country. None of these things are exclusive to each other. They have one common thread: housing.

The national housing strategy put forth by the Liberal government is an epic failure. I absolutely support this motion and I support the work that is being done, but it is imperative that we speak up and call out why we are even in this position to have this motion put forth in the first place. This should have been built into the national housing strategy. Why, five years later, is this being put forth as a motion? It is absurd. It is a rinse-and-repeat cycle of the Liberal government, which is constantly in reactive mode instead of thinking ahead.

Private Members' Business

Last Friday, I went to a homelessness crisis meeting in my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha. The winter months are upon us and I know that across this country members from all ridings will agree with me that they probably have vulnerable people in their riding that will freeze to death because we do not have a sustainable strategy in place for housing and, in particular to this member's motion, for those with invisible or non-visible disabilities.

We will continue to be in a rinse-and-repeat cycle if we do not think ahead. Not thinking ahead means housing is absolutely a basic human need. If housing is put in place for people who have non-visible disabilities without supports, they will be put into a rinse-and-repeat cycle and it is just wasting money.

Yesterday, I met with members of the FASD rural network, the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder network. For those who do not know what fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is, it is when a fetus is exposed to alcohol because the mother has consumed alcohol. The spectrum is very significant, ranging from visible to non-visible. Many people live in our society without being diagnosed properly and they need supports like many people. Think of it like autism or somebody with mental health issues. If they do not have the support, understanding, diagnosis or access to the supports they need, they will not succeed.

It is our job as the government to put policies in place and make it accessible to access the money that is supposed to be there. Under the national housing strategy, it is a nightmare to access a lot of this funding. CMHC needs a complete overhaul. Reaching home is a program designed to say that it does good things, but it is not delivering what it is meant to deliver.

Since 2015, the average home prices have nearly doubled and show no signs of slowing down. In the past year alone, average house prices have increased by over 28%. Canada now has the second-most inflated housing bubble in the world. The current national housing strategy has been in place for five years, and we are currently 1.8 million homes short across this country. We have yet to see the details, like many other programs by the Liberal government, of the \$4-billion housing accelerator fund that is supposed to help boost the market rate supply of homes and address the numerous barriers to getting more supply online faster.

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• (1350)

The programs that have become available through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the national housing strategy have been so inaccessible when it comes to applying for and receiving funding that it is clear the government either is not listening or is not serious about tackling the current housing supply shortage. I can say with certainty that if members were to speak with their constituents and the builders in their ridings, they would hear that these builders are ready to put up houses tomorrow. It is the restrictions under the Liberal government that are preventing the supply that needs to be put out to help these people.

It is important to also hear directly from those who would be impacted the most by this motion. The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association believes that Motion No. 59 is too narrow in scope. Empowering individuals to get ahead requires housing and services that support their individual needs. The NHS has been around for five years and has not met these needs despite advocacy from the housing sector. Why is this finally happening five years in? However, it does support the motion.

My riding of Peterborough—Kawartha was ranked as the most overvalued housing market in Canada, at 107% overvalued, in April 2022. The reason for this was lack of supply. As it stands right now, we are not meeting demand and we have not been building to meet the demand for 30 years. While more houses were being built in 2021 and 2022, two good years certainly do not make up for 30 years of not building enough.

The population in my community has steadily risen due to immigration, but the number of new homes built has fluctuated, and there were a number of years when no new apartment buildings were built in the city of Peterborough at all. We cannot continue to build homes at the same rate as in the 1970s and think we are doing enough. We need all levels of housing built at an expedited rate, with a focus on the missing middle when we look at the housing continuum.

This motion puts a focus on housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities. Still, to fulsomely address this housing shortage we need to look at all levels of housing, from single detached family homes to mid- and high-rise apartments with one bedroom. We even need to look at tiny homes. Every single one of these pieces matters because they free up supply for those who need it most and keep costs down.

What can we do better to address the current lack of housing across our country? As I have outlined in this speech today, one is the timely release of funding programs once they are announced. Housing cannot wait for a flashy headline. Another is easier applications. Many of the organizations that are applying for funding for affordable units are grassroots not-for-profits on shoestring budgets that many times are hiring staff solely to fill out applications and waiting extended periods to hear if they were successful. It is such a ridiculous system.

