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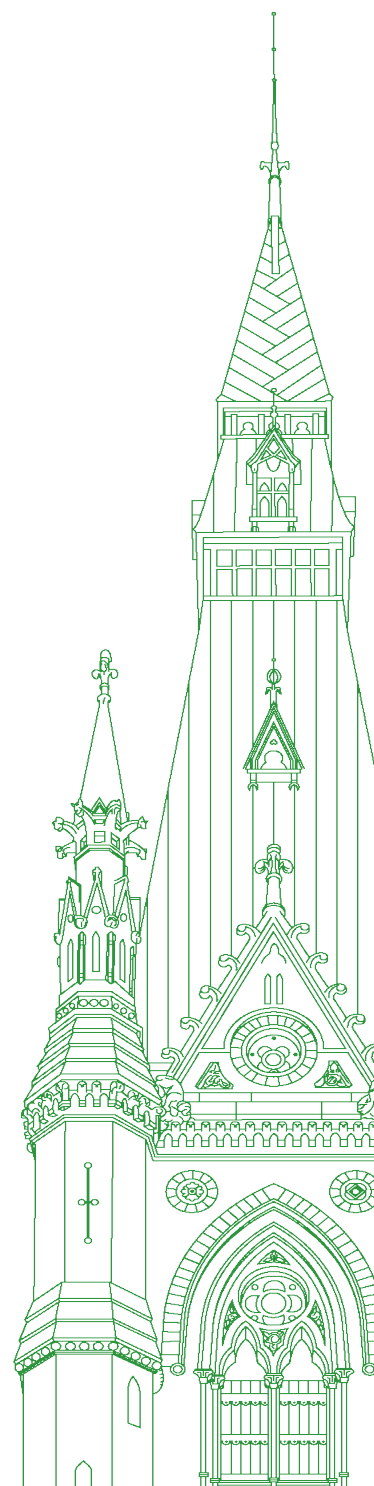
House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 9, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1000)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 8, Bill C-41, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as amended, is deemed concurred in at report stage on division.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 8, the House will now proceed to third reading of this bill.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (for the Minister of Public Safety) moved that Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we conclude debate on Bill C-41 before sending it off to the Senate. This legislation aims to address important aspects of the deepening crisis in Afghanistan and responds to calls from Canadian humanitarian aid agencies to deliver relief to a country on the brink.

Once again, the committee process did the good work I have seen time and time again in this place, making the bill we have before us today better than it was, better because we listened and we responded.

We included an important amendment from the member for Edmonton Strathcona to include a humanitarian carve-out in the bill. I will expand more on that later, but I thank her for bringing this forward so we could unanimously support it. As someone who has worked in the humanitarian sector, she brings a passion to her work that reflects her clear desire for a better world.

Although we were both elected in 2015, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and I have never worked together before. There are many issues on which we have divergent views, but on the issue of aid to Afghanistan and to those most in urgent need, we are on the same page. I want to sincerely thank him for the patient and collaborative approach he brought to this bill. I can confidently say we would not be here today without his efforts.

My friend from the Bloc Québécois, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, asked at committee:

Can the committee members make some concessions and manage to balance out this bill to get a deal as quickly as possible?...As a parliamentarian, I'm trying to see what's acceptable to humanitarian organizations to get this bill passed as quickly as possible.

That is exactly what we accomplished with the bill before us now. I thank the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean for his passion, for ensuring we are acting to save lives in Afghanistan and around the world, for his trust and his friendship, and for the productive way we worked together.

Before talking about the changes made to the bill, I want to reiterate what brought us here. I am proud of the cross-party collaborative efforts made by the Special Committee on Afghanistan and the important recommendations put forward by that committee, reflecting the work Canadian non-governmental organizations and humanitarian aid agencies have put forward as a pathway to deliver aid to Afghanistan.

The situation in Afghanistan is haunting. The Afghan people have persisted through four decades of war, and since the forceful capture of the country by the Taliban, the world has witnessed the erosion of fundamental rights and the steady deterioration of social and economic systems. This has created the largest humanitarian crisis in the world.

I want to remind the House that Afghanistan was a country that was reliant on foreign aid before the takeover by the Taliban. According to the special committee's report:

The World Bank had assessed that Afghanistan's economy was "shaped by fragility and aid dependence." Grants were financing some 75% of total public expenditure and were responsible for around 45% of Afghanistan's gross domestic product in 2020. With the abrupt [and violent] return to power of the Taliban, Afghanistan—whose currency reserves held abroad were frozen—experienced a significant fiscal contraction at the same time as it essentially became cut-off from the international banking and payments systems. That occurred because the Taliban have long been [rightly] subject to sanctions in relation to terrorism.

An important motion was passed at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights following the passage of Bill C-41 reiterating:

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That the committee report to the House that it firmly denounces the Taliban and rejects any recognition or legitimization of their control over Afghan territory. In particular, the committee denounces the Taliban system of gender discrimination, systemic violence targeting minority communities, reprisals against former members of the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces, attacks on freedom of the press, and other violations of fundamental human rights. The committee believes that the Taliban must remain a listed terrorist organization.

The overall result for Afghanistan of the takeover by the Taliban has been the near economic and institutional collapse, including an inability to provide the most basic services and pay civil servants' salaries. The net effect for the Afghan people is that prices have increased, livelihoods have disappeared and household resources have been exhausted. Egregious human rights violations are taking place, in particular impacting women and girls.

• (1005)

To encapsulate the enormity of this situation, John Aylieff, regional director for Asia and the Pacific in the World Food Programme, told the special committee, "Today, millions of people in Afghanistan—young children, families and communities—stand at the precipice of inhumane hunger and destitution."

Of the 23 million people who require food assistance, nearly nine million were one step away from famine, while some one million children were at risk of perishing this year from acute malnutrition. The population of Afghanistan is 40 million, and 23 million require food assistance. Canadian aid agencies are ready and willing to help.

As Michael Messenger, CEO of World Vision Canada, described, they had two containers, "full of packets of ready-to-use therapeutic food...to treat children facing the severest forms of malnutrition. This [is food that] can literally bring children back from the brink of death by starvation." The organization could not ship it to Afghanistan, despite the pleas from their team on the ground. Each container would have helped more than 900 children.

Martin Fischer, director of policy at World Vision Canada, reiterated recently at the justice committee their organization's inability to deliver aid in Afghanistan, saying, "every organization has a different risk appetite and arrives at conclusions regarding risk in a different way. For World Vision Canada, there was a decision that we wouldn't find workarounds, either any through our global partnerships or any other way".

Bill C-41 should provide registered Canadian organizations the clarity and assurances needed to deliver humanitarian assistance and meet the basic needs of the people of Afghanistan, without fear of prosecution for violating Canada's anti-terrorism laws. Canada has a long and rich history of fighting for human rights and delivering life-saving assistance abroad.

Over the last 20 years, many Afghans experienced improved access to health services and education and were able to participate in efforts to build their democracy. This occurred, in no small part, thanks to the efforts of Canadian organizations providing aid and support of a generation of leaders, many of whom were women, who were building a better country for Afghans.

Currently, the Criminal Code contains strong counter-terrorism financing provisions. Specifically, under paragraph 83.03(b), it is prohibited to directly or indirectly provide or make property avail-

able knowing it could be used by or will benefit a terrorist group. These provisions are having a significant impact on Canada's ability to deliver aid and other forms of international assistance, namely in Afghanistan. During the committee process, we heard from eight organizations who asked for changes to the bill.

Joseph Belliveau, executive director of Doctors Without Borders, testified:

Principled humanitarian work is recognized and protected by international humanitarian law, or IHL. Humanitarian organizations, such as MSF, providing essential services impartially with no commercial, political or other objective must be afforded the protection of IHL. Under IHL, humanitarian assistance cannot be considered support for any party to a conflict, even one deemed "terrorist". In other words, providing humanitarian aid cannot be considered a crime.

IHL is integral to Canadian law. As party to the Geneva Conventions, Canada has an obligation to uphold IHL and must, according to recent United Nations Security Council resolutions, ensure that domestic counterterrorism legislation is compatible with IHL.

Canada's Supreme Court has similarly affirmed that the Criminal Code must be interpreted such that "innocent, socially useful or casual acts" with no criminal intent are not criminalized.

MSF acknowledges that Bill C-41 aims to facilitate rather than curtail humanitarian action. Unfortunately, Bill C-41 and the counterterrorism parts of the Criminal Code it relates to are, in their current formulation, inconsistent with IHL and Canadian law and will undermine Canadian humanitarianism.

We listened to MSF and adopted the NDP's amendment in Bill C-41 to amend the Criminal Code to create a humanitarian assistance carve-out from the terrorist financing offences in section 83.03, clarifying that:

Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply to a person who carries out any of the acts referred to in those subsections for the sole purpose of carrying out humanitarian assistance activities conducted under the auspices of impartial humanitarian organizations in accordance with international law while using reasonable efforts to minimize any benefit to terrorist groups.

• (1010)

Moreover, for permissible development activities in addition to the humanitarian carve-out, eligible persons and organizations could be granted certain authorizations that would shield them from criminal liability for their operations in a geographic area that is controlled by a terrorist group. This could include education, immigration services, livelihood supports or health services that could not be captured under the definition of humanitarian assistance.

The authorizations would also cover implementing partners or service providers involved in the delivery of the permissible activities. This includes the delivery of aid, in addition to support services related to immigration, including resettlement efforts and safe passage activities.

To be clear, strict measures would still be applied to prevent financial flow from reaching individuals linked to terrorist organizations where possible. Humanitarian organizations are aware of the risk of sending humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. They are also experts in the field, and they best understand how to deploy aid in the most efficient way possible to reach the most people in need without it going to the Taliban.

I want to quote a member of Islamic Relief Canada, an organization that I am proud to have in my riding of Oakville North—Burlington. They said:

In the summer of 2021, when the Taliban took over the government, we wanted to understand our risk appetite as Islamic Relief, so we figured out and calculated what the taxes were. They were around 3%. This is what we did at Islamic Relief. The U.K. and the U.S., our counterparts, do have broader humanitarian exemptions, and we wanted to continue helping the people of Afghanistan with Canadian donor funds that our donors from across the country wanted to give for Afghanistan, so we carved out the 3% that was for government taxes, and our counterparts in the U.K. subsidized that portion. As a result, no Canadian funds were being used that went to the government.

This testimony at committee helped parliamentarians understand why a humanitarian carve-out is not only so important but also possible to implement. Knowing that these humanitarian organizations are already taking it upon themselves to implement operational policies and risk assessments, to ensure that aid is getting to vulnerable Afghans and not the Taliban, helps reduce the overall risk of monies flowing to individuals linked to terrorism.

I would again note in the House that the authorization regime would not be restricted to Afghanistan. It would apply to any geographic area controlled by a terrorist group in order to be able to respond to similar situations.

Jessica Davis testified that approximately 8% of countries worldwide are controlled by terrorist groups; these include Nigeria, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan and parts of West Africa, where terrorist groups are controlling territories. Bill C-41 would apply to those areas in the world as well.

At committee, we heard about the need to reduce the burden on humanitarian organizations in having to determine by themselves which geographic areas are controlled by a terrorist group. We heard that they require clarity. The amendment adopted at committee, put forward by my Conservative colleague, places a positive onus on the public safety minister to provide written information at the request of an applicant as to whether an authorization is required. This amendment considers the dynamic nature of terrorism and allows for the most up-to-date assessment of terrorist groups and their control of geographic areas.

Another important change made at committee ensures that if an application is refused, applicants would be able to reapply after 30 days. This was amended to shorten the original 180-day reapplication waiting period. This was requested by humanitarian aid organizations and reflects their desire for their organizations to reapply quickly, should they be unsuccessful for any reason. Applicants can also seek recourse through a judicial review.

An amendment to the original bill also explicitly restricts the use of applicant information for the purpose of the authorization request or its renewal. This responds to a request from humanitarian aid organizations, which articulated concerns about how the data

collected in their authorization applications would be processed by departments and agencies. Moreover, information sharing by prescribed departments allows them to collect and disclose information in assisting the public safety minister in this regime; it has been limited to the purposes of the administration and enforcement of the regime. The public safety minister must ensure that the assisting entities comply.

The bill also calls for a comprehensive review of the operation of the authorization regime. This provision was amended to require that it occur within the first year rather than the fifth year of this section coming into force, followed by every five years thereafter.

● (1015)

I recognize that some people are skeptical about how the new regime will work, and they are eager to see regulations developed following passage of the bill. This shortened one-year timeline will ensure that we can quickly address any shortcomings, should they arise.

The Minister of Public Safety must table a report to Parliament, which must also include a plan and timeline to remedy any deficiencies. As parliamentarians, we have an obligation to all Afghans to pass this legislation, because aid to Afghanistan remains absolutely vital. With this legislation, Canada is responding to the continuing crisis in Afghanistan by facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance, health services, education and human rights programs, as well as safe passage and immigration processing for vulnerable individuals destined for Canada. This will also help our government work with like-minded countries and international partners to advance our international priorities.

Canada has a hard-earned international reputation as both a fierce protector and a steadfast source of humanitarian assistance. It has committed to accepting at least 40,000 refugees from Afghanistan. So far, 32,745 have arrived in Canada. A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of greeting a plane of 280 Afghan refugees arriving in Toronto via the UAE. It is impossible to express the joy that these people had upon arriving in Canada. One gentleman told me that Canada is the best country in the world, and I would agree with that. I looked at the young girls arriving, thinking that they could now have an education. Most importantly, these individuals will be able to go to bed knowing they are safe.

These refugees who will make Canada home are the lucky ones. However, millions remain in Afghanistan and need our help today. Our government will continue to collaborate closely with international Canadian partners as we work together to accomplish our shared humanitarian and development assistance commitments.

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Martin Fischer, head of policy at World Vision Canada, stated:

We believe that with some fine tuning, it is a critical step forward in a longer-term journey to ensure that Canadian humanitarian organizations as well as those delivering other services in these difficult contexts can operate in a neutral, impartial and independent manner in the most difficult and exceptional circumstances.... We cannot lose sight of the severity of the humanitarian crisis there and the obligations that Canada and Canadians have to help.

I firmly believe that the committee process has ensured that the bill we have before us has been improved by the input of civil society and the collaborative work of parliamentarians, as well as that the fine tuning has been achieved. This legislation will truly make a change that will save the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in the world.

As Martin said, as Canadians, we have to help. It is in our nature. As parliamentarians, we have an obligation to help. Bill C-41 will ensure that humanitarian organizations can deliver aid to Afghanistan and save lives.

• (1020)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this bill took a lot of hard work and co-operation. Obviously, in the end, it was about compromise. That means that no one is 100% satisfied. However, despite everything, I think that politics is all about the art of compromise.

I would like to ask my colleague whether there were any proposals made by opposition members that she thinks should have perhaps ended up in the bill but did not.

Does my colleague think that the bill goes far enough? Could it have gone further?

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, as my friend and colleague knows, other changes were proposed. I know that there are those who feel that we should have gone further in some of the changes. I hope that, with the change to a one-year review, if there are any shortcomings and areas where we need to go further, we will be able to remedy that quickly so that aid organizations have the certainty they need.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have many questions about how this regime would work in practice, but we also recognize the urgency of having some kind of legislative framework that would allow urgently needed assistance to be delivered in Afghanistan.

This reflects what the Afghan Canadian community and development stakeholders are looking for. Sadly, we are a little behind the eight ball in Canada. Many other countries have been able to move much more quickly in responding to this situation.

I agree with the parliamentary secretary that the legislative process has worked. We were able to make substantial, meaningful improvements to the bill at committee through lots of discussion and painstaking compromise.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could speak a little more to the provisions around organizations asking the government if they need to apply. This is something that we added through an

amendment, addressing the fact that there may be some cases where there is ambiguity about whether an organization needs to apply.

How does the parliamentary secretary anticipate that this regime would work, in terms of organizations asking if they need to apply? How long would the government response take in those cases?

• (1025)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for putting forward the amendment that puts the onus on the government and not the aid organizations to make that determination.

As the hon. member knows, the original bill required aid organizations to determine by themselves whether it was a geographic region, for example, that was under the control of terrorists. There were suggestions put forward that a list be created. However, these things change so quickly on the ground, and now, thanks to the hon. member's amendment, the onus is on the Minister of Public Safety to inform organizations. For example, if an organization is working in Nigeria and the area falls under the control of a terrorist group, the onus would be on the public safety minister to inform that organization.

I think that, because of the process we had at committee and the collaborative nature of our work with all parties, the bill would give aid organizations the certainty that they require. This will make it easier for them to be able to deliver development aid in those countries.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is too bad, but Bill C-41 is not the solution to such a vitally important issue. This bill was flawed from the start. The work should have been done by Global Affairs Canada, not Public Safety Canada.

The NDP cannot support a bill that says that the international solidarity sector must request the Canadian government's authorization to go save lives abroad. The premise of this bill, which involves getting the permission of a government, the Government of Canada, goes against the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality.

The NDP feels it is unacceptable to have a bill that could criminalize foreign aid in the Gaza Strip, for example. There is a risk that people who want to help and save lives could face criminal prosecution.

Why are the Liberals proposing a bill that could have those sorts of consequences?

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the NDP will not be able to support this bill.

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The bill was made through compromise. I feel that it would allow aid organizations to deliver the aid they need across the country. We listened to the New Democratic Party and included a humanitarian aid carve-out, which was not originally part of the bill. I think that is an example of listening, not just to the New Democratic Party but to organizations like Doctors Without Borders, which said that it was critical. I know that other organizations, such as the Red Cross and World Vision Canada, also wanted this humanitarian carve-out.

We listened, and unanimously, with all parties in the House, we adopted the NDP amendment that makes the important distinction that, under humanitarian law, aid organizations could deliver humanitarian aid, even in places like Afghanistan, without getting an authorization beforehand. The authorization regime would only apply to development assistance, and we feel that it reaches the proper balance and is a way for aid organizations to deliver aid to the most vulnerable in the world.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for speaking about this important topic. When we were on the Afghanistan committee together, we heard from many witnesses about the importance of this change and the impact it would have on the ground. I wonder whether the hon. parliamentary secretary can speak more to the impact this would have in Afghanistan.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, we did serve together on the special committee and heard about the need to urgently get this work done.

Right now, Canadian organizations, overall, are not able to deliver aid directly into Afghanistan. As I spoke about, there is a humanitarian crisis in that country. It is a country that was dependent on aid before the Taliban took over, and millions of people will die of starvation if we are not able to get in and deliver aid. Therefore, I do believe this would have a positive impact on the ability of our organizations from Canada to deliver aid in Afghanistan and that it would save lives.

I do not think Canadians recognize the humanitarian crisis that is happening in Afghanistan right now. I wish they did. I wish more Canadians were paying attention. This would allow the amazing Canadian aid organizations we have in this country to deliver the aid they want to deliver in Afghanistan.

• (1030)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am torn about Bill C-41, only to the extent that I understand why some of my NDP colleagues will be voting against it. I will be voting for it. It is urgent that Canada provide the cover for massively needed humanitarian aid and assistance.

This is an aspect of what the government claims is a feminist foreign policy. The government in Afghanistan has declared war on its women, and we are not doing enough. I ask my hon. colleague to share with us, if she will, because she is such a strong feminist, what else she thinks we ought to be doing to protect the women and girls in Afghanistan and why we have not gotten the women who were former members of Parliament out of Afghanistan as quickly as possible.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, what is happening to women and girls in Afghanistan is horrific. It is almost indescribable the way women and girls are being targeted by the Taliban: not being able to leave their homes, being married off, and not having access to education and to employment. Some of these young women have spent their lives under a regime where they were allowed to do this. They were allowed to be members of Parliament, and it pains me to even say this aloud. No woman should have to be “allowed” to do anything. However, the fact is that now in Afghanistan, those aspirations of young women and women and girls in Afghanistan are gone.

There is much more we can be doing to support those women. There are incredible organizations, like Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, that have not been able to deliver programs in the way that they would like to. I would also argue that Canadians need to pay attention to what is going on in Afghanistan and raise their voices in support of the women and girls living there under this oppressive regime.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House today concerning this important piece of legislation, Bill C-41, the trigger of which is the crisis in Afghanistan, but which, more broadly, seeks to establish a framework for allowing vitally needed short- and long-term development assistance to get into areas controlled by terrorist organizations.

I want to start my remarks today by speaking about the legislative process more generally, because I think the process we have been through on Bill C-41 has been quite effective and may be instructive for other kinds of engagements going forward. Our primary role as members of Parliament is to be legislators, and naturally we get drawn into a variety of other activities that are also important but are not as central. We are here to legislate. We are here to make law, understand laws that are before the House, debate them, propose changes to them, try to make them better and represent our constituents specifically in the law-making process.

