



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 213
Wednesday, June 14, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 14, 2023

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

PAWAN K. SINGAL

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to the late Dr. Pawan K. Singal, a champion of medical research and education in Winnipeg.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Singal was known for his dedication as a researcher, educator, mentor, and community leader. After serving as a professor at the University of Manitoba and as director of the Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences, Dr. Singal's contributions to medical research in Manitoba are matched by few.

His passing will be mourned by his friends and family, by countless colleagues and students and by Canada's scientific community. Dr. Singal will be remembered as a compassionate man who cared deeply for his family and his community. He was a generous and long-standing contributor to the St. Boniface Hospital Foundation, and a devoted volunteer with the Hindu Society of Manitoba.

I send my condolences to the friends and family of a true Manitoban hero, Dr. Pawan K. Singal.

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MARTIN NAUNDORF

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to Martin Naundorf, who farmed near St. Paul. He passed away on June 2 at the age of 80.

Known as a man of few words, he wore his heart on his sleeve, and was proud to be a dedicated volunteer. He worked tirelessly to

improve the lives of others. Martin served as president of Mallaig's Haying in the 30's Cancer Support Society, a completely volunteer-driven cancer support society that provides financial aid for transportation, fuel and lodging to families of loved ones going through cancer treatment.

Since 1999, it has raised more than \$6 million and assisted more than 5,000 families across Lakeland, with every single cent going to the people they help. Martin's motto was that, every day, we are blessed with a sunrise and a sunset, and believed that a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love is all we need.

Our thoughts are with Martin's family, his many loved ones and his community. May we all live our lives with the same grace, selfless dedication and love for life that Martin did. May his memory be eternal.

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CANADIAN JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTRE

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Seniors Month, I would like to recognize the Canadian Japanese Cultural Centre in my riding of Hamilton Mountain.

Founded after the Second World War, CJCC initially gathered its members in homes and churches before establishing their centre on Hamilton Mountain, where I am proud to say it still thrives today.

Thanks to the new horizon for seniors program, the CJCC was able to improve accessibility, allowing for more diverse participation in programs such as the Japanese tea ceremony, Japanese language classes, and ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging. I recently tried a class, and it was so engaging that I bought my own *kenzan* to practice ikebana at home.

These types of experiences are why the CJCC makes our community richer and why it needs to be accessible for everyone. Thanks to our funding for the improvements, the centre recently welcomed back a member who is 102 years old.

The Canadian Japanese Cultural Centre is an integral part of Hamilton, and I look forward to visiting again very soon.

Statements by Members

● (1405)

*[Translation]***STANLEY CUP**

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is now official. The Stanley Cup is coming to Amos this summer, thanks to the excellent work of native son Nicolas Roy. This great centre and former Forestiers player will have his name forever engraved on the precious trophy that he and his Vegas Golden Knights teammates won last night. It has been 30 years since a hockey player from Abitibi—Témiscamingue last hoisted the emblem of our national sport.

I am also proud to recognize the achievements of two other Quebec hockey players. Jonathan Marchessault was awarded the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP. He recorded more than one point in every game of the playoffs. Thanks to his legendary perseverance, he became only the second player in history to win that trophy after going unselected in the annual NHL draft. I also want to congratulate William Carrier for his grit in overcoming a serious injury to help his team to victory.

Thanks to the hard work of our three Golden Knights, these magical moments will become cherished shared memories and give us yet another great opportunity to be proud to be Quebecers.

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FRED JALBOUT

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a welcoming place where people are free to explore their unique talents and vision of the world. Fred Jalbout is the embodiment of a dreamer. His relentless work has earned him success and several Guinness world records. As co-founder and CEO of SACO, his environmentally friendly LED lighting company, he now collaborates with world-renowned performers like Céline Dion, Elton John, the Rolling Stones, U2 and Taylor Swift.

[English]

The Burj Khalifa proudly displayed its work on its endless structure a few years ago, just like it did on the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles. The company will soon unveil its latest groundbreaking project with new cutting-edge technologies and the world's largest video screen surface.

[Translation]

Mr. Jalbout is also actively involved in the community, including the Montreal Children's Hospital and the Cedars Cancer Foundation. He is a proud Lebanese Canadian and an inspiration to young inventors and entrepreneurs.

Long live Canada and long live Lebanon.

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*[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, many Canadians were subjected to poor air quality from wildfires across this country. However, in my community, many suffer from terrible air quality every day. While visiting one of my

constituents in Langton, Norfolk County, I sat in their backyard and my eyes were burning. They were burning from the horrible methane and hydrogen sulphide venting from orphan gas wells that were drilled by companies. Some of them are from over 100 years ago, and many of these companies no longer exist.

Homeowners, most of whom were not even born at the time that these wells were abandoned, are now left to deal with the fallout. Communities and landowners are not able to deal with the 27,000 orphan wells in Ontario, which pose an environmental and public health risk. In 2021, in Chatham-Kent, an orphan well exploded, destroying a building and injuring 20 people.

I am calling on the government to stop ignoring this problem and to ensure clean air, clean water and safe communities for my residents of Haldimand—Norfolk.

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BASKETBALL EXCELLENCE

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 12, Waterloo region cheered on Jamal Murray of the Denver Nuggets as they captured their first NBA championship. Jamal, like me, was born in Kitchener, Ontario. Jamal played at the Stanley Park Community Centre and it was clear even then that he is an exceptional basketball player.

In the Waterloo region, it was no surprise that Jamal averaged 26.1 points per game, the highest ever by any Canadian citizen. After all, a Canadian invented basketball. Jamal Murray is the ninth Canadian to win an NBA title. He is the fourth player to average 20-plus points and 10-plus assists per game in the finals, with the three before him being Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan and LeBron James.

On behalf of the Waterloo region and Canada, our thanks go to Jamal's family, Roger, Sylvia and Lamar. NBA champion and superstar Jamal Murray has made Waterloo region and Canada proud. I send him congratulations, and say to keep being himself and doing what he does.

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● (1410)

BIRTHDAY AND ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to celebrate two remarkable milestones.

First, I want to congratulate Liem Tran on reaching the magnificent milestone of his 80th birthday. Liem Tran's journey through eight decades has been a testament to resilience, wisdom and the beauty of a life well lived. His dedication, kindness and commitment to our community have touched the lives of countless individuals, inspiring us all to strive to greatness.

Second, my warmest congratulations go to the Vietnamese community of North York for working in our community for over 30 years. This remarkable organization has been a beacon of hope, support and unity for our Vietnamese seniors. It has provided a platform for connection, cultural preservation and the sharing of experiences.

On behalf of the Humber River—Black Creek community, I offer heartfelt congratulations to Liem Tran for a happy 80th birthday. To the North York Vietnamese Canadian Seniors Association, I wish continued success in its noble endeavours.

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FINANCE

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the budget adds more than \$60 billion in new deficit spending, meaning more taxes, more inflation and higher interest rates. The former Liberal finance minister John Manley said that the government is stepping on the gas with new spending while the Bank of Canada is stepping on the brakes with higher interest rates.

Ordinary Canadians are getting caught in the middle, like Jeff from Langley, who wrote to me saying that he thought he had been doing everything right in order to give his wife and two young children a comfortable life. However, he is terrified that he will no longer be able to afford the cost of his mortgage when it comes up for renewal.

Canadians are out of money, and the government is out of touch. Only Conservatives can bring home a government that works for the people who work. It is time to bring back the common sense of common people.

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SOCIAL CONNECTION

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize two organizations that are making Canada a healthier and happier place by fostering and supporting human connectivity through face-to-face social connections.

Oot is a Whitby-based social enterprise that launched on Monday. Co-founders Thyagi and Paul developed a social media platform to help people more easily find others with common interests so they can connect face to face. Through their business, they are fostering a sense of belonging and are combatting isolation and loneliness.

Genwell Project is a registered Canadian non-profit organization and is leading Canada's Human Connection Movement as a grassroots, community-led initiative. The Genwell Project has been working since 2016 to share essential resources, and in collaboration with the Canadian Alliance for Social Connection and Health, it is leading the development of Canadian social connection guidelines.

As the world emerges from a global pandemic, The Genwell Project and Oot continue to forge ahead, ensuring that Canadians understand that social connection is just as important to our health as nutritious diets and an active lifestyle are. As Pete Bombaci says, as it turns out, "The best medicine for people, is people."

Statements by Members

CARBON TAX

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "insulting" is how the Liberal premier of Newfoundland and Labrador describes Ottawa's approach to carbon tax. Atlantic premiers have long called for Ottawa to re-examine the policies of the Liberal government that will result in a heavier cost for the people of Atlantic Canada.

The PM's close friend Premier Furey said, "I take great exception to the federal minister...it's a false dilemma, and it's as insulting to us as it is simplistic." On July 1, Atlantic Canadians will pay an extra 20¢ per litre for heating fuel as a result of carbon tax 1, and that same day, carbon tax 2.0 will add another 20¢ per litre to diesel and heating oil, 17¢ to gasoline, and 12¢ per litre to propane, so those who heat their homes with oil will be slammed with a total of 40¢ extra per litre.

If the Liberal government will not listen to Atlantic Canadians, then there is one thing left to do: get rid of the Liberal government.

* * *

• (1415)

FINANCE

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister said she did not want to pour fuel on the fire of inflation and that she would balance the budget by 2027, but as with all NDP-Liberal promises, the government did a massive flip-flop with its failed budget, admitting deficits are here to stay as it adds to the debt and fuels further inflation.

Random Liberals like Mark Carney say inflation is a domestic issue, and former Liberal finance minister John Manley said government spending fuels inflation. The debt-fuelled inflation made interest rates rise, and now homeowners are at risk of defaulting on their mortgages. Canadians have as much debt as the entire GDP, and the IMF warns that Canada is the most at risk of a mortgage default crisis in the G7.

The NDP continues to prop up and support the Liberals, indebted struggling Canadians further. Maybe instead of going woke and virtue signalling, the NDP-Liberals should rein in government spending and rewrite this failed budget so Canadians do not go broke and start losing their homes this summer.

* * *

[Translation]

CIRCUIT DU PAYSAN

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to a real success story in my region: 25 years of the Circuit du paysan.

Statements by Members

The Circuit du paysan is a key tourist attraction in the region. It links up various attractions, sites, local producers, artisans and artists. It helps sustain vibrant local businesses.

Hats off to everyone who believed in it from the very beginning and who worked to get it off the ground and keep it going, including my friend Michel Charbonneau, former executive director of the Centre local de développement des Jardins-de-Napierville and the driving force behind this fantastic regional marketing tool.

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the international development sector in Canada is led by incredible women like Lauren Ravon and her team at Oxfam Canada, who shared their work on how to improve the lives of paid and unpaid care workers in Canada and around the world; Anna Vogt and the international program representatives from the Mennonite Central Committee, who are in Ottawa to share MCC's work building peace globally; and Janice Hamilton, who heads the Fund for Innovation and Transformation alongside the folks at the ICN who are testing innovative solutions for gender equality in the global south.

These leaders are changing the world, but they need the government to support their efforts. They need the government to reverse the 15% cut to official development assistance and to finally deliver the promised feminist foreign policy.

When we make women and girls the centre of our efforts, ensuring women are at the table for peace talks; acting on climate change, which disproportionately affects women and girls; and empowering women and girls to determine their own health and education priorities, we make a real difference for everyone.

* * *

[Translation]

350TH ANNIVERSARY OF CITY OF TERREBONNE

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say hello to my dad.

I would like to wish a happy anniversary to the residents of Terrebonne, who are celebrating their city's 350th anniversary this year.

Since it was founded in 1673, the face of Terrebonne has been shaped by the construction of a flour mill, and then by the arrival of the textile industry. It is thanks to people like Charles Aubert de La Chesnaye, Calixte Gauthier, Louis Lecompte Dupré and Joseph Masson, who instilled an enduring entrepreneurial spirit right from the start, that Terrebonne has grown into the 10th-largest city in Quebec today.

I invite everyone to come out and enjoy the 350th anniversary festivities and discover everything Terrebonne has to offer, such as Île-des-Moulins and Vieux-Terrebonne, where I have the pleasure of having my constituency office.

The wonderful team at the 350th anniversary steering committee has put together a rich and diverse program of events. I would like to thank them for all the effort and heart they put into this historic year.

I wish Terrebonne a happy 350th.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety is accountable for the actions of his staff and his department.

Last week, we learned that Canada's most heinous criminal was being transferred from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security prison. This is a slap in the face to the victims and their families. The minister claimed that he was not aware, but his claims just do not add up. We know that on March 2, the minister's office was informed that this transfer would happen. On May 25, his office was informed again that this transfer would happen, and on May 29, the transfer did indeed happen.

The minister is either misleading Canadians or he is recklessly incompetent in carrying out the duties as minister. The minister must take responsibility for his inaction and his actions. The Minister of Public Safety must resign.

* * *

● (1420)

[Translation]

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS AWARENESS MONTH IN CANADA

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or ALS, Awareness Month, a time to reflect—

The Speaker: I do not know what happened, but it is a bit noisy. I will ask the hon. member to start again.

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark ALS Awareness Month, a time to reflect on a cause that affects the lives of many Canadians.

ALS is a progressive and terminal disease that affects nerve cells in the brain, resulting in a loss of muscle control.

[English]

In Canada, approximately 3,000 people live with this debilitating illness, with two to three Canadians diagnosed with ALS every day.

[Translation]

These statistics highlight the need for continued research, improved support for patients and caregivers, and increased public awareness of this disease.

[English]

Let us not forget the faces behind these numbers. In their honour, and in recognition of all Canadians affected by ALS, we need to continue on for a future without ALS.

I thank all the researchers who have dedicated countless hours towards developing treatments for this disease. Their work means everything to the ALS community, and I sincerely hope for, and wish them tremendous good luck in finding, a treatment for ALS.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an entire generation of women will have to relive the traumatization of hearing about Paul Bernardo. We have learned that the government moved this monster, Paul Bernardo, from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security prison, where he will be free to receive visitors and interact with other human beings.

The Minister of Public Safety said he was shocked by the news. We now know that he had known about it for three months. What he said was false.

Will he resign?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was shocked because I was informed about it on May 30, the day after Mr. Bernardo was transferred to a medium-security institution. This was a mistake made by my office, and I will be taking concrete action.

We will always defend the rights of victims. I had a very good call with the representatives of the families of Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy. We will always defend their rights and all victims' rights.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an entire generation of Canadian women have to relive the traumatization of hearing Paul Bernardo's name. They all remember his horrific and monstrous crimes. They learned that the government decided to free this monster from a maximum-security prison and allow him to go to medium security, where he would be able to interact with other people, have visitors and enjoy other liberties.

The minister claimed this was all a big surprise to him. However, we learned today that his office knew in early March and was informed again in May. In other words, he did know, and what he said was false. Will he resign?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be farther from the truth. As I said earlier, I was informed on May 30, the day after Paul Bernardo was physically transferred to a medium security institution. At that time, I took immediate action, expressing the concerns of the families of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French to the commissioner. There is an internal review process.

Oral Questions

I have also made it clear to my staff that this should have been briefed immediately. Corrective steps have been taken. I have dealt with it, and we will now always defend the rights of victims.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now the minister is throwing his staff under the bus. His office admits that it found out on March 2, three months before the minister claimed to be shocked by the news. If his staff had really kept a secret from him of this enormity, he would have fired them a long time ago, but he has not, because he knows and they know that he knew way back then.

Will he do the only honourable thing that is left for him to do, and resign?

• (1425)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite the leader of the Conservative Party to repeat that allegation outside of the House. I will absolutely reject it. I knew on May 30—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am going to ask the members to take a deep breath. I know some of the topics we are discussing here are very emotional, and we get carried away, but I am going to ask everyone to allow the minister to answer so the Leader of the Opposition can hear the answer.

The hon. minister, please continue.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, it is the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada who misleads the House when he implies my knowledge before May 30. I had made it absolutely clear that that was the day on which I found out.

I have taken corrective steps internally with my office, an office for which I am responsible, to this Parliament and to the Canadian public. That is why, immediately upon knowing the fact that the prisoner was transferred to a medium-security institution, I raised it with the commissioner. I have spoken with the representatives of the families of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French. We will always—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have stated all these things outside of the House of Commons, so whatever threat he is trying to make, he can act on.