We need to create service standards with transparency on successful applications, and accountability on how many dollars remain in specific funds and where funds are going. If we have learned one thing already in this Parliament, it is that the government needs to be accountable for wasteful spending. There is mon-

ey that can be used properly and not for reckless spending. That is where we are losing taxpayer money. The ArriveCAN app should have cost \$250,000 but cost \$54 million, and we do not even know where that money is. How many homes could have been built with that money?

The last solution I would like to propose has been suggested for many years by several organizations. This is the key to leadership, which is missing. We need to listen and we need to act. What has been proposed is a permanent national housing round table made up of all stakeholders in the housing sphere. If we are not listening to the experts on the front lines, how do we think we can make the decisions that would best suit Canadians? It is our job to bring their voices here, not take Ottawa's voice to them. The solutions exist if we ask the experts. Let us listen and then act.

People with non-visible disabilities are entitled to a home just like every Canadian in this country. Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes basic shelter, food and clothing. If people do not have a place to live, if they do not have somewhere to hang their coat, to feel safe and to know that their things will not be taken, torn down or removed, they are displaced. They cannot be productive members to themselves, their partners or their employers.

We have so much work to do on housing and it is a fundamental basic need that needs to happen in order to deal with the crises we are seeing across this country, such as mental health, addiction, crime and affordability. Everyone deserves access to housing.

I will support this motion, but I hope the government has heard what I had to say today.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on this important topic. I thank my colleague for introducing a motion on such a challenging but crucial issue as the housing crisis.

On Friday afternoons, we are all like school kids waiting for the bell to ring. I have had this Friday afternoon speaking slot a few times, and there is always that point where everyone is looking at their watch and feeling a bit droopy. That is understandable.

I talked about the housing crisis last time too, but let us talk about it again. I am glad this motion is up for discussion today so we can talk about it. As my colleague who just spoke said, the housing crisis in Quebec and the rest of Canada is dire and of crucial importance.

Private Members' Business

I had the opportunity to talk about it two weeks ago: Scotia Bank says that we are short 3.5 million housing units in Canada to deal with the current crisis. It is a huge task. I was talking with an economist at CMHC who said that if nothing is done in the next 10 years and we allow the market to have its way, then there will be 500,000 housing units built in Quebec. There will be condos, bungalows, triplexes and various types of housing. It will not necessarily be just housing for the most vulnerable. If developers are not forced to build affordable housing for the most vulnerable, it will not happen. If we allow the market to have its way, as I was saying, 500,000 housing units will be built. According to that CMHC economist, an additional 600,000 affordable housing units need to be built to deal with the current affordability and accessibility problems. It is a huge task, a massive undertaking. The government needs to face the facts.

My colleague has good intentions, but she needs to talk to her department and to those people. Her government boasts about spending \$72 billion under the national housing strategy, but only 35,000 housing units have been built in five years. They are only halfway there. The strategy, which was launched in 2017, was a 10-year plan. They have built 35,000 housing units and renovated 60,000 others. That is nowhere near the goal. They are a long way off from dealing with the major housing issue in this country.

I put a question earlier to my Liberal colleague, the member who moved the motion. Under Bill C-31, \$500 will be sent to individuals who earn less than \$20,000, or families earning less than \$35,000, and who spend more than 30% of their income on rent. That is commendable. We could not oppose sending the \$500. However, Quebec has social housing. Some Quebecers pay 25%, or less than 30%, of their income on housing. That is how it works. People with lower incomes have access to social housing that was built precisely because the federal government withdrew from housing. Quebec created a program called AccèsLogis.

In reading between the lines of Bill C-31, it is clear that 87,000 people will not be eligible for this assistance, and that is according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That means 87,000 low-income people who earn less than \$20,000, so people who are poor. The federal government is going to send money to people all over Canada, but because Quebec is progressive, because we address our problems, because we create programs to help the most vulnerable in our society, we are being penalized. The same thing has happened with many programs that have come before the House. Quebec is usually at the vanguard, but we have to fight for every penny, because we create our own programs to help people.