The process that bills are supposed to go through is this: They are presented by the government as items for consideration without being perfect or approaching perfection at that point. Then they are debated in principle and members vote on the principle. Then they are analyzed in detail at committee. There should be meaningful consideration and back-and-forth discussions among parties, oriented toward making the bill as good as possible. Then we come back to the House for report stage and third reading.

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Very often, sadly, bills are presented in a way that presumes they are in their final form, and the discussion in the House treats them as if the legislative process is a necessary evil instead of a vital process of refinement. Too often, there is pressure to push legislation forward as is and to accept it as a good bill, so we pass it instead of actually digging into the meat or substance of it. I think also that, too often, we see cases of legislation that does not have detail in it but, rather, provides an enabling framework for the government to simply do whatever it wants afterwards. All these cases involve a minimization of the important role legislators are supposed to play in the process of making good laws for our country.

I think, with respect to Bill C-41, though, the process worked very well. The government put forward a piece of legislation that was very flawed, and the need for the legislation was clear, based on advocacy from various stakeholder organizations, including, in particular, people from the Afghan Canadian community and from the development sector. Opposition parties had been asking for this. There were a number of motions at the foreign affairs committee calling for legislation that would allow humanitarian and longer-term development assistance to get into Afghanistan, so the advocacy that happened led to the government's putting forward legislation, though legislation that was flawed.

We debated it in principle, then we brought it to committee and had lengthy, painstaking and detailed negotiations among different parties. The conversations were multidimensional. They were all motivated by the sincere desire of everyone to make the bill better and recognized the urgency of resolving the challenge we have of the legal impediments to getting vitally needed humanitarian assistance into Afghanistan. Those conversations happened; they were constructive all the way along, and, as opposition members, we were very grateful as well for the hard work and involvement of our non-partisan public service.

I think there is an important interplay that happens, as well, between legislators and the public service, which is that we should not simply take or be expected to take as given the products we are given by the public servants; it is our job to challenge, question and say that we want them to come up with a different solution to problems. Public servants were responsive to those issues and questions, and we deferred to their expertise when there were technical concepts that needed to be understood.

I think there was very good interplay between the parties and between legislators and the public service, which led to substantial improvements in the bill.

• (1035)

My only complaint about the process is that, increasingly, we are seeing committee chairs make relatively narrow rulings about the scope of bills. I think that is a trend we should watch, because when the House endorses a bill in broad principle at second reading, committees need to have the space and the scope to be able to make amendments without too narrow an interpretation of the scope parameters. That said, we solved that problem by having a unanimous consent motion in the House to deem an amendment in scope that might not otherwise have been deemed in scope. We were thus able to achieve a workaround here, but, in general, I think this is just a point of caution for committee chairs and for those who are inform-

ing these decisions to think about: that we would risk getting to a point where the kinds of improvements to a bill that are required at committee cannot be made if the interpretations of scope are too narrow.

That said, I think this was a constructive process, and we have come back with a bill that is still not perfect but is substantially improved and substantially changed as a result of members of Parliament from all parties doing the work they are supposed to be doing in terms of engaging the legislative process. I enjoyed working with all my colleagues on the committee most of the time, I would say. I enjoyed working with all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, to paraphrase an old line. It was good to be able to work with members with whom I have substantial disagreements on other issues, but with whom, nonetheless, I shared a common framework for approaching the bill.

What would the bill do? The bill engages a complex area of law, which is anti-terrorism law, and seeks to create opportunities for exemption within our terrorist financing law that would allow organizations to deliver vitally needed development assistance to areas controlled by terrorist organizations, while seeking to minimize any kind of interaction with terrorist organizations. When we brought in Canada's terrorist financing regime, the principle, essentially, was that this was the most extreme sanction available for any organization, and that, when an organization is on the terrorist list, there should be absolutely no truck or trade whatsoever with this organization. This is a good principle to start from, but when terrorist organizations control territory, there may be instances where there need to be certain kinds of minimal engagement. If we do not have a nimble enough framework that allows that kind of minimal engagement, then the likely outcome is simply that fewer organizations would be listed as terrorist groups.

Our view is that we need to be able to list terrorist organizations as terrorist organizations and keep them on the terrorist list even if they control territory. It would be perverse to have terrorist organizations taken off the terrorist list simply because they became militarily successful. We need a framework that allows us to list and to maintain the listing of terrorist organizations even while they control territory, but also that allows organizations be able to provide assistance to people in those areas, a framework that allows certain kinds of minimal interactions, such as paying a bridge toll or using space in a building to deliver food aid. Naturally, these exceptions need to be quite limited, but they should exist. I have not heard anybody say that people who, through no fault of their own, happen to live in areas controlled by terrorists should be condemned to not receiving any kind of assistance or support.

I want to respond to an objection raised by an NDP member, because I think there is an important distinction to be made here. The NDP member who spoke a few minutes ago said that the bill would criminalize certain activity that might be undertaken by development organizations. The bill would not do that. The bill would create a potential for a general exemption in the case of humanitarian assistance, and a potential for an exemption through an authorization regime in the case of other development assistance. The bill would create an exception to existing criminal law; it would not create that criminal law.

● (1040)

Today, and as the law has existed for a long time, an organization that is seeking to do humanitarian assistance, but in the process gives money to a terrorist organization, could well run afoul of criminal law. Much could be said about that reality, but that is the existing legal reality. Today, Canadian development organizations in many cases have not been able to work in Afghanistan because of the existing criminal law that means that their risk calculation is that there is some risk of prosecution if they are engaged in Afghanistan, even if they minimize their interactions with the Taliban.

I think it is wrong to measure this bill against some abstract standard of perfection. What we should measure this bill against is the status quo that it improves upon. This bill does not criminalize anything. It creates exemptions and the possibility for exemptions to existing criminal law. As far as I understood the position that, for most of this debate, the NDP were articulating at committee, even they would or should regard this as an improvement on the status quo. It seems that they have now chosen to oppose a bill that does not improve enough on the status quo. I think it is fair to say that this bill, in certain respects, does not improve enough on the status quo but, from our perspective, it does not make sense to oppose a bill simply because it is not perfect, or simply because it does not go far enough in the desired directions.

We have to recognize that there are important complexities on the other side of this. Some amendments were proposed, for example, that would limit the definition of a terrorist group to only listed terrorist entities. That would be a substantial change to terrorist financing law and it would allow organizations that have, for instance, a terrorist purpose, but are not listed as terrorist entities, to be able to receive financing from Canada. Our approach was to try to strike an appropriate balance to protect the integrity of our anti-terrorism regime, to improve on the bill as much as we could, to provide greater predictability for humanitarian organizations, but also, recognizing how quickly we wanted to move on this bill, to not have kind of broad substantial changes to terrorist financing law that would have all kinds of other impacts outside of the area of development assistance.

I am proud of the role that Conservatives were able to play in those discussions. I think we took a reasonable approach that improved the bill and that will provide us with a framework that will facilitate the continuing listing of terrorist organizations even if they control territory, while also being able to be engaged constructively with the people of those areas.

I want to share just some of the amendments we supported or proposed at committee. We supported an amendment on providing a humanitarian exemption that has already been discussed during debate today. The previous version of the bill said that, in effect, any development activity would require authorization if it involved that kind of activity in terrorist-controlled areas. Now the bill says that for emergency humanitarian relief, an exemption is not required. There is a general exemption but for longer-term development assistance, likely in cases where there is actually time to make this application and consider it, that there is an authorization regime in place.

Government Orders

We put forward an amendment that would allow organizations to ask if they need to apply. There has been a lot of discussion, rightly, about the Afghan context, but there are many cases where it is much more ambiguous. There might be a group that could be considered a terrorist group but is not a listed terrorist entity, that partially controls sort of semi un-governed parts of the country, and then organizations have to make the judgment call of what kinds of interactions would be required and whether this organization is a terrorist group or not. We felt that it was not appropriate to put the onus on development organizations to make these kinds of calls. They should be able to ask the government to get feedback. This was an area in which there was a great deal of discussion. I think we came to a good compromise.

We also supported amendments around the protection of personal information and Conservatives put forward the amendment on moving up the review clauses. This reflects our belief that this legislation has problems. It is not perfect and needs work, but it also needs to pass. Having a one-year review will allow us to see how the government is doing in terms of implementation and how the regime is working.

● (1045)

I would like to speak more broadly to the situation in Afghanistan. I want to be clear that this bill is not in any way softening our denunciation of the Taliban. In fact, this bill and the accompanying conversation have reinforced our denunciation of the Taliban. In the absence of a bill like this, a government has to consider either maintaining a terrorist listing and, therefore, the associated restrictions on development assistance or lifting a terrorist listing with all the attendant problems with that.

This bill would allow us to maintain the listing of terrorist organizations that ought to continue to be listed as terrorist organizations. It would allow us to list other organizations, such as the IRGC or the Wagner Group, that have close relationships with government and may, in certain instances, be conceived of as controlling territory. It would allow us to list government-affiliated entities without fear of negatively impacting the flow of development assistance. This would, therefore, strengthen our ability to denounce and hold accountable terrorist organizations like the Taliban.

It is very important for this House to remain seized with the situation in Afghanistan. A humanitarian crisis is ongoing there, but there is also the fundamental crisis in human rights and recognition of universal human dignity that is not happening, needless to say, by the de facto authorities.

Government Orders

Canada has had a long-running commitment to Afghanistan. Over 150 Canadian soldiers died fighting for the freedom of that country. We need to honour the sacrifices of those Canadians, as well as Afghans and other allies who fought along with them, by continuing to work on the advancement of freedom and democracy in Afghanistan. There are ongoing efforts under way by the Afghan people in Afghanistan and in the diaspora to build up the necessary institutions in exile, to challenge the Taliban and to work toward the restoration of freedom and democracy.

The Afghan people want us to be firm in sanctioning the Taliban, in condemning its human rights abuses and also in looking for ways to support and engage with opposition groups across the spectrum, different types of opposition groups doing different kinds of things. We heard yesterday at the foreign affairs committee from one of those groups, speaking about the hope that, because of the Taliban's general ineffectiveness due to the problems, the Taliban could be on its way to a kind of structural collapse earlier than many people expected. We can hope for that collapse and the restoration of freedom and democracy in Afghanistan, and we should not give ourselves over to undue pessimism as it relates to Afghanistan. We need to continue to be engaged, thinking and proposing ideas for a brighter future for Afghanistan when this dark night is over.

Canada has been there in the past. The abandonment of Afghanistan in the recent chaotic pullout and the failure of the Canadian government to evacuate those who needed to be evacuated are sad points in terms of our engagement, but we need to work together as parliamentarians to build for a brighter future for Afghanistan.

I want to commit to all those listening in the Afghan community that it will continue to be a priority for me to think about and work on how Canada can honour its commitments to Afghanistan and continue to work with the Afghan diaspora, the people of Afghanistan, to address the immediate humanitarian crisis, but also to work for the restoration of freedom and democracy and the expansion of pluralism that includes ethnic and religious minorities. This is possible, this is realistic and we must continue that work going forward.

• (1050)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the member's beginning remarks when he was talking about the process. I found it somewhat interesting.

As the member recalls, in opposition when Stephen Harper was the prime minister, the quid pro quo was to not pass anything in committee if it came from opposition members. The Conservatives never accepted any amendments with a majority Harper government.

Today, we have seen better, healthier legislation, in good part because of the member's involvement in the committee with his suggestions. More and more we are seeing not only government member amendments being brought forward, but also opposition member amendments being brought forward, and, more importantly, they are even passed. It gives strength to the legislation.

I believe Canadians, at heart, are great humanitarians. Given the nature of the issue and the people, and, we are helping them to do the work they want to do to support the world in a positive way.

I would like his comments on that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is quite correct that the Conservatives, when in government, never accepted opposition party amendments.

It was very good to be able to work constructively with members of all parties, including the governing party. Of course, the context we have right now is a minority Parliament. There was the opportunity for the opposition to come together and make changes to the bill, which the government did not like. Ultimately, we were able to work collaboratively with the government.

I think that collaboration was also born out of the realities of a minority Parliament. We have tried to use the tools we have to work constructively to make this bill better and to bring in the kinds of changes that have delivered the improvements that will hopefully make the regime work better.

In any event, we have the one-year review clause that we proposed that ensures that, given the potential problems, we are going to have an opportunity to look at this issue again very soon.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all four parties in the House have worked extremely hard on this bill. We reached a compromise, although not to everyone's satisfaction, of course. As I said earlier, politics is the art of compromise.

A question that I consider of the utmost importance has been on my mind. On February 7, 2022, I asked an initial question in committee about the issue before us today concerning this bill. On February 17, 2022, I tabled a unanimous consent motion in the House, but the Liberals blocked it. We could have resolved the issue a lot faster.

Why did the government take all this time to introduce a bill that is still flawed, even though we have known about the problem for the past 20 months? This is the question on my mind, and I would like my colleague to answer it.

• (1055)

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with the points the member made about the timing. This has been raised multiple times by multiple committees. I think there were two different motions adopted at the foreign affairs committee. Prior to that, there was a recommendation in the report from the Special Committee on Afghanistan.

If we had been on top of it timing-wise, we would probably already be at that one-year review stage looking back saying that we passed the bill a year ago and seeing how it is working. However, we are not there. It is fair to point out again that it was on the day that Kabul was falling that the Prime Minister's priority was to call an election instead of being at his desk working on these important issues.

I do not want to take away from the spirit of collaboration that exists around this bill by acknowledging those realities, but those are realities. It would have been much better for the people of Afghanistan, and for these Canadian organizations, if we had moved faster on this legislation.

We are behind our allies. We are behind where the needs are. It is better late than never. Let us get this done and see how it works.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. He has a very long riding name but I remember it. I remember it because I know the member spoke a lot about process. I know the member is famous for filibustering in committee.

One example is when the member for Edmonton Strathcona put forward a study to look at women's reproductive rights globally. The member obstructed that study by trying to filibuster it. We know that abortion rights are human rights.

Does the hon. member agree that abortion rights are human rights, as stated under international law?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I regret to advise the member that she has not kept up on the unfolding of events at the foreign affairs committee at all. We had a dispute at the committee about aspects of the committee's agenda. Our view was that the committee should prioritize work on the ongoing invasion of Ukraine and other studies the committee had already agreed to. Nonetheless, despite that dispute, we eventually came to a conclusion, an understanding.

The study that I think the member is referring to was a priority of the Liberals and the NDP. They wanted to do a study on abortion at the foreign affairs committee. Notwithstanding the various other things that are going on in the world right now, that was their priority and that study has since occurred. The hearings are complete, and I think the House will be hearing back with the conclusions of that study.

I will not pre-empt any of that, but if the member had kept up with the workings of the foreign affairs committee, she would know that the events she is alleging are ongoing are no longer ongoing. The House will have the opportunity to look at the conclusions of the foreign affairs committee.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in voting for this bill, would the hon. member also put forward any ideas he has for what we should be doing to protect the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, at the same time as the committee adopted this bill, we adopted a motion that my Conservative colleague had put forward, which was a clear denunciation of the Taliban. It included identifying the system of gender discrimination

it has built and is building and called for the continued listing of the Taliban as a terrorist organization.

It is very important that we work closely with women's groups from Afghanistan and with Afghan diaspora groups in general to understand what they are looking for. I think what they are looking for is for us to continue to be tough on the Taliban by condemning what it is doing, sanctioning it, etc. They also want us to look for ways to support civil society opposition groups and to remain hopeful about what the future of Afghanistan could look like so that we can see a post-Taliban future sooner rather than later.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1100)

[English]

UKRAINE INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES FLIGHT PS752

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on June 11, this Sunday, a rally will be held on Parliament Hill by 2,000 Iranian Canadians to again protest the failure of the Canadian government to get justice from Iran for the January 8, 2020, shooting down of flight PS752. That horrific act murdered 176 people, 55 of whom were Canadian citizens and 30 of whom were permanent residents. One of those victims was a friend.

Sunday's rally will also demand that the Canadian government abandon its ongoing reluctance to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization, and demand that the government finally take action against Iranian operatives who are harassing and intimidating the Iranian community in Canada.

From Parliament Hill to Toronto City Hall and Richmond Hill, I have stood in solidarity with Canada's Iranian community. Will the government? To date, the protesters have received useless platitudes and empty promises. Hopefully the government's indifference will soon end.

* * *

POLICE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the early 1970s, the former town of Dominion police service established the Police Boys and Girls Club, an organization to support and engage youth in the local community. Fifty years later, I am proud to say that this club and its initiatives are going strong. With that, it is my sincere pleasure to congratulate the Police Boys and Girls Club on its 50th anniversary.

Today, the club provides activities for nearly 125 youth in the Dominion area. That is an incredible feat that certainly maintains its impact on our communities. Our youth are our future, and organizations such as the Police Boys and Girls Club reassure me and should reassure everyone in this House that the future is very, very bright.

Statements by Members

I thank all community volunteers, past and present, who have devoted their time over the course of 50 years.

* * *

WORLD'S STRONGEST MAN CHAMPION 2023

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte is home to many great firsts. My community is home to the earliest published recipe of the iconic treat, the butter tart; the Oro African Methodist Episcopal Church, which is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, African log churches still standing in North America; and the historic Fort Willow Conservation Area, which was actively used as a supply depot during the War of 1812.

Just recently, our community, specifically the small town of Midhurst, became home to another historic first. Mitchell Hooper, a Midhurst resident who happily goes by the nickname “the Moose”, was crowned the champion at the 2023 World’s Strongest Man finals in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. At this year’s competition, Mitchell Hooper became the first man to win four events in the six-event final at the World’s Strongest Man competition, and the first Canadian to ever win this prestigious title.

“The Moose” is a big, strong man who also has a big spirit and lives by his own mantra: “lift heavy, be kind”. Congratulations to Mitchell for his many hours of hard work and dedication.

* * *

VISA-FREE TRAVEL

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people from the Philippines who have visited Canada in the last 10 years or have a current valid U.S. visa will now be able to travel to Canada via air visa-free. This is wonderful news. Today, all those eligible can go online and apply for the electronic travel authorization. In most situations, they will be approved within hours. That is big news for the thousands of people who will be directly benefiting throughout the country, and nowhere more than in the city of Winnipeg.

The estimated population of Canada’s Filipino community today is one million people. Manitoba makes up about 10% of Canada’s Filipino heritage community. The north end of Winnipeg is where we will find the heart of Canada’s Filipino community, which means that the announcement made earlier this week, on June 6, will benefit the residents of Winnipeg North more than any other community in the country.

June is the month that we celebrate Filipino heritage. What a great month it is.

* * *

● (1105)

SPORTS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again I am standing up for Canadian athletes who are demanding an independent national public inquiry into abuse in sports in Canada. To date, over 1,000 athletes in 14 sports and 27 organizations have called on the government for a national inquiry. The Liberal response has fuelled outrage by survivors and sports advocates, who

feel ignored in their request to drop the piecemeal improvements and implement a national strategy. Band-aids will not heal these athletes, and abuse in sports is not new. Athletes at the heart of the sport system deserve better protection and meaningful changes.

Sports needs to change. Consider how poorly the Toronto Blue Jays have dealt with their own locker-room hate. The Liberals and the Blue Jays need to get off their “Bass” and do the right thing.

* * *

MEDICAL ISOTOPES

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a world-class medical isotope ecosystem. From production to processing to delivery, we house almost the complete isotope supply chain.

One of Canada’s largest medical isotope clusters is in my riding of Kanata—Carleton. Companies like Nordion, Best Theratronics and BWXT Medical are leading the market in developing, manufacturing and supplying isotopes. These companies contribute billions to Canada’s economy and employ hundreds of people in my riding. Their expertise in innovation is literally saving lives. Their isotopes are being used to diagnose and provide effective new treatments for illnesses like cancer, transforming the medical sciences field.

We are committed to working with industry to leverage this already strong foundation to truly put Canada on the map as the world leader in medical isotopes.

* * *

RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a busy June in my area, with some remarkable milestones that I would like to recognize.

I am happy to announce the start of the 172nd annual Millbrook Fair, an opportunity to celebrate agriculture and enjoy countless family-friendly activities happening this weekend.

Best wishes to Fritz Mattern, Rick Dowdall, Bill Lockwood, Shaun Thurston and Dave Magee on their retirement from the Kawartha Lakes Fire Rescue Service. I thank these gentlemen for their service.

Two Haliburton County legends are celebrating 90th birthdays this month. One is Ed Pickard, who spent his working career in the RCMP serving his community, including as past president of the Royal Canadian Legion in Haliburton and zone president. In fact, the main hall in Branch 129 is being named after his late wife Billy. The other is Betty Hayward, a long-time volunteer on the Harcourt Hall board of directors, a lifetime member of the Ladies' Auxiliary at the Royal Canadian Legion in Wilberforce and the founder of Busy Bees Sewing Club.