More important than that is that he did not act. His office knew on March 2. He expects us to believe that his staff just forgot to walk down the hall and inform him that perhaps the most notorious killer in Canadian history was being moved out of a maximum-security penitentiary to enjoy more luxuries and more freedoms in a medium-security penitentiary.

Finally, he has the power now to designate that mass murderers should all go into maximum-security prisons. He could have done that weeks ago. Why has he not done it, and why has he not resigned?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada lays out a prescription for political interference, which foreshadows what Canadians would get with a Conservative government.

On this side of the House, we recognize the independence of those decisions. When I became aware of the fact that Bernardo had been transferred to a medium-security institution, I raised it with the commissioner. I raised the concern—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to have to interrupt again. It is getting way out of hand. I want everyone to take a deep breath.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, in the questions that are posed by the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Canadians know they will get a prescription for political interference. On this side of the House, we are doing it the right way.

Today, I will be issuing new ministerial instructions to the Correctional Service of Canada to make sure that it puts victims' rights at the centre of decisions to transfer and that it informs victims' families before those transfers take place. We will always stand up for their rights.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the legitimate power of a public safety minister to issue directives about classes of prisoners. The former public safety minister, Ralph Goodale, did that about prisoners suspected of having contraband. That is normal. That is a power that the minister has today. He could classify all mass murderers as requiring maximum-security detention. That is a decision he could make now. It is a decision he could have made on March 2, when his office became aware that this monster was being transferred out of a maximum-security prison.

Given that he has not done that, and because he has misled the House, will the Prime Minister fire him?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada did not hear my last answer. We will be issuing new directions to the Correctional Service of Canada to ensure that it puts victims' rights at the centre of these decisions, to be sure that it informs victims' families before these transfers take place and to be sure that I am directly notified on a go-forward basis.

What did they get with Conservatives the last time they were in government? They got cuts to the Correctional Service of Canada in the amount of \$300 million in their last year of government. That is the difference between what Canadians get with Conservatives and what they get with our government.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government must launch an inquiry into Chinese interference before we rise for the summer. The government appears more open to the idea, but it is not making much headway because it refuses to clari-

fy its intentions. This is because of a word that starts with “p”. Every time we mention an inquiry, the government talks about a public process. I looked everywhere but could not find a definition for “public process”. Potential commissioners probably do not know exactly what it means either. A public inquiry is a clear concept; it is even defined by law.

Why not just announce an independent commission of public inquiry? That is what everyone wants. This is what it comes down to.

● (1430)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I share the interest of all parliamentarians in finding the right process and, as I have said, a public inquiry has never been ruled out. However, it is a matter of finding the right way to do the work in a respectful manner, while taking into account the importance of protecting highly confidential security information, in order to rebuild Canadians' trust.

That is what we are going to do, hopefully with the support of the opposition parties.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they are still talking about a process. It is not easy to get the facts from the government.

It seems like the government is hemming and hawing over whether to hold a public inquiry on Chinese interference. It must do it, because this is too important. The government has a duty to launch an inquiry before the House adjourns. In order for that to happen, it must do two things. First, it must announce the format of the inquiry, which will be a commission of inquiry. Second, it must ensure that the commissioner is truly independent. No one will accept the job as long as the government keeps hiding its intentions.

Will it launch a commission of inquiry, yes or no?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, the letter we received from the Bloc Québécois is an important step towards building a consensus about the right way to move forward. Our colleague put forward the idea of an independent public inquiry. Perhaps he did not hear when I clearly said that it is an option the government is considering.

However, the process for this public inquiry must be properly defined. How will it protect top secret information? What will the time frame be? Who are the right people to lead this process?

*Oral Questions**[English]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is going on in the office of the public security minister? We just found out that his office was aware of the transfer of Paul Bernardo out of maximum security three months ago, but the minister claims that he only knew about it on May 30. If the minister cannot keep his house in order, how is he going to keep the country safe?

When will the minister stop waiting beside a fax machine and start checking his emails for these serious updates?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in this chamber, I was notified on May 30, the day after Paul Bernardo was transferred to a medium-security institution. I have taken corrective steps to deal with the issues within my office, and going forward, I have indicated that we will be issuing new instructions to the Correctional Service of Canada to put victims' rights at the very centre of transfer decisions and make sure that victims' families are notified. This is something I will continue to be focused on every day: defending victims' rights.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem does not end there.

[Translation]

The director of CSIS confirmed in committee that his service had indeed informed the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, when he was Minister of Public Safety, of the information involving the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

The director said that he had shared information with the Department of Public Safety with very specific instructions to share it with the minister.

Can the minister confirm in the House that he is now able to read his emails?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to clear up a misunderstanding the member opposite appears to have. The national security and intelligence adviser, the public safety officials and Director Vigneault have all been very clear in that ministers and their offices do not have direct access to top secret electronic networks. Mr. Vigneault did not send his note to me, nor did he notify me that the information had been sent. Director Vigneault had many opportunities to brief me but, unfortunately, never briefed me on the contents of his note.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we learned last week that serial killer Paul Bernardo was going to leave a maximum security prison, the Minister of Public Safety acted surprised.

According to the CBC, he knew about this for three months. This minister misled Canadians. If ministerial responsibility and honour still mean anything to him, he should resign.

Will he do that?

● (1435)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I was shocked by CSC's decision to transfer Mr. Bernardo. I was informed of that decision on May 30.

I am taking corrective steps at my office. It is my responsibility and I take it very seriously.

We will continue to focus on victims' rights. I had a very good conversation with the representatives of the French and Mahaffy families. We will work together to protect victims' rights.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot imagine how much pain, anxiety and indignation the loved ones of Paul Bernardo's victims felt when they learned that the minister had known about the murderer's transfer for three months and said nothing.

It was completely insensitive and downright irresponsible. This minister has lost all credibility when it comes to protecting victims. He needs to resign, right away.

Is he going to resign?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is mistaken. I was informed of the transfer on May 30, as I have said many times.

Today, I am handling this by taking further action and giving new directives to the CSC. The CSC must notify victims' families before a transfer occurs. I must also be directly briefed as Minister of Public Safety.

We will always protect victims' rights.

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety told Canadians that he relied on the advice of law enforcement to implement the Emergencies Act. That was false. He told Canadians that the Beijing-run police stations in our country were closed, and that was false. Then he told Canadians that he did not know about child rapist and murderer Paul Bernardo's transfer out of a maximum-security prison. He stood in front of the victims' families and acted shocked.

He knew for three months; now he is throwing his staff under the bus. Which staff member did he fire?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. I stood with the families of Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy, because I have great care for them, as do all Canadians. That is why I called the commissioner to express my concerns. That is why she is conducting a review of the decision. That is why I am issuing new instructions to the CSC.

The hon. colleague refers to the Emergencies Act. I will always defend the government's decision to invoke that act. While we were working around the clock to restore public safety, what were the Conservatives doing? What was the leader of the Conservative Party doing? He was serving up Timmy's. On this side of the House, we will always defend law and order.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if he claims he does not read emails, if he claims he does not get briefed by staff, if he claims he does not get briefed by his officials, if he claims he does not tell the Prime Minister anything, what does he actually do here?

He told the families of Paul Bernardo's victims that he had no knowledge of the transfer. He pretended that he had no idea. He re-victimized the families of the victims, and he does not have the trust of Canadians. His own caucus cannot even look up at him.

There is only one option for the minister. It is to resign.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the events that occurred—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, the horrific events that were the result of the absolutely heinous crimes by Paul Bernardo are felt viscerally, I would say, by every single Canadian.

What the minister has stated is that this is a decision that was made by Correctional Services Canada, which acts independently. The minister indicated that when he became aware of it, he indicated to Correctional Services that he did not find that decision acceptable and asked for it to be reviewed.

We have also asked for it to take a victims-centred approach going forward in corrections. I want to work with the party opposite on that, because I know they care—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a pattern of misleading behaviour from the minister. That is the problem here.

For example, he misled the House when he said he was not banning hunting rifles. That was false. He was banning hunting rifles. He misled hunters. He misled farmers. He misled indigenous Canadians. He was forced to back down on that as a result, but he broke the trust of hunters and firearms owners. He will never get that back.

How can the Prime Minister have a Minister of Public Safety who cannot be trusted?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise once again, because I think we are all unified in our horror of these crimes. I think that we are all unified in our desire to make sure that the victims, not only here but in every instance, are protected. That is why I think the minister's offer to have a conversation about how we can use this to instruct a more victims-centred approach in our corrections is the right approach.

I would invite the opposition to participate in that discussion. I think the minister has been clear that the decision made by Correctional Services Canada was one that we do not support and have asked them to review.

• (1440)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the member is listening to the exchange going on here. The minister also claimed that the illegal Beijing police stations operating in Canada were closed. That was not true either, was it?

These police stations not only violate our sovereignty, but they threaten the security of Chinese Canadians. It is issue after issue with the minister, and he continues to mislead the public. It is critical that the Minister of Public Safety, above most ministers, has the trust of Canadians. However, he has repeatedly misled Canadians on issues of public safety.

How can he be trusted to keep us safe when we cannot trust a word he says?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way is not the final arbiter of trust. It is Canadians. We are working hard every single day to protect public safety.

We have introduced Bill C-21, which will take AR15-style guns out of our communities. The Conservatives want to make those types of guns legal again.

My colleague refers to the so-called police stations. The RCMP has repeatedly confirmed that it has taken disruptive action to stop foreign interference in relation to those so-called police stations.

On the matter of Paul Bernardo, there is an internal review. We are working with the families. We will always stand up for victims' rights.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, foreign interference continues while the government is still waffling, wondering what to do about the special rapporteur fiasco. It still cannot take the first step, which is to announce whether it intends to launch a public and independent commission of inquiry.

I am reminded of those profound words, full of wisdom, from Talleyrand, a French diplomat, who said something to the effect that there is only one way to say yes, and that is yes, and all the others mean no.

So is that a yes on an independent public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to repeat the answers I gave to my Bloc colleague a few moments ago. As we have always said, the country, Canadians and parliamentarians will benefit from a public process that will follow up on Mr. Johnston's reports and recommendations.

This is an opportunity to collaborate on what kind of process will be launched, what kind of people will lead that process and what the mandate will be. I look forward to continuing to work with the opposition parties.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for almost four months now, the government has been schooling us on how to stall for time on the Chinese interference issue. The four-month mark is approaching, and we are right back at square one. We have no time left. If the inquiry is to shed light on this interference before the next election, considering the upcoming summer recess, it has to get off the ground now. Time is running out.

Will the government finally announce an independent public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I share our colleague's opinion on the need for swift action. I said it publicly and I repeat it now: Ideally, the opposition parties and the government will agree on a process by the end of next week. This work is being done in the interest of Canadians. I deeply appreciated the letter I received yesterday from the Bloc Québécois. I have had encouraging conversations with other opposition parties, even today. The work continues. I remain optimistic.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Paul Bernardo is a brutal serial killer and rapist. He kidnapped, tortured, raped and murdered teenage girls. His victims and their loved ones have to live with that grief forever. He traumatized an entire generation and the whole country.

Two weeks ago, that monster was moved out of maximum security, but three months before that, the minister was told. He did nothing, and now he says he cannot do anything to keep this dangerous criminal locked up in max. His whole job is to keep Canadians safe, and he cannot or he will not.

When will he name and fire the staffer he says screwed up, or just resign?

• (1445)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is right in

her characterization of these crimes. I think she will find no argument from anyone there.

Let me say that all of us, on this issue, need to work together to make sure that the families are served and the victims are served. The minister has suggested a conversation about a victim-centred approach in corrections to make sure this mistake, which was made independently by corrections services, does not happen again.

I hope the member opposite will take up that conversation. I know how sincere she is in her horror of those events. I know she knows I am sincere in mine.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want accountability and action. The ministers can blame everyone else all they want, but the truth is their policies endanger Canadians and it is a habit.

The Liberals are soft on sentences for kidnapping, sexual assault and rape, and let those monsters do time at home among their victims and law-abiding neighbours. Crime has skyrocketed because the Liberals give bail not jail to violent criminals.

Misleading Canadians is the minister's habit. He said law enforcement asked for the Emergencies Act. That was not true. He said all Beijing police stations in Canada were closed. That was not true. He is misleading us now, as we know, when he says he did not know about Paul Bernardo's transfer.

When will he finally be accountable, stop all this deliberate deception and resign?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be absolutely clear again that I found out about this decision on May 30. I agree with my colleague that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am having a hard time hearing the answer. I am sure many other members are as well.

I just want to remind some members that they have very strong voices. Maybe they are just trying to talk to someone close to them and their voices are very loud. I want them to be very mindful of the strength of their voices.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, as I have said on numerous occasions, I was personally informed on May 30, the day after an independent decision was taken by CSC to transfer Paul Bernardo. I expressed shock and outrage at the time, along with the families.

Oral Questions

I should have been briefed immediately by my staff. I have dealt with that matter internally through corrective steps. Going forward, we have new instructions coming to CSC to put victims at the very centre of these decisions. We will ensure they are notified so that we can take a trauma-informed approach.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Paul Bernardo is a serial rapist and murderer who targeted teenagers. He deserves to stay in a maximum security prison forever, full stop.

If the minister's staff keeps secrets from him on serious issues, then the public safety minister has no control over his files. He has not fired anyone. To allow the minister to keep his job is to be anti-woman, anti-justice and anti-victim.

If the Liberals want to stand with women, tell him to resign.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, opposition members want what they have asked for many times. I do not know if there was ever a point at which they supported the minister, but they do not now and that is fine.

What we are talking about with the crimes they are consistently repeating are heinous traumas that were visited upon those families and, in an echoed way, upon every single Canadian. What I have heard from the minister is an offer to have a conversation about how we ensure that Correctional Services does not make a decision like that again and that we work together on that.

I look forward to constructive offers from the other side, not just—

The Speaker: The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those families are suffering again because of the inaction of the government.

The minister makes an art form of spreading misinformation. He said CSIS did not inform him that Beijing was targeting an MP, that Chinese-run police stations were closed and that Bill C-21 did not target hunting rifles. That was false, false and false. Now he says he did not know that Paul Bernardo was transferred to medium security. He has known since March.

Canadians deserve a public safety minister who tells the truth. This one, who threatens our safety with his deceptions, should resign.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not, because I continue to be focused on public safety for all Canadians.

I issued ministerial directions to the service to ensure that the elected government would be briefed on the foreign interference of parliamentarians. I am going to be issuing directions to the CSC to be sure that this office is briefed directly when it comes to inmate transfer decisions. That is what responsibility looks like.

On the opposite side, what are we getting? We are getting dilatory tactics, delays, filibustering and no support for the budget. That undermines public safety.

On this side of the House, we will be focused on our paramount objective, which is protecting the safety and security of Canadians.

* * *

● (1450)

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we hauled the CEO of Loblaws in front of the committee and told him that he has to stop gouging Canadians. The reality is that greedflation is a massive contributor to the cost of living going up, but neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives have the courage to even mention it.

Yesterday, it was confirmed at committee with the grocery affordability report that there needs to be more transparency, and yes, the federal government can do a lot more to bring down the price of groceries.

When will the Prime Minister stop protecting billionaires and start standing up for Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we stick up for Canadians every day on this side of the House. That is why our budget has measures in place to make sure that Canadians can get through this inflationary cycle.

Let us take a look at what we have done on the tax front. We have permanently raised the corporate income tax by 1.5% on the largest banks and insurance companies. We have put in the Canada recovery dividend for banks and insurance companies that made more than \$1 billion in profit. We have also put in a luxury tax on vehicles and planes.

We are making sure that tax fairness is integral to how we approach things in Canada. We will continue to do that work.

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ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every election the Liberals campaign on electoral reform, yet the only thing the Liberals have done is leave a trail of broken promises. Canadians are feeling increasingly disengaged with not seeing their votes represented. People do not want political games; they expect action. The NDP believes that all Canadians deserve a voice in our democracy.

My question is simple. Will the Liberals make right on their promises and implement a citizens' assembly on electoral reform?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we are focused on is working collaboratively with the NDP. The member's colleague and I have had a number of meetings to talk about how we can implement the agreements in the supply and confidence agreement to make voting more accessible, exactly as our colleague identified. This is to ensure the greatest number of Canadians can participate in the democratic process, to deal with issues like mail-in ballots, to allow people to vote at different polling stations and to ensure that our electoral system is safe but also accessible to the greatest number of people in the easiest way. Those are our priorities.