Over the past few days, I also spoke with housing experts such as the staff at Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation. They told me that they had high expectations for the NDP-Liberal coalition. They believed that the NDP would pressure the government to tackle the housing crisis and build more housing. The people in Quebec I spoke to over the past two weeks are devastated by the result. Who would be against people receiving a \$500 cheque? Naturally, everyone is pleased, but that is not what is needed. That is not what the organizations are telling us. I no longer remember the exact figure proposed in Bill C-31, but it is in the millions of dollars.

• (1400)

That money could have been used to build housing. Affordable housing could have been built over a longer period of time. We would not have to come back every year and say that there is a crisis and that people do not have the money for housing if we were to build housing right now, if we took the bull by the horns and if we addressed the problems together. Unfortunately, that is not happening. Once again, there is precious little to show for this type of coalition between the NDP and the Liberals. Once again, people are devastated and it feels like we will never see the end of this.

I will now address Motion M-59. I spoke about this earlier, however, tonight is homelessness awareness night in Quebec. I believe that is in keeping with the theme of the motion. Homelessness awareness night is a very important event in Longueuil and everywhere in Quebec. I would like to salute the organizations in Longueuil that are preparing for this event. I will join them this evening as soon as my work day is over. It will be a big night and the vigil will be held outside. There will be singing, people will be participating in the vigil and there will be a big parade through all of Longueuil to raise awareness about homelessness.

As we know, the pandemic has been very challenging for many people. A lot of people fell through the cracks. Now we are seeing more mental health problems, which can lead to substance abuse and other problems, so homelessness is increasing and becoming more visible. There are organizations in Longueuil and across Quebec that are doing tremendous work. I commend the people who are getting ready in Longueuil, whom I will be joining shortly. Many organizations are doing great work. They are committed, they have empathy and they are wonderful. I commend them.

Let us talk about the motion before us. We should define what we are talking about before we get into the discussion. What is a visible disability and what is a non-visible disability? It is a rather specific concept. A non-visible disability is one that cannot easily be seen, one that might not be noticed if the person does not talk about it. This often means the person might have a disorder of some sort, but no one would know if the person does not talk about it. Still, the disorder might have serious repercussions on their quality of life. The concept of a non-visible disability can be so complex that it is often hard to even talk about one non-visible disability, which is why it might be better to talk about non-visible disabilities.

I was surprised to learn that, despite the received wisdom, it is estimated that only two in 10 people with a disability use a wheelchair, and 80% of reported disabilities are non-visible. Non-visible disabilities are more common than we think. Examples include visual or hearing impairments and mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. There is also dyslexia, dyspraxia and a wide range of other illnesses. The disability can be recent and may be temporary. During a difficult period in life, a person may contract a condition that later goes away.

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A person with a non-visible disability often has a hard time being recognized as disabled by others. Their disability is not acknowledged. The disability may be misunderstood by the people around them, who do not understand the difficulties the person may encounter while trying to accomplish even simple tasks. To the people around them, it is easier to see these deficiencies as character traits. Often, a person who appears impulsive, lazy, detached or irritable may actually have a specific disorder. In fact, people with these disabilities tell us that getting their disability or disorder recognized is the biggest problem they run into.

The lack of physical manifestations, such as a wheelchair, garners them less sympathy. We do not see it, so we do not feel it. The fact that the people around them do not recognize their disability can affect the person's mental health. If those around them lack understanding and leniency, a person with a non-visible disability can experience great psychological distress.

Obviously, non-visible disabilities can cause problems for the person's life in society and relationships with others. A person who parks in a spot reserved for people with disabilities but who seems to be able to get around normally may be criticized by passersby. However, perhaps that person has a chronic illness that means they tire easily while walking. There are people who suffer from chronic fatigue. That is a big deal. The same thing goes for a person who uses the washroom reserved for people with disabilities when they do not have reduced mobility. They will often get nasty looks, but perhaps they needed to use that washroom because they have a digestive issue or other condition. There are other disorders like autism, ADHD and those we talked about earlier, such as bipolar disorder, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity, giftedness and dyslexia.

As I have said many times, we do not have enough time to talk about important things in the House.

• (1405)

This is an important motion and we are going to support it. The government is not doing enough in terms of housing. I would like to say that we need to continue to work on this particular issue. The Bloc Québécois stands behind the government.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the law is clear that adequate housing is a human right, but many of the 22% of Canadians with disabilities are being left behind.