I hope all members will join me in celebrating these individuals and the many others across the country who give so much to make their communities better.

* * *

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BAN

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a very special group of young advocates in my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. The grade 1 class of Winona Elementary School, led by Mrs. Merritt and Ms. Tylee, petitioned our government for an expansion of our ban on single-use plastics. They collected hundreds of fruit and vegetable price look-up stickers and mailed them to my office in support of Maya's Plastic Pollution Campaign. The campaign builds upon our actions last year, when our government initiated a ban on six different types of single-use plastics.

Over the next decade, this world-leading ban on harmful single-use plastics will result in the estimated elimination of over 1.3 million tonnes of hard-to-recycle plastic waste and more than 22,000 tonnes of plastic pollution. While our actions will go a long way to preventing more damage to the environment, wildlife and human health, we know that more needs to be done. Initiatives like Maya's Plastic Pollution Campaign serve as a reminder for all levels of government that expanding our efforts to ban single-use plastics is a priority.

Thanks again to the students and teachers of Winona Elementary School for their advocacy on this very important issue.

* * *

JAMES AGATHOS

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the life of James “Jimmy” Dimitris Agathos, who unfortunately passed away recently at the age 92 after a battle with Parkinson's disease. Those who knew him knew him as a proud Greek, a proud Londoner and a proud Canadian.

He immigrated to London from Greece in 1951. A few years after, he began working as a busboy at Hotel London. In 1963, he opened the Huron House Restaurant. Anyone who grew up in London knows the Huron House as a community meeting place and a stable business in London, Ontario.

In addition, he supported many causes. His entrepreneurship and the success he enjoyed as an entrepreneur were shared with the wider community. For example, every year he sponsored no less than 35 minor sports teams in our city. For that, in October 2022, he was inducted into the London Sports Hall of Fame, in addition to

Statements by Members

the many other recognition points and awards of distinction he received along the way for numerous volunteer activities.

To his wife Katherine, his sister Olga and his many children and grandchildren, we share our deepest sympathies. They must be very proud.

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● (1110)

HOUSING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has been running massive deficits ever since it took office. All this debt has predictably triggered an inflation crisis, which has led to massive mortgage rate hikes. Half of all homeowners say their mortgage was already barely affordable, and now they are one renewal away from a shocking new payment that will add \$1,400 a month to a typical family with a mortgage.

Rate hikes are also crushing the dreams of new buyers and threatening to collapse transactions that are currently in progress. Young Canadians face housing prices and rents that have doubled, and now the highest interest rates in 25 years.

I beg the government to stop making things worse. It must stop the massive deficits that cause inflation and that are driving up mortgage rates to the point that homeowners cannot pay for the homes they own and young people have given up hope of ever owning one.

* * *

ART CAVE EXHIBITION

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I visited the “Art Cave” exhibition presented by the Mixed Media for the Neurodiverse class at the Dollard Centre for the Arts.

[Translation]

This class is taught by Keyiana every Sunday for eight weeks at the civic centre, which is an important meeting space for neurodiverse young adults.

[English]

This includes people with autism, ADHD, Tourette syndrome and OCD. It was a pleasure to see the amazing art by Laura, Katia, Alessia and other students. Art is a valuable expression of people's lived experience, thoughts and feelings.

Statements by Members

The artistic environment built by Keyiana allows neurodiverse young adults to experiment and to explore and promote their self expression. The Art Cave empowers unique voices through artistic expression. It fosters empathy and understanding within our society.

I say “thank you” to Keyiana and to all the students for their amazing work.

* * *

FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June marks Filipino Heritage Month. From coast to coast to coast, we celebrate Filipinos, who have enriched the social, cultural and economic fabric of Canada. Filipino Canadians have helped bring hope to so many of our communities with their ongoing achievements and vibrant culture.

As vice-chair of the Canada-Philippines Interparliamentary Friendship Group, I recently joined Filipinos in the greater Toronto area, where I met with people from the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and celebrated the incredible music, dance, art and traditions of the Philippines at the Filipino Centre Toronto.

Later this month, I will be in Neepawa, Manitoba, home to a vibrant and growing Filipino community, to celebrate Philippine Independence Day, a day when the people of the Philippines celebrate the day they rose up and demanded their freedom.

On behalf of all Conservatives, I wish everyone a happy Filipino Heritage Month.

Mabuhay.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has added more to our national debt than all previous governments combined. The only thing worse than a tax-and-spend Liberal is a borrow-and-spend Liberal. Liberal deficit borrowing is driving up interest rates, making Canadians' loans and mortgages more expensive. Liberal overspending is driving up the cost of goods and services, making everything, including our homes and our food, more expensive.

Albert Einstein once said that compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world, and that those who do not understand it will face the consequences. As interest rates rise, Canadian homeowners are facing the consequences, and Canadian taxpayers are facing the consequences of an exponential increase in government interest debt. Eventually this debt needs to be repaid. We cannot burden future generations with this overwhelming responsibility.

It is time to save Canadians' finances by ending the Liberal deficits and balancing the budget.

[Translation]

FOREST FIRES

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from one end of the country to the other, forest fires are forcing people to leave their communities or else spend days under a blanket of smoke. In northern Ontario, 50 fires are burning.

I want to thank all the firefighters for bravely fighting the fires, protecting the public and ensuring the safety of affected communities.

We are investing in training more community firefighters, and we are turning to indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge to help us stave off the threat of forest fires. Hundreds of firefighters from other countries are coming in to support our efforts in the days and weeks ahead.

We are working together to keep Canadians safe and build strong, resilient communities.

* * *

● (1115)

[English]

OPIOID CRISIS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the urgent need to address the toxic drug crisis, which is costing lives in Winnipeg Centre.

Yesterday, I joined local frontline organizations, advocates and elected officials in calling on the federal government to work with Manitoba to increase the number of naloxone kits in Winnipeg. The situation is so dire that some organizations have been forced to source supply from other provinces. Their message is clear: More kits are desperately needed.

We also need to start treating the overdose crisis as a public health issue, not a criminal issue. I have been disgusted by the rhetoric we have been hearing from the Leader of the Opposition, who has been whipping up fear and spreading misinformation about this issue. We need more funding for addiction treatment, but we also need to keep people alive. Someone who fatally overdoses from poisoned drugs can never recover.

That is why I am urging the government to expand safe supply programs, decriminalize personal possession, and fulfill its promise to implement a dedicated mental health transfer. Lives are at stake. We must act now.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREST FIRES

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, adversity brings out the best in people.

At this time, in the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean, which I have had the honour to represent since 2019, people are coming together in wonderful ways to try to ease the fears of Jamésie residents, who are worried about losing their homes. This huge wave of support demonstrates, once again, how the people of Lac-Saint-Jean pull together. People are lining up to volunteer, offers of accommodation are pouring in over social media, and businesses are opening early to let people in. People are eager to help out of sheer compassion. It is really wonderful to see. Our courageous teams are working on putting out the fires. Although the situation is improving, it is still very worrisome.

In closing, I would like to say to those who have had to leave their homes in recent days, to all those affected directly or indirectly by the fires and to the SOPFEU teams that the Bloc Québécois is with them.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us play a game of *Jeopardy!*

I choose “Budgets Balance Themselves” for \$1.22 trillion.

This Liberal deficit will saddle our kids and grandkids with insurmountable debt for generations to come. The answer is, “What is \$61 billion?”

This increase in price is at its highest in 40 years, raising the cost of groceries, gas and everything Canadians buy. The answer is, “What is Liberal inflation?”

This burden on families is making owning a home unaffordable for millions of Canadians, and if it does come down soon, it will result in the loss of their homes. The answer is, “What are Liberal interest rates?”

Finally, for \$1.22 trillion, is the following: This Canadian political leader will end the destruction of the middle class and those who currently see no hope in joining it. The answer is, “Who is the member for Carleton?”

It is your home, my home, our home. Let us bring it home.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the days of having to rely on images of crumbling glaciers and Amazon deforestation to express urgency with respect to the climate emergency we find ourselves in are history. The climate emergency is at our doorstep, in our neighbourhoods and, over these past few weeks, in our lungs. Whether it is the wildfires, floods, droughts, heat waves, hurricanes or other extreme weather events, climate change is impacting our daily lives more than ever before. The wildfire smoke that enveloped Ontario is beginning to move south, causing our neighbours in the United States to have to stay indoors. There has never been a more urgent call to action on our collective obligations to combat the climate crisis.

Oral Questions

To quote Dr. David Suzuki, from one of my favourite books, *A Sacred Balance*, “There is no environment ‘out there’ that is separate from us.” We literally are our surroundings. Suzuki goes on to say, “Indigenous people are absolutely correct: we are born of the Earth and constructed from the four sacred elements of the earth, air, fire and water.”

However, all week, despite acknowledging Clean Air Day and World Oceans Day, the Conservatives have continued to debate the most basic of all tools to decarbonize and combat the climate crisis.

Climate change is a public health emergency and it impacts every single Canadian.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1120)

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is simple: Massive Liberal deficits cause inflation to rise, which forces interest rate hikes and mortgage defaults. The solution is clear: Stop the deficits, which slows inflation, prevents the interest rate hikes and saves people's homes. This week, the Bank of Canada increased interest rates to 19 times what they were last year.

Will the Prime Minister end his inflationary deficit spending and save Canadians' homes?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since last year, the Canadian economy has grown by 3.1%. Canadians have created close to 900,000 jobs, and 2.7 million Canadians have been lifted out of poverty. Nine million Canadians are getting access to dental care, child care costs are coming down by 50%, and, guess what, Canada has the lowest deficit in the G7.

We have cut taxes for small businesses and we have cut taxes for the middle class. There is definitely more work to do, but we have the tools to make life more affordable for Canadians.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is cold comfort for Canadians who are skipping meals, for families who are cancelling their kids sports activities and for families who have no hope of having a summer holiday, even for a couple of days of camping. Young Canadians, an entire generation, have lost all hope of ever owning their own home. However, the Liberal solution is to spend more and drive up prices. Budget bill after budget bill, the Liberal Prime Minister and finance minister keep taking away more and more opportunities from hard-working Canadians.

Will the Liberals pull back on their budget bill and replace it with one that does not throw more fuel on the inflationary fire?

Oral Questions

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is really important to talk about families, because we are the party that introduced the CCB. We have lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty, and when parents are trying to make ends meet, one of the most important things the government is doing is lowering the cost of child care.

I have had multiple parents complain to me, over the course of my parliamentary life, about the fact that the cost of child care was equivalent to a mortgage payment, but they do not say that anymore, and it is going to get better because we are going to continue to reduce it until it is \$10 a day.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I hear from parents is that they are working two or three jobs and are working every hour of overtime they can, just to put food on the table. Rent has doubled under the Liberals. It is harder and harder for families to make ends meet at the end of each month.

Conservatives have offered to stay here as long as it takes to fix the Liberal budget bill. Will the Liberals stay here, fix their bill and eliminate wasteful spending so Canadians can finally get some relief from the Liberals' inflationary crisis, or will they just go on vacation?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite what the Conservatives are saying, Canada is working and Canadians are working. Canadians have created close to 900,000 jobs since the pandemic.

There was a time for the Conservatives to positively contribute their solutions to the budget implementation act. That started in April, but instead of doing that, they decided to filibuster the entire thing. They sent food banks home. They sent chambers of commerce home. They did not want to hear from Canadians on how we could make it better. Therefore, their suggestion that they are going to come back in the summer, when their homework was due two months ago, is quite hypocritical.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the reality currently facing all Canadians. After eight years of Liberal governance, with chronic deficits and out-of-control spending, this is the reality. Uncontrolled deficits lead to higher inflation. Higher inflation leads to higher interest rates. What happens when interest rates go up? People run the risk of losing their homes. This is the reality facing Canadians every day, and will be for the months and years to come.

Why does the government not do what it did last November, that is, come up with a plan to balance the budget?

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after peaking at 8.1% last year, the inflation rate now stands at 4.4%, and the Bank of Canada expects that to drop to less than 3% by the end of the fall. Canada delivered the strongest economic growth last year. The OECD predicts that Canada will once again have the strongest economic growth this year and next. Canadians can and should have confidence in the resilience of our economy.

• (1125)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, the reality is that if he says that to people who are on the verge of losing their homes, they will laugh in his face or ask him whether he is prepared to take their keys because they can no longer pay for their home. That is the reality facing Canadian families.

If the member wants to quote studies, I could point out that the International Monetary Fund says that Canada is the country at the highest risk of mortgage defaults. This week, the Governor of the Bank of Canada said that mortgage payments could rise by 40%. This is the daily reality for Canadian families. Why does the government refuse to come up with a plan to balance the budget?

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, Canada is forecast to have the strongest economic growth among G7 countries this year and next.

One thing my hon. colleague did not mention is the fact that just today, almost 900,000 more Canadians have recovered the jobs they lost during the pandemic. There are 128% more jobs than there were before the pandemic.

Canadians can be confident about their future.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about Chinese interference, or rather, let us talk about those who are the victims of it, those who the government refuses to talk about. Let us talk about the defenders of democracy from Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Solomon Islands. Let us talk about the Uyghurs and the Tibetans. Their representatives all rallied with the Bloc Québécois to demand a public and independent inquiry into Chinese interference, not because they are picking a side in a partisan dispute, but because they want to protect their community and they feel abandoned by this government.

When will the government stop ignoring their request for a public and independent inquiry?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect all parliamentarians in this place to take the issue of foreign interference extremely seriously. It is not a partisan issue. Part of that is actually doing the work that comes with Mr. Johnston's report. I note that the leader of the Bloc has decided to not actually look at the information that has been provided to him, which is the basis of Mr. Johnston's report.

If opposition members want to criticize the work of Mr. Johnston, they should first look at the documents included.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the situation speaks for itself. No pro-democracy groups and no representatives of the victims of the Chinese regime support the government's initiative. None. The government would know that, had its special rapporteur taken the time to talk to them before publishing his report. They are all calling for a public inquiry led by an independent commissioner with the power to issue a summons. They want the government to finally get to the bottom of things, to deal with Beijing's interference tactics.

When will the government finally listen to them?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting Canada's democracy is a responsibility that we take extremely seriously. While the opposition is playing politics, we are taking very serious measures.

We want to implement a transparency registry on foreign influence and strengthen oversight mechanisms because the protection of our institutions is our top priority.

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HOUSING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada's ninth interest rate hike is hitting Quebecers hard. Someone may have worked very hard for years to be able to realize their dream of purchasing a home and then a few years later is forced to sell it because their monthly payment has increased from \$2,300 to \$3,780, a 64% increase in one year. That is the harsh reality of families in Quebec and right across the country.

What will the Liberals do to help families that are about to lose their homes?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We all agree that Canadians are grappling with higher rent prices and that times are tough when it comes to housing.

The federal government has put in place a national housing strategy as well as programs for municipalities, because everyone must be at the table to make decisions.

In budget 2023, we also proposed measures and guidelines to protect Canadians who took out mortgages in exceptional circumstances.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every time the Bank of Canada raises the interest rates, workers pay the price. While bosses and CEOs cashed in on their quarterly profits, Canadians lost 17,000 jobs in one month alone. To Liberals and

Oral Questions

Conservatives, economic recovery just looks like somebody else's unemployment, but for everyday people, it looks like economic punishment.

At a time when there is deep despair, why does the Liberal government refuse to fix unemployment insurance while so many Canadians continue to lose their jobs?

• (1130)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economy remains strong. We have experienced the strongest economic growth in the G7 over the last year. Our unemployment rate remains low, at 5.2%. We have recovered 128% of the jobs lost since the start of the pandemic. However, we are also working hard to make sure that we are looking after all workers, including those who have lost their jobs. We are making record investments in skills training and affordable housing. We are partnering with labour and industry on generational investment in the VW plant in St. Thomas and the Stellantis plant in Windsor, and we are modernizing the EI system to make sure that it is there for all workers when they need it.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a growing conflict of interest, the Prime Minister's rapporteur and one of the people he was supposed to be investigating were paying the same firm for advice. That person, of course, is the former Liberal member for Don Valley North. He left the Liberal caucus amid a foreign interference scandal, and Johnston did not even interview him. Canadians do not trust this process, and they cannot believe Johnston's report.

Will the Prime Minister finally call a public inquiry as, the House has called on him to do three times?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately what we see is another Conservative taking a page out of the Trump playbook, where it is just personal attacks when they do not like the outcome. The Conservatives made the conclusion prior to Mr. Johnston's report. They were never going to accept it. They are pretending now that it is the process they are upset about, when it is all partisan games.

On this side of the House, we take the importance of our democratic institutions seriously. That is why we appointed someone with Mr. Johnston's credibility to this position.

Oral Questions

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if they took democratic institutions seriously, they would respect the will of the democratically elected people in this House, who voted three times for a public inquiry. Instead, they wanted a Liberal solution to a Liberal problem. That is why they appointed a member of the Trudeau Foundation, who then hired some Liberals to help him out. When he thought he was in a conflict of interest, he asked another member of the Trudeau Foundation to say that he was not. Now we learn, of course, that he and the person he was supposed to be investigating were both getting advice from the same firm.

It is levels of conflict of interest with the Liberals. Canadians have had enough. A majority of them want a public inquiry. Will the Prime Minister finally call one today?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, Canadians can see on full display that the Conservatives are not serious about foreign interference. What they would rather do is just make personal attacks.

Another proof point of this is the fact that we had David Johnston at PROC for over three hours, and in their precious questioning time, the Conservatives did not ask a single foreign interference question in over 15 minutes' worth of time. Instead, they went for personal attacks. To them, foreign interference is a partisan game, but to Canadians, it is serious business.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the Prime Minister's loyal rapporteur, it is conflict after conflict. He hired the crisis management firm Navigator. This was the same firm hired by the member for Don Valley North, who happened to be the subject of the rapporteur's investigation. The rapporteur conveniently exonerated the member without even interviewing him. This conflict goes to the heart of the rapporteur's questionable conclusions. His report has no credibility. He needs to go.

When will the Prime Minister fire him and finally call an independent public inquiry?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives question Mr. Johnston's report, yet their leader—

The Deputy Speaker: We will hold on while things quiet down.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, they are cheering the fact that they live under a veil of ignorance and they are proud to do so. They question Mr. Johnston's report, even though their own leader has said he refuses to read the information it was based on.

If Canadians want to see somebody who is serious about foreign interference in the House, they should not look to the Conservatives, because all we hear is personal attacks in question after question.

• (1135)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. The conflicts are everywhere. The rap-

porteur is a family friend of the Prime Minister. He is a member of the Beijing-financed and compromised Trudeau Foundation. He hired a team of Liberals to draft and defend the conclusions of his report, and now this.

How many conflicts with this rapporteur is the Prime Minister willing to ignore? When will he fire him and finally call an independent public inquiry?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I find highly suspicious is the fact that the members opposite sit and make nothing but personal attacks while offering no solutions, no suggestions, on how to actually strengthen our democratic institutions.

The Conservatives have nothing more than conspiracy theories and personal attacks, just like the Trump administration did. On this side of the House, we take these issues seriously, because that is what Canadians expect.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the scandal of Beijing's interference in our democracy, we saw it all this week. First, the loyal Liberal rapporteur said that he saw no conflict of interest between his role and the fact that he is a close friend of the Trudeau family and a member of the Trudeau Foundation, that he has sought advice from another friend of the Trudeau Foundation, and the list goes on.

Then we heard the special rapporteur say he had omitted important facts and witnesses from his report. Yesterday, we learned that the loyal rapporteur and a Liberal MP who was a subject of his investigation had hired the same crisis management firm.

How can the Liberal members blindly follow the Prime Minister in yet another conflict of interest? When are they going to fire the special rapporteur?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the special rapporteur. I have a quote here from the Conservative leader, who said, "we are dealing with a very credible individual and I think that history bears little relevance to the fact that he has a very distinguished career".

At some point, the Conservatives decided to turn this into a political game. They could simply accept the briefing they have been offered and learn all the details of the situation.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since then, he has gotten caught in the Prime Minister's trap.

Sacha Trudeau, Sheila Block, Valérie Gervais, Don Guy, Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, David Johnston, Frank Iacobucci, Morris Rosenberg, the MP for Don Valley North and a crisis management firm, all these people or organizations have connections to the Prime Minister.

The problem is that they are all key actors in the play being staged by the Prime Minister in order to avoid launching an independent public inquiry into Beijing's interference. No one believes in Mr. Johnston's independence any more.