The Speaker: I want to point out to the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies that I realize he has a very strong voice and we can all hear it. I just want him to realize that himself.

The hon. member for Don Valley East.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that Canada is a top destination for many travellers from around the world. Though we experience cold winters, Canadians are known for their warm welcome.

In my riding of Don Valley East, we have a very vibrant Caribbean population whose loved ones from abroad are hoping to visit Canada and spend more time with their loved ones. In fact, as we speak, my Aunt Maria is visiting from Trinidad.

There have been some updates to the visa process here in Canada. I would like to ask the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to share some of these updates with us in the House today.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his advocacy for liberalized travel policy when it comes to Canada.

I am pleased to share with this House that last week we announced a major change to immigration policy that is going to allow more people to come to Canada visa-free if they have held a Canadian visa within the past 10 years or hold a current American visa. This applies to nationals of 13 different countries, including Trinidad and Tobago. This is going to allow them to access our country for a seven-dollar application fee, and approval will come within mere minutes.

The member's aunt will be able to continue to visit, and I look forward to more families being reunited and a successful tourism season this summer.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for three months, the office of the Minister of Public Safety knew that Canada's most heinous criminal was being moved from maximum to medium security. Paul Bernardo is a serial killer,

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a serial rapist and, without a doubt, the most heinous monster of our time, yet the minister did not tell the victims' families and pretended to be shocked by the news.

Today, the Conservatives demand that the minister stand in this House, apologize, do the right thing, just say sorry and resign. If you care about these victims' families, do it.

• (1455)

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members to place their questions through the Chair and not directly to each other, as well as the answers, for that matter.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would just observe that I do not think we should be casting aspersions about whether anybody in this House does not feel absolute horror and repulsion at these crimes. It is not a constructive or useful approach to accuse anyone of not caring about these families or these victims. The member obviously knows that just as she cares deeply about what happened in those crimes, so does every member of this House.

There is an opportunity to talk about how we can ensure the decision made by Correctional Services Canada does not happen again, and that is action. That is an opportunity that we have to take together.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety cannot even stand in the House and answer the question I just gave him. He cannot even look into the camera and say to the victims' families that he is sorry. Instead, he wants to divert. He wants to blame everyone else. He is the minister. The buck with public safety stops with him, no one else.

It is enough. Will he resign? If he will not resign, he should tell us right now which staff member is going down for not telling him.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member and all members in this chamber that I grieve with the families of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French. I said so when I first communicated my shock and outrage at the decision of the CSC. I said so this morning when I spoke to the representative for the families. I think all members can and should empathize with those families and with the families of all victims.

We will continue to do everything necessary to put their rights at the very centre of the decisions that are taken around the transferring of inmates. That is precisely what I have done today by signalling new instructions to the CSC.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remember sitting here five years ago when the public safety minister said he would make changes to the prison transfer program when another child killer, Terri-Lynne McClintic, was transferred to a minimum-security healing lodge.

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Right now, I am struck by the fact that the Prime Minister has only ever fired one person. Therefore, I have to wonder if the minister thinks the reason the Prime Minister has not fired him, while he did fire Jody Wilson-Raybould for doing the right thing, is because of Jody's gender.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I have offered many times to have a constructive conversation around specifics and about how we can deal with the decision made by Correctional Services Canada. Instead, we are getting into what I would categorize as very partisan territory on an issue that is extremely sensitive. We are dealing with victims here whom we all care about.

I look across to the member and know that she cares as much about this as any other member does in the House, so let us have a constructive conversation. I would suggest that victims—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, respectfully, I would argue the government has had five years to have a constructive conversation on this. The victim's family was revictimized when Terri-Lynne McClintic was transferred to a minimum-security prison.

My colleagues have already gone down the line of the litany of failures of the minister. It is not just the Bernardo issue today. If he will not admit a gendered aspect to the firing in his cabinet, which I think is true, will he at least have the courage to name which one of his staff he is going to make fall on the sword for this issue?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of us, unfortunately, have had our lives touched by crime. That is something that some have to live with, and in the case of these victims, it has been in the most horrific and awful way.

The only thing that is gendered about it is that women, unfortunately, are more often the victims than not. Having responsible, mature conversations about that and about how we deal with the Correctional Service of Canada, which is independent and cannot be directed by us, and how we create policies that make sure we have the right outcomes is the conversation that we need to have.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service confirmed that he warned the Minister of Emergency Preparedness in a memo that a member of Parliament was being threatened by China. However, it was reportedly lost in limbo because the minister was never informed.

Yesterday, we also learned that the same bad luck befell his colleague at Public Safety. His office had known for three months that Paul Bernardo would be transferred from prison, but he was never informed either.

Why is it that, when it comes to safety, everyone knows about the hot issues except the ministers responsible?

• (1500)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former public safety minister clarified that he was

not informed by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. That is why I gave new instructions to ensure that elected representatives on the government side will now be briefed by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service when there are incidents involving foreign interference.

That is why I am in the process of issuing new instructions to the Correctional Service of Canada to protect victims' rights.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that takes us right back to Chinese interference.

The Prime Minister does not have much luck either with memos getting lost in limbo. He, too, was never warned of the threats against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, even though the Canadian Security Intelligence Service had produced the memo and it briefs the Prime Minister every week. The information got lost along the way, as it did for his two ministers of public safety.

Are all their offices dysfunctional or is it the ministers who make sure they know only what it suits them to know?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of sharing information when a member of Parliament is being threatened as part of foreign interference, we acknowledged the problem and rectified it.

The Minister of Public Safety has given instructions that, from now on, this kind of information and intelligence must be shared not only with the minister responsible but also with the parliamentarian concerned. We have made a positive change.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that the families of the victims of Paul Bernardo were only informed of his prison transfer after it had taken place. They have every right to be shocked and outraged, but the Minister of Public Safety has absolutely zero excuses, especially when he and his staff knew of this transfer for three months.

Paul Bernardo should be in a maximum security prison. When will the minister do the right thing? Canadians deserve better. Victims' families deserve better. Will the minister resign?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with one aspect of the question from the member opposite, and it is that I do agree that victims' families should be notified ahead of these transfer decisions.

That is precisely what we are in the course of doing. We are issuing new instructions to the Correctional Service of Canada so that we can prevent a situation like that from occurring again. We will continue to put victims' rights forward and front and centre when it comes to these decisions.

I agree to work with my colleague opposite, who represents the Niagara region, and the colleagues on this side of this House, some of whom have been personally and profoundly impacted, along with victims' families, so that we can prevent a tragedy like this from occurring again.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CBC is reporting that the Minister of Public Safety's staff found out Paul Bernardo was going to be transferred to a medium-security institution three months before it happened.

However, neither the deputy minister nor senior officials knew about it. No one other than the minister's staff knew about it.

Can the minister tell us which staff member made the mistake and whether they have been fired?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be clear. I addressed today the mistakes made by my office. It is very important that, now, we focus on victims' rights.

Today, I am issuing new directives to the Correctional Service of Canada that will put victims' rights at the heart of our approach to decisions about transferring offenders. These directives will ensure that I, as Minister of Public Safety, will be briefed about such decisions going forward.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister admits that there has been a series of mistakes in his office.

We saw the same thing in January, when the minister said that the safe third country agreement was working very well at Roxham Road. Meanwhile, hundreds of illegal migrants were entering Canada.

Suddenly, two months later, President Biden and the Prime Minister announced that an agreement had been reached and that the road would finally be officially closed, even though the minister had said that closing the road would be impossible.

This points to a series of mistakes and incompetence in the minister's office. Will he do the right thing, fire these people and resign as minister?

• (1505)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, has a new agreement with the United States to accomplish two goals.

First, we want to protect the rights of refugees. This is very important. Second, we want to strengthen the integrity of our borders. That is exactly what we are doing with a new \$450-million investment in the CBSA.

Oral Questions

We will always protect the rights of refugees. That is what this new agreement is all about.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party would have us believe that the abortion debate is closed, but it is taking every opportunity to reopen it.

The member for Yorkton—Melville introduced a bill to limit a woman's right to reproductive health services. We cannot take that right for granted.

Can the minister tell us what our government is doing to protect the right to choose?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sudbury for her advocacy on this important issue.

I want to reassure my colleague and all Canadians that we will not allow the Conservatives to do through the back door what they cannot do openly, in other words, chip away at a woman's right to choose.

The Conservative leader is trying to win votes by attempting to reopen the abortion debate. In Canada, in 2023, it is shameful and unacceptable. A Liberal government will always stand up for women's rights.

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FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at a time when Canadians are struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table, the Prime Minister gave \$200 million to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, or AIIB.

Now, after resigning, the bank's communications director has revealed that the AIIB is controlled by Beijing, which intends to expand the Chinese empire worldwide using Canadian taxpayers' money.

Will the Prime Minister take back the money that he gave the AIIB and return it to Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Prime Minister said earlier today in answer to this question, the Government of Canada will immediately halt all government-led activity at the bank.

Furthermore, she has instructed the Department of Finance to lead an immediate review of the allegations raised and of Canada's involvement in the AIIB. The Canadian government will also be discussing this issue with its allies and partners who are members of the bank.

Oral Questions

The review announced today is to be undertaken expeditiously. No outcome is being ruled out following its completion.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, four years ago, Conservatives told the Prime Minister that he had no business sending over 200 million tax dollars to the Beijing-controlled Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to fund pipelines and roads and bridges over there while Canadians could not pay for groceries. Now we have been proven right by the head of communications for that very bank, who has resigned, saying that it is dominated by the Communist Party and is being used to build Beijing's empire around the world.

The government says it is going to cease operations now, but the question is this: Where is the \$200 million of Canadians' money that he gave that bank?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said earlier today in response to this matter, the Government of Canada will immediately halt all government-led activity at the bank. The minister has instructed the Department of Finance to lead an immediate review of the allegations raised and of Canada's involvement at the AIIB.

The Canadian government will also be discussing this issue with allies and partners who are members of the bank. The review announced today is to be undertaken expeditiously. No outcome is being ruled out following its completion.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was not the question. Conservatives agreed with Japan and the United States, which refused to give money to the Beijing-controlled Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. We pleaded with the Prime Minister not to throw our money away on this enterprise, which was designed to expand Beijing's empire around the world by building infrastructure in other countries.

However, 200 million Canadian tax dollars have gone into this bank, so I will ask for a third time: Where is our money and how will we get it back?

• (1510)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to repeat that the Government of Canada has halted all government-led activities at the AIIB. Our government has instructed the Department of Finance to lead an immediate review of the allegations to end Canada's involvement at the AIIB. This review is to be done expeditiously, and no outcome has been taken off the table.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill S-5, the bill modernizing the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which had not had a major overhaul in more than 20 years, received royal assent yesterday.

More than 50 hours were spent on this bill in parliamentary committee. The newly strengthened legislation includes major advances in protecting the environment and human health.

Can the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change tell the House about the next steps in implementing the framework for ensuring the right to a healthy environment?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for all his work as chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, as well as all the members of the committee.

I would also like to thank the Senate, since Bill S-5 was passed last night. For the first time ever in Canadian law, we have enshrined in law the right to a healthy environment for all Canadians. This is a first for our country.

We will be working hard over the coming months to determine how this right will be implemented in Canadian law.

[English]

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my riding is cut in half. Highway 4 has been closed for over a week because of wildfires. With the closure, local food banks are suffering, as people are trapped. This is impacting people who were already struggling with food insecurity. They are worried, and many do not know where their next meal will come from.

Will the federal government provide emergency funding to local food banks, small businesses and the community and provide emergency unemployment insurance to help people who are cut off by the wildfires?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for a very important question. I want to assure him that I will reach out today to the British Columbia government and ensure that there is close coordination between federal supports and the province's work to serve that community. We will work with him and those communities to ensure that the people who are impacted by those wildfires receive the supports that they require.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, carbon capture and storage is unproven technology. In fact, it often emits more carbon than it captures, yet this government keeps—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry, but I am having a hard time hearing the question. There is someone shouting over here. I am sure they do not want me to name them.

The hon. member for Kitchener Centre can continue from the top, please.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, carbon capture and storage is unproven technology. In fact, it often emits more carbon than it captures, yet this government keeps giving our money to big polluters to experiment with it, including \$520 million in this year's budget alone, and now we know why: Oil and gas executives helped write our government's own strategy on carbon capture.

Will the government stop outsourcing the climate plan to the very industry most responsible for the crisis we are in?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to my hon. colleague, I would certainly say that his technical assessment is simply wrong. I would be more than happy to sit down and have a conversation with him about carbon capture and storage technologies.

The development of thoughtful policy requires gathering input broadly, including environmental organizations, indigenous peoples, civil society and industry. When we were developing the carbon management strategy for Canada, 1,500 organizations and individuals provided input. The advisory group that was referenced by the hon. member included a whole range of people, including Ed Whittingham, the former executive director of the Pembina Institute, and—

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I am afraid that is all the time we have today for question period.

I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Jon Reyes, Minister of Labour and Immigration for the Province of Manitoba.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1515)

[Translation]

The Speaker: We have other guests joining us today. Canadian Forces Day is an opportunity for Canadians across the country to recognize the sacrifices that our men and women in uniform make on our behalf.

[English]

It is my pleasure to draw the attention of the members to the presence in the gallery of six members of the Canadian Forces who are taking part in Canadian Armed Forces Day today: Captain Sigmund Sort, Captain Hilary Anderson, Sergeant Joshua Ballard, Master Corporal Jude Julien, Sailor 1 Charles Tucker and Corporal Mathieu Mageau-Martin.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Private Members' Business

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT ACT

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, in relation to the motion respecting Senate amendments made to Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act, one member of each recognized party will be allowed to speak for not more than ten minutes followed by five minutes for questions and comments, and at the conclusion of the time provided for this debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the motion be deemed agreed to.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am concerned about this conspiracy theory among Green and New Democrat politicians that carbon capture and storage does not exist. Therefore, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to table the addresses of a number of hotels in my riding to help these members come and see for themselves how carbon capture and storage works.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

COPYRIGHT ACT

The House resumed from June 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-294, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (interoperability), be read the third time and passed, and of the motion that this question be now put.

The Speaker: It being 3:18 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion that this question be now put.

Call in the members.

• (1545)

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

(Division No. 373)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif

Aitchison

Private Members' Business

Albas	Aldag	Khalid	Khera
Ali	Allison	Kitchen	Kmiec
Anandasangaree	Arnold	Koutrakis	Kram
Arseneault	Arya	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Ashton	Bachrach	Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Badawey	Bains	Kwan	Lake
Baker	Baldinelli	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Barlow	Barrett	Lametti	Lamoureux
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Lantsman	Lapointe
Battiste	Beaulieu	Larouche	Lattanzio
Beech	Bendayan	Lauzon	Lawrence
Bennett	Berthold	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Bérubé	Bezan	Lehoux	Lemire
Bittle	Blaikie	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Blair	Blanchet	Liepert	Lightbound
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Lloyd	Lobb
Block	Blois	Long	Longfield
Boissonnault	Boulerice	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Bradford	Bragdon	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
Brassard	Brière	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe	Maloney	Martel
Calkins	Cannings	Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Caputo	Carrie	Mathyssen	May (Cambridge)
Casey	Chabot	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
Chagger	Chahal	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
Chambers	Champagne	McGuinty	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Champoux	Chatel	McLean	McLeod
Chen	Chiang	McPherson	Melillo
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Mendès	Mendicino
Cooper	Cormier	Miao	Michaud
Coteau	Dabrusin	Miller	Moore
Dalton	Damoff	Morantz	Morrice
Dancho	Davidson	Morrison	Morrissey
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Motz	Murray
d'Entremont	Desbiens	Muys	Naqvi
Desilets	Desjarlais	Nater	Ng
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Noormohamed	Normandin
Diab	Doherty	O'Connell	Oliphant
Dong	Dowdall	O'Regan	O'Toole
Dreeschen	Drouin	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Dubourg	Duclos	Paupé	Perkins
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	Plamondon	Poilievre
El-Khoury	Ellis	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Rayes	Redekopp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Reid	Rempel Garner
Fast	Fergus	Richards	Roberts
Ferri	Fillmore	Robillard	Rodriguez
Findlay	Fisher	Rogers	Romanado
Fortier	Fortin	Rood	Ruff
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Sahota	Sajjan
Freeland	Fry	Saks	Samson
Gaheer	Gallant	Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Garon	Garrison	Scheer	Schiefke
Gaudreau	Gazan	Schmale	Seeback
Généreux	Genuis	Serré	Sgro
Gerretsen	Gill	Shanahan	Sheehan
Gladu	Godin	Shields	Shipley
Goodridge	Gould	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Gourde	Gray	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Green	Guilbeault	Singh	Small
Hajdu	Hallan	Sorbara	Soroka
Hanley	Hardie	Sousa	Steinley
Hepfner	Hoback	Ste-Marie	Stewart
Holland	Housefather	St-Onge	Strahl
Hughes	Hussen	Stubbs	Sudds
Hutchings	Iacono	Tassi	Taylor Roy
Idlout	Ien	Thériault	Therrien
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Thomas	Thompson
Johns	Joly	Tochor	Tolmie
Jones	Jowhari	Trudeau	Trudel
Julian	Kayabaga	Turnbull	Uppal
Kelloway	Kelly	Valdez	Van Bynen

Private Members' Business

van Koeverden
Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi— 320

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Bibeau
Savard-Tremblay— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on the main motion.