The National Housing Strategy Act embeds Canada's international human rights obligations to implement the right to adequate housing, but as this motion points out, the national housing strategy is missing recognition of the additional barriers to housing faced by persons with disabilities.

The motion has the opportunity to correct that. Article 19 of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities notes the equal rights of all persons with disabilities to live independently and to inclusion in the community. That is not happening under the government. The Government of Canada is failing to live up to its obligation to ensure adequate, accessible and affordable housing.

We see the housing crisis manifesting in communities across this country. There are people in Canada suffering, and the government has a responsibility to fix it, to build homes, to have affordable homes, to stop the homeless crisis in Canada and to recognize that persons with disabilities have even more barriers to housing.

Canadians with a disability are greatly overrepresented in the homeless population. Forty-five per cent of Canada's homeless have a physical or mental disability, and core housing need is at least 16% higher for persons with disabilities. In British Columbia alone, nearly 4,000 people living with disabilities are on a wait-list to find an accessible home. Housing demand far exceeds availability. Only 5% of units in B.C. are targeted for accessibility despite the fact that 15% to 20% of Canadians live with one.

It has been said that the only true disability is the inability to accept and respect people's differences. Living up to the legal obligation to protect human rights means understanding equity and addressing long-standing inequities. How can those inequities be fixed if the decision-making tables are missing those perspectives?

This motion seeks to begin to correct that. That lack of representation at decision-making tables is also contributing to poverty. There are links between poverty, homelessness and living with disabilities. According to one IRIS report, people living with disabilities are twice as likely to live below the poverty line. In fact, living in poverty is likely to increase instances of disability.

While there are no concrete numbers on how many people experiencing homelessness in Canada live with disabilities, we know that there are many. The Center for Justice and Social Compassion estimates that 45% of all people experiencing homelessness are disabled or diagnosed with a mental illness. Given that the Canadian survey on disability showed that 13% of Canadians self-identified as having a disability, this shows just how overrepresented people living with disabilities are in the homeless population.

Street Health Toronto found that 55% of people experiencing homelessness had a serious health condition, and of those, 63% had more than one. In a report by the Daily Bread, it was reported that almost 50% of people frequenting Toronto food banks have a disability, and that includes persons with invisible disabilities.

Invisible disabilities, such as anxiety, depression, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia, are not always seen out in the community, but it does not make them any less limiting in this ableist world. Long COVID, for which there is no single test and with symptoms varying from person to person, joins the list of invisible disabilities with very real impacts. This reality needs to be addressed and investments in supports and benefits are required from the government.

Accessing those supports and benefits must be easier. Accessing benefits has always been a barrier. Complicated processes and confusing paperwork are all too often more challenging for persons with disabilities. In *The Globe and Mail*, Michael Prince wrote about how people with severe and prolonged disabilities face many challenges when trying to get their benefits and appealing decisions when their applications are rejected. Prince claims that the system is “structurally flawed” and asks:

Who suffers? The clients and their families, who confront new obstacles to access [programs] vital to their well being and financial security.

• (1410)

When the very systems put in place to support persons with disabilities are themselves exclusionary and unaccommodating, it is no wonder that these people are living in poverty and falling through the cracks, and when that system is keeping them from housing, their basic human right is being violated. The government needs to stop this violation and build the accessible, affordable homes required.

When I was first elected, I asked an Order Paper question about accessible housing. I asked about what accessible housing we are losing each year in this country. CMHC came back and said, “CMHC does not collect data on accessible units that have been lost or decommissioned.”

I also requested some stats from CMHC about federal funds used to build accessible units and to convert existing units to accessible housing. Its response only included the national housing strategy program, even though I asked it for data since 2010. This meant that no data was collected on accessible housing until 2017, and for the first three years, from 2017 to 2020, there was nearly no data. Only in the last two years, 2020 and 2021, was there any data of any measurable consequence.

Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to deliver on housing for all Canadians. How could they not, if they were not even collecting the data?

The need to act cannot wait. We cannot have one more person with a disability forced into a tent on the street like the ones we see every day on our way to the House of Commons here in Ottawa. As the motion says, we must “prioritize the creation and repair of accessible units through [the national housing strategy] programs”. The government cannot move fast enough on that.