When will the Prime Minister do the right thing, fire his friend Johnston and launch a real independent public inquiry?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, my colleague wants to play politics. Protecting Canadian democracy is a responsibility we take very seriously. While the Conservatives focus on playing political games, we are taking strong action.

The person in question is highly qualified. Frankly, I have not heard anyone in my constituency tell me that he is not credible. We are working with someone who is reliable. He knows about foreign interference, he is the one we will be working with, and we will do good work.

LABOUR

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after nine months of lockout at the Port of Quebec, employees have just received their first offer from management. It was rejected by 98% of membership. How is that possible?

It is simple. At the federal level, the employer does not need to negotiate. It hires strikebreakers. It replaces workers with scabs, like in 1920. The federal government is responsible for stalling this dispute with its antiquated labour laws.

When will it finally join the 21st century and prohibit the use of strikebreakers?

[English]

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has done more for Canadian workers than any government in the past did.

We are continuing to support workers and the bargaining process, both the employers and the workers, and we are on track to ban replacement workers by the end of this year. It is part of the budget, and we are on track to do it.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it should do so immediately, then. That is why the Bloc Québécois introduced a bill to prohibit strikebreakers. Quebec prohibited the use of strikebreakers in the 1970s. What is good for all workers in Quebec should be good for federally regulated workers.

This government claims to defend the middle class. If that is the case, then when will it bring back our bill and prohibit the use of strikebreakers, a practice that undermines labour rights?

[English]

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we have wrapped up consultations. We are taking the feedback that we have received

Oral Questions

from unions, employers and indigenous groups to inform our legislation, which will be tabled by the end of this year. This is the latest evolution in policy to protect the collective bargaining process. We need to strike a balance between doing it quickly and getting it right.

I encourage the member opposite to support our budget so that we can get this job done.

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the Bank of Canada hiked interest rates. This is a direct result of the government's inflation-inducing fiscal policy, which is driven by frivolous tax-and-spend policies that bankrupt Canadians. As a result, reams of struggling Canadians will default on their mortgages, putting the dreams of home ownership even further out of reach.

We do have a solution. We will stop the deficits, rein in inflation, stem interest rates and end the defaults. Are they willing to put partisanship aside, work with the opposition and end this inflationary deficit spending?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was going to give an answer about housing, but I must admit that my colleague's last comment really got a rise out of me.

If she wants to work together, then I would encourage her to stop blocking the budget, which seeks to give directives to protect Canadians who took on mortgages in exceptional circumstances. That is set out in budget 2023, and yet the Conservatives voted against it.

[English]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have been extremely clear. We are willing to put party politics aside and sit down with the government to hash out a budget that would actually help Canadians instead of punishing them.

The Liberal government is far too eager to ram this legislation through the House instead of putting in the necessary work to deliver a fiscally responsible budget. Will the government accept our proposal to work together, sit down with us on this side of the House and work in the best interests of Canadians?

Oral Questions

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that all the students who go to summer school are the ones who did not do their homework throughout the rest of the year, and that is exactly what the Conservatives did. They spent two months filibustering the budget.

We were talking about how we could positively contribute to solutions for affordability for Canadians and to create jobs for Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and for more than six weeks, the Conservatives decided to talk to themselves and send away Canadians who were coming to the table with solutions that were going to work. For them to come out this morning to say that they want to revamp a budget over the summer, I invite them to draft it. It would be nice to have a single solution in the House from the other side.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Prime Minister, along with the costly NDP coalition, have made the dream of home ownership and starting a family far out of reach for working young adults in my riding. They have done everything they were asked to do and left with only fear and tears.

Will the Prime Minister end his inflationary deficit spending and let young adults begin their lives and start a family?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, youth unemployment has gone down under our budget. We have provided more jobs through the Canada summer jobs program. We are making sure there are jobs available.

Whether it is on small craft harbours in Atlantic Canada, in the aerospace industry in Quebec, in car manufacturing in Ontario, on farms on the Prairies or in biotech companies in B.C., we are going to make sure there are lots of opportunities for young individuals to have the high-paying sustainable jobs of the future. That is why we are investing in this country. It is because we believe in the future, unlike the Conservatives.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberal-NDP coalition does not care about the future generations, what does it say to the homeowner who cannot pay their mortgage because the Liberal government overspent and caused inflation that caused mortgage rate hikes? The Prime Minister is stripping the hopes, dreams and house keys from the hands of Canadians.

When will he realize the pain and suffering he is causing?

• (1145)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think context is important. Inflation in Canada is coming down. It reached a peak of 8.1% and is now at 4.4%. It is going to go below 3%, as is projected, before the end of this year. Despite the fact it is coming down, it is already lower than what it is in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and the OECD.

That means we can afford to make investments in making life more affordable. No Canadians are convinced that their lives are going to be more affordable by getting rid of dental care, getting rid of child care, eliminating the CBC or stopping to fight climate change. They have no good ideas on the other side of the House.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, close to a million people living with a disability live in poverty, and the Liberals have left them to suffer. The Canada disability benefit must be the solution to finally enable them to make ends meet, otherwise the government continues to be part of the problem. People living with a disability deserve to live in dignity.

Will the Liberals ensure that this new benefit will lift people living with a disability out of poverty?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her collaboration and her advocacy on this critically important issue.

In Canada, no person with a disability should live in poverty, period. That is why we are creating the Canada disability benefit, an income supplement with the potential to seriously reduce poverty and improve financial security for hundreds of thousands of working-age persons with disabilities.

In February, the House unanimously adopted Bill C-22. Bill C-22 is now on the calendar for debate in the House on June 14. We are looking forward to getting this legislation past the finish line as quickly as possible.

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LABOUR

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I stand in solidarity with the unionized workers, and their families, of the Iqaluit Housing Authority. They have been on strike for close to three months. The labour minister remains silent as the Iqaluit Housing Authority brings in scabs and undermines workers' rights. New Democrats have introduced anti-scab legislation to stop this.

Will the minister support the NDP's bill to protect unionized workers?

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the best deals are made at the bargaining table, and federal mediators are in touch with the parties. Our federal mediators are very good at what they do, and we have faith in their ability to help parties reach an agreement.

We are on track to ban the use of replacement workers by the end of this year, but we need to strike a balance between doing things quickly and getting things done right, as I have mentioned before.

HEALTH

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has strained our health care system, disrupted our economy and changed the way we interact every day. We know that better health care for Canadians means supporting our health care workers and ensuring patients receive timely access to the health services they deserve.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health announced direct support to the Medical Council of Canada, the National Registry of Physicians, the Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine and the Canadian Alliance of Medical Laboratory Professionals Regulators. Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport please tell the House how yesterday's announcement is addressing current and emerging labour demands in health care?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague from Richmond Hill for his hard work, and for his excellent advocacy in his riding and at the health committee for foreign credentials qualifications.

Yesterday, our government announced \$78.5 million for three projects that support foreign credentials qualifications for internationally trained medical graduates to grow and support our health care workforce. These projects will help improve the process for recognizing foreign credentials for internationally educated health professionals, and improve labour mobility for physicians to make it easier for them to work where they are most needed through our country.

Our government's priority remains to work together to support our health care workers so that patients across Canada get the care they need when they need it.

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THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to add fuel to the inflationary fire, despite the finance minister's words that deficits must be reduced and this is a line that cannot be crossed.

What will happen? Inflation goes up and interest rates go up, so Canadians default on their mortgages and Canadians lose their homes. What is the solution? The solution is to stop the inflationary spending and stop the interest rate hikes, so Canadians can have lower inflation rates and lower interest rates.

Is the government ready to do that?

• (1150)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Conservatives do not believe that we can fight inflation and fight climate change at the same time, yet emissions and inflation are both coming down in Canada. Canadians have created over 900,000 new jobs. We have the lowest deficit and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

Oral Questions

In addition, the IMF and the OECD now both project that Canada will have the strongest economy in 2023 and in 2024. This gives us the tools we need to address affordability. Of course, we have a national housing strategy, which is the first time the federal government has invested in housing in over 30 years.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, then why do we have the greatest level of household debt in Canada that we have ever had?

The IMF states that out of the G7, Canadians are most likely to default on their mortgages. Even the finance minister recognizes that Canadians are struggling. She said that Canadians are facing hardships as a result of high interest rates.

Why does the government not commit to eliminating inflationary deficits and eliminating inflationary spending, so that Canadians can have lower inflation and lower interest rates?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. As she is well aware, the national housing strategy is not just about helping Canadians pay their rent. It is also about helping them to fulfill their dream of home ownership.

My colleagues opposite voted against the budget, which contains direct measures to help Canadians who are struggling with mortgages in exceptional circumstances. I would invite her to read that part of the budget and vote in favour of it.

[English]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the IMF warns that Canada is at the greatest risk of home mortgage defaults in the world. The Liberal government's out-of-control spending and massive deficits have caused inflation to skyrocket.

Canadians cannot absorb these higher rates, placing their dreams of home ownership at risk. Families are struggling, and they are struggling because of this Liberal government.

Will the Prime Minister end his inflationary deficit spending?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite what the Conservatives say, everyone knows that inflation is a global phenomenon. Inflation in Canada is lower than our peer economies, and we have the best fiscal framework in the G7.

Our budget not only retains this fiscal advantage and allows inflation to continue to decrease, it makes life more affordable for Canadians and invests significantly in health care and in dental care, while creating high-paying sustainable jobs to go above and beyond the close to 900,000 jobs that Canadians have already created.

Oral Questions

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians simply cannot afford the higher cost of living brought about by these Liberal government policies. They are being forced to work more shifts or find a second job simply to get by. Canadians deserve our help. Budget 2023 only makes the cost of living crisis worse.

Conservatives are ready to work through the summer to fix their mistakes. Will the Liberal government cancel its vacation plans?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my summer plans are to go back to talk to my constituents and find out possible solutions to make Canada better. I hope that Conservatives will do the same.

I wish that the Conservatives would do what they say and, over the summer, find solutions to bring to the House. The only solutions they have brought to the House so far have been to cancel the CBC, stop the fight against climate change and raid the pension benefits of seniors.

Those are not viable solutions, so if they could spend the summer coming up with some positive solutions, I would be happy to work with them.

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[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during lockdown at the beginning of the pandemic, the government brought in the emergency business account. It provided loans of up to \$60,000, \$20,000 of which was forgivable if the loan was paid off by a certain deadline.

That was the right thing to do. Some 900,000 business owners needed it. The deadline of December 31 is fast approaching, however, and 40% fear they will be unable to pay off the loan in full, which means they will not qualify for loan forgiveness. This is threatening their survival.

Will the government offer them some flexibility?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Bloc Québécois member because it underscores the importance of small businesses here in Canada.

We have always been there to help and support SMEs. We lowered taxes from 11% to 9%. The opposition voted against that measure.

We were there to provide support during the pandemic with the loans the member across the way mentioned.

What we just did with the budget is lower credit card transaction fees for SMEs. Again, the opposition voted against that.

• (1155)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has such a habit of letting its work be done by

Crown corporations and officials that it cannot even answer its own questions.

The deadline of December 31 seemed reasonable at the start of the pandemic. It was believed that the economy could be put on hold and then re-opened, and that that would be the end of it. However, it is just the start for SMEs. The variants prolonged the crisis and led to supply chain problems, skyrocketing costs, labour shortages and empty downtown cores.

As a result, with the deadline six months away, 40% of these businesses, or 250,000 companies, may have to close their doors. Will the government let them, if necessary, make repayment plans without losing their subsidies?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what needs to be pointed out with respect to the question asked by the member opposite is that SMEs could apply for a maximum of \$60,000. Repayment of two-thirds of the loan by the deadline results in loan forgiveness of one-third.

We are always here to listen to SMEs' concerns. That is why, as I mentioned, we have just cut credit card transaction fees for SMEs here in Canada.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not long ago the Liberal Minister of Finance said:

By exercising fiscal restraint, and by not pouring fuel on the fire of inflation today, we will ensure we can responsibly invest in Canadians and in a Canadian economy for years to come.

Yet, here we are, \$60 billion in new spending and interest rates at their highest level in 22 years. The Liberals call that restraint? They are practising about the same amount of restraint as a kid in a candy store.

When will the Liberals stop gouging Canadians and end their inflationary spending?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are putting forward a plan that is fiscally responsible.

That is why inflation is coming down. If the member is not aware, it peaked at 8.1% and is now at 4.4%. It is projected to go lower than 3%.

If the member thinks he is going to convince Canadians that he is going to make life more affordable by suggesting that we delete all the programs that make life more affordable, like dental care, like child care, like the CCB, like investing in retirement security for seniors, I do not think he is going to fool anybody other than perhaps the other members sitting on the other side of this House.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk a little about the people who are hardest hit by—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Maybe somebody does not know how to use their headset. I just want to make sure members have their headsets on mute. I know it might be the first day with some of this stuff.

The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the people hardest hit by the Liberals' inflationary spending, just for a minute.

The Liberals claim to be the champions of equality and they weave that word into every announcement they make. However, for them, it is nothing more than a buzzword.

In the words of one of the Prime Minister's own former advisers, government spending “will impact disproportionately lower income Canadians and young families, potentially creating divisions and threatening new sorts of inequality.”

When will the government drop the platitudes and stop gouging the Canadians struggling the most?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have no credibility when it comes to supporting families. When they were in power, they sent out cheques to millionaires with their universal child benefit.

Our Canada child benefit has supported tens of thousands of families in my riding alone.

If the Conservatives really want to support families, then they should support dental care, which has provided dental care for 1,100 constituents in the riding of Carleton and over 1,000 kids in my riding as well. How about some solutions from the other side, rather than just constant slogans?

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the past eight years, this Prime Minister and this government have been spending recklessly, and this is having a devastating effect on Canadian families. Accumulated deficits drive up inflation. Everyone knows that. Inflation has led to higher interest rates. The Bank of Canada had to raise its key interest rate. The result is ever-higher mortgage payments.

When will the Prime Minister finally understand that he needs to eliminate these inflationary deficits, which are putting people out on the streets?

Oral Questions

• (1200)

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite my hon. colleague to have a look at the budget. He can look directly at the budget to see very clearly that the deficit will continue to decline every year for the next five years, despite the headwinds we face. The Conservative Party's reckless austerity measures would be very problematic. Our government has the lowest deficit in the G7. We have the lowest debt and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio. It is thanks to our leadership that we have been able to achieve these important goals.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a very important federal-provincial-territorial meeting was held last week to discuss wildlife and biodiversity conservation. Specifically, the parties discussed practical ways that they can work together to achieve the important biodiversity targets that they committed to at COP15. One of the most important targets is to conserve 30% of Canada's land by 2030.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change update us on Canada's progress in this regard?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. The COP15 summit held in Montreal was a major triumph for Canada and the planet. We are implementing the agreement that was signed. I am very pleased that the provinces and territories have committed to contributing to our objective of conserving 30% of Canada's lands by 2030 in order to slow the decline in wildlife populations.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 16, 2021, Cody McConnell's life was forever changed because his fiancé Mehale Busch and 16-month-old son Noah McConnell were murdered by a registered sex offender who was deemed highly likely to reoffend. Noah's law would protect vulnerable women and children who are most likely to be victims of sex offenders.

Will the Liberals do the right thing, pick up the bill and make Noah's law a reality today?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I salute the member's empathy and the good place from which the question came.

Oral Questions

Our sympathies go out to Cody McConnell and his family and friends for his loss. I tabled in the Senate Bill S-12, whose intention is precisely to preserve and strengthen the sex offender registry. I have undertaken publicly, and I will do it again now, to look at the proposed Noah's law to see if it is in conformity with what we are trying to do and to work with members across the floor to see what we can do.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, eight years of the Liberal government have given Canadians higher deficits, higher inflation and higher interest rates, which, of course, lead to higher mortgage payments. According to a recent study by the International Monetary Fund, Canadians are now the most at risk to default on their mortgages, and this problem will only get worse as more and more Canadians renew their mortgages at higher interest rates.

When will the Prime Minister end his inflationary deficit spending?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have had the opportunity to say many times in this House, our plan is fiscally responsible and inflation is coming down. It is at 4.4% and we expect it to be less than 3% before the end of this year.

At the same time, we are investing in making life more affordable, and we can afford to do that because we have the lowest deficit and because we have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio and because we have the fastest-growing economic growth, at 3.1%, in the G7. We need to take advantage of our good fiscal framework and make sure that we make life more affordable for Canadians.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Immigration designed overly narrow criteria for admitting the families of Afghan language and cultural advisers, whose lives are now in danger. They cannot get to Canada and the minister refuses to schedule meetings with Afghans who want to fix the rules and save these lives.

Why can the minister find the time in his schedule to announce visa-free travel for people from other countries, but not to take a meeting with a brave Afghan who served Canada and whose family may be killed because of that service?

● (1205)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly I want to reiterate to this House that the resettling of Afghans remains our very top priority. These Afghans have worked side by side with the Canadian Armed Forces in our mission in Afghanistan to promote peace and democracy in this region.

Let me be very clear. We will not turn our backs on these brave Afghans who have worked with us and we will do everything we can to get Afghans to safety.

HOUSING

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that a significant gap remains for indigenous peoples living in urban, rural and northern areas when it comes to housing. There is an urgent need to act now.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing elaborate on how our government is upholding the right to housing as per UNDRIP's articles 21 and 23, with an emphasis on the for indigenous, by indigenous approach, and how this recently announced partnership with the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc. is designed to rapidly address the urgent needs and long-term housing challenges of indigenous peoples across Canada?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his hard work.

Too many indigenous people in urban, rural and northern communities do not have the housing they need. That is why our government committed to co-developing a for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy. Yesterday we announced immediate funding of \$287 million with the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc., and it is just the beginning. Through budget 2023, we are investing an additional \$4 billion.

As we advance toward reconciliation, our focus remains on providing safe, affordable homes for all.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Albertans have made it very clear that they do not want coal mining in the Rocky Mountains. Coal mining in the eastern slopes threatens our land and our water, it is not good for our planet and it is not good for Albertans, yet the minister is fine with an Australian coal mining company carving out more than 500 hectares of Grand Mountain.

Based on my private member's bill, this government promised that all coal mining would trigger a federal environmental impact assessment. Albertans want it. First nations want it. So, where is the impact assessment on the Grand Cache Mine?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a commitment to end the export of thermal coal, and we are working across all sectors of our economy to make sure that we are reducing emissions.

We put in place a robust impact assessment system that is there to make sure that there are regional assessments and impact assessments to take into account environmental concerns. We have a very objective system. I am sure that the member opposite can look at the improvements that we have made towards those policies.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, in May 2022, an IRCC committee tabled a report that noted overt and subtle racism at its offices abroad, especially at posts where visa decisions were delegated to locally engaged staff, such as in South Africa. It has come to my attention that an unofficial filter system has been incorporated in that country. White local staff are overwhelmingly refusing visa applications from predominantly Black South Africans. Indeed, white visa applications are being placed in one pile and non-white in another. This is unconscionable.

Can the minister confirm or deny if Canada is running an apartheid-era visa selection process in South Africa?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that we have zero tolerance for racism or discrimination of any kind. That is why we are already hard at work to address racism and create real, lasting change.

We created the anti-racism task force. We continue to provide training to address unconscious bias for all of our employees. Also, IRCC has released our new anti-racism strategy 2.0. However, we know that there is more to do, and we will keep working hard to fight all discrimination and build on our findings.

* * *

● (1210)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the June 12, June 13, June 14 and June 15 sittings be 12 midnight, pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022.

The Deputy Speaker: First of all, I thank the minister on behalf of chair occupants, as we can get that schedule done. Pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the minister's request to extend the said sittings is deemed adopted.

Are there any other points of order?

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, I am representing Calgary, the best place on earth.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance said that Conservatives shut down witness testimony of finance. In fact, it was the Liberal committee chair who skipped over 10 hours of committee testimony. The Liberals did not want to hear from Canadians who are saying that their—

The Deputy Speaker: I believe that is descending into debate.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, can I table this document?

Routine Proceedings

The Deputy Speaker: We will need unanimous consent. All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I have the honour to lay upon the table a notice of ways and means motion to introduce an act to give effect to the self-government treaty recognizing the Whitecap Dakota Nation/Wapaha Ska Dakota Oyate and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I request that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion of the notice of ways and means.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the document entitled “A Self-Government Treaty Recognizing the Whitecap Dakota Nation / Wapaha Ska Dakota Oyate”.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 16 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud and honoured to present petition 441-01522. This petition has been signed by 238 signatories from the County of Essex and city of Windsor area.

The petitioners are calling on the government to rewrite the tax laws of Canada and renegotiate any tax treaties with the United States to recognize 401(k) contributions and social security and medicare payroll taxes as foreign tax credits in Canada for Canadian residents.