● (1555)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 374*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Baldinelli
Barrett
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Berthold
Bezan
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Blois
Boulerice
Bragdon
Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings
Carrie
Chabot
Chahal
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Damoff

Aitchison
Aldag
Allison
Arnold
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barlow
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Block
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brassard
Brock
Calkins
Caputo
Casey
Chagger
Chambers
Champoux
Chen
Chong
Cooper
Coteau
Dalton
Dancho

Davidson
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dong
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Ferreri
Findlay
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garon
Gaudreau
Généreux
Gerretsen
Gladu
Goodridge
Gourde
Green
Hajdu
Hanley
Hepfner
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Johns
Jones
Julian
Kelloway
Khalid
Kitchen
Koutrakis
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Kwan
Lalonde
Lametti
Lantsman
Larouche
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saarnich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McGuinty
McLean
McPherson
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morantz

Davies
Deltell
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Doherty
Dowdall
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ehsassi
Ellis
Erskine-Smith
Falk (Provencher)
Fergus
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Gallant
Garrison
Gazan
Genuis
Gill
Godin
Gould
Gray
Guilbeault
Hallan
Hardie
Hoback
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Jeneroux
Joly
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Kelly
Khera
Kmieć
Kram
Kurek
Kusmierczyk
Lake
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lapointe
Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maguire
Martel
Masse
May (Cambridge)
Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod
Melillo
Mendicino
Michaud
Moore
Morrice

Private Members' Business

Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Muys	Naqvi
Nater	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poileuvre
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Ruff
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schiefke
Schmale	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Sousa	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi — 322

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron	Bibeau
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Savard-Tremblay — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

The House resumed from June 9 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 63 under Private Members' Business in the name of the member for Scarborough North.

● (1610)

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

(Division No. 375)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Ali	Allison
Anandasangaree	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cooper
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dong
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Ferri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis

Gerretsen
Gladu
Goodridge
Gourde
Green
Hajdu
Hanley
Hepfner
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Johns
Jones
Julian
Kelloway
Khalid
Kitchen
Koutrakis
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Kwan
Lalonde
Lametti
Lantsman
Larouche
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McGuinty
McLean
McPherson
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morantz
Morrison
Motz
Muys
Nater
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Plamondon
Powlowski
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Robillard
Rogers
Rood
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scheer
Schmale
Serré

Gill
Godin
Gould
Gray
Guilbeault
Hallan
Hardie
Hoback
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Jeneroux
Joly
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Kelly
Khera
Kmieć
Kram
Kurek
Kusmierczyk
Lake
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lapointe
Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maguire
Martel
Masse
May (Cambridge)
Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod
Melillo
Mendicino
Michaud
Moore
Morrice
Morrisey
Murray
Naqvi
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Petitpas Taylor
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Rodriguez
Romanado
Ruff
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Seeback
Sgro

Routine Proceedings

Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sorbara
Sousa
Ste-Marie
St-Onge
Stubbs
Tassi
Thériault
Thomas
Tochor
Trudeau
Turnbull
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

Sheehan
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Small
Soroka
Steinley
Stewart
Strahl
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Thompson
Tolmie
Trudel
Uppal
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Wauugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi— 322

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Bibeau
Savard-Tremblay— 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

The House resumed from June 13 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, concerning the extension to consider Bill C-290.

● (1620)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 376*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
Albas

Aitchison
Aldag

Routine Proceedings

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

Private Members' Business

Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi— 319

Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

Généreux
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kniec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Mazier
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Perkins
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 113

Genuis
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Moore
Morrison
Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Bibeau
Savard-Tremblay— 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST PREGNANT WOMEN ACT

The House resumed from June 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-311, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (violence against pregnant women), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-311, under Private Members' Business.

• (1635)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 377*)

YEAS

Members

Aboulttaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Berthold
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Bezan
Bragdon
Brock
Caputo
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
Deltell
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Gallant

Aldag
Anandasangaree
Arya
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Chabot
Chahal
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi

NAYS

Members

Ali
Arseneault
Ashton
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bérubé
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Casey
Chagger
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury

Routine Proceedings

Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lemire	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Pauzé
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Rayes
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Sorbara	Sousa
Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thompson
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi— 205	

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron

Bibeau

Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Savard-Tremblay— 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; and the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Public Safety.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2022 annual report on the RCMP's use of the law enforcement justification provisions. This report addresses the RCMP's use of specified provisions within the law enforcement justification regime, which is set out in subsections 25(1) to 25(4) of the Criminal Code. This report also documents the nature of the investigations in which these provisions were used.

The report stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

* * *

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the annual report of the 2021-22 Canada account, as prepared by Export Development Canada.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and consistent with the policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled “Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Finland concerning Youth Mobility”, done at Helsinki on March 31, 2023; and “Amendments to Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade”, adopted at Geneva between June 6 and 17, 2022. This treaty is tabled for information purposes only.

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 eight petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the fourth part of the 2022 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, PACE, and parliamentary mission to Poland in Strasbourg, France, and Warsaw, Poland, from October 10 to 20, 2022.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, five reports of the delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, or APF.

The first is respecting its participation in the APF's Parliamentary Affairs Committee meeting, held in Brussels, Belgium, from May 23 to 25, 2022.

The second is respecting its participation in the meeting of the Working Group on Reforming the APF Constitution, held in Paris on November 3 and 4, 2022.

The third is respecting its participation in the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Sharm el-Sheikh on November 10 and 11, 2022.

The fourth is respecting its participation in the 18th Summit of La Francophonie, held in Djerba from November 18 to 20, 2022.

The fifth is respecting its participation in the fifth Leadership Workshop for Francophone Women Parliamentarians, held in Paris from December 12 to 16, 2022.

[English]

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association respecting its bilateral visit to the United Kingdom held in London, England, and Belfast, Northern Ireland, from October 24 to 27, 2022.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of

Routine Proceedings

the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, entitled “New Contract for the Administration of Veterans Affairs Canada's Rehabilitation Program”.

[Translation]

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

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the witnesses who appeared before us for this report, and to acknowledge the tireless work of the committee members, the analyst and the clerks who helped us.

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the following three reports of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

I am tabling the 14th report, entitled “Domestic Manufacturing Capacity for a COVID-19 Vaccine - Prevention is Better than Cure”, and the 15th report, entitled “Blockchain Technology: Cryptocurrencies and Beyond”. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these two reports.

I also have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology concerning Bill C-42, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report it back to the House with amendments.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the analysts, the interpreters and our clerk, and now our new clerk. Their work was instrumental in the committee's successful presentation and tabling of these three reports.

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, entitled “Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for all Athletes in Canada”.

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

This has been an incredible journey for all of our members. I would specifically like to thank our clerk, Danielle, and our incredible analysts, Dominique and Clare, who worked through this very difficult study. I am proud to present this on behalf of the status of women committee. I am proud of what we have done.

• (1645)

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the supplementary report on behalf of the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Routine Proceedings

Many witnesses expressed the need for the government to commit to conducting an independent, trauma-informed, survivor-led inquiry into maltreatment in Canadian sport.

We believe that the terms of reference for the inquiry should include, among other things, an examination of the failure of sporting bodies to report or address breaches or alleged breaches of the Criminal Code to the proper authorities.

* * *

[English]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-342, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (maximum security offenders).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in my place today to introduce this private member's bill. Over the past several days, Canadians have shared with us their frustration and anger with a justice and corrections system they feel is out of balance. The recent decision by the Correctional Service of Canada to transfer Paul Bernardo to a medium-security facility has shocked Canadians and galvanized them into wanting to see action taken to protect society.

This proposed legislation would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to require that inmates who have been found to be dangerous offenders or convicted of more than one first-degree murder be assigned a security classification of maximum and confined in a maximum-security penitentiary or area in a penitentiary.

I wish to thank our Conservative leader, the hon. member for Carleton, for his tremendous leadership and support on this issue, as well as my hon. colleague, who seconded the bill, our Conservative shadow minister for public safety and the member of Parliament for Kildonan—St. Paul.

It is an honour for me to sponsor this important bill. It is an important bill for the residents in my community, but it also addresses the concerns of all members who are now hearing from constituents about the need to restore trust and confidence in our justice and corrections system. This is about doing what is right.

I look forward to working with all my parliamentary colleagues on seeing this legislation pass.

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

* * *

PETITIONS**FIREARMS**

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to table today.

In the first, the petitioners call on Parliament to reject what they rightly refer to as the Liberal government's federal gun grab. The signatories reject the premise of the Liberals' justification for confiscating law-abiding gun owners' personal property. They say that going after the lawful registered rifles of hunters, farmers and ranchers under the pretense of public safety utterly ignores the reality that illegally obtained black market guns smuggled in from the U.S. are the real reason for the gun violence in Canadian cities.

Furthermore, they call on the Liberals to replace bail for jail for violent offenders if they are serious about tackling gun crime.

● (1650)

BEREAVEMENT CARE

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when families are grieving the loss of a child, they need all the support they can get. That is why I am rising to table a petition on behalf of petitioners demanding that common-sense and compassionate measures be implemented to help these families. They are calling on the government to implement all seven recommendations contained within the report "Supporting Families After the Loss of a Child" and to implement a bereavement benefit for all parents experiencing pregnancy and infant loss.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government penalizes working people in so many ways at every turn and none so blatantly as with its carbon tax on the necessities needed to live in Canada's northern climate, like transportation fuel and home heating. The petitioners say that in addition to raising fuel costs, the carbon tax applied throughout the supply chain is raising the price of everything, and the government's so-called rebates come nowhere near covering the real cost of the tax. They worry about the impact that the Liberals' scheduled tripling of this tax will have on their incomes and their ability to meet their basic needs.

The petitioners join Canada's Conservatives in calling on Parliament to scrap the Liberal carbon tax.

SEARCH AND RESCUE SERVICES

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be back in the House of Commons and able to stand and represent the constituents of Labrador.

I am presenting a petition today on behalf of over 3,500 residents in Newfoundland and Labrador calling on the Government of Canada to designate 5 Wing Goose Bay a dedicated SAR air base and to include a designated SAR Cormorant helicopter as part of the Department of National Defence's NORAD modernization commitment, which would be assigned to the 5 Wing air base in support of search and rescue for Labrador and adjacent northern areas of Canada.

I want to thank my colleague from Avalon for accepting this petition on my behalf when I was away, and all my colleagues in Newfoundland and Labrador on both sides of the House for their support of search and rescue in Labrador.

I also want to acknowledge the family that started this petition. Jeanette and Dwight Russell lost their son Marc and his friend Joey tragically at sea and recognize the need for enhanced search and rescue services in the Labrador region.

VETERANS OF PERSIAN GULF WAR

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I echo those sentiments and I welcome back the member for Labrador.

I am very proud to present petition e-4399 on behalf of the 965 Canadians who signed it. This petition follows up on e-petition 3217, which I presented in May of 2021, but it did not receive a government response because of the election.

In the petition, Canadians call on the government to reclassify the Persian Gulf mission to “wartime service”. Petition e-4399 has support from all parties and a former prime minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney.

Persian Gulf veterans deserve to have the same classification as veterans from the Korean War and merchant mariners. Their classification was changed long after the Korean War and after the Second World War.

I want to thank President Harold Davis of the Persian Gulf War Veterans of Canada; Mike McGlennon, vice-president; and all veterans of the Persian Gulf war. On behalf of a grateful nation, I thank them for their service. Veterans are indeed the ties who bind this great nation together.

PORT WORKERS

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of over 600 folks in British Columbia, most of whom are members of the ILWU, Canada's largest port workers union.

The petitioners note that Canadian port workers are essential to the efficiency, resiliency, competitiveness and sustainability of Canada's supply chain. They further note that decisions related to Canada's ports have a profound impact on the lives of port workers and that port workers bring unique and important skills, expertise and experience to the table when it comes to the management and operation of marine ports.

The petitioners call on the government to amend the Canada Marine Act to ensure there is a seat at the board tables of Canada's port authorities for the employees and the workers in those ports.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition on behalf of residents of Brampton South, who are calling for the establishment of direct international flights from Toronto to destinations in India, particularly to Amritsar in Punjab.

Brampton has a significant Indo-Canadian population, and there is a rising demand from residents to have a direct flight from Toronto to Amritsar. Establishing a route between Toronto and Amritsar in Punjab will reduce the overall distance travelled, leading to shorter travel times and better travel experiences for passengers.

Routine Proceedings

These residents urge the government to continue expanding and facilitating these direct flights and to collaborate with all partners to make these flights a reality.

FINANCE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present this afternoon.

The first petition is a petition to the House of Commons and Parliament assembled from 58 signatories in Guelph to support Bill S-243, an act that would enact the climate-aligned finance act, which was drafted based on consultation with national and international experts. It would enable Canada to leapfrog from a laggard to a leader in aligning financial flows with climate commitments.

● (1655)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from 37 constituents who are calling on the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for the Government of Canada to stop fossil fuel extraction expansion, accelerate the shift to a low-carbon economy and offer much more help to the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

I thank the people from Guelph for continuing to advocate for our climate and for the alignment with financial institutions.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like the member for Brampton South, I too have a petition dealing with the substantial growth of Canada's Indo-Canadian community. With that substantial growth, we have seen a dramatic increase in the demand for international flights, and specifically for direct flights from Canada to India.

The personal preference of the people who have signed this petition is to have a flight that goes from Winnipeg to Amritsar. Increasing the number of flights is a very positive idea, and the petitioners are calling upon the Prime Minister and members of Parliament in general, along with the airport authorities and the different airlines that provide international flights, to give more consideration to establishing direct flights between Canada and India.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to be able to stand in this place and present petitions on issues that are important to Canadians.

The first petition that I will be presenting today is from a number of Canadians who have stated a significant concern regarding some of the language that has been used in the committee studying medical assistance in dying, specifically by Louis Roy from the Quebec college of physicians, who recommended expanding euthanasia to “babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world with severe deformities and very serious syndromes”.

Routine Proceedings

These petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to block any attempt to allow the killing of children in this country.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I am here to present on behalf of a host of Canadians from across the country is in relation to a promise that the Liberal Party made in the 2021 election, in which I would note that it got fewer votes than the party that makes up the official opposition.

During that election, the Liberal Party specifically referenced that it was going to apply a values test, referred to as “values test 2.0”, on not-for-profit organizations that do not align with its political views.

Petitioners therefore call upon the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a political-ly and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without the imposition of another values test, and to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

As always, it is an honour to present these petitions in the people's House of Commons here today.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a number of petitions today, starting with one signed by Canadians from across the country who are concerned about the unsanctioned detention of people around the world, particularly by Turkish, Pakistani and Bahraini officials who have committed gross violations of human rights against Turks, with eight Turkish Canadians being detained at this point.

Turkish officials are responsible for causing hundreds of deaths, including the torture of Gokhan Acikkollu. Turkish officials have wrongfully detained over 300,000 people.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to closely monitor the human rights situation in Turkey and to place sanctions on 12 Turkish officials who are responsible for these gross violations against eight Canadians and the death of their friend Gokhan Acikkollu. They are calling on the Turkish, Pakistani and Bahraini governments to end all violations of human rights in their countries.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is from Canadians from across the country who are concerned around the comments made by Louis Roy of the Quebec college of physicians, recommending the expansion of euthanasia to babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world with severe deformities and serious syndromes.