Let us not forget how Canadians got into a situation where housing is unaffordable and inaccessible. Conservative and Liberal governments have overseen the financialization of housing. Instead of protecting our social and accessible housing stock, they encouraged upzoning and gentrification in the name of density, forcing persons with disabilities living in poverty out of their homes. Density dreams are for developers and investors. The financialization of housing is only working for the super-wealthy and is leaving the rest of Canadians behind.

The National Housing Act has legislated that the Government of Canada’s housing policy is required to recognize that the human right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law and that housing is essential in the inherent dignity and well-being of the person. The government must do better.

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The housing minister must live up to his words, and has committed:

that...every single project that seeks to get money from the federal government to build housing, whether it's private sector, government, another order of government or the non-profit sector, we have minimum accessibility requirements. Unless they fulfill accessibility requirements from our government, they don't get a single dime from us.

He also said, “barrier-free housing for Canadians with disabilities is a priority of the national housing strategy and always will be”. Even if M-59 does not pass, the NDP will hold the government to those words.

I must point out, though, that I am not sure the government has an achievable goal here, as we are still waiting to hear what the government means by the word “accessible”. In the HUMA committee, I asked specifically for information around the government’s definition of “accessible” because I have experienced that it is very hard to get the market to build accessible housing.

When the response came back from CMHC, the word “accessible” was only written once, and the accessibility definition was not included. The government needs to do better to identify what definition it is using in its commitment to accessible housing.

In closing, I appreciate the member for London West’s highlighting the gaps at the decision-making tables around housing and in the national housing strategy and the need for a more inclusive understanding of housing needs in Canada. With the failings of the government in providing accessible and adequate housing for indigenous people, people with disabilities and more, I encourage the government to do better and to start realizing that one size does not fit all, and adding to that the aging population.

We need a better approach to accessible, affordable housing in this country, and the debate today is an important step for all of us to think about how to solve the problem of a home for everyone in Canada in a more inclusive way.

• (1415)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the residents and visitors who remain here in the gallery late this afternoon to listen to this wonderful debate. It is wonderful to have them join us here this afternoon.

It really is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Motion No. 59 on housing for persons with disabilities. I would like to begin by thanking the member for London West for tabling this motion. Her constituents are served so well by her advocacy and strong leadership on this issue.

Private Members' Business

Since 2015 we have made extraordinary progress to advance the rights of persons with disabilities, yet barriers still exist in public spaces, housing, buildings and parks, and even in information and communications technologies. That is why we are taking bold action to drive the creation of accessible and inclusive communities.

As members may be aware, on October 7 we launched Canada's first-ever disability inclusion action plan. It was a proud moment, and it served as the culmination of years of fruitful collaboration between the disability community and government. During this collaboration, we heard extensively from persons with disabilities about the issues, including accessible and inclusive community design, which brings me back to the overarching values that guide every aspect of our work with persons with disabilities.

I would like to take a moment to talk about the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Canada is a state party to this convention, as well as to its optional protocol. It means we recognize the right of all persons with disabilities to live independently and to live in a community. The convention provides us with two very important articles on inclusive housing, which I believe are rather relevant to today's discussion.

Under article 9, as a state party to the convention, we are taking action to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to the physical environment, including housing. What is more, article 28 of the convention sets out that persons with disabilities have the right to adequate housing, including access to public housing.

Our work is also guided by gender-based analysis plus. We developed the GBA+ to assess the implications of intersecting populations across Canada, including persons with disabilities, which means that when we create housing programs we need to consider the ways a person may experience intersectional barriers, so that we can minimize or remove those barriers at every step of policy development.

A report from the COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group recommended that we recognize the increased risks of gender-based violence for women and girls with disabilities. It also recommended that we address the urgent need for low-barrier shelters and housing, as well as services and other supports. Indeed, accessibility in housing and shelters is a key priority for us. It is a key component of our plan to achieve a barrier-free Canada by 2040, and I will now speak about how we will get there. I will begin by speaking about the Accessible Canada Act.

Let me be absolutely clear: The government is committed to advancing accessibility and inclusion across Canada. This is clear in our disability inclusion action plan and was first codified in the Accessible Canada Act landmark legislation, which became law in 2019. We implemented this groundbreaking act as part of our effort to proactively identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility across seven priority areas, including the built environment. In the spirit of "nothing without us", we do this work in consultation every step of the way with the disability community.