Routine Proceedings

Further, the petitioners are calling to reinstate the temporary waiver with respect to 401(k) contributions and FICA payroll taxes, retroactive to January 1, 2022, until such time as the tax laws of Canada and tax treaties with the United States have been updated.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions to table today on behalf of my constituents.

The first one is on foreign interference. Specifically, petitioners are drawing attention of the House and the government to the fact that, so far, there has not been a public inquiry called. The petitioners are very concerned about the special rapporteur's conflict of interest with the Prime Minister and those who have been hired by him and assigned by him to work on his report. They are calling on the government to conduct a full, open, independent public inquiry into Beijing's election interference to give Canadians the transparency they need in order to restore their trust in Canada's civic and parliamentary institutions.

• (1215)

HONG KONG

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from Hong Kongers and those with heritage from Hong Kong.

The petitioners are drawing the attention of the House to the following: On February 6, 2023, Canada announced that it would extend and expand the Hong Kong pathway open work permit program for eligible Hong Kongers by extending the open work permit scheme for an additional two years and making additional changes to it in pathway stream B. However, those changes are not sufficient to save more pro-democracy movement Hong Kongers.

The petitioners want the following to be changed: They want the requirement for an obtention of a police certificate from Hong Kongers to be annulled and not a requirement; they want eligible open work permit holders in Canada not to have to submit it; and they want it to apply when they apply for permanent residency in Canada through Hong Kong pathway stream B. They believe that the police certificate requirement and making Hong Kongers seek that from the constabulary in Hong Kong puts them all in danger.

HEALTH

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is from petitioners from the riding of Calgary Shepard, my constituents. They are drawing the attention of the House to the fact that there are over 53,000 internationally trained nurses, doctors and physicians in Canada. They say that we should copy what we do for skilled trades in the Red Seal program and create a blue seal program that would make the processes simpler for the recognition of international credentials within a 60-day standard. That way, more doctors and nurses would be licensed; streamlining the process would also help us fill the shortages of workers in health care.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my final petition comes from Venezuelans both in my riding and all across Canada who are calling the attention of the House to the disaster that is the Maduro Communist regime in Venezuela. I have

very little affection for the regime, but I have a lot of affection for the people of Venezuela.

Petitioners are drawing the attention of the House to some important numbers. As per the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' figures in 2022, more than 6.1 million Venezuelans have left Venezuela since 2015. Canada promised to welcome an additional 4,000 migrants from the Latin American region by 2028. Moreover, Canada announced at the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, in June 2022, that it also planned to bring in 50,000 more agricultural workers from Mexico, Guatemala and the Caribbean.

Petitioners are calling for the following two things: to create a Canada-Venezuela humanitarian visa program to help Venezuelans and the family members of Canadian Venezuelans with permanent residency to come to Canada, providing them with the ability to work and study while in Canada; and to provide those Venezuelans who are already in Canada the option to extend their visitor status, work permits and study permits, so they can continue to live and work here in Canada temporarily and not be sent back to that awful Communist regime.

DOG IMPORTATION

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to rise to present a petition on behalf of petitioners who, first of all, note that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the CFIA, announced in September of last year a new policy that prohibits the entry of commercial dogs from specific countries that are at high risk for rabies. This includes adoption and fostering. There are over 100 countries listed from which these dogs are prohibited from entering Canada, including Ukraine and Afghanistan, where humanitarian crises are occurring, and the Philippines and China, where rescuers are saving animals from the dog meat trade.

Animal advocacy groups have said they were not consulted on this plan. It came as a shock to them. The petitioners recognize that there are other measures that could ensure public safety, such as adequate vaccinations or blood-antibody testing. They note that no other western jurisdiction has banned international dog rescue entirely and that many Canadians adopt and rescue dogs from overseas. Petitioners note that this change could lead to more dogs in shelters or on the street globally, and it could exacerbate Canada's puppy mill crisis. They also note that they feel it is important for Canadians and their pets to be safe and that working with rescues and advocates is important.

They call on the Government of Canada to work with affected dog rescues and animal rights advocates to ensure that government policy on dog importations keeps Canadians safe without increasing the number of animals in shelters or on the street globally.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present a petition today that has been signed by the members of the Falun Gong, who have been very proactive on a number of different issues. Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline that consists of meditation, exercise and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance.

In July 1999, the Chinese Communist Party launched an intensive nationwide persecution campaign to eradicate Falun Gong. Hundreds of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been detained in forced labour camps, brainwashing centres and prisons, where torture and abuse are routine. Thousands have died as a direct result of this.

I am sure members can imagine the passion in those individuals involved in the petition campaign. What they are really doing is calling for the government, and all parliamentarians, to do more in terms of raising the profile of this particular issue and taking actions where we can.

* * *

● (1220)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1435, 1436, 1441 and 1443.

[Text]

Question No. 1435—**Mr. Brad Redekopp:**

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the government's response to Order Paper question Q-1146: what are the details of the tables provided in Annex A, broken down by category and country of origin?

Ms. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, IRCC undertook an extensive preliminary search to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the request to provide details of the tables provided in annex A in response to Order Paper question Q-1146 broken down by category and country of origin. The data elements identified for this response would be too large to provide and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

However, application processing times for selected categories are available by country at the IRCC Check Processing Times – Canada.ca website. Application categories where small sample sizes exist are excluded from processing time calculations, as including them would lead to unreliable calculations. The categories available online are as follows:

Under temporary residence: visitor visa, from outside Canada, broken down by country; visitor visa, from inside Canada; visitor extension, visitor record; super visa, parents or grandparents, bro-

ken down by country; study permit, from outside Canada; study permit, from inside Canada; study permit extension; work permit, from outside Canada, broken down by country; work permit from inside Canada, initial and extension; seasonal agricultural worker program, SAWP; international experience Canada, IEC; electronic travel authorization, eTA; economic immigration; Atlantic immigration pilot; Atlantic immigration program; Canadian experience class; caregivers, home child care provider pilot; caregivers, home support worker pilot; provincial nominees; self-employed persons, federal; Quebec business class; skilled workers, federal; skilled trades, federal; skilled workers, Quebec; and start-up visa.

Under family sponsorship: spouse or common-law partner living inside Canada; spouse or common-law partner living outside Canada; dependent child, broken down by country; parents or grandparents; and adopted child or other relative, broken down by country.

Under refugees: government-assisted refugees, broken down by country; privately sponsored refugees, broken down by country; protected persons and convention refugees, in Canada; and dependants of protected persons.

Humanitarian and compassionate cases.

Under citizenship: citizenship grant; citizenship certificate, proof of citizenship; resumption of citizenship; renunciation of citizenship; search of citizenship records; and adoption.

Permanent resident cards.

Under replacing or amending documents, verifying status: verification of status; replacement of valid temporary resident documents; amendments of immigration documents; and amendments of valid temporary resident documents.

The department aims to process all applications received within established service standards. There are factors outside of IRCC's control that may affect the processing time of an application, e.g., type of application, immigration levels space and client response time to follow-up questions. These factors are equally applicable, regardless of the applicant's country of origin.

Question No. 1436—**Mr. Brad Redekopp:**

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada: what is the spending on settlement services for immigrants by governmental and non-governmental organizations, broken down by the (i) organization, (ii) fiscal year, since 2015-16, (iii) projected spending for the fiscal year 2023-24, (iv) province and territory, (v) program spending, including but not limited to, the Resettlement Assistance Program, the Interim Housing Assistance Program, the International Migration Capacity Building Program, and the Settlement Program?

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, IRCC, undertook an extensive preliminary search in order to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the question and the amount of time that would be required to prepare a comprehensive response. IRCC concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question would require a manual collection of information that is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Question No. 1441—**Mr. Scott Aitchison:**

With regard to the Housing Accelerator Fund: (a) will having municipal regulations that encourage housing development be a pre-requisite for communities to receive money through the fund, and, if not, why not; (b) will communities who receive funding be required to avoid taking any action that makes the building of housing more difficult, such as restrictive zoning changes or by-laws; (c) what are the metrics that will be used by the government to monitor the effectiveness of this funding in each community; and (d) how does the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation currently track municipal housing policies, and does this tracking include whether or not a community's policies are consistent with the goals of the fund?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), in order to receive money through the fund, eligible communities must commit to an action plan that includes local initiatives that remove barriers to housing supply, accelerate the growth of supply, and support the development of complete, low-carbon and climate-resilient communities, which are affordable, inclusive, equitable and diverse. The action plan must detail the local government's commitment to a housing supply growth target, alignment to priorities and minimum number of initiatives they plan to undertake to increase and speed up the supply of housing in their communities. Approved applicants will receive an upfront advance to begin to implement their action plan. The remaining approved funding will be disbursed in installments annually over three years until 2026-27, provided the applicant adheres to the terms and conditions of the contribution agreement, including successful completion of local initiatives and achievement of growth targets. Enacting municipal regulations that encourage housing development is both an eligible initiative and an eligible expense.

With regard to part (b), annual installment payments for successful applicants will be conditional upon achieving growth.

With regard to part (c), municipalities will report annually on the number of permits issued and provide detailed progress updates on the implementation of their action plan Initiatives.

With regard to part (d), CMHC does not systematically track municipal housing policies; however, applicants will be required to demonstrate how their proposed systemic changes support the development of complete communities, the development of affordable, inclusive, equitable and diverse communities, and/or the development of low-carbon and climate-resilient communities. Applicants will also be required to have a current housing needs assessment during the program. The progress and implementation of these changes will be regularly monitored throughout the program duration.

Question No. 1443—**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:**

With regard to the government's response to the July 2018 report from the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology titled "The Shame is Ours: Forced Adoptions of the Babies of Unmarried Mothers in Post-war Canada": (a) why did the government not act on the first recommendation by issuing a formal apology; (b) does the government have any plans to issue a formal apology to the mothers and babies who were subject to forced adoptions, and, if so, what are the plans, including the time; (c) did the government create a fund to support training programs for professional counsellors that is appropriate for the needs of individuals affected by past adoption practices and the provision of counselling services by those professionals to mothers and adoptees affected by forced adoption practices, at no cost to them, and, if not, why not; and (d) does the government plan on setting up a fund similar to that contained in recommendation number three of the report, and, if so, what are the details?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada recognizes the significant and lasting impact that forced adoption had on individuals and families across Canada and has formally acknowledged the work of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology's on the 2018 report, "The Shame Is Ours: Forced Adoptions of the Babies of Unmarried Women in Post-War Canada".

Since the time period reviewed in the Senate report, legal protections have been put in place to ensure that forced adoptions can no longer take place. As the separation of children from their parents has been found to violate section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the right to security of the person, any forced separation of a child and parent must comply with the principles of fundamental justice. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Canada has been a party since 1991, also provides that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except where competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.

The Government of Canada is also a signatory to the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. These conventions, through principles and agreed standards, contribute to the objective of protecting the rights of women and children in Canada and around the world. The Government of Canada remains committed to upholding the principles enshrined in these conventions through our ongoing efforts to support women and children in Canada. This includes working with provinces and territories through the Continuing Committee of Officials on Human Rights, which is the principal intergovernmental body responsible for consultation and collaboration among governments in Canada with respect to international human rights treaties.

In addition to these legal protections, the Government of Canada is committed to improving supports for women, children and families including those for mental health. The government continues to work to ensure mental health services are accessible to Canadians. Budget 2023 provides \$25 billion over 10 years to provinces and territories to both address and integrate mental health and substance use health across shared priorities from family health services to improved data collection/sharing. This investment will build on the budget 2017 investments, which include \$2.4 billion from 2023-24 to 2026-27 to flow to provinces and territories for mental health and addictions services. Combined, these investments will help improve access to care, reduce harms, prevent overdose, reduce stigma and help save lives.

The Government of Canada continues to collaborate with advocates and other levels of government on this important issue, and to ensure that those impacted by forced adoption are supported and that these practices do not occur again.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1437 to 1440, 1442, 1444 and 1445 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1437—Mr. Brad Redekopp:

With regard to government departments, except Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada: what is the spending on settlement services for immigrants by governmental and non-governmental organizations, broken down by the (i) organization, (ii) fiscal year since 2015-16, (iii) projected spending for the fiscal year 2023-24, (iv) province and territory, (v) program line?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1438—Mr. Brad Redekopp:

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and applications to the temporary resident to permanent resident pathway during the program's dates of May 6 to November 5, 2021, broken down by province and territory: (a) how many applications (i) were received, (ii) have been completed, (iii) were approved, (iv) have been refused, (v) are currently outstanding; (b) how many agents are working on the program; (c) on an average weekday, how many processing agents were working at the Whitehorse, Yukon, IRCC office on these files during this time; and (d) what was the budget for processing the applications?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1439—Mr. Gerald Soroka:

With regard to overpayments made by the Phoenix pay system, as of April 24, 2023: (a) what was the total amount of overpayments made by the system; (b) what was the number of employees who received overpayments; (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by department, agency, or other government entity that used the Phoenix pay system; (d) of the amount in (a), how much has (i) been recovered, (ii) not yet been recovered; (e) of the amount in (d)(ii), how much has been written off by the government; and (f) for each amount in (e), what was the reason for the write-off?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 1440—Mr. Gerald Soroka:

With regard to the report released by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) titled "What We Heard: Perspectives on Climate Change and Public Health in Canada": (a) what was the estimated cost of producing the report; (b) what is the itemized breakdown of all costs associated with the report; (c) what was the total number of PHAC and Health Canada employees who worked on the report; (d) what are the details of all contracts issued related to the report, including, for each (i) the vendor, (ii) the value, (iii) the description of goods or services provided, (iv) whether the contract was sole-sourced or awarded through a competitive bidding process; and (e) what was the total amount spent on (i) travel, (ii) hospitality, related to the report?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1442—Mr. Adam Chambers:

With regard to government expenditures related to the Prime Minister's town hall meetings that have occurred since January 1, 2023: (a) what are the total expenditures to date associated with the meetings; (b) what is the breakdown of expenditures by meeting, including the date and location of each meeting; (c) what is the itemized breakdown of (a) and (b); and (d) for each meeting in (b), which groups or organizations hosted the meeting?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1444—Mr. Mike Lake:

With regard to government funding of non-governmental organizations or groups, since November 4, 2015: (a) how much money has the government allocated to (i) Environmental Defense Canada, (ii) Climate Action Network Canada, (iii) Oil Change International, (iv) Canadian Climate Institute, (v) LeadNow Society, (vi) Centre for International Environmental Law, (vii) Climate Emergency Institute, (viii) International Institute for Sustainable Development, (ix) Canadian Institute for Climate Choices, (x) Canadian Labour Congress, (xi) Trottier Energy Institute, (xii) Friends of the Earth U.S.; (b) for each entity in (a), what are the details, including the (i) department, agency or other government entity, (ii) date of the funding, (iii) amount and deliverables expected; (c) of the allocations in (a), which ones were (i) sole-sourced, (ii) awarded through a competitive bidding process; (d) of the allocations in (c)(ii), what was the (i) duration of the competition, (ii) number of organizations that submitted bids for the required deliverables; and (e) what programs from each organization listed in (a) received government funding, broken down by year and deliverables expected?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1445—Mrs. Rachael Thomas:

With regard to government requests to remove, edit, or alter information in the media, since January 1, 2016: (a) how many requests has the government made to social media companies, including for any article, post or reply; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by social media platform, year, department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity that made the request; (c) what are the details of each request to a social media company, including, for each (i) the date, (ii) the platform, (iii) the description of the post or reply, (iv) a summary of the request, (v) the reason for the request, (vi) whether the information was removed, edited, or altered, and if so, what changed, (vii) the title of the individual who made the request; (d) how many requests has the government made to traditional media companies; (e) what is the breakdown of (d) by media outlet, year, department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity that made the request; and (f) what are the details of each request in (d), including, for each, (i) the date, (ii) the media outlet, (iii) the title of the individual who made the request, (iv) the description of the content subject to the request, (v) whether the content was removed, edited, or altered, and if so, what changed?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is very encouraging legislation. As I highlighted earlier in the form of a question to the member, it is actually healthier legislation today than when it was first introduced, because of the process that we have gone through. The biggest benefactors, I believe, to this are going to be the people who it will impact and the people who have the desire to reach out and help others, in particular, in Afghanistan.

Could the member just give a very brief highlight as to why he is supporting the bill?

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I certainly agree that this bill has been improved through the committee process. I think it improves on the absence of a bill in this context, although there is still a lot of work to be done. This is why Conservatives proposed a very tight timeline for review, so that we will be able to revisit the subject a year from now. Our government has moved far too late on this, but at this point, we need to move forward as quickly as possible and then evaluate the approach. We can then see to what extent it is working effectively to get humanitarian and other forms of development assistance to those who urgently need it.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is quite an honour for me to rise with you in the chair. It is a first for me, and I hope I will live up to your wisdom. I am a bit nervous about my speech and I am worried you will find it is not up to snuff, but we can talk about that later.

Last year, many of my colleagues from the other parties and I had the honour to serve on the Special Committee on Afghanistan. I was one of the co-chairs of that committee. One of the very first questions that I had the opportunity to ask the witnesses over a year ago now at the February 7, 2022, meeting was this:

They said that the Criminal Code might need to be amended so that NGOs on the ground could operate in Afghanistan without fear of being accused of funding terrorism. In my opinion, this is a very important subject that we need to address. What are your thoughts on this...?

That was February 7, 2022. I asked that question as soon as I had the opportunity to do so, both to the organizations themselves and to the various departments involved. It will come as no surprise, then, that I was quite happy to hear the government finally announce that it was going to amend Canada's Criminal Code to make it possible for humanitarian aid to flow again and to allow NGOs to do their work without fear of prosecution. That was exactly what the NGOs were afraid of.

Bill C-41 is a useful bill that will help us make progress in the area of humanitarian aid. I am happy to have made my small contribution along with my colleagues from the other parties.

As everyone knows, I am a lover of democracy. I am one of those who believe that, despite differences of opinion, working together is beneficial to the parliamentary process the majority of the time. I would therefore like to thank my colleagues with whom I have worked over the last few weeks to try to improve this bill, but also to support its speedy passage. I would like to mention them by name because, unfortunately, it has been a long-term process, but one of collaboration. I want to thank the member for Oakville North—Burlington, the member for Edmonton Strathcona and the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. A number of other MPs took part in the work, but it was this group of MPs who worked in greater depth on the bill and managed to find some common ground. I would also like to take this opportunity to tell them that I am proud of the work we accomplished. It shows that, despite our often differing positions, and sometimes even completely opposing positions, we can work together and get things done.

Ultimately, Bill C-41 is a good bill, but we have to be careful not to get ahead of ourselves. Although I consider it a good bill, I had to temper my expectations a few times. There is nothing unusual in that; it goes hand in hand with teamwork and collaboration among the parties. Still, although I dare hope we achieved a result that will satisfy everyone, I think Bill C-41 could have been much better. Let me explain.

The bill is now in the Senate for a pre-study before it reaches report stage. As it is currently written, the Criminal Code does not include any exemptions to facilitate the delivery of essential activities in areas affected by terrorism. The government of Canada tabled Bill C-41, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, on March 9. As I mentioned earlier, this bill amends one of the Criminal Code's anti-terrorist financing offences to facilitate the delivery of much-needed international assistance, immigration activities, and other assistance in geographic areas controlled by terrorist groups.

In other words, the proposed amendments would create a new authorization scheme that would allow those that provide humanitarian aid to apply for an authorization that would shield them from the risk of criminal liability if the terms and conditions of the authorization are respected. We have to understand that the Taliban, as the current de facto authority in Afghanistan, is likely to receive revenue from any payments needed to support humanitarian aid. For example, sometimes the Taliban may collect taxes at roadside checkpoints they have set up and people have to pay to be able to pass through. Under the Criminal Code, any Canadian or person in Canada making or authorizing such payments would risk contravening a provision of the Criminal Code.

Despite the uncertainty, most organizations have continued to respond to crises around the world, but problems have grown exponentially since the Taliban, a listed terrorist entity, took control of Afghanistan in August 2021. In that regard, the scale of the humanitarian and economic crisis that the Afghan people are now facing cannot be overstated.

On paper, Bill C-41 rectifies this inability to make exceptions for organizations that are trying to deliver humanitarian aid on the ground.

• (1225)

Some humanitarian groups welcome the bill, but others were less favourable because they feel it creates more legal obstacles and red tape.

For the sake of clarity, here is what Bill C-41 set out at first reading. Under this regime, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the Minister of Public Safety or an authorized delegate would have the authority to grant an authorization to NGOs.

That seems like a lot of people. When we talk about bureaucracy, that is what we are talking about. I think it is clear that Bill C-41, at its foundation, may not have been ideal.