This proposed legalization of the killing of infants is deeply offensive to the folks who have signed this petition, and they want to state emphatically that infanticide is always wrong. They call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to allow for the euthanasia of children.

• (1700)

MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition comes from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about a report from the national defence advisory panel that calls for the clergy from religions that have views on gender and sexuality that differ from the views of the Department of National Defence to be banned as chaplains in the Canadian Armed Forces.

This report slanders mainstream Canadian religious communities, and the petitioners are calling on the Canadian government to ensure that the freedom of expression of chaplains and the freedom of religion of chaplains be maintained without discrimination.

Discrimination on the basis of religion is wrong and is offensive to Canadians. The Canadians who have signed this petition are calling on the Government of Canada to ensure that the chaplaincy of the Canadian Armed Forces remains the way it is and that the final report of the Minister of National Defence's advisory panel not—

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to have to shut it down there. Your phone is on top. I have reminded folks time and time again to make sure that those phones are not put near the microphones so that that the impedance of the phone does not interfere with the microphones.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, they recommend that the House of Commons and the Government of Canada reject the recommendations on chaplaincy in the Canadian Armed Forces' final report and that they affirm the right of Canadians, including Canadian Armed Forces chaplains, to their freedom of religion.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have is from Canadians across the country who are concerned with an item in the 2021 platform of Liberal Party that would deny charitable status to organizations that have convictions about abortion that differ from the Liberal Party's position. This may jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do not agree with the Liberal Party on this matter for reasons of conscience.

Many Canadians depend on the benefits of these charitable organizations, which include food banks and summer camps, and the government has previously added a values test and discriminated against worthy applicants for the Canada summer jobs program, denying funding to any organization whose officials were not willing to check a box endorsing the political position of the governing party.

Charities and other organizations should not be discriminated against on the basis of their political views or religious values and should not be subject to a politicization of charitable status. Under the charter, all Canadians have the right to freedom of expression without discrimination.

Therefore, the folks who signed this petition, residents of Canada, call on the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without imposing another values test, and to affirm the rights of Canadians to freedom of expression.

* * *

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. 1459, 1460, 1465, 1466 and 1467.

[Text]

Question No. 1459—**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:**

With regard to the use of artificial intelligence by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA): does the CRA use artificial intelligence, and, if so, how?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, please note that the scope of the CRA's artificial intelligence, AI, definition is consistent with the definition of "automated decision systems" outlined in the Treasury Board's directive on automated decision-making. However, the CRA's directive is broader in scope as it includes AI solutions developed for CRA's compliance programs and internal operations in addition to those developed for external service delivery. This definition also includes robotic process automation, RPA, processes that are highly administrative, require little judgment and have clear business rules.

It is important to highlight that the CRA continues to keep humans in the loop of all its AI activities. Human oversight and final decision-making continue to be applied in all types of AI results and program activities.

The CRA does use artificial intelligence in various ways.

The CRA is using AI-based solutions to solve compliance and collection business activities including analysis of patterns, cluster analysis, prescriptive, predictive models and applied predictive analytics i.e., for non-compliance identification, fraud detection, workload selection and compliance strategies.

The CRA employs AI to transform business activities using robotic process automation to automate pre-assessment activities and AI techniques to model and identify processes efficiency gains.

The CRA is using AI-based solutions to transform client service offerings and enhancements through continuous improvements such as the chatbot and improved accessibility. Service improvements are also informed through AI text analytics such as topic modelling, text summarization and sentiment analysis on high volumes of unstructured textual data such as client feedback.

Routine Proceedings

The CRA also uses AI techniques to strengthen data-driven outcomes. Specifically, it is used for research including forecasting, identity and relationship resolution, lead generation and advanced visualization pattern detection. In the research space, the CRA is beginning to experiment with artificial neural networks and recurrent neural networks to test predictive capabilities and assess potential business benefits.

Internally, the CRA uses AI to transform its internal services including natural language processing for analysis of employee surveys. The CRA also uses AI to support security including the evaluation of software/documents to assess their maliciousness, anomaly detection, log collection, tracing and monitoring of accesses.

Question No. 1460—**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:**

With regard to the use of artificial intelligence by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC): does IRCC use artificial intelligence, and, if so, how?

Ms. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, IRCC uses artificial intelligence, AI, technology for purposes of advanced analytics to triage client enquiries and to identify routine and straightforward applications for faster processing within the programs of temporary resident visa for visitors, visitor records, and spouse and common-law partner in Canada applications. Advanced analytic tools are used to help determine the applicant's eligibility to the respective program. When eligibility requirements are met, the application is then sent to an officer to determine if the applicant is admissible to Canada and to make the final decision. Applications that do not have their eligibility approved automatically are sent to an officer for review and final decision. Only an IRCC officer can refuse an application; the automated tools never refuse or recommend refusing applications. IRCC does not currently use black-box algorithms to automate or recommend decisions.

Routine Proceedings

AI is used by IRCC to automate the detection of risk patterns. These risk patterns are one factor considered when determining whether to initiate a verification activity. IRCC officers would then follow standard operational processes to verify the authenticity of documents with the document issuer, e.g. university, bank, etc. Risk patterns are not visible to IRCC officers; instead, they receive only the results of the verification activities initiated. As such, the tool does not automate nor does it recommend final decisions on applications.

AI is also used for a chatbot deployed on IRCC's Facebook channel to provide functional guidance to IRCC clients looking to make an application. The intent of IRCC's chatbot is to serve client inquiries in English and French on 76 unique pages of IRCC's website. The responses provided by the chatbot are general and based on people's typical circumstances. This means it cannot respond to case-specific information or provide tailored immigration advice. The chatbot can respond to questions in two ways: responses written and trained by human operators based on previously received questions, or referrals to curated lists of IRCC web content. It directs clients to various linked web pages across our website, including our help centre FAQs, tools such as the "Come to Canada tool", varied program-specific web content and the client support centre.

The IRCC chatbot cannot intervene with a client's application as it does not have back-end access to the GCMS services. This means it cannot respond to case-specific questions or provide tailored immigration advice based on a client's particular situation. The responses provided by the chatbot are general and based on people's typical circumstances. If the chatbot can't answer your question, or the user is unsatisfied with the answer provided, it will instead ask you a series of questions to determine which of our service channels is right for you, and then direct you there.

Question No. 1465—Mr. Ben Lobb:

With regard to government revenue from the goods and services tax (GST) and the federal portion of harmonized sales tax (HST), broken down by year since 2016: (a) how much GST or HST revenue was collected on the sale of new homes; (b) on how many new homes was GST or HST collected; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by province or territory?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the goods and services tax and the harmonized sales tax, GST/HST, the government does not track the amount of GST/HST that is collected for each type of good or service that a vendor may sell. When firms remit the GST/HST that they have collected on their taxable sales, they report and remit to the Canada Revenue Agency only one single amount. Requiring vendors, such as small businesses, to track GST/HST collected on the individual types of goods or services they sell would impose a significant reporting burden on them.

Question No. 1466—Mr. Dane Lloyd:

With regard to legal costs incurred by the government in relation to the invocation of the Emergencies Act in 2022, as well as any subsequent legal action: what is the total amount (i) paid out to date, (ii) scheduled to be paid out, on outside legal counsel, broken down by department, agency or other government entity which encountered the expense?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to legal expenses incurred by the government for outside legal counsel on work related to the invocation of the

Emergencies Act in 2022, as well as any subsequent legal action, to the extent that the information that has been requested is or may be protected by any legal privileges, including solicitor-client privilege, the federal Crown asserts those privileges. In this case, it has only waived solicitor-client privilege, and only to the extent of revealing the total legal costs.

The total legal costs associated with expenses incurred by the government for outside legal counsel on work related to the invocation of the Emergencies Act in 2022, as well as any subsequent legal action amounts to \$3,756,458.66. This amount includes outside legal fees related to the Public Order Emergency Commission, which had a timeline compressed by statute. The total amount mentioned in this response is based on information contained in Department of Justice systems, as of May 4, 2023.

Question No. 1467—Mr. Dane Lloyd:

With regard to the upcoming tenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP10) to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, from November 10 to 25, 2023, and the third session of the Meeting of Parties (MOP3) to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, from November 27 to 30, 2023: (a) how many individuals will be part of the government's delegation and what are their names and titles; (b) what is the overall budget for the government's COP10 and MOP3 participation, broken down by (i) accommodations, (ii) meals or per diems, (iii) hospitality; (c) what are the government's key priorities or action items for both the COP10 and MOP3; and (d) has the government been assigned any specific agenda items or resolutions for both the COP10 and MOP3, and, if so, what are they?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this time, the Convention Secretariat to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control has not published an agenda for the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties. Therefore, Health Canada has not yet confirmed details such as participants in the Canadian delegation, the budget for Canada's participation, or key priorities and action items.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 1458, 1461 to 1464, 1468 and 1469 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1458—**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:**

With regard to the Canada Dental Benefit, broken down by federal electoral district since the program's inception: (a) what is the total number of applications (i) received, (ii) approved; (b) what is the total dollar value of payments delivered to eligible applicants; and (c) how many children, in total, have been helped by the program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1461—**Mr. Ryan Williams:**

With regard to expenditures on chauffeur-driven vehicles or similar types of car and driver services for ministers, exempt staff, or senior government officials, since January 1, 2018, excluding expenditures associated with the government's fleet of executive vehicles: what are the details of all such expenditures, including, for each, the (i) start and end dates of the vehicle usage, (ii) amount, (iii) individual for whom the vehicle was used, (iv) pick up location, (v) destination, (vi) type of vehicle, (vii) vendor?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1462—**Mr. Ryan Williams:**

With regard to the public service: (a) how many employees occupy or have been assigned more than one physical office on government property; (b) of the employees in (a), how many are (i) executives, (ii) other employees; and (c) for each employee in (a), what is (i) their title and classification, (ii) the number of offices they have, (iii) the buildings and cities where their offices are located, (iv) the reason for having multiple offices?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1463—**Ms. Louise Chabot:**

With respect to the Canada Summer Jobs program: (a) for each of the 338 ridings in Canada (i) how much money, how many positions and how many hours of work were allocated for fiscal year 2023-24, (ii) how much money, how many positions and how many hours were requested for fiscal year 2023-24, (iii) what is the numerical difference between the amount of money requested and the amount of money received, (iv) what is the numerical difference between the number of positions requested and the number of positions granted, (v) what is the numerical difference between the number of hours requested and the number of hours granted; (b) in mathematical terms, and with all variables defined, what was the formula used in fiscal year 2023-24 to determine the funding granted to each riding; and (c) what share of the overall funding, in percentage and dollar terms, has been paid to ridings in Quebec, broken down by fiscal year since 2006-07?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1464—**Mr. Gord Johns:**

With regard to the communities which comprise the federal electoral district of Courtenay-Alberni, since fiscal year 2018-19: (a) what are the federal infrastructure investments, including direct transfers to municipalities and First Nations, for the communities of (i) Tofino, (ii) Ucluelet, (iii) Port Alberni, (iv) Parksville, (v) Qualicum Beach, (vi) Cumberland, (vii) Courtenay, (viii) Deep Bay, (ix) Dashwood, (x) Royston, (xi) French Creek, (xii) Errington, (xiii) Coombs, (xiv) Nanoose Bay, (xv) Cherry Creek, (xvi) China Creek, (xvii) Bamfield, (xviii) Beaver Creek, (xix) Beaufort Range, (xx) Millstream, (xxi) Mt. Washington Ski Resort, broken down by fiscal year, total expenditure, and project; (b) what are the federal infrastructure investments transferred to the regional districts of (i) Comox Valley Regional District, (ii) Nanaimo Regional District, (iii) Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, (iv) Powell River Regional District, broken down by fiscal year, total expenditure, and project; (c) what are the federal infrastructure investments transferred to the Island Trusts of (i) Hornby Island, (ii) Denman Island, (iii) Lasqueti Island, broken down by fiscal year, and total expenditure; (d) what are the federal infrastructure investments transferred to the (i) Ahousaht First Nation, (ii) Hesquiaht First Nation, (iii) Huu-ay-aht First Nation, (iv) Hupacasath First Nation, (v) Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, (vi) Toquaht First Nation, (vii) Tseshaht First Nation, (viii) Uchucklesaht First Nation, (ix) Ucluelet First Nation, (x) K'omoks First Nation, broken down by fiscal year, total expenditure, and project; (e) what is the infrastructure funding of Pacific Rim National Park, broken down by fiscal year, total expenditure, and project; (f) what is the funding of highways, including, but not limited to, (i) Highway 4, (ii) Highway 19, (iii) Highway 19a, (iv) Bamfield Road, broken down by fiscal year, total expenditure, and project; and (g) what other infrastructure investments are provided through the funding of national parks, highways, the Building Canada Fund, Infrastructure Canada, the Gas Tax Fund, Small

Privilege

Crafts and Harbours, BC Ferries, etc., broken down by fiscal year, total expenditure, and project?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1468—**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:**

With regard to the government's executive vehicle fleet for ministers, since January 1, 2019: (a) what is the make and model assigned to each minister; (b) were there any changes to the assigned vehicle for each minister, and, if so, on what date did it change; and (c) what was the mileage driven on each vehicle, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1469—**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:**

With regard to polling conducted by or on behalf of the Privy Council Office since January 1, 2022: what are the details of all such polling, including, for each poll, (i) who conducted the poll, (ii) the start and end dates, (iii) the number of participants, (iv) the complete results of the poll, including the questions asked and the responses received, (v) the type of poll, (vi) the value of the contract related to the poll?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to orders of the day, I believe the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock is standing on a question of privilege.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED OBSTRUCTION OF MEMBER FOR SOUTH SURREY—WHITE ROCK

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege concerning the offensive and unparliamentary gesture the Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader, Senate, made toward me last evening during private members' hour. The facts are well known already. Put bluntly, he gave me the finger.

It is my belief that this constitutes a prima facie contempt and should be taken up by the House as such. Hansard shows the sequence of events and comments that led to the incident during the debate on Bill C-311, the violence against pregnant women act.

Privilege

I argued that the government had lost credibility on the matter of women's rights, in part because it had failed to stand up for the victims of Paul Bernardo. As members know, this killer and serial rapist targeted female teenagers and traumatized our nation. In my speech, I referenced a unanimous consent motion that the member for Niagara Falls brought to the House. The motion reads as follows:

...that the House call for the immediate return of vile serial killer and rapist Paul Bernardo to a maximum security prison, that all court-ordered dangerous offenders and mass murderers be permanently assigned a maximum security classification, that the least-restrictive-environment standard be repealed and that the language of necessary restrictions that the previous Conservative government put in place be restored.

In my remarks, I stated that the member for Kingston and the Islands was a member who denied consent.

● (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think it is really important, when the member is rising on a question of privilege, to understand what actually took place yesterday, and the member is talking about a dispute over—

Ms. Raquel Dancho: This is debate.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I am speaking to that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I was being respectful for the member—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Let us please get to the point of order that we are trying to hear.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would argue that the member is talking about a dispute over the facts, and she is misrepresenting what actually was said by the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will let the hon. whip for the Conservatives speak, and I will go to the hon. parliamentary secretary afterward.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, in my remarks, I stated that the member for Kingston and the Islands was the member who denied consent. I did so because I was in the House when unanimous consent was asked for. I sat directly across from the member and heard him deny consent, as did many other House officers and members near me. I recognize that the member has every right to defend himself and can dispute me in the course of debate. However, his response went far beyond debate. He said, “This member should apologize, because she is lying right now.” He then walked out of the House. This remark caused significant disorder.

I immediately rose on a point of order to file my objection to his use of an unparliamentary term. The member returned during my remarks, and he proceeded to shout over me, making it difficult to express my point of view. He then offered a half-hearted and insincere apology. I say “half-hearted and insincere” because his next action was to make a face at me and give me the middle finger. At that point, he walked out of the House again.

His aggressive gesture is representative of language that is strictly forbidden in the House. Many members saw this aggression. Notably, the member for Vancouver Kingsway and the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies confirmed that they saw this action in their own points of order. I took the floor again to call for the member to be sanctioned in the strongest way possible, including being ejected from the House.