We also created a new organization, Accessibility Standards Canada, or ASC, which became accredited this past year, and we are in the process of creating national accessibility standards. I am

also happy to remind members that in November 2021 the ASC and CSA group began collaborating on the development of three accessibility standards, including a standard on accessible homes. That work is well under way, and as the CEO of ASC has said, they are developing standards focused on equitable technical requirements.

● (1420)

We are also working to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to housing through the home accessibility tax credit. The tax credit helps seniors and persons with disabilities stay in their homes by offsetting the cost of expensive renovations that make their homes more accessible. These include, for example, the installation of wheelchair ramps, walk-in bathtubs, wheel-in showers, the widening of doorways and hallways and the building of a bedroom or bathroom on the ground floor. Budget 2022 doubled the home accessibility tax credit. The qualifying expense limit has been increased to \$20,000 in 2022 and subsequent tax years. This includes a tax credit of up to \$3,000, which is twice the previous amount. That is more money in the pockets of Canadians with disabilities.

We also introduced the national housing strategy, the largest and most ambitious federal housing program in history. Through the national housing strategy, we are taking steps to advance the right to housing for all Canadians, with a priority on the most vulnerable. This includes persons with disabilities who require more affordable and accessible housing options. Under this strategy, at least 2,400 new affordable units are being built for persons with developmental disabilities. All funding programs include accessibility requirements and thresholds that must be met by developers.

Now I would like to revisit the disability inclusion action plan, with a focus on pillar three on accessible and inclusive communities, which also includes accessible housing. The disability community has been very clear during consultations on the disability inclusion action plan. The design of physical spaces, including apartments and homes, is often inadequate and inaccessible. This is because disability is often not considered in the initial stages of design. Pillar three of the action plan addresses the physical and attitudinal barriers that far too often prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in public spaces, like community buildings and workplaces. It will also influence architects and planners to adopt an inclusive mindset when they design housing projects.

While physical accommodations are important, there is always more that we can do to create inclusive spaces. For example, having calming spaces and quiet areas could be very important for some persons with disabilities. Some people might need these places to be connected to services and programs that support the independence of persons with disabilities. Others may need written information in large print or in plain language.

The initiatives that I have mentioned represent a paradigm culture shift, one where persons with disabilities are included from the very start. Through the disability inclusion action plan and ASC standards, we will drive even more profound changes.

In closing, I would like to once again thank the member for London West for her motion and leadership. Her constituents and Canadians with disabilities are being well served by her passionate and effective advocacy. Together, we will build an inclusive Canada for all.

● (1425)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is quite timely that we are considering Motion No. 59, which calls on the government to work with indigenous governing bodies, service providers to people with disabilities, housing providers and other relevant stakeholders, including the provinces, “in upholding a federal framework to improve access to adaptable affordable housing for individuals with non-visible disabilities”. This is at a time when we are seeing in media reports that folks who have disabilities and folks who are housing insecure, both of whom are unable to get the support they need and unable to find affordable housing, are instead opting for medical assistance in dying. We are in a situation where we are failing Canadians. We are failing Canadians who need us the most.

This is going to require the federal government to get to the table with the provinces. We need to solve this crisis, which is resulting in people opting for medically assisted death because they feel so

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hopeless. It is incumbent on the federal government and incumbent on its partners to resolve this, because certainly we can all agree that this is not what the medical assistance in dying framework in Canada was designed to do. We can all agree that the folks among us who are struggling in poverty and folks living with disabilities should not be left to feel like death is their only option. We need to offer them hope.

While this motion is laudable, the outcomes are items the government could have included in previous legislation or could be in existing frameworks. Certainly, we would demonstrate to people that this is taken seriously by the government if the Prime Minister were to sit down with the first ministers to discuss health care funding and if we had transparency about the conversations that were going on between the federal housing minister and his provincial counterparts, a relationship that appears strained on the federal side.

It is important that we address this as a House. It is important that we offer hope to all Canadians, including Canadians who are housing insecure, Canadians who are experiencing homelessness and Canadians who are living with disabilities. It is our responsibility as legislators and it is an important conversation to have today. It is also important that the government takes it seriously and advances meaningful steps that will resolve the concerns and crises that Canadians are living with.

● (1430)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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