“The authorizations would shield applicants from criminal liability for certain activities such as the provision of international assistance...that would otherwise risk contravening the Criminal Code.” That is a good aspect of the bill and it is about time.

“In deciding whether to grant an authorization, the Minister of Public Safety would consider referrals by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and take into account their assessment of the application”. All of that remains to be seen.

The Bloc Québécois criticized the government for using an approach based on mistrust, even though it already knows a good number of the Canadian NGOs that it collaborates with and who have a proven track record. No departmental representative was able to tell me how long the authorization process would take. Even if someone had given me a figure, would we have believed them? Since becoming an MP, I have had many opportunities to observe how slowly the Canadian bureaucracy moves.

At first reading of Bill C-41, it provided for applications for authorization to be processed within a reasonable period of time by the Government of Canada. I repeat that we were talking about a reasonable period of time by the Government of Canada. That is scary.

Despite the positive advances in Bill C-41 at first reading, what worried me was the number of interventions required between departments and the impact of such a bill on humanitarian organizations. It is no secret that when it comes to processing times, I get the sense that there are some departments that do not spend much time checking the clock. For NGOs working in countries such as Afghanistan, where the situation is deteriorating before our eyes, time is running out.

Government Orders

As I said earlier, when Bill C-41 was being studied in committee, I had to make some concessions. That is fine and it is to be expected. The Bloc Québécois worked closely with the other parties and with stakeholders to speed up the passage of this bill but, more importantly, to improve it.

Overall, I was happy with the result. Imagine my surprise, however, when I learned in committee that the government was boasting about having held extensive consultations with major NGOs in drafting the bill. We quickly realized that some major organizations like Doctors Without Borders had not been consulted, when those are the organizations who are most familiar with what is happening on the ground. The entire sector should have been consulted, but unfortunately, it was not.

Another unfortunate point is that I get the impression that this is starting to become a habit on the government side. Bills are introduced, but, often, the community that will be most impacted by them has not been consulted, or the government consulted a small, select group of people who often have close ties to the Liberal Party, people who are already convinced. I think the government should do a little soul-searching and perhaps re-evaluate the way it conducts consultations on bills that are to be tabled in the House.

Although all the parties had announced their willingness to pass the bill quickly so that humanitarian aid could get to Afghans in need as quickly as possible, it still took quite a while.

The original bill contained some problematic provisions, including a very significant concentration of power in the hands of the Minister of Public Safety, a lack of predictability for NGOs and overreach in certain elements of Canadian government investigations.

For this reason, I think that the amended version of Bill C-41 achieves the necessary balance between security, justice and humanitarian aid.

• (1230)

What is more, opposition members were united on most of the amendments proposed. My colleagues who spoke before me mentioned that, and the ones who will speak after me will say the same thing. However, I must also point out that the government was available and honestly open to discussion.

Government Orders

I want to thank the member for Oakville North—Burlington, with whom I spoke many times, sometimes late into the night, to try to come to an agreement so that the bill would be passed by the House. Yes, the opposition parties were united on some of the amendments, but the government was also very open. I want to say that it is a pleasure to work with my Liberal Party colleague. I know her reputation and I know that I am not the only one who finds it easy to work with her. All of my colleagues who have worked with the member for Oakville North—Burlington on various files have said the same thing. We often give the government a hard time because that is our job, but when someone works hard and is open to discussion, it is only right to acknowledge it.

Ultimately, the amendments that were adopted improve the bill on several fronts. First, they remove the sword of Damocles hanging over the NGOs wishing to contribute to humanitarian aid in areas controlled by a terrorist group, as the principle of wilfully provided illegitimate aid will be incorporated into the Criminal Code. NGOs will nonetheless have to make reasonable efforts to minimize any potential benefit to terrorist groups. The minister will also be required to inform any eligible group or person of the classes of activities that would require authorization in certain geographic areas. The amendments also provide for an annual report by the minister outlining the applications that were approved or refused in the previous calendar year, as well as a comprehensive review of the impact of the bill, with a detailed plan to remedy any deficiencies that may be identified.

The amended bill is a version that, on paper, seems to suit the objectives of all the parties. The true impact of these legislative measures on the ground remains to be seen, however. That is why I want to say that the NGOs and the communities involved are the ones who will be able to tell us whether this is going to work. Unfortunately, we will only know during humanitarian crises in areas controlled by terrorists. That means that things will go badly somewhere in the world. The people who are there to help the less fortunate and the vulnerable are the ones who will be able to tell us whether these legislative measures are working or not.

It is mind-boggling to know that it took almost two years since the evacuation operation in Afghanistan for us to finally adopt this kind of legislation in Canada. If I remember correctly, on December 22, 2021, the UN proposed resolution 2615 to respond to the problem of NGOs that want to work in areas controlled by terrorists. The UN adopted that resolution on December 22, 2021 and here we are in June 2023. Canada is finally waking up. It is extremely problematic. Let us not forget that when the pandemic hit the entire country, all the opposition parties came together to adopt legislative measures to quickly come to the help of the Quebec and Canadian people. These were very complex bills that contained complex provisions, but we got the job done in a matter of weeks.

Everyone agrees that there is a problem in Afghanistan, that children are probably dying, and that vulnerable women, men and children are suffering and experiencing one of the worst humanitarian crises on the planet. Why has it taken two years to amend Canada's Criminal Code to help them, whereas Parliament was able to quickly adopt pandemic measures over the course of barely two weeks?

Every time I asked the ministers why it was taking so long, I was told that the situation was complex, that there were many things to

examine and that they did not want to rush. It was urgent, and it is still urgent.

• (1235)

For this Liberal government, is the situation of a Canadian who loses their job because of the pandemic more important than that of an Afghan child who needs humanitarian aid to eat and who will die if they do not get it? That is the question we needed to ask. Unfortunately, I believe I know the answer: No, it was not urgent for this government, otherwise the bill would have passed a long time ago.

When the government announced that it planned to amend the Criminal Code to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance in areas controlled by terrorist groups, the Bloc Québécois reached out to the government. We announced that we wanted to work twice as hard to pass the bill quickly so that our NGOs could once again do their work on the ground and humanitarian aid could reach vulnerable populations.

I think it is fair to say that the government did not define the word “quickly” the same way we did. However, let us remain optimistic and continue in a spirit of collaboration. Right now, Bill C-41 is a step in the right direction for humanitarian workers and people who are suffering. However, we will need to take more than one step forward to improve the situation. Since the situation is urgent and we need to be on the ground as quickly as possible, I think we have no choice but to vote in favour of this bill. However, I can understand how some of my colleagues, knowing that the bill will be passed, will vote against it in order to send a message to the government that this bill is not ideal.

Of course I have the utmost respect for my esteemed NDP colleague from Edmonton Strathcona. I know she has a background in this field, and she had several criticisms of this bill. While we may vote differently, I think we agree on the principle that we need to help the NGOs do their job. This bill does not necessarily have unanimous consent, but at least we were able to improve it through a number of amendments when the opposition worked together. I think it is important to emphasize that. Just because the NDP and the Bloc Québécois will be voting differently does not mean we are not on the same page. That may sound a bit odd, but it is nevertheless true.

In closing, I hope the government will learn from how it handled this file. It is just wrong for the government to drag its feet when it is well aware of a situation that calls for diligent action. When it is a matter of life and death, that is just wrong. This government, which claims to champion human rights while not giving a penny for international development and doing even less than the Harper government did, I would remind the House, needs to stop thinking that it is the best in the world when it comes to human rights. One need only look at how it handled this bill. It is just wrong that the government took so long to do this while people are suffering.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For as long as I live, I will definitely never forget that I delivered a speech with you in the chair.

• (1240)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Before we go to questions and comments, I would like to remind the hon. member that he cannot be disrespectful towards the Chair, even sarcastically.

The member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct that we worked very well together on this legislation. I will be speaking to it directly after him.

As he mentioned, I have worked in this sector for over two decades, and one of the main concerns I have with this bill is that, in effect, it criminalizes international development work. Instead of saying that we will tell organizations when we do not want them to work in a certain area or when they need an exemption in a certain area, they have to assume they are committing a crime and check in.

This is the criminalization of international development and of the very Canadian organizations that are flying our flags around the world and doing what needs to be done in the most dangerous, difficult circumstances. We are now criminalizing them. I wonder if he could talk a bit about how difficult that makes things for organizations.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. That is one of the consequences of this bill. I mentioned it and I believe that she, too, understood my point. We have no choice but to pass it now. It is better to have NGOs on the ground than to have no one. At present, people cannot go work in Afghanistan because they would be in violation of the Criminal Code. That will be the case until we pass this bill.

It truly is a ridiculous state of affairs. It was worse in the beginning, at first reading of Bill C-41. Clearly, there was mistrust of NGOs, as though they were fundamentally doing something wrong and it was up to them to prove otherwise, whereas we should be reversing the burden of proof.

I agree with my colleague, 100%. As I said, everyone tried to come to a compromise for this bill. That is what has happened. Admittedly, it is far from perfect. However, people are suffering in Afghanistan right now, and we absolutely must vote in favour of this bill, even if it means tabling a new bill to improve it when Par-

liament resumes in the fall. In the meantime, a number of NGOs in the sector are asking us to pass the bill. Then we will see if we can amend or improve it.

• (1245)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the member's efforts and thoughts in regard to the whole committee process. It is quite encouraging when members from different political sides come together to give strength to legislation. I understand there was a high sense of co-operation.

I looked this up just to make sure that I had the riding right. Oakville North—Burlington is the riding of the member he is referring to. Knowing her personality, I am sure she would have greatly appreciated the sense of co-operation coming from the member representing the Bloc.

Would my hon. colleague not acknowledge that, as a result of that high sense of co-operation, something done in an apolitical fashion, to a certain degree we now have stronger, healthier legislation?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, there was a lot of co-operation and mutual support on this bill. Not everyone is happy with the final product, but it is what it is.

I think that the way that we worked and the process that we followed to get to where we are today can serve as a model. The Conservatives, the NDP, the Bloc Québécois and the government all worked on this bill.

The next person who is going to speak, the member for Edmonton Strathcona, is going to be a bit more critical in her speech. I support those criticisms. However, as I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the bill because the situation is urgent. Something should have been done long a long time ago.

Throughout the process, I saw evidence of the fact that it is possible to work with some government members to make legislative changes. However, that is not always the case. I would like all the other government members to look at what the member for Oakville North—Burlington did and follow her example. If everyone were like her, then things would go a lot better in this Parliament.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech and his hard work. International humanitarian aid represents 0.3% of Canada's GDP, despite the government's commitment to increasing that figure to 0.7% of GDP. This bill could have been passed long ago, because lives that depend on it.

Government Orders

My questions for my colleague are the following. Does this not give the impression that, in international matters, Canada is always lagging a bit behind, as though this were not a priority? I do not want to say this is done consciously or voluntarily, but perhaps out of negligence. Should there not be more pressure to make international aid for those who need more a priority again in the future, whether through legislation or financial support?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: In 2015, Justin Trudeau said, “Canada is back”. Even the NDP—

• (1250)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The member for Lac-Saint-Jean knows full well that he cannot name sitting members of the House and that he needs to refer to them by their title.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, that is what the Prime Minister said. People from everywhere, from all political backgrounds, believed him when he said that infamous phrase in 2015. However, the Liberal government spends less on international development than the Harper government did. Canada has never spent so little on international aid. There were even cuts to international aid funding in the last budget.

The UN has asked us to invest 0.7% of our GDP in development assistance. Canada is currently investing 0.3%. We are not even close to the OECD average, which is around 0.42%.

I am a Quebec sovereignist, and I would argue that Canada is not a military power or an economic power, but it has shown leadership in the area of human rights in the past. Lester B. Pearson comes to mind, with his contribution to peacekeeping. On the Conservative side, Brian Mulroney led the battle against the apartheid regime. Canada has quite a human rights history.

When the Prime Minister came to power, he told us that everything would change compared to the previous government. However, things got worse. This Prime Minister is all about image and never about action, especially when it comes to international development, human rights, or funding for international projects that help vulnerable and underprivileged people who live in fear of losing their family, their life and their friends. The Prime Minister should look in the mirror. I know he does it a lot, but he should look himself in the eyes rather than looking at how he is dressed before leaving for work.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I tend to disagree with the member's comments regarding the Prime Minister. In many ways, Canada is back. We see it, whether through international trade agreements or the demand for the Prime Minister to go outside of Canada, which is fairly high, especially if we compare it to former prime minister Stephen Harper. In many ways, Canada continues to contribute, working through the United Nations, working with our allied forces, doing things to support the Five Eyes countries and doing so much more.

On the legislation, I think the legislation is good, and after its passage, we are going to see more people helping more people in need. I see that as a good thing. Would he not agree?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I think they are confused. It is not “Canada is back”; it is more like “Canada is at the back”. I am not sure if I can say it like that. The Liberals are at the back. They have not moved forward; they have fallen back.

That is pretty much the only answer I could give my friend. Flying in private jets to attend the coronation of the King of England is not exactly doing international work. That is not how it works. I understand that, during his first term, the Prime Minister had fun dressing up in different ways in different countries, but that is not how you promote change internationally.

I apologize in advance, but I must say that this Prime Minister has not done his job on the international stage, whether we are talking about international relations, funding, or recognizing human rights abuses. Just think of the Uyghur issue. It took forever before he even thought to acknowledge the genocide. The Prime Minister did not even acknowledge it himself; it was the House of Commons that had to do it for him.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we hear from the Liberals that they think they are back. I was not a member of Parliament or a politician in 2015 when the Prime Minister stood up and said that Canada was back. He tapped his chest and did that little thing he does when he is trying to make people think he really means it.

We all thought he did. The Prime Minister said all of the right words, all the right things that we wanted to hear. He said that Canada was back. We were going to be back on the world stage, and we were going to be back with peacekeepers. He promised over 600 peacekeepers. He told us we were going to be back on international development and diplomacy, that we were going to be in those conversations.

No one is more disappointed that that never happened than I am. We went through the Harper decade. I was with civil society groups that were working on foreign affairs, international development and sustainable development in the Harper years. I saw what happened under the Harper decade.

We were so looking forward to a shining example of what this country could be. Unfortunately, eight years in, the Liberals have failed to deliver that for us. We have a 15% cut to international development assistance in the budget at a time when we know the world needs Canada to step up more than ever. We have 60 peacekeepers in the field when the government promised 600. We have failures on our diplomatic fronts. Every decision the Liberal government makes puts trade ahead of human rights, ahead of people and ahead of women, every single decision.

However, that is not why I am here today. I just could not let it pass, to have the government tell us parliamentarians that Canada is back. Canada is not back.

We are here to talk about Bill C-41. I will repeat what I just mentioned. I have worked in international development, foreign affairs and sustainable development around the world. I did it for my entire career prior to being a politician, in countries all throughout the world. I have represented organizations. I have done an awful lot of this work.

It is very important work. I sometimes think that, in the House of Commons, we forget that. We forget that our foreign policy is a stool. That stool requires trade, one hundred per cent, and it requires diplomatic relationships with other countries. It also requires development, and we know what happens when we step back from that piece of the stool.

What we are talking about today is basically a humanitarian carve-out so that we would be able to get urgent help to people in Afghanistan, except that is not what this bill is. That is not how legislation works. This would impact the international development and humanitarian sectors for decades because it is law. It is not contextual for the Afghan crisis. I will say, I have stood in the House time and time again demanding that the government do more for the people of Afghanistan. My heart breaks for the women and girls in Afghanistan who cannot go to school, who cannot leave their homes, whose lives are in danger.

The worst day I have had as a parliamentarian was finding out that one of their members of Parliament was murdered because we did not get her out fast enough. What is happening in Afghanistan is horrendous, and we need to do what we can, but this bill is going to have implications longer than just what is happening in Afghanistan. This would have implications around the world, and I do not think the people in the House are treating it with the severity that they need to.

It has been over two years since I asked the government to work with civil society, the non-profit sector and experts in the field to come up with a plan. It has been over two years. It was in May 2021. In February 2021, I wrote to then minister Garneau and said that this is what is going to happen. The U.S. has indicated that they are leaving, and this is what is going to happen. What is the plan?

There was never a plan put in place. There was never a plan to help those people who had worked so hard for Canadians. There was never a plan put in place to make sure that Canadian organizations doing the incredible work on the ground were able to work in Afghanistan.

For two years, we have been asking for this legislation. We asked for the government to work with the sector. I understand that none of us in this place are experts in everything. We cannot be. We have to depend on experts. We have to depend on experts to give us the best advice, but the government did not get the best advice.

• (1255)

The sector clearly asked for a humanitarian carve-out. What it got, in the first iteration of Bill C-41, was a messy, overly bureaucratic, overly complicated criminalization of humanitarian aid and international development. It got a bill that was created by three ministries. Do members know who led that? The Minister of Public Safety. I am sorry, but the Minister of Public Safety does not work in international development.

Government Orders

I do not know where the Minister of International Development was or why he was not part of these conversations. I do not know why we did not hear enough from Global Affairs Canada, but we did not. That is the reality. Therefore, we had a messy and broken piece of legislation come forward because the government refused to listen to the experts. The experts knew what was needed and what would make the lives of those in the sector easier so they could go into Afghanistan and provide life-saving aid and support to its people.

I want to take a moment here because I agree with my colleague from the Bloc, the member of Parliament for Lac-Saint-Jean. I worked very well with him. I also want to give a shout-out to the member for Oakville North—Burlington because she was basically given a terrible piece of legislation and told to shine it. When I say a terrible piece of legislation, I think members know exactly what I think of it.

She was told to make it better, so instead of bringing us a law that we could improve slightly, she brought us a dumpster fire that we then had to try to do what we could with, so I want to give her a shout-out. She worked very hard, very collaboratively and very well with me. I worked very well with the member for Lac-Saint-Jean. We all, every one of us, wanted to make sure this bill got help to people in Afghanistan as fast as it could.

When the Minister of Public Safety came to committee, he talked to us about balance. He said that we have to have a balance between protecting against terrorist and protecting international development groups. What I said to him then, and I will say to every member in the House right now, is that the balance is wrong. He got the balance wrong. The balance we have right now criminalizes international development organizations. It is only because we were able to get an NDP amendment through for a carve-out that humanitarian organizations are not in there.

The folks who work within public safety do great work, but they do not understand international human rights law. They do not understand international development rights. They just do not have that line. Therefore, we worked with other parties to try to get this fixed because one of the key things, and I think perhaps something that members do not understand, is ensuring that organizations can maintain their neutrality. It is vital. It is a cornerstone of humanitarian and international development work because we are asking these organizations to go into sectors, regions and areas that are under fire and are very dangerous.

Government Orders

We are asking them to go into some of the worst places on the planet, and often those places are rife with conflict. There are often groups working there who are bad actors, and terrorists who are doing terrible things, so the only way organizations can do that work is if they are seen as neutral, independent and impartial. This legislation makes organizations go to the government to get permission to work in certain areas, which takes away their ability to be impartial and independent.

I raised this when the Minister of International Development was first appointed. As members know, he is the former minister of defence. No offence to the minister, but that was a terrible idea because we spend our entire careers trying to ensure that folks understand we are not the military and we are not the government. We are independent. We are here to help. We are here to provide life-saving supports. That is what the sector does, what it tries to do.

When we put in a minister who is a former minister of defence, how does that look? It endangers the organizations working on the ground. It is an indication that the government does not understand, that it does not care and that it does not get it.

• (1300)

We did vote for the bill to go to committee, because, as I said, we all wanted to make sure that this aid got out to the people in Afghanistan who needed it. When the bill came to committee, we brought forward 12 amendments, and all of those amendments came from the sector. However, only six of those amendments were adopted.

As I mentioned, the key amendment for us was making sure that the humanitarian exemption was finally agreed to by the other parties. It was ruled out of scope, but we were able to bring it forward within the House. However, that was only one fix. That was only one of the things we wanted to ensure were fixed that the sector had asked us to fix.

One of the other things was a list. In this legislation, the government refuses to tell organizations which regions, which areas, they would need to ask for an exemption for, which puts all the onus on the organization. When we stand in this very sterile environment, it seems to make sense that an organization that is going to work in Sudan should ask if Sudan is one of the countries it would need an exemption for. However, that is not how international development works. Some of the Canadian organizations that I have worked with have 40-year relationships in some of the countries they work in. Change for Children in my riding has a 40-year relationship working in Nicaragua, and I can tell members that what is happening in Nicaragua has changed over 40 years.