The Chair informed the House that he did not see the gesture in question and would review the tapes. That step is no longer necessary, because the member for Kingston and the Islands returned to the House again, admitted that he made the gesture and then followed that with another insufficient apology for what he described as “displaying [his] frustration”. He did not adequately take—

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order from the hon. member for Waterloo.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take away from the opposition whip's time, but I want to acknowledge, as the member just stated, that the member for Kingston and the Islands did apologize. In this place, we have a tradition where we take members at their word and—

The Deputy Speaker: That again falls into debate. Let us have those comments after the member for South Surrey—White Rock completes her statement, when I will be more than happy to recognize other members.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

● (1710)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, he did not adequately take responsibility for his actions. He should apologize to me, the Chair and the House.

In the circumstances, and upon some reflection on the matter, now that we are out of the heat of the moment, I truly believe that with his misogynistic bullying and insults, the parliamentary secretary was trying to obstruct me from making and completing my speech.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, at page 107, states:

In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, Members should be able to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. Assaulting, threatening, or insulting a Member during a proceeding of Parliament...is a violation of the rights of Parliament.

Continuing at page 108, it states:

Speakers have consistently upheld the right of the House to the services of its Members free from intimidation, obstruction and interference.

This is a long-standing and well-established principle in the law of parliamentary privilege, tracing its roots back to the April 12, 1733, resolution of the British House of Commons, which states, “That the assaulting, insulting or menacing any member of this House, in his coming to or going from the House, or upon the account of his behaviour in Parliament, is a high infringement of the privilege of this House, a most outrageous and dangerous violation of the rights of Parliament and an high crime and misdemeanour.”

Bosc and Gagnon observe the following at page 109:

Government Orders

In order to find a *prima facie* breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the Member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions and that the matter is directly related to a proceeding in Parliament.

On May 1, 1986, at page 12847 of the Debates, Speaker Bosley held:

If an Hon. Member is impeded or obstructed in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties through threats, intimidation, bribery attempts or other improper behaviour, such a case would fall within the limits of parliamentary privilege.

While I did complete my speech, I have to say it is very disturbing, distracting and disruptive to have to finish a speech after being put through that escalating ordeal by the member for Kingston and the Islands. I say that as someone who has spent a career as a litigator.

Certainly, the giving of the finger is improper behaviour at the least, and with the context it was given in last evening, it was intended to be of a threatening or intimidating nature. In fact, the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, second edition, defines giving the finger, at page 555, as “mak[ing] an obscene gesture with the middle finger raised as a sign of contempt.” A “sign of contempt” is the literal definition. It is certainly unparliamentary, and I would argue that it is contemptuous, behaviour. No matter how we cut it, it is unacceptable conduct in any professional setting. I must say, I have never experienced this in my professional career to date.

While I do not believe we have ever had a Speaker's Ruling on a member giving another the finger, Bosc and Gagnon explain, at page 112:

It is impossible to codify all incidents which might be interpreted as matters of obstruction, interference, molestation or intimidation and, as such, constitute *prima facie* cases of [contempt].

At page 81, they state:

There are, however, other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege: tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members, or its officers.

They continue:

The House of Commons enjoys very wide latitude in maintaining its dignity and authority through the exercise of its contempt power. In other words, the House may consider any misconduct to be contempt and may deal with it accordingly.

Indeed, on June 7, 2021, at page 8034 of the Debates, the Speaker found a *prima facie* contempt concerning our former colleague, Will Amos, who, while attending the House virtually, urinated into a coffee cup.

• (1715)

I would note the wording from that ruling. It states:

In response, the member for Kingston and the Islands agreed that it was a deplorable and unacceptable incident, while also pointing out that the member for Pontiac had accepted full responsibility and that he had stepped aside from his parliamentary secretary responsibilities and from his committee responsibilities in order to obtain the appropriate assistance. For that reason, he was again apologizing on his behalf.

Further in the ruling, it states:

I obviously take note of the apology from the member for Pontiac. He recognized that his behaviour was completely inappropriate and confirms his commitment to obtain the necessary assistance. Nevertheless, the Chair is required to determine whether the alleged facts are a breach of the rules governing contempt and thus merit priority consideration.

That is the case here.

Just as in those circumstances two years ago, I believe that the misogynistic bullying and offensive gestures by the member for Kingston and the Islands must absolutely be called out. They rise to the threshold requiring your intervention, Mr. Speaker, and this House's disposition through a privilege motion.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, should you agree, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for her intervention. Just to add to what happened last evening, after the member had come back in, I think I was pretty stern in telling him that he had to unreservedly admit and apologize.

I am just going to read Hansard. He said, “Mr. Speaker, I admit that what the members are indicating that I did, I did do. I unreservedly apologize for displaying my frustration that way.”

Knowing the information that was provided, we will go back and come back with a ruling.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I read through that apology again, as I said, out of the heat of the moment, which was very disorderly and chaotic in this place.

What the member apologized for was using that expression to express his frustration. He did not apologize to me, the House or the other members, and that is quite different.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for that. We will come back with a ruling.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT ACT

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.) moved:

That a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours that, in relation to Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act, the House:

agrees with amendments 1, 4 and 5 made by the Senate;

agrees with the Senate proposal to make any necessary consequential changes to the numbering of provisions and cross-references resulting from the amendments to the bill;

respectfully disagrees with amendment 2 because it raises significant constitutional concerns by seeking to regulate the insurance industry specifically or contracting generally, both of which fall within provincial jurisdiction;

proposes that amendment 3 be amended to read as follows:

“New clause 10.1, page 4: Add the following after line 5:

“Appeals

Government Orders

10.1 Subject to regulations, a person, or any other person acting on their behalf, may appeal to a body identified in regulations made under paragraph 11(1)(i) in respect of any decision

- (a) relating to the person's ineligibility for a Canada disability benefit;
- (b) relating to the amount of a Canada disability benefit that the person has received or will receive; or
- (c) prescribed by the regulations.””.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the government's position on the proposed Senate amendments to Bill C-22, an act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act. I do so on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe peoples.

I will begin by thanking senators for their attention to this bill, especially the members of the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology for their study, which resulted in six amendments to the bill and seven observations.

Each time I have risen in the House on Bill C-22, I have begun by declaring that no person with a disability in this country should live in poverty, yet many do. Approximately 23% of working-age persons with disabilities in Canada live in poverty, and many are in deep poverty. The history of how this came to be in a country with as much promise and opportunity as Canada is one of exclusion, marginalization and discrimination. This history, and the resulting financial insecurity and poverty, which is a lived experience of many persons with disabilities in Canada, is the backdrop for Bill C-22, and it is why we are here today working together to create a new federal benefit for low-income, working-aged persons with disabilities. At its core, the Canada disability benefit is about poverty reduction and financial security.

There is a significant gap in our social safety net for persons with disabilities. The Canada child benefit disability supplement is available until age 18 and old age security and the guaranteed income supplement are available after age 65, but there is nothing in between. However, just as the guaranteed income supplement did for seniors and the Canada child benefit did for children, the Canada disability benefit would lift persons with disabilities out of poverty.

Bill C-22 is framework legislation by design. The Canada disability benefit would be established and implemented through Bill C-22, which is a legal framework to create the benefit and a subsequent regulatory process through which the specific details will be established. This reflects our commitment to the disability community and recognizes the leading role that provinces and territories play in providing supports and services to persons with disabilities.

Now I will move on to the amendments.

There were six amendments sent back from the Senate. As was said, the government agrees with amendments 1, 4, 5 and 6, and proposes that the House accepts these amendments as is. These amendments enhance Bill C-22 in that they add clarity, precision and specificity. We also agree with amendment 3 with a minor amendment.

Amendment 3 would add a new clause, clause 10.1, related to appeals. While Bill C-22 provides for an appeal process to be creat-

ed by regulation, this new clause gives a right to appeal in two specific areas: benefit ineligibility and amount. The government proposes that this Senate amendment be further amended to clarify that other decisions may also be appealed. This would avoid a future legal interpretation where grounds for appeal are restricted to the two specified areas of ineligibility and amount. I thank the Senate for its thoughtfulness on this important issue of administrative justice and trust that it will consider the government's proposed amendment appropriate.

Now, I will spend some time on the final amendment, Senate amendment 2, as the government's proposed response to it is to respectfully disagree.

Amendment 2 would amend clause 9 of Bill C-22, which concerns the way benefit payments are to be treated in situations such as bankruptcy or insolvency. Amendment 2 would add that benefit payments “cannot be recovered or retained, in whole or in part, under the terms of any contract, insurance plan or similar instrument”.

I understand that the intent of this amendment is to address the situation where provincial benefits or insurance payments are at risk of being clawed back or reduced as a result of a payment of the Canada disability benefit, effectively leaving the recipient no better off and potentially impacting secondary program and service entitlements. The issue of clawbacks is perhaps the most common concern raised by the disability community. We heard it here in the House as well.

The disability benefit and support landscape is incredibly complex, and varies significantly across the country. There are different eligibility criteria in every province and territory, different definitions of disability, different treatments of other sources of income, different reduction rates, etc. As a result, we have to be mindful of the potential direct and indirect impacts that additional income in the form of the CDB could have on provincial or territorial benefit and service entitlements.

● (1720)

Since day one, we have been clear that this is supplemental income, meant to be in addition to provincial and territorial income supports and other forms of income. It is not replacement income. It is not employment income or employment earnings.

We explored ways to address these concerns through legislation. The challenge is that both contracting generally and the insurance industry fall within provincial and territorial jurisdiction. This is why no such provision exists in any other benefit legislation in Canada, not for the Canada child benefit, OAS or GIS, CPP, or the Canada workers benefit.

While the federal spending authority allows the government to create such a benefit, it does not allow the federal government to attach conditions in areas of provincial jurisdiction, such as the regulation of insurance companies. Knowing this, we have worked very closely with provinces and territories on benefit interaction.

Provinces and territories have expressed gratitude for early engagement. There is consensus that the CDB is intended to be supplemental income, not replacement income, and make people better off. They share our view that the best way of optimizing benefit interaction is by working together. We have a detailed federal-provincial-territorial work plan that all jurisdictions have agreed to. Once this bill becomes law, we will begin the formal negotiations on agreements with the provinces and territories.

We have also engaged with the private insurance industry. The feedback we have received from the industry is that they would not choose to offset or claw back income that is considered social assistance or a poverty reduction measure. Once again, the CDB is not replacement or employment income. Once this bill becomes law, we will continue to work with private insurers throughout the regulatory process.

Simply put, the government disagrees with this amendment because we believe it raises significant constitutional concerns. Both the regulation of private insurance and contracting generally fall within provincial jurisdiction. If we went ahead with this amendment, the likelihood of an individual or organization bringing forward a court challenge would be very high. This would create significant uncertainty and could impact the regulatory process, which could in turn impact benefit delivery. This could very well delay benefit payments.

Furthermore, I am concerned that there would be serious implications for federal-provincial-territorial relations. It is likely that the provinces and territories would see this provision as an encroachment on their jurisdiction. This could undermine the work that we have accomplished to date. Therefore, while I understand and share the Senate's concerns around clawbacks, the way to address this issue is to continue with the process that is already under way, not through this amendment to Bill C-22.

The Senate amendments we are proposing to accept further strengthen Bill C-22 and do not limit the government's commitment to a quick, regulatory process. The amendment we are proposing to not accept, respectfully, raises constitutional concerns and could significantly impair our relationships with provinces and territories, and ultimately delay benefit delivery.

I thank the senators for responding to the disability community's concerns. Both the House and the Senate have improved this bill.

The Canada disability benefit is the result of decades of relentless advocacy on the part of the disability community. This benefit is the culmination of the work of every self-advocate, every ac-

tivist, every parent, every ally, every organization, everyone who has fought to have disability rights recognized.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that we are here, working together, on this. We have come together on this bill already, and today we did it again. We are on the cusp of doing what every single one of us in this place came to Ottawa to do, which is to help people, make their lives better and right historic wrongs. Today, we are literally making history.

● (1725)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last we heard was that it would take approximately a year to negotiate with the provinces and territories, and a year, at the same time, to develop the regulations, once this potentially passes royal assent and became law.

Is that still the timeline that is being worked towards? Will it take a year to develop all of that? Should people realistically expect the disability benefit a year past this point?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, yes, the anticipated timeline for the regulatory process remains at 12 months, so as I have said, the quicker we get this to royal assent, the quicker we start that 12-month clock.

* * *

● (1730)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 26—AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, with respect to the consideration of Government Business No. 26, at the next sitting of the House, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate not be further adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP) moved that Bill C-219, An Act to enact the Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Private Members' Business

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I stand in the chamber this evening to begin debate on my bill, Bill C-219, the Canadian environmental bill of rights. I first want to thank Linda Duncan, the author of this bill, who introduced it on four occasions over 11 years during her time as the member of Parliament for Edmonton Strathcona. On one of those occasions, it passed at second reading, but it unfortunately died when an election was called.

There are environmental bills of rights in Ontario, Quebec, Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, but until last night, there was no federal law that explicitly recognized the right to a healthy environment in Canada. With the passing of Bill S-5, which updated the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, we now have a federal statement of rights to a healthy environment, but those rights are limited to the scope of CEPA, basically to toxins within our environment, and those rights have no accountability processes or powers associated with them. Bill C-219 would expand and strengthen those rights to the rest of the scope of federal jurisdiction.

Last summer, on July 28, 2022, the UN General Assembly passed a unanimous resolution that recognized the right to a healthy environment around the world. With Canada voting for that resolution to join the rest of the world and 92% of Canadians agreeing with it, it is certainly high time we had federal legislation that recognizes that right. We are behind the rest of the world in that regard. Over 80% of UN member states already legally recognize the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

International efforts to recognize this right go back to the 1972 Stockholm declaration, which recognized the right to an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being. After that came the United Nations Aarhus convention in 2001. This multilateral agreement, more fully known as the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, protects every person's right to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being. The Aarhus convention links environmental rights and human rights. It acknowledges that we owe an obligation to future generations. It establishes that sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders. It links government accountability and environmental protection, and focuses on interactions between the public and public authorities in a democratic context. According to the Aarhus convention website, it is, at its heart, about government accountability, transparency and responsiveness. It grants the public rights, and it imposes on parties and public authorities obligations regarding access to information and public participation in and access to justice.

This is what this bill would do as well. Bill C-219 would extend the right to a healthy, ecologically balanced environment to all Canadian residents. It would do this by amending the Canadian Bill of Rights to add the right to a healthy environment; by providing a bundle of rights and legal tools to all residents of Canada, including accessing information around environmental issues and decisions, standing before courts and tribunals, transparent processes that will help hold the government accountable on effective environmental enforcement and on the review of law and policies through investigations and, if necessary, environmental protection actions; and by

extending protections for government whistle-blowers who release information relevant to health and environmental impacts.

This bill would apply only to federal jurisdiction, and would not change provincial environmental law. The bill would not take away from the rights of Canadian indigenous peoples, as recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the Constitution. The bill would specifically exclude the Canadian Environmental Protection Act from its ambit, as that act, after the passage of Bill S-5 last night, provides rights to a healthy environment, although restricted to the scope of that bill. Bill C-219 would extend those rights to the rest of federal legislation.

● (1735)

Why do we need this? For one thing, Canadians want it. As I mentioned, in a recent poll, 92% of Canadians agreed we should have the right to live in a healthy environment. However, the right to a clean and healthy environment is a hollow promise if it does not come with accountability measures. That is because, unfortunately, governments often simply do not live up to the legislation they pass. They do not take action to enforce that legislation, including legislation meant to protect our environment.

I will mention two quick examples of this, and I am sure everyone here in the chamber could add to that list. Ten years ago, in July 2013, a tanker truck rolled into Lemon Creek in the beautiful Slocan Valley, in my riding, and spilled its entire load of 33,000 litres of aviation fuel into this pristine water source. Although this clearly caused environmental harm, not only to the stream and the life within it but also to the residents of the Slocan Valley who relied on that water source, the government of the day refused to act. It was left to a courageous local resident, Marilyn Burgoon, to initiate court action against the trucking company under the federal Fisheries Act. Eventually, perhaps shamed by Marilyn's powerful example, the federal government did agree to step in to help fight this battle, which dragged on until January 2020, for seven years, before finally being resolved. Sadly, Marilyn passed away a few weeks before that case was concluded, but her legacy in the Slocan Valley lives on, and her memory is cherished by many.

If we declare that Canadians have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment, we must make sure the federal government is accountable for holding up its part of that all-important bargain. Bill C-219 would do that.

Another example is a more personal one to me. I used to work as a consulting ecologist, and much of my work involved species at risk. For eight years, I was one of the co-chairs of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, or COSEWIC. Under the Species at Risk Act, or SARA as it is called in the trade, COSEWIC has the task of assessing wild species in Canada and advising the government, through the Minister of Environment, of its decisions. Every year, COSEWIC writes a letter to the minister and lists the assessments it has made. Some species might be listed as endangered. Others may be listed as threatened, and still others may be listed as not at risk. Under SARA, the government has nine months to make a decision about listing a species after receiving the advice from COSEWIC. It can adopt the advice or not, but the decision is public and transparent. If a cabinet decision is not made, the decision defaults to the COSEWIC-assessed status.

All this sounds perfectly logical, but what happened under the Harper government was unexpected. It decided the clock started ticking when the minister told cabinet, so it came up with the cunning plan that the minister would not tell cabinet at all about COSEWIC assessments, even though they were on the public registry. Therefore, that government listed zero species for four years, despite having been advised to list over 80. It avoided the transparent decision part of the deal. I pressured the current Liberal government to at least change that in policy, though it was reluctant to support the bill I put forward to change it into law, so now it is public policy that listing cannot be put off indefinitely.

Bill C-219 could help in that situation too, since it covers all federal legislation, including SARA, the Fisheries Act and others. This would be for all legislation I mentioned except the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which is carved out because it has a similar promise when it comes to living in a clean and healthy environment.

Like most members with private members' bills, I have talked to each party about my bill and about why it's so important and what it would and would not do. In one of those discussions, the issue of constitutionality came up, so I want to spend a couple of minutes talking about that issue. I will say right off the top that I am confident this bill is constitutional. For one thing, this is the fifth time the bill has been introduced, and as far as I know, this is the first time this concern has been raised. As I mentioned before, the bill passed second reading in a previous Parliament, and the bill is explicitly concerned with actions based on existing federal legislation.

● (1740)

None of the rights here apply to matters that are found only in provincial legislation, so I was confident this concern had no real foundation. However, to be sure, I asked the House of Commons legal department to provide an opinion on this matter. This is the conclusion of its opinion:

After having reviewed the bill carefully, we are of the opinion that the main subject of the bill is not the environment. Consider that the bill would not regulate any aspect of the environment, such as water quality, air quality, species at risk or toxic substances. Rather, the bill relates to civil liberties, which may be regulated by either level of government, depending on which level of government has legislative authority over the institutions and activities to which the civil liberties apply. In the case of Bill C-219, most provisions explicitly apply to federal matters only.

Private Members' Business

The opinion also explains why three provisions, while not explicitly applying to federal matters, would be considered by any court as applying to federal matters. Accordingly, the opinion states that no amendment to Bill C-219 is necessary.

In summary, the environment is a jurisdiction shared between the provinces and the federal government. Some people might therefore be concerned that this bill treads on provincial jurisdiction. However, since this bill deals with human rights and civil rights, and deals with them on matters of federal issues only, this bill is constitutional. I am confident of that and I do not think we need to amend it in any way to deal with that issue.

I am going to conclude with a plea. We are so proud of this country. We are proud of its size, its beauty and all the resources it provides for us in ways that keep us living in a healthy way in this clean environment. It gives us jobs and also keeps us healthy. I think everybody in the House would agree that we have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment. If we have that right, we need legislation to uphold that right. That is what Bill C-219 would do, and I hope that everyone here will support this bill and provide that right to all Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's bringing forward the legislation, and his comment. The member has made reference to the fact that the bill has been brought forward to the House in the past. He also made reference to the fact that there is joint responsibility between the provinces and the federal government. I would add indigenous peoples to that as a very important factor when we talk about anything related to the environment, let alone any other issue that might be out there.

Could he just share whether he has had that dialogue and whether he has some direct information he can provide in terms of feedback from the provinces, territories and indigenous communities?

● (1745)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, as I said, this bill would not infringe on anything involving the indigenous rights under section 35. I discussed this with my colleagues here in this place: the member for Nunavut and the member for Winnipeg Centre, who are well versed in these matters.

Again, this is the fifth time this bill has been tabled in this place. Those matters have been discussed in committee and discussed at length in other venues, so I am confident we are actually making this country a clean and healthy place for all. Indigenous people are really the best stewards we have had, and I am sure they would appreciate any legislation that would keep us all protected from anything that would limit the ability for us to live in a healthy environment.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am on the environment committee, so if it does proceed past this stage, I will look forward to seeing it studied in more detail.

In relation to indigenous communities and indigenous people here in Canada, could the member unpack how this legislation would impact that special relationship that indigenous communities have with the Crown, and how that would impact the environment? I am specifically asking in relation to a number of communities in Alberta that are looking for partnership opportunities when it comes to resource development. I know there are other economic opportunities, fisheries on the coast, and otherwise. Could the member expand on that?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, that question is very similar to the previous one.

With regard to development or anything like that that would have an impact on the environment, Bill C-219 operates through federal legislation. Any development that went through federal legislation, having gone through those regulations, got their permits and all that, would not be affected by this at all.

This only comes into effect when there are developments that contravene those regulations, those protections that we already have in place. It would not affect any development that is proceeding legally whatsoever.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his bill and the care he took to ensure that it did not affect Quebec's environmental sovereignty.

Can he clarify how his bill goes much further than the study we did in committee on Bill S-5 with respect to the right to a healthy environment?

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I am assuming that the member was referring to how this bill extends these rights further than Bill S-5 and in a stronger way.

This covers all federal legislation, not just the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and it provides, as I mentioned, mechanisms for citizens, if they feel that the federal government is not responding to environmental issues, such as companies that are breaking the law with regard to the environment, citizens could demand an investigation. If that proceeds to a certain point, they could even take environmental action.

If we are giving people the right to live in a healthy environment, we must uphold that right and we must hold the government accountable with transparent measures so that people know that they can enjoy this right.

● (1750)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member bringing forward Bill C-219. As he is indicated on several occasions, this is legislation that, with a different bill number, has been before the House in the past.

The timing is really interesting. Just yesterday, we had royal assent on Bill S-5. I was encouraged by the way many members of the House spoke to Bill S-5. I thought that maybe I would pick up on a couple of points, if I may, the first one being something that I think, far too often, does get overlooked, something that we should be talking about more whenever we talk about the environment.

It is a shared responsibility, as we know. If one were to do a radar scan of one's constituents, we would find that it is typically in the top three or four issues. For me, in Winnipeg North, health care might be number one or in the top two, but the environment and concerns related to the environment are consistently among the top issues that want to be talked about. They also want to see action on the issue of the environment.

The member talks about shared responsibility. Often, when we talk about shared responsibility, we do not highlight the importance of indigenous people. When we talk about reconciliation, I think it is absolutely critical that indigenous people, governments, first governments and so forth be recognized and appreciated in terms of their important role traditionally, today and going into the future.

I like to think that Bill S-5, in good part, reinforces that. We talk about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and its adoption. We need to apply that lens to the different types of legislation that come through the House.

That is the reason I had posed the question to the member. I am concerned about the issue of jurisdictional responsibility, recognizing that the environment does not recognize borders, interprovincially or internationally.

We just saw a very good example of that with the forest fires. I am thinking of Quebec, Nova Scotia and Alberta. We had responses across Canada, in trying to assist in dealing with these fires. We also had direct contact with the President of the United States, who was concerned about the quality of air that is going south of the Canada-U.S. border.

I would like to emphasize that when one talks about the environment, one has jurisdictional responsibility but, even more importantly, many would argue that there is a moral responsibility that is tagged to that jurisdictional responsibility, because air knows no boundaries; water knows no boundaries.

● (1755)

When we take a look at what the member also emphasized, it is the issue of environmental rights, the idea of having a right to a healthy environment. That is why, at the beginning, I tied Bill S-5 in. When I spoke on Bill S-5, I like to think that I amplified the issue of the right to a healthy environment and the expectations that Canadians have regarding it.

Bill S-5 dealt with the assessment and management of substances and ensured that Canadians and residents from coast to coast to coast have a direct link to ensure that they have that right to a healthy environment.

Private Members' Business

I understand that the legislation that is being proposed, Bill C-219, wants to expand on that. I think it is worth looking at. The right to a healthy environment means more than just the air we breathe. We can and should be expanding on that.

I do not want to say that I know all the details of the legislation, nor have I been around to hear the discussions that have taken place at the committee level. What I do know is that there is, as an issue, a desire of the people of Canada to see the government be proactive in dealing with our environment.

I also recognize that there are not only the legislative measures that I referred to in relation to Bill S-5, but there are also budgetary measures and measures that would be incorporated through regulations that also deal with the concerns that we have with respect to the population as a whole.

I would like to highlight a few of those measures. When we talk about our environment, we need to try to put it in a way most people, including myself, can understand the issues. When I think of a right to a healthy environment, I would like to think there is a tangible recourse dealing with an issue that is affecting me. When I say, "me", I am not talking about me as a member of Parliament. I am talking about me as a resident and anyone in the communities we represent.

If they witness or have a concern about something that is taking place in our environment, they need a vehicle to express that concern with an expectation that someone is actually listening. Hopefully, some form of action can be taken where it is, in fact, warranted.

I remember many years ago one of the first issues that I ever had to deal with in 1989 or 1990 was the issue of PCBs and how PCBs were impacting a playground at a school. There were concerns, at that time, about Manitoba was going to be able to do.

There are issues of that nature and issues people want to directly get involved in themselves. There are issues like when the government, through a regulation, said that it wanted to ban single-use plastics or it wanted to provide financial assistance to those who are prepared to look at alternatives to fossil fuels.

These are the types of initiatives the government can look at and deliver on. The idea of how we can enhance those environmental rights is something I am very interested in.

● (1800)

I would look for specific examples that we could, in essence, put into a brochure. I think it is important—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up. I know that 10 minutes goes by quickly.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent has the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to speak in the House, especially on a subject is important as the environment and our vision for the future of the planet and our country for our children and grandchildren.

The bill introduced by our NDP colleague deserves our attention. First of all, we feel that the key element of this bill is that it ensures that people can live in a healthy environment. It is a principle we share, of course, and one we shared in Bill S-5, as the member stated earlier in response to a question from the member for Terrebonne, my Bloc Québécois counterpart. The bill we are currently studying certainly does go much further than Bill S-5 in protecting the environment and ensuring that people can live in a healthy environment. We recognize that.

As we see it, however, the bill goes too far in the judicial area. This is a delicate issue. Ultimately, we believe that the judiciary must enforce laws, and that elected representatives of the people must make the laws and vote on them. This is a fundamental principle. Based on the wording of the bill, we think that the judiciary will become the legislative authority. This is where our visions differ. Ultimately, we do not believe that the role of judges is to decide how laws are made, but rather, to decide how they should be enforced. It is the role of the legislator, the elected representatives of the people, to establish legal frameworks. This is not to say that the bill should be scrapped. On the contrary, it contains some positive elements that could serve as inspiration for other legislation and other parliaments. These strong elements could be used to create an even more forceful argument in support of the need for people to live in a healthy environment. We recognize and support this principle.

This gives us the opportunity to discuss the environmental issue. We all know that climate change is real and that it directly affects peoples' lives. Humans contributed to climate change, so they have a responsibility to take steps to reduce the impact of climate change and, essentially, reduce pollution. Members will recall that just a few days ago, on Monday afternoon, the deputy House leader of the official opposition and member for Mégantic—L'Érable read a motion that was unfortunately rejected by the Liberal government, a move we vigorously condemn. The motion included all the elements of our vision for the environment. Unfortunately, it was rejected by the Liberals. I will read the motion moved by my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable:

That the House:

- (a) stand in solidarity with and express its support for all those affected by the current forest fires;
- (b) acknowledge that climate change is having a direct impact on people's quality of life, and that it is exacerbating the frequency and scale of extreme weather and climate events, such as floods, tornadoes, forest fires and heat waves;
- (c) recognize that the federal government must do more to combat climate change, prevent its impacts and support communities affected by natural disasters;
- (d) call on the federal government to take concrete action in the fight against climate change, which is at risk of becoming increasingly expensive for both the public and the environment.

Private Members' Business

That text outlined our vision concerning climate change. It unequivocally stated that we acknowledge that climate change exists, that it has an impact on the extreme weather events that we are experiencing, that it makes them worse and that it is our duty, as parliamentarians, to take concrete steps to address that situation. It is unfortunate that, for the sake of petty partisan politics, the government rejected our motion. The Liberals simply had to say yes. I cannot believe that they had anything against a single word or sentence of that motion. However, they could not acknowledge that we Conservatives are thinking about this issue. I understand them, in a way, because they have nothing to be proud of. After eight years of this government, where does Canada stand on the world environmental stage?

I would remind members that, after being elected in 2015, the Prime Minister was proud as a peacock to stand up at the Paris climate conference and say, "Canada is back". Eight years later, Canada is way back.

• (1805)

It is not me saying it, it is the UN itself. In November, at COP27 in Egypt, the United Nations tabled a report containing a scathing indictment of this Liberal administration. The report assessed the 63 most industrialized countries and scored each country on effectiveness in fighting climate change. Scientists from around the world who were brought together by the UN gave the following report on the Liberal government that has been in power for eight years. Liberal Canada ranks 58th out of 63 countries in terms of fighting climate change. It is not the Conservatives saying that, it is UN scientists who said it in a report.

Since the UN released that report, I have asked for unanimous consent from the House over a dozen times, if not more, to table that scientific UN document. Once again, the Liberals in power decided that that UN assessment should be swept aside and that they should continue as if nothing were wrong.

The problem is that they talk a good game but cannot deliver. That is also why Equiterre, the group co-founded by the current Minister of Environment and Climate Change that recently marked its 30th anniversary, decided to sue the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, because it feels that the government is good at rhetoric, but not so good at fighting climate change. Once again, it is not the Conservatives saying that, it is Equiterre, the group co-founded by the current Liberal Minister of Environment and Climate Change. On May 6, 2022, he was sued by Equiterre, the group he founded.

The government has chosen to fight climate change with taxes. That is not the road we want to take. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, who I just questioned at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, confirmed that the Liberal approach of creating a second carbon tax on clean energy, as they themselves have stated, will have a direct impact on every family in Quebec. Quebec families will need to spend an average of \$436 more because of that double carbon tax. In other words, Quebec families will have \$436 less in their pockets because of that double carbon tax. People really do not need that when we know that interest rates are rising. We know that everybody is struggling right now. Creating a new tax during a period of inflation when people

are struggling is absolutely ridiculous. I would go so far as to say that only the Liberals could come up with such an idea.

Let us talk about the future. Let us talk about hope. We Conservatives want the government to put in place concrete, realistic and responsible measures to tackle climate change. If the Liberals do not, we will. The fundamental principle to consider is the need to reduce pollution. That will take concrete action. What does that mean? It means reaching out to polluters and asking them to cut their pollution as much as possible. It is a bottomless pit, but that is okay.

If we somehow manage to lower our pollution by 20% in one year, I say bravo. However, what is to be done on January 1 to reduce the impact of pollution on our environment? For that, we must rely on research and development, new technologies and tax incentives for businesses to invest in them. Real, concrete measures are needed to reduce pollution.

Then, the green light needs to be given to green energy. In Canada, we have tremendous solar, wind, geothermal and nuclear energy potential. We can develop our green energy potential even further. To do that, however, the government would have to be willing to move forward and not constantly throw up roadblocks every time we come up with an idea.

Under Bill C-69, which was passed in 2019 with the backing of the Bloc Québécois, the federal government gave itself veto power over hydroelectric projects in Quebec. That is crazy. If the Government of Quebec wants to propose a hydroelectric project, it should get every facility to move forward, but the federal government gave itself veto power with the surprising and disappointing backing of the Bloc Québécois.

In addition, our Canadian know-how must be exported. Our natural resources must be exported. It is unfortunate that rare metals like lithium, cobalt and other similar elements are currently being mined in countries where human rights are unfortunately not respected.

• (1810)

We need to promote Canadian potential. The fourth part is more than just a pillar; it is the foundation of our whole vision. It is that all this needs to be done in partnership with first nations, as our leader said at a press conference in Vancouver three months ago.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, my goodness, I have so much to say to my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent. It is going to take a glass of wine or a beer to talk about it.

The Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-219. We believe that it really needs to be studied in committee. At first glance, the bill seems to be well thought out and drafted, with its preamble clearly setting the context for this desire to include real access to the courts as part of the enforcement of the right to a healthy environment.

In reading this bill from my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay, I am pleased to see something other than statements of principle, and to see more legally binding and prescriptive provisions. I am especially pleased that its content has the potential to have a tangible impact on Canadians, the environment and society in general.

Bill C-219 also stands in contrast to what the Liberal government has given us. I am talking about its claim to have literally created a right to a healthy environment. I do not know about anyone else, but I believe that the word “creation” implies the idea of accomplishing something bigger than oneself.

Still, the Liberal government believes that, with Bill S-5, which modernizes the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, it has done exactly that. We do not think so, however. In fact, senior officials confirmed that this is merely an interpretation key for the implementation of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which does not apply to other legislation and is to be defined at a later date by the Minister of the Environment.

Let me describe this as a communication strategy. What is the point of having a right if it is unenforceable, and if in the event that this right is violated, remedies and penalties are essentially symbolic and serve as neither a deterrent nor a punishment? The answer is obvious. Sadly, there is a lack of accountability for organizations and individuals who think that they are above the law and who commit reprehensible acts that cause serious harm to the natural environment, to the people who have to deal with it, and to society as a whole.

Since 2006, the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms has established that “[e]very person has a right to live in a healthful environment in which biodiversity is preserved, to the extent and according to the standards provided by law.”

The Bloc Québécois believes that the Quebec nation has sole jurisdiction over public decisions concerning the environment and Quebec's territory. Therefore, it seems to us that Bill C-219, as drafted, will be enforceable under federal environmental legislation without adversely affecting the laws of Quebec or Quebec's environmental sovereignty.

In April 2022, members of the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously adopted a motion affirming the primacy of Quebec's jurisdiction in matters of the environment. I would like to make it perfectly clear that in matters of environmental protection, this essential condition must be met before the Bloc Québécois will support any legislative proposal.

Elected members from Quebec also unanimously oppose any environmental intervention by the federal government on Quebec's territory. We view this position, which we will voice systematically on the federal political stage, to be a true reflection of the interests and values of Quebecers. That is our mandate.

Private Members' Business

The Bloc Québécois definitely supports the recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a universal human right. It has almost been one year since the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a historic resolution declaring that access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a universal human right.

There were 161 countries that voted in favour of the resolution. According to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, if we want to make this right a reality, governments must recognize it and do what is required to make it a reality. Governments must also ratify and implement all existing multilateral agreements concerning environmental rights.

Obviously, Bill C-219 will not make the right to a healthy environment a fundamental right like the rights that are guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, it is interesting to consider studying it in committee if only to examine and better interpret the legal, even constitutional, framework for a Canadian environmental bill of rights.

● (1815)

That said, the bill will amend “the *Canadian Bill of Rights* to provide that the right of the individual to life, liberty and security of the person includes the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment.” In that context, it makes sense to think that this right would be quasi-constitutional in scope.

In support of this scope, I should mention that the preamble to the bill states the following:

Whereas action or inaction that results in significant harm to the environment could be regarded as compromising the life, liberty or security of the person and as contrary to section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;

Ultimately, my colleague's proposal creates a true right under Canadian environmental laws. It is a right that citizens could avail themselves of in order to require the government to investigate potential violations of environmental laws, to bring an environmental protection action against a person who has allegedly violated federal environmental laws, to file petitions on the review of any federal environmental law, and to file an application for judicial review, including by a person not directly affected by the subject matter of the application, if the matter concerns environmental protection. That is very interesting.

It is significant that the meaning of the word “environment” and the expression “healthy and ecologically balanced environment” is clarified under the “Interpretation” heading.

I also appreciate that the bill includes the concept of the state as trustee of the public good. Protecting the environment means looking after society's collective interest, which is the role of the state, as much for those living now as for future generations. This principle, the fiduciary doctrine, is the very foundation of the progressive work leading to a better understanding and application of environmental rights around the world.

Private Members' Business

I must also applaud the Member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for the attention he has given to an extremely valuable piece of legal content, a section entitled “Paramountcy of Principles of Environmental Law”.

In any legal context, it is vitally important to be able to rely on clear concepts and recognized definitions, if for no other reason than to allow the legislative branch to unambiguously express what the judiciary must have in mind when seized of a case.

I am referring to the polluter pays principle, the principle of sustainable development, the principle of generational equity and the principle of environmental justice. I could also talk about the principle of prudence, but it is not there. Instead, we have the precautionary principle. I want to reassure everyone that just because I was a professor in another life, that does not mean that I am going to flunk a member on their exam. I will just make the correction.

It is a typo. Looking at the English version of the Rio declaration of 1992, it clearly says “precautionary principle”. However, that was poorly translated. The French version refers to the “*principe de prudence*”, which has nothing to do with the environment. This flawed translation removed the very essence of this principle, which is central to the framework for implementing such a bill.

The Bloc Québécois succeeded in rallying the members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development around this correction during the study of Bill S-5. The precautionary principle entails abstaining if there is a risk, whereas the idea of prudence instead suggests the authorization of an action and the management of its risk, which is very different. I know my colleague will be quick to make this change. Like the Bloc Québécois, I am sure he sees recognition of the precautionary principle as essential to the framework for implementing legislation to protect the environment.

In conclusion, I repeat that the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of Bill C-219.

• (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley in northwest B.C. to speak to Bill C-219, which is before us today.

I will start by paying tribute to my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay. It has been, and continues to be, such a pleasure to work with him in the House. My colleague is an ardent defender of the environment and, in addition to being an excellent parliamentarian, many people do not know that he is one of Canada's foremost bird experts. I think he probably holds the record for the most question period interventions related to birds. I had the opportunity last year to go birdwatching with him, which was a real treat.

His work in the House is a service not only to his constituents, but also to all Canadians. The bill before us is just one example of that work, so I want to thank the member for bringing it forward. I am excited it has gotten to this point and will be put to a vote because this is an issue of interest and concern to so many Canadians.

I also want to acknowledge Linda Duncan, the former member of Parliament for Edmonton Strathcona, who brought forward a very similar bill during her time in the House. I am sure she is pleased to see these ideas advancing in Parliament.

Sometimes when I sit in this place, I remind myself, particularly on days when we feel stuck in the weeds of the minutiae of different issues, to reflect on our purpose as parliamentarians, the reason we are here, why we are elected and what our constituents want us to focus on. I can think of nothing more central to our mission, more core to our purpose as a Parliament and as a country, than ensuring our citizens are able to live healthy, fulfilling lives. The security and vitality that could be afforded to every Canadian are so important for us to come back to in all of our work. I cannot think of anything more important in this bill than its articulating in Canadian law the right to a healthy environment, which is very central and relevant to the idea of facilitating healthy, fulfilling lives for all Canadians.

I was thinking of another person in preparing for this speech, who was 10 years old when I met him. In 2014, I was a small-town mayor in Vancouver for a conference. Going into the Vancouver Convention Centre, I was approached by a 10-year-old boy named Rupert. He is still out there. I looked at the date, did the math and realized that he is now almost 20. Rupert was approaching all the municipal politicians at this convention and advocating for the very concept that we are talking about today in the House of Commons.

To him, the most important thing we could be doing was ensuring a healthy environment for his generation and generations to come. He looked around at the world that he was inheriting. He was there with his sister Franny, and both were involved in this advocacy. He wanted us, as local politicians, to understand how vitally important it was to protect the environment and pass on an environment that would not put his generation in jeopardy.

I think sometimes 10-year-olds and young people can see complex issues with such moral clarity. One of the reasons I wanted to amend the Canada Elections Act to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to participate in our elections is that I believe they have so much to contribute to the conversation. Even at 10 years old, Rupert was contributing back in 2014, and I am thinking about him today as we debate this bill in the House.

We know that the environment is us. We are the environment. We are inextricably linked to our surroundings, the ecosystems and other systems that support life on this beautiful planet. I was reminded of a quote from David Suzuki that speaks to this very well. He said, “We are of the Earth, every cell in our bodies formed by molecules derived from plants and animals, inflated by water, energized by sunlight captured through photosynthesis and ignited by atmospheric oxygen.”

● (1825)

Rupert was quoted as saying, "If humans are harming the environment, we're directly harming ourselves". This is something that for so long we have been oblivious to. It is something I believe as humans we once understood much more intuitively and paid more respect to, this concept of being inextricably linked to our environment, but somehow we have forgotten and have moved away from that.

I grew up in a remote community out in the bush. When I think about a clean environment, the image that sticks in my mind is that of drinking right out of the river. My parents had a homestead, and we had a log house on the bank of this swift flowing creek, Kiwa Creek. We had a log that went out onto the creek. My father had flattened the top of the log, and we walk out on to that log with a bucket, scoop water right from the river and drink it without any treatment.

I cannot think of an image that sticks in my mind more when I think of a clean and healthy environment than that of drinking clean water coming from our rivers and streams, yet in so many parts of Canada, that is no longer a safe proposition for people.

How many among us would disagree that Canadians deserve these things, that they deserve to breathe clean air, drink clean water, eat safe food, live lives free of dangerous toxins, receive the many benefits of healthy functioning ecosystems, and most importantly in this day and age, enjoy the benefits of a stable climate and pass a stable climate on to future generations? As well, as this bill speaks to, who would disagree that they deserve to participate in the decisions that affect the environment and, thereby, affect them?

For people raising children in this day and age, the right to a healthy environment has a particularly poignant and meaningful relevance. My children are now 18 and 16 and going off into the world, and I think about the future they are inheriting. There is nothing I want more for them than for them to experience the environment in the way I enjoyed and have all of these things I have spoken of to live lives that are healthy and free from environmental harm.

When thinking about this bill, I also think about all of the people in northwest B.C. who have been fighting for a healthier environment, for a cleaner environment and for the various environmental harms to be dealt with by the government and other governments. I think of the Chicago Creek environmental group near Hazelton, which was responding to a coal spill into Mission Creek, a creek near its community. I heard from indigenous folks in the area, members of the Gitksan Nation, who are deeply concerned about the impact of that coal spill on the creek itself and on the vegetation surrounding it, vegetation they rely on for a number of purposes.

I think of CN rail, of course, which runs right through the riding I represent. A couple of years ago, CN rail was found guilty of spraying herbicides right into the waterways that flow into the Skeena River, British Columbia's second-largest wild salmon river.

I think of community groups in Smithers and in Kitimat that have been working for years to address air quality concerns. I think of one particular citizen of our community, who was deeply concerned about a government practice of spraying arsenic on pine

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trees to kill the mountain pine beetle, who eventually succeeded in forcing an end to that practice.

For those people who are watching tonight, and I am sure they are watching on CPAC as all Canadians do, I hope they see some promise in this bill before us.

I want to again thank my colleague for bringing it forward, and I look forward to the vote in the House of Commons.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

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

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[*English*]

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister again for her intervention today.

Part of the next stage of this, presuming this passes and becomes law, would then be to develop the regulations for this bill and to negotiate with the provinces and territories. This would all be done not through Parliament, not at committee but behind closed doors. While the government touts itself as being open and transparent, the way that this would play out would actually be behind closed doors. There would not be an opportunity to come back to Parliament. There would not be an opportunity to take any of the details of this benefit to committee to be analyzed, to have witnesses testify and to have amendments.

My question to the minister is this. Would you consider this to be an open and transparent process going into the next stage?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that she is to address all questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the member.

The hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

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Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can reassure the hon. member that this would be a very public process. In fact, because of amendments made in this House, there would be an obligation of the government and of the minister to report to both Houses on engagement: the level of engagement and how we have engaged with the disability community. We would have to report, at the end of one year, what regulations have been put in place and what they look like, not to mention that the regulatory process itself would be quite public.

In the pre-regulatory process, we have already engaged with the disability community. We are working on a series of round tables. We have a ton of input already. I could go on, but I want everyone to know that we intend to make this a very public, open and transparent process.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to ask a little bit about the consultation that has already happened and how far along this is. I know, and the minister and everyone in the House knows, that the community wants this benefit to be passed and that it wants to have it in bank accounts as soon as possible.

Has some of that consultation already gone forward on regulation, and what kind of timeline do you really anticipate this is going to be?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind members to address questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Madam Speaker, technically, the regulatory process itself has not commenced, because there is nothing to regulate until there is a law, until the bill is passed; however, a lot of work has been done to date. Community members are very engaged on the specific elements, giving us feedback on areas like how the reduction rate should be designed, how much the amount should be, how we work with provinces and territories—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the minister, but I have been informed that there are problems with the interpretation.

It is sorted out now.

The hon. minister can continue.

[English]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Madam Speaker, yes, a lot of work has been done technically on specific elements of the benefit, but of course the regulatory process itself cannot start until this bill becomes law.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, while I am encouraged that the minister was so deeply involved in ensuring that Bill C-22 was going to move through the House this evening, I am deeply disappointed that the Senate amendment that would have ensured that people with disabilities do not have their benefits clawed back from the insurance industry was not support-

ed. This is essentially going to increase the profits of private insurance companies.

Why is the minister not willing to stand up and ensure that this amendment that the Senate carefully worked through is included?

• (1835)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Madam Speaker, I am not willing to encroach on provincial jurisdiction in the area of general contracting or on private insurance, or create the risk and uncertainty that doing so would do, which is not to say that I have not put a red line in the sand on clawbacks. I am working very closely with provincial and territorial colleagues to make sure that does not happen.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to stand in the House to speak to Bill C-22 today. It is always an honour to represent my community of Kelowna—Lake Country.

I know that our Conservative members are all committed to increasing support for Canadians living with a disability. More than one in five Canadians lives with a disability. It is not an insignificant number. In fact, it is not a number at all; these are people. These are family members, friends, brothers, sisters and parents. Canadians living with disabilities can have additional financial burdens with assistance, supplies or equipment that they may require. Canadians living with disabilities are underemployed, as approximately 59% of working-age adults with disabilities are employed, compared to around 80% of those without disabilities, according to Statistics Canada.

Navigating life with a disability can be a full-time job for many, with no time out and no break. While the intention to support those with disabilities remains, there are many unknowns with Bill C-22, which we are discussing today. This is because the most important details of this bill, such as eligibility, what “working age” means as mentioned in the bill, what the payment amounts will be, what the application process will be, and provincial and territorial co-operation and interaction with other benefits are all being left to be determined through regulation. These would all be determined behind closed doors, with no ability to come back to parliamentarians for debate or amendments, and no opportunity to hear from witnesses at committee in a public venue. Essentially, we have a bill with a benefit and process that are yet to be determined. Canadians living with disabilities deserve legislation that is committed to them through concrete action, not promises.

This legislation had extensive testimony at the human resources committee, including many written submissions. I will mention just one witness who testified at committee: Michelle Hewitt, chair of the board of directors for Disability Without Poverty, who is also a constituent of mine in Kelowna—Lake Country. I first met Michelle many years ago in my community, and she has been a strong advocate in many ways for persons with disabilities. I will read a couple of comments she made on record during her witness testimony at committee. She said, “Disabled people do not live in poverty because they are worthless to society. It is quite the opposite; it is because their worth is not valued. In fact, people with disabilities contribute over \$47 billion to the Canadian economy.” She also stated:

We talk about lifting disabled people out of poverty, but what does that really mean? Canada's official poverty lines use the market basket measure, which fails to take disability into account.

We hear the stories of disabled people living in poverty on a daily basis, as they are our friends and family. We can tell you about the man who approached Rabia in the parking lot of a grocery store offering to swap bus tickets for food, or my friend who lives month to month with MAID approved, wondering if this month will be her last because she can't afford to live.

...Time is of the essence. Food inflation is at 11.6%, yet provincial disability payments are not index-linked. This means that in real terms, disabled people fall further behind every day.

This is why this benefit would most effectively be delivered if details were co-created with persons with