We are not just asking organizations to check whether or not they can get into a country and do work. We are asking them to check, almost daily, to see if anything has changed, and the world changes. It is not the House of Commons where these organizations are working. They are working in mayhem. They are working in places that are in crisis. They are working in places that are in conflict. It is absurd to ask them to do that, to put that onus on them, because the government does not want to prepare a list of countries, and it is a list that it has to have. If the government does not have a list, it is almost negligence. However, to not be able to share that list with the organizations is shocking to me. It is absurd.

Another thing, which we tried to fix, is that in the legislation there is the term “links to a terrorist group”, which is not defined anywhere. There is nothing in this legislation that would define “links to a terrorist group”. What does that mean? Does it mean a person who rode on the same bus as someone, or who is talking to someone whose sister-in-law is implicated? Nobody knows what it means. It has no legal definition. In fact, I will read from the brief from the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, which said:

This is much too discretionary; for example, would distant family ties, former work or school associates, or membership in the same religious community or congregation be considered links? In our work, we have seen how each of these types of “links” have been identified by security agencies as being grounds for suspicion based solely on guilt by association. The example of Afghanistan, a Muslim majority country, is apt in this assistance, as we have particularly observed how Muslims in Canada are subject to this exact kind of guilt by association, leading to increased surveillance, loss of security clearances and employment [and] even includes the sharing of information which has led to rendition, arbitrary detention and torture

This is not good legislation when we have organizations like this one telling us that this does not make sense and that it is not clear.

The other piece I have with this legislation is that, right now, I have been told by the government that it is going to put policies in place to make sure that this all works just fine. However, the problem with policies is that other governments can come forward, and other governments can use the legislation differently. I have a very deep concern that, if we were to get a Conservative government, Conservatives could weaponize international development, and I will tell members why I think that is a concern. It is because they have done it before.

I was in the sector when the Harper government weaponized and refused funding to Oxfam. I was in the sector when the government weaponized it when Bev Oda wrote the infamous “not” on the application for funding so that Kairos, who had been critical of the government, could not get funding. The Conservative government has done this before. They could do it again, and there is no protection in this legislation to make sure that does not happen.

• (1305)

What happens if, all of a sudden, organizations are not allowed to work in Gaza? What happens if, all of a sudden, the government decides to delay providing the exemption? Right now, there are three ministries involved: public safety, justice and international development. I have spent most of my career trying to get funding through Global Affairs Canada and I can tell everyone that it is almost never able to deliver on the timelines it puts forward, through no fault of its own. Some of the best, most devoted public servants in our country are at Global Affairs Canada, but they are under-resourced, understaffed and under-empowered to make the decisions.

Let us add in two more ministries and see how that goes, and let us think about that in context as well. A humanitarian crisis is an emergency. That means that things have to happen in hours, not days. Action has to be taken to save lives in hours. We heard from one of the witnesses that they think they would be able to get a decision back to organizations well within six months. Within six months, people are dying. People need the support, they are dying and hours make all the difference, but we are being told months, and that is from a government that has not been able to deliver on its promises to date. I am deeply concerned about that.

There is another thing I want to bring up very quickly. One of the amendments we were able to get through and that I am very happy about is that there will be a one-year review, so we will be reviewing this legislation in one year. It is part of the reason I think it is very important for the House to look at this seriously and keeps a very close eye on it.

I cannot support this legislation. This legislation goes against all of the principles of international development and international humanitarian law. It does not listen to the sector and to the supports that the sector has asked for.

There is one other thing. We are also the only country in this situation. The U.S. has a humanitarian exemption. The U.K., the EU and other countries were able to do what the Liberal government could not do. They were able to do what the government, with the support of every party in this House, was unable to manage to get done.

I know the bill will pass. It will not pass with my support. I do not believe that this legislation is worthy of being passed. The fact that other parties are voting for it indicates that they have a smaller understanding of international development and humanitarian law. I am glad that the help will get to the people of Afghanistan as soon as possible. I am appalled that it has taken us two years to get to this point, but the international development sector offering people in crisis around the world crumbs and telling them they have to take it because that is all there is on offer is un-Canadian.

• (1310)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I do have many concerns about this legislation, although I do think the member gilds the lily a bit.

The irony, in relation to her comments, is that the development sector has overwhelmingly said that it would like us to pass this bill, though it has also been critical of various aspects of it. I know

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the member worked in the sector previously, but I do not think she knows more than all of the stakeholders that represent the sector. I would challenge her to provide the House with one or a couple of quotations from individuals who actually want us to vote against the bill. There is going to be a lot of information out there of people saying things that are critical about the bill, but can she name one development organization that is standing up and saying we should oppose this bill?

The other irony I will point out is that, despite the member's sharp criticisms of the government, she is a member of a party that continues to give confidence and supply to the government. The Conservatives and the Bloc, though we have voted against the government on key confidence and supply issues, have sought to work collaboratively with the government to find compromises, recognizing that one cannot always get 100% of one's way here.

I have two questions for the member. First, can the member name any stakeholder that agrees with the NDP position of opposing the bill at third reading? Second, if these issues are so fundamental, why does her party uniquely continue to provide the government with confidence and supply?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell members a little bit about our foreign affairs committee. It is an interesting committee. Of course we have people from all parties. It is probably one of the most important committees that we have in the House of Commons, particularly considering the war in Ukraine, what we see happening in Afghanistan and Sudan; conflicts that we have around the world that Canada could play a uniquely important role in.

One of the things that I am quite proud of is that at committee we represent the policies that are brought forward by the government or we test them to see if they are being upheld. I was part of the sector when the feminist international assistance policy was brought forward, something that I am very proud of. Of course, I would like to urge the government to do more to make sure that we are actually implementing that policy.

One of the things that came forward in this last recent session is that we were able to look at the sexual and reproductive rights for women around the world. This happened after a lot of delay by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan because he was filibustering. He had some religious objections. He tries to impose his will on our committee on quite a regular basis, to the detriment of the work that we need to get done for places around the world. Realistically, I am happy that we were able to get that study done after his filibuster. He tried to filibuster a study I brought forward where I talked about the idea of peaceful things Canada could do to make peace more likely in the Middle East.

Frankly, I am not really interested in answering his questions.

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[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her speech. Her passion and commitment on this issue are very clear. I would like to better understand her position. I understand that this bill is not really perfect. My colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean said that it was a compromise.

I understood from the member's speech that the bill's approach goes completely against the spirit of international development. However, there is a crisis in Afghanistan and the NGOs are asking us to support this bill, for lack of a better option. I understood that the member's party will be voting against the bill for the reasons she gave.

Does she think it would be better to implement this bill or to have nothing at all?

• (1315)

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, this is the difficult challenge that we found this sector in. This is in fact exactly where we are at, with millions of people who are dying and millions of people who are at risk. There are also principles of humanitarian development and humanitarian aid that are core principles under which we need to do this work and this bill pits those two things against each other. That is the problem. This bill actually is offering, like I said, crumbs to the sector in saying they are not going to get what they want or what they need, the people of Afghanistan are not going to get what they want or what they need, but here is something. They either have to take this or they have to wait another two years for anything, if anything ever comes forward.

It is not really a fair choice to give to the sector. It is not really a fair choice to give to any of us in this place to give us such flawed legislation, knowing that people's lives are on the line and we either have to choose to support a terrible bill being brought forward by the government or let people die. It is an impossible choice and the implications are that down the road this could have impacts on other populations. This could mean other people could die because of the criminalization of development.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her impassioned speech but, more importantly, for the work that she has done and for the work that she continues to do to advocate for those less fortunate around the world.

Perhaps I do not have as much experience as my colleague, but I have had the privilege of working with NGOs that are doing a tremendous amount of work in Afghanistan. I am always reminded that one of the most important principles of humanitarian aid is humanity and making sure we take care of the most vulnerable.

Now, this legislation may not be perfect. It may not be what everybody wanted in its purest form, but would it not make sense for us to send a united message that at a minimum we are all united in trying to alleviate the suffering of those in Afghanistan and allowing those NGOs that need to be doing this important work to be able to do that work? Recognizing that there are always areas of improvement, would it not send a message to the Taliban and to

others that we are not going to stand in the way as a Parliament of working together to achieve these goals?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, this comment goes back to what I was saying before. As much as I think all of us in this place want to get aid to the people of Afghanistan as fast as possible, and I honestly believe that all of us in this place want that, the difficulty of being a lawmaker is that we have to look at the long-term implications of the laws we put forward. What happens if this means there are women and girls in other countries who do not get the support they need because we put legislation in place and because another government chooses to weaponize it? It is a real concern.

I appreciate the work the member has done in Afghanistan. I want to give a huge shout-out to an organization, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, which continues to do everything it can to help women and girls in Afghanistan at a time of great personal risk. One thing we should all continue to think about as we think about Bill C-41 is that the organizations that represent Canada around the world, the CSOs and NGOs, the organizations doing this important work, are heroes. They really do need to be acknowledged in this place.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's passion and her years of experience, and I certainly hope the people in this place are listening.

I spent many years of my life working in a non-profit organization to support newcomers coming to Canada. One of the things I found very liberating about the work we did is that we were able to get on the ground quickly and respond to issues as they arose. Being funded by different levels of government, they were often slow and not able to do that work, so our work was precious.

When I heard her speech, I could see very clearly that it is the same thing. Not having the links to terrorism defined really prevents them from being able to do their work effectively. When we have them figuring out where they can and cannot go, it keeps adding burdens, and every burden we add means that lives cannot be saved.

I am wondering if the member can talk about how quickly these civil society organizations can move and what the barriers are when government adds these extra duties.

• (1320)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from British Columbia is absolutely right. She really could not be more correct about these burdens added to organizations that are already underfunded. Remember, these are organizations facing a 15% cut in official international development assistance. These are the same organizations that have lived through decades of neglect, starting with Stephen Harper and continuing with the current government. These are organizations for which core funding was stopped, so they did not have the capacity to maintain staff and maintain the work. Every burden we add to that, every single thing we add to those organizations, means it is harder for them to do the work they need to do in the field. It is so much more difficult.

I want to add, and I said it in my speech but I will say it again, that it is difficult for any non-profit organization to work with a single federal ministry, but to have to work with three is absurd.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and speak on Bill C-41. First, I want to begin by thanking all of my colleagues from all parties who have been working hard at this, particularly my colleague from Oakville North—Burlington, who has really made this, in many ways, an important part of all of the work that she has done in Parliament.

I think we should be very proud that we are at this point. One of the first things that was said to me, when I got elected, by an NGO that is doing work in Afghanistan right now is that we need to find a way to unlock this problem for the people of Afghanistan, for women and girls and for the organizations that are trying their best to work under extremely difficult circumstances.

Canadian NGOs have been at the front line of many of the most complicated challenges, the most complicated problems and the most difficult situations and circumstances in Afghanistan. They have been the ones that have been prepared to go to places where many other organizations have not wanted to go. They have been the ones that have been trying to support work in the most complex of circumstances.

Our ability to flow funds, our ability for organizations to do work in those areas and our ability for NGOs to be able to do the work that is required of them is really a matter of life and death. We have heard this throughout this debate. We have heard this throughout all of the speeches that at the forefront of our thinking, the forefront of our concern has to be the most vulnerable in Afghanistan and in other countries where this will apply but, in particular, we have been talking a lot about Afghanistan.

Two-thirds of the country now needs foreign aid to develop and to survive. People have literally had to make life-or-death decisions about whether they keep their children or sell them in order to be able to feed their families. The question of education is one that people would love to be able to even think about, but they are too busy trying to figure out if they are going to be able to eat.

We are at a place now where Bill C-41 finally does what so many have been calling for for so long. We have heard different points of view on whether this is the best route or the perfect route.

As we have learned, there is no perfect bill, but we are in a place now where we have the opportunity, as a Parliament, to tell the world that Canada is not only going to be there, that we are not only going to continue the work that we have historically done, but we are now going to make it possible for these NGOs to do the work that, in many ways, was made impossible not by design but by circumstance.

The fact that the Taliban took the decision to enforce legislation governing taxation of NGOs put so many people at risk of criminal liability. What this meant was that organization upon organization had to make the difficult decision of how they were going to engage, whether they were going to take the risks that involved.

This has led to an unprecedented economic humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. We are talking about 20 million people at risk.

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Being able to pass this bill, making sure that we come together to get this over the finish line, to send a clear message that Canadian NGOs will be able to do the important work that they need to do, is something that I think we should all be proud of and that we should all do together.

● (1325)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:25 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 8, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of third reading of the bill now before the House.

[Translation]

The question is on the motion.

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

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 12, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent at this time to call it 1:30 p.m., so we can begin private members' hour.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have unanimous consent to see the clock at 1:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

The House resumed from December 8, 2022, consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to provide some comments on the member for Scarborough North's motion. I think the member has done us a great service, in terms of providing this motion before the House, and I just want to thank him for the work he has done in bringing it to the stage at which it is.

The issue of racism is very much alive, and there is a role for parliamentarians to do what we can. This motion, if it passes, and I sure hope it does pass, would ensure a direct action that would see a standing committee of the House do a study with a particular focus on hate crimes, an issue that affects all of society. We need to be able to come together.

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I was just reflecting, a few minutes back, on Canada's diversity, and it is no doubt one of the greatest strengths we have here in Canada, if not the greatest. We should never, ever, take that for granted. We have, in the month of June, for example, Indigenous History Month. We have Filipino Heritage Month. We have the Portuguese community, the Italian community and all the communities that are celebrating their heritage in the month of June. This speaks in terms of Canadian heritage, which is ongoing and continues to evolve. It speaks volumes about our diversity.

As elected officials, we often go out into our communities and talk about Canada's diversity. Part of that is the responsibility of recognizing, as the member for Scarborough North has done, that there are racial incidents that are causing harm, and we need to be able to address that. From my perspective, the best way of addressing issues such as discrimination and racist behaviour is through education. I have advocated for years for the importance of cross-cultural education and ways we can marginalize those with attitudes that are negative and have a racial bias. That would include, for example, looking at our education system and encouraging its incorporation into the curriculum.

There are all sorts of things, from the school board level to the Parliament of Canada. Here we have an opportunity to take a tangible action, and I would encourage all members, of whatever political stripe, to get behind the member for Scarborough North, who has been leading on this issue, and support the motion today.

● (1330)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to rise to speak to the motion on the floor of the House, a motion that touches so many Canadians across the coast, myself included, Canadians who trace their roots back to Asia.

If we are going toward a future free of anti-Asian racism and discrimination, we need to learn from the past. One in five Canadians, 20%, including my family and many members of the House, traces their roots back to Asia. Asian Canadians have made a significant contribution to Canada, going back to the mid-19th century. For example, Chinese immigrants began to enter Canada in the mid-1800s. Many of these Chinese immigrants were labourers. The opium wars had just ended, and many were looking for work. Some of them came in the British Columbia gold rush of 1858. Some of them ended up working on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, playing a major role in Confederation.

In fact, Confederation would not have happened if not for the thousands of Chinese labourers who came over to the west to build the railway. Their back-breaking labour literally laid the steel foundation that laid the constitutional foundation of our 1867 Constitution. The Canadian Pacific company was formed in 1881 for the express purpose of fulfilling a promise made to the colony of British Columbia. This was the promise: If British Columbia joined Canada and Confederation, then the Canadian government would build a railway connecting eastern Canada to the Pacific Ocean. B.C. joined Canada and Confederation on July 20, 1871. The Canadian Pacific Railway was established subsequently, in 1881, and the railway was completed in 1885.

The construction of this railway was incredibly dangerous; through the Rockies, the Pacific coast mountain ranges and the vast Prairies, it was very dangerous work. Tens of thousands of labourers worked to construct the railway, including 15,000 Chinese railway workers. They worked in the harshest conditions year-round, with little pay. Historians have estimated that at least 600 Chinese railway workers died constructing the railway. That is an incredible human toll of suffering and misery to complete what laid the base of this country's Confederation. Despite all that work and sacrifice, they were discriminated against during and after.

The Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 was passed and put in place by Parliament to discourage Chinese immigration to Canada. Under that act of 1885, a \$50 head tax, a great sum of money at the time, was levied on all Chinese immigrants. That tax was then increased to \$100 per head in 1900. It was increased to \$500 per head in 1903. Even this punishing head tax did not deter Chinese immigration to Canada as the act had intended. In fact, the Chinese population in Canada tripled during the time of the head tax, from 13,000 people in 1885 to 39,587 people in 1921. Therefore, the government decided to put in place an even harsher solution: full exclusion, a full ban. Parliament passed the Chinese Immigration Act, with the exact same title as the initial Chinese immigration act. It was also known as the "Chinese Exclusion Act". The act, which was in place from 1923 to 1947, banned virtually all Chinese immigration to Canada for those 24 years.

● (1335)

Although immigration to Canada from other countries was restricted during those years as it is today, unlike today, only Chinese people were singled out and banned entirely from immigrating to Canada and entirely on the basis of their race and race alone. It took until 1947 for the Parliament of Canada to repeal this law and it took until 1967 for all immigration rules based on national origin and race to be fully eliminated.

My father was one of the Chinese immigrants who immigrated to Canada. He immigrated from Hong Kong in 1952 to Winnipeg, just five years after the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed by this very House.

He arrived as a young student at the University of Manitoba, but even though the act had been repealed five years earlier, the sentiments behind the act still lingered on. He faced racism and discrimination that our generation can only imagine. He was also, I have to say, met with the incredible generosity and fair-mindedness of ordinary Canadians who invited him, as a single student thousands of miles away from home and very much alone, to a Sunday roast beef dinner or to a Thanksgiving dinner or to spend a weekend with a fellow student's family. Nevertheless, it was tough times in those 1950s for Chinese immigrants.

He had to support himself. At one point he could not find work here in Canada as a student, during the summer, and so he decided to go down to New York City to work in Manhattan's famed Chinatown. He worked in a Chinese laundry and in a Chinese restaurant washing dishes, as thousands of Chinese immigrants in decades past have done coming to Canada, in order to save the dollars he needed to put himself through school. Eventually, my father found a position as a summer student working as a lumberjack in northern Ontario in Kenora, which is something I cannot think of as more Canadian to do during a hot summer in northern Ontario. All along, he saved, saved and saved.

As the 1950s transitioned to the 1960s and 1970s, Canada began to change. In 1967, we got rid of our race-based requirements for our immigration system. Since then, much further progress has been made, such as the 1982 Patriation of the Constitution along with the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms and such as Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology on June 22, 2006, for the head tax that had been levied on some 81,000 Chinese immigrants to Canada.

However, despite all this progress in creating a society free of racism and discrimination, a society where one's race, religion or creed do not determine one's standing in Canadian society, we still face racism and discrimination. The pandemic revealed the ugly side of that in the last several years and so has the rise of the PRC's threats, both here and abroad. People have exploited those issues to foment racism and discrimination against their fellow Asian Canadians.

Today, the Asian community is a cherished part of our Canadian society. Whether from places like the People's Republic of China or the Philippines or the Republic of India or so many other places in Asia, the Asian community, which includes one in five Canadians, has made a vibrant contribution to this country. From business to politics and from the academy to arts and charity, Asian Canadians play leading roles in Canadian society.

Therefore, as we debate and hopefully adopt this motion and as the committee begins its work, let us remember all the contributions and sacrifices that Asian Canadians have made to this country for well over 150 years. Let us stand in solidarity with Asian Canadians when they face racism and discrimination and let us celebrate Asian Canadians for the contributions they have made and that they continue to make to this our home and native land.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since we are on the second hour of considering Motion No. 63, it is important to remember when the first hour occurred. It was in December. It is said that six months is an eternity in politics. I think we had a clear example of that today. In that first hour of consideration of the motion, we did not yet have the revelations from The Globe and Mail and Global News on Beijing's interference in our elections. Not everyone was aware of all of Beijing's measures targeting people from the Chinese community here.

This second hour of debate on the anti-Asian racism motion makes it clear—maybe not to parliamentarians because we were already aware of Beijing's practices in the Asian community, but to

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ordinary people who are probably more aware of the situation now—that members of the Asian community face a double challenge, to say it politely. In addition to being occasionally ostracized by other Canadian citizens, by other people living on Canadian soil, they are also targeted by their country of origin.

The fact that we are resuming debate today, after all the information and the leaks that were reported in The Globe and Mail and by Global News, helps shed new light on the importance of this motion.

Basically, the motion became essential as a result of the growing stigma that people of Asian descent were experiencing in relation to COVID-19. Since that was the basic principle, the original reason for which the motion was tabled, I will focus on that aspect.

The numbers speak for themselves when it comes to the stigma experienced by people of Asian descent during COVID-19. Hon. members may also recall the SARS crisis in 2003, when people of Asian descent were ostracized in the same way as they have been regarding COVID-19. It may have been a little less obvious in the case of SARS, because it was much less widespread globally than COVID-19, but unfortunately, it was a starting point. This clearly illustrated the problem of quick, easy and deplorable stigmatization towards people who had absolutely no reason to be targeted.

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified this problem to some extent. Analyses done with the benefit of hindsight have shown that there were indeed clear and concrete examples of much greater ostracization of the Asian population. A 2021 analysis showed that police-reported hate crimes increased between 2019 and 2020 from 3% to 100%, including hate crimes targeting people of East and Southeast Asian descent. That is huge.

Statistics Canada also conducted a public survey between August 4 and 24, 2020. It found that there was a marked perception of discrimination and loss of confidence in accessing health care services. Groups designated as visible minorities, most notably Chinese, Korean and southeast Asian participants, were more likely than other groups to have perceived an increase in the frequency of harassment or attacks based on race, ethnicity or skin colour since the beginning of the pandemic. This has been empirically documented. Chinese, Korean, southeast Asian and Black participants were also twice as likely as white participants to report that they had experienced discrimination. These results are consistent with the results of a previous crowdsourcing initiative, which noted an increase in the frequency of race-based harassment or outright attacks.

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During the same period, Vancouver police reported a 700% increase in hate crimes against Asian communities between 2019, before the pandemic, and 2020, at the height of the pandemic.

• (1345)

Unfortunately, this is nothing new. Discrimination is nothing new, even if its target changes. It is not related to the pandemic. It even used to be state-sanctioned. I believe it is important to remember history.

My colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills talked about it. Canada was built by the railroad. People of Chinese descent were called on to work on the railroad, and discrimination already existed back then. After construction of the railroad, it continued.

For example, in 1885, Canada imposed a \$50 head tax on Chinese immigrants. Imagine what \$50 meant in those days. To make it even more difficult for people of Chinese origin to immigrate to Canada, the tax was raised to \$500 in 1903. In 1907, Japanese immigration was limited to 400 people a year because of the growing hostility towards the Asian population. This was later limited to 150 people. In 1908, the federal government said that immigrants trying to reach Canada from Asian countries could not have stopovers on their way here. However, at the time, there was no such thing as direct, non-stop travel. That was therefore an indirect way of saying that they could never set foot in Canada. In 1923, the government stopped beating around the bush and simply banned Chinese immigration through legislation.

Discrimination was also woven into various laws unrelated to immigration. Election laws come to mind. Limits were placed on the ability of Chinese Canadians, among others, to participate. In 1872, for example, the government of British Columbia forbade Japanese Canadian citizens and indigenous peoples from voting in provincial elections. The goal was to keep political power exclusively in the hands of white people. In 1895, the previously established voting rights of Japanese Canadians were taken away outright. In 1907, the law was extended to include Canadians from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. A short time earlier, citizens of Chinese descent had already been barred from voting in federal elections. More laws limiting their voting rights were passed. For example, if a population were targeted by a law passed by one of the provinces, it would lose its federal voting rights too.

There are many moments in history where the government demonstrated racism towards people of Asian origin. The motion is therefore welcome in that it seeks to remedy the current situation, which may stem not from the government but from the population. Educating people about what is happening may lead to change. The motion will also make it possible to conduct studies to see whether anything tangible can be done to resolve this problem.

The premise of the motion is to “condemn anti-Asian hate and all forms of racism and racial discrimination”. I would encourage the committee that examines the issue to ensure that the bill is not so specific that it addresses only one form of discrimination, because all forms of discrimination should also be considered in any future anti-racism bills, studies or initiatives. That is what my colleague from Drummond said when he spoke. We hope that, if there are a whole host of bills, studies or initiatives that target specific populations, then no one will fall through the cracks.

To return to what I was saying at the start about interference, I think that, aside from the racism issue, we also have to make sure that we give a voice to the public, which is currently calling for a public inquiry. Racism is not the only way to sideline people in the population. These people are asking for an inquiry. It is time we gave them a voice.

• (1350)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this crucial motion, which is really important to the NDP caucus. I want to congratulate and thank my colleague from Vancouver East, who has already spoken to this issue.

This motion is important because it talks about a phenomenon that sadly still exists in Canada and Quebec, anti-Asian racism. As other colleagues mentioned, it is important to remember that unfortunately, if we look at our history, anti-Asian racism is nothing new.

I will go over some of the things that have already been raised here by my colleagues from the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois. Anti-Asian racism has deep roots in our history and our country. Obviously, our country was largely built by Chinese workers. Think of the railroad that is the backbone of the transportation industry and the Canadian economy. Essentially, it was built by thousands of Chinese workers who worked in deplorable conditions, who were literally exploited, and who got injured and suffered almost to the point of dying. This did not bother the big railway owners at the time at all.

This racism continued afterwards. Many discriminatory laws against Asian communities were passed. In 1872, in British Columbia, a law took away the right to vote of Chinese Canadians and Canadians of Chinese origin. It is no small thing in a democracy to say to a community that it can no longer participate in democracy, in public and civic life, by taking away their right to vote.

In 1895, again in British Columbia, Canadians of Japanese origin lost their right to vote. Then, in 1895, Chinese Canadians lost their right to vote in federal elections, and it would be a long time before this situation was rectified. In 1897, a British Columbia law prohibited workers of Chinese or Japanese origin from getting a job in the mining industry. The economic sector excluded people because of their origins.

My colleague spoke about the head tax on Chinese immigrants. In 1885, Chinese immigrants had to pay \$50 when they arrived in Canada, and, in 1903, this tax was increased to \$500. In 1923, the Chinese Immigration Act, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, outright told those people that they were not wanted. Today, we would call that systemic racism.

This racism continued with an unfortunate episode during the Second World War, when, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Canadian government sent 21,000 people of Japanese origin to detention camps. They were imprisoned in these camps for weeks and months, with 4,000 inmates being deported to Japan. Some of those people had never been to Japan in their lives.

While it may be less intense today, this discrimination still exists. Discriminatory, hurtful and sometimes violent behaviour against the Asian community remains a reality. It has even been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with people making completely inane and ridiculous associations because the virus first emerged in the Chinese province of Wuhan. This has given ammunition to conspiracy theorists and people who are simply racist or xenophobic to attack and insult Quebeckers and Canadians of Asian origin.

This is not just empty rhetoric. Studies and police reports have confirmed it. In 2021, in Vancouver, which is home to several Asian communities, hate crimes against people from these communities increased by 700%.

• (1355)

According to one study, 58% of Asian Canadians overall say they have experienced discrimination. That is the majority. That is what is happening these days.

Amy Go, president of the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice, says it is a “common and shared experience”. It is a situation that people in the Asian community experience. Unfortunately, it is extremely common, perhaps even more common than the numbers suggest. In 2020, hate crimes in general against the Asian community across Canada increased by 300%. That is huge.

What is more, this may only be the tip of the iceberg, because a University of Victoria study found that incidents of racism are not always reported. People from Asian communities do not always report the assaults, violence or insults they experience. The University of Victoria says that these acts are under-reported. It is likely that the situation is even worse than we realize.

That is why this motion is important. That is also why the debate we are having and the study that will be done in committee afterwards are important. By working together, as elected representatives, but also as citizens, we are going to be able to tackle this issue and reduce all forms of racism and discrimination.

We even saw it here in the streets of Ottawa with the so-called “freedom convoy”. That is their name for it, not mine. Asian people in Ottawa also felt like these protesters were being extremely aggressive and even violent in their words and attitudes. Some people were spit on or shoved because they were Asian.

We heard testimony from a young woman who was intimidated for filing for an injunction to clear the city's streets. Someone drove at her in a truck while she was on the sidewalk. The driver stopped

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about a metre short, just to scare her. This young woman is Asian. This story was reported in the news at the time.

Unfortunately, these types of phenomena, statements, attitudes and behaviours were exacerbated by flawed comparisons that put the blame on people who, quite frankly, had nothing to do with a global pandemic that nobody saw coming.

While we are talking about anti-Asian racism, I want to talk about a phenomenon that affects many women in the Filipino community. I am referring to the widespread and perhaps even unhealthy reliance on temporary foreign workers.

Domestic workers are one of the categories in which the hundreds of thousands of temporary foreign workers fall into. Many of the workers who are hired by very rich families to do housework, look after children and cook meals are of Asian origin. Unfortunately, there is something called a closed work permit. These temporary foreign workers have a closed work permit and cannot change employer. This means that if they are hired by a very rich family and live in a house as a domestic worker, which is generally the case, and if they are ever the victim of abuse, assault, violence, harassment or sexual assault, they cannot change employer. Their only other option is to buy a plane ticket and go home. I think we should be aware of this phenomenon.

I would like to move an amendment to the motion, which I will read right now: That the motion be amended by adding the following after the words “issues of anti-Asian racism”: iv) work collaboratively with community groups and people with lived experience to establish and adequately fund units to prosecute hate crimes in every Canadian community to hold to account the perpetrators responsible and fight against the rise of anti-Asian racism and all forms of hate in Canada.

• (1400)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that, pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill without the consent of the sponsor of the item.

Since the sponsor is not present to give his consent, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Richmond Hill.

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Motion No. 63 pertaining to anti-Asian racism. I would like to start by applauding and congratulating my colleague, the member for Scarborough North, for bringing forward this motion and for his advocacy and hard work on this very important and crucial matter.

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Over the past couple of years, especially since the pandemic, we have seen a disturbing rise in anti-Asian hate and racism around the world, something that unfortunately our country has not been immune to either. As of September 2021, 2,265 incidents of anti-Asian racism have been reported in Canada.

In Toronto only, the Toronto Police Service has reported a 51% increase in hate crimes against people of Asian descent. In Vancouver, the police board has reported that anti-Asian hate crime incidents have increased by 878% compared to 2019. The Ottawa Police Service reported a 600% increase in hate crimes against people of Asian descent, while Montreal's Service de police de la Ville de Montréal reported five times more. What is even more horrifying about these numbers is that most of the victims of these xenophobic attacks are women, making up 66% of the respondents.

The Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice, CCNC-SJ, reports that both online and public instances of anti-Asian racism rose in 2021, with almost half of all incidents taking place in public spaces, at an increase of 48%, while online incidents have risen 132%. Verbal harassment makes up the majority of anti-Asian incident reports, but physical assaults, such as being coughed at or spat on, increased their share of the data, rising by 42% from the previous year's report published by the CCNC-SJ.

This increase in xenophobia is underpinned by the long history of exploitation and "othering" of people of Asian descent in Canada. Many of my colleagues before me went into great detail about how this exploitation has taken place over many years.

As hate-related attacks and racism continue to negatively impact the lives of our Chinese Canadian population, I strongly believe that acknowledgement of our history is essential to moving forward and addressing all forms of hate, racism and discrimination across Canada.

This year marks 100 years since the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923, a shameful act that banned persons of Chinese origin from entering Canada. As a result, many Chinese Canadians were separated from their family members for 24 years.

On May 27 of this year, I attended the forum commemorating the 100th anniversary of the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. I would like to thank the Commission of Marking the 100th Anniversary of Chinese Exclusion Act for organizing this event and providing the opportunity to learn and reflect. One hundred years later, it is indeed important to reflect on the harm caused by this law and honour the significant contribution that the Chinese community has made and continues to make to Canada today.

It is in this context that the purpose of Motion No. 63 is highlighted. Motion No. 63 calls on the government to:

- (i) condemn anti-Asian hate and all forms of racism and racial discrimination,
- (ii) ensure all anti-racism policies and programs address the historical and present-day racism, discrimination, stereotyping and injustices faced by people of Asian descent,
- (iii) highlight the lived realities of racism and barriers to inclusion experienced by people of Asian descent in national consultations on issues of anti-Asian racism....

• (1405)

Finally, in addition, the motion calls on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct a review of anti-Asian hate crimes and hate-motivated incidents across the country.

This motion not only addresses the issue I laid out earlier in my speech, but it is also aligned with previous actions in this House, including the March 22, 2021, motion that was adopted in this House by unanimous consent to condemn the rise of anti-Asian racism and racist attacks throughout North America.

This is in addition to the unanimous adoption of the March 24, 2021, motion urging the government to include anti-Asian racism in Canada's anti-racism strategy, 2019-22, and all anti-racism policies and programs.

Moreover, this motion is aligned with our government's strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. In short, Motion 63 is so widely supported because it is simply common sense. No one should feel unsafe or othered because of who they are, the colour of their skin or their place of origin, and hate and intolerance should not go unchecked.

I am thrilled to see the House unanimously stand up to anti-Asian racism on several occasions as racism cannot be addressed by one individual or one group alone. We need to confront this problem and stand up against rising hate together, as one strong and united front.

Asian Canadians have made invaluable and long-standing contributions to this country's culture and prosperity, and this will not be forgotten as we all collectively work toward building a more inclusive country, one in which all communities from various backgrounds and ethnicities can thrive and flourish.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my Conservative colleagues for the opportunity to contribute to Motion 63. It is their slot that I am using.

I am thankful for the opportunity to be able to share my experience as a member of Asian heritage. Sometimes we do not hear enough voices who could speak for themselves on an issue that directly impacts them. I want to thank my Conservative colleagues for the opportunity. In my riding of Spadina—Fort York, we are home to Toronto's Chinatown. One in seven of my constituents are of Chinese heritage like me.

Unfortunately, what we have seen in Toronto, and frankly the country writ large, has been a surge in anti-Asian racism. According to the official statistics of the Toronto Police Service, the hate crime rates have surged since the pandemic by over 50% from 2019 to 2020, and a further 22.4% from 2020 to 2021.

The thing we need to bear in mind is that, culturally, as a community, we also do not have a tendency to report statistics. I can say, as a member of Chinese heritage myself, that we prefer to keep our head down, work, and hope that we will be respected and acknowledged. I think there is also a bit of historic lived experience where there is a distrust of the system, perhaps not in Canada, because of the experiences they may have had back home in Communist regimes, which are not necessarily places where people can trust that the system will take care of them or take their concerns seriously.

Therefore, while we have the official statistics of the Toronto Police Service, there are other avenues, such as Project 1907, which collected self-reported statistics from members of the Chinese community that were collected by members of the Chinese community. There was a level of trust, and they felt more comfortable. Those statistics are a lot more staggering, and I think more accurate, in truly capturing the immense number of hate crimes that have been committed. Those statistics report a very concerning quintupling, a 500% growth, in hate crimes. I worry a lot about that.

I can say that, during the pandemic, when my mother was still with us, would go to pick up groceries. She was living with a rare autoimmune disease that affected her lungs, so she coughed more, and she had trouble breathing when she was wearing a mask. I was worried that she would be a victim of some sort of targeted Asian hate crime just because of the way she looked and because she was coughing, not because she had COVID, but because of the condition she was living with. I worry a lot about people who look like me, such as the sponsor of Motion No. 63, and some other members, such as the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, as they think about the life they want to lead and the careers they aspire to when they see the vitriol some of us receive or that is targeted toward people who look like us on social media.

I cannot count the number of times I have been called a Chink. I do not want to put on the record the stuff I have been called, nor what people think is okay to say to my staff when they call in. I remember working late just a few weeks ago. The staff had gone home, and I was preparing for a late show. We had a call come into my Ottawa office, so I picked it up. I was there, so why not? There was a gentleman on the other end of the line who said that he was a constituent, which was obviously an indication that he was not. Thinking that I was a member of my staff working in my office, he then launched into how I should be ashamed of working for a Chink like me, and that he could not believe that the military would let someone like me serve in our Canadian Armed Forces.

In some respects, I signed up for this, but my staff did not. The members of my staff represent the diversity of my community and our country. They reflect the many faces of Toronto. One of my staff members is also of Chinese heritage. I am glad that I got that phone call and not her. She and other members of my staff also have to see the stuff that comes in to my office.

● (1410)

We have a dedicated folder where we gather this, and we use a euphemism for it of “negative feedback”, because it is so bad. I wonder sometimes if we should speak up and say something. When we do, our critics will say things like we are playing the victim or

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we are trying to get sympathy. On the other hand, if we do not speak up, we let this issue fester. We do not address it.

I am glad we are having this discussion today, but what I really want to see is truly some action. This matter relates to a broader issue that we have been debating extensively in this House, and that is the matter of foreign interference. Far too often, some regimes, and in this instance I am referring to the Chinese Communist Party, will use racism as a shield to try to defend themselves from very legitimate criticisms of the genocide being committed against the Uyghur peoples, the dismantling of Hong Kong's democratic institutions and the aggression in the South China Sea. They will try to wash it all away with a “How dare you? You must hate Chinese people. You are racist.”

I want to reiterate, as we heard from a number of different members, there is a key distinction between the Chinese people and the Chinese Communist Party. It is vitally important, with this cloud of foreign interference hanging over this place and our country and its democratic institutions, we shine a light into the shadows where foreign operatives hide. There is no better way to address these questions people have when they look at someone like me and wonder, “Where do his loyalties really lie? Is he really a Canadian?”

This is why we need to hold an independent non-partisan public inquiry into foreign interference. It is also why we need to add transparency with a foreign agent influence registry so we know who is working with who. If one is conducting legitimate advocacy, advancement for trade and different business, that is fine. Transparency is great. We cannot allow this cloud to continue to hang, because in the absence of transparency, these bad actors are able to take advantage of this to actually perpetuate racism themselves.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough North has five minutes for his right of reply.

● (1415)

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is truly a privilege to speak on my private member's motion, Motion No. 63.

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I rise today on the unceded and traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation on the eve of the 156th anniversary of Confederation. For most Canadians, July 1 is known as Canada Day, a time to celebrate our country with pride and joy in the company of family and friends. For Chinese Canadians, however, July 1 is also known as “humiliation day”, a day of shame on which Canada commenced the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923. More appropriately called the Chinese Exclusion Act, the legislation virtually prohibited all Chinese people from immigrating to Canada in an apparent and blatant act of racism. Unwanted and undesirable, the Chinese community was singled out and utterly humiliated. This brought an abrupt end to the hopes and dreams of family reunification for a generation of mostly Chinese men in Canada, despite their contributions to helping build the country.

The first documented Chinese immigrants arrived here in the late 1700s; between 1881 and 1884, over 17,000 Chinese workers came to construct the Canadian Pacific Railway. After the railroad was completed, however, Canada imposed a \$50 head tax that steadily rose to \$500 on every Chinese individual seeking to enter the country. In the ensuing decades, the Chinese in Canada were disenfranchised and systematically targeted through laws that prevented them from working certain jobs, owning property, voting and holding public office.

The tide turned after World War II, when Canada found its anti-Chinese legislation at odds with its support for a United Nations charter of human rights. On May 14, 1947, the Chinese Exclusion Act was finally repealed following the passing of the Canadian Citizenship Act, 1947. After an era of legislated anti-Chinese racism, Canada would open its doors and eventually embrace waves of Chinese immigrants.

Through influxes of immigrants from such places as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia and mainland China, Canada is now home to 1.7 million Chinese Canadians, who comprise approximately 5% of the country's population. Among the Chinese diaspora are people from all walks of life, with diverse beliefs, cultures and languages; they have broken through barriers in all aspects of society. Since the latter half of the last century, Canadians of Chinese descent have continued to help build the nation they are proud to call home.

The global outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020, however, brought with it what the United Nations Secretary-General called the virus of hate. Chinese people were blamed for the coronavirus the world over. As racist hashtags trended on social media, and public commentators perpetuated anti-Chinese sentiment with such terminology as “yellow alert”, one major world leader went as far as referring to COVID-19 as “kung flu”.

It is no laughing matter that, over the past three years, racialized communities have increasingly suffered at the hands of racism, from disrespectful treatment to outright harassment and physical acts of violence. One hundred years after the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act, following decades of progress, society has taken one giant step back as new generations of Chinese Canadians fall victim to a new-found hate.

Since introducing Motion No. 63, I have heard from Asian communities from coast to coast to coast. In Montreal, traumatized shopkeepers in Chinatown witnessed a storefront vandalized with racist graffiti, but, out of fear and hopelessness, did not report it. In Calgary, a Filipino community leader is concerned that Asian professionals are hitting the bamboo ceiling, which is now lower than ever, in addition to facing tokenism and the unspoken “one is enough” rule. In Vancouver, a proud Canadian woman of Chinese descent is feeling the subtle but stinging threat of her loyalty to Canada being called into question, she says, because she was born in China.

These are, indeed, the racist realities faced by Asian Canadians, not a hundred years ago but today. That is why I implore the House to be bold and to take a stand. Let us send a strong message that Canada is no place for racism, racial discrimination or any other form of hatred.

• (1420)

On this 100th anniversary of the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act, let us acknowledge past mistakes and vow to never repeat them. We cannot escape a history that is stained by injustice, but we can use it to envision a future that engenders fairness.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. member for Scarborough North.

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 14, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

(The House adjourned at 2:24 p.m.)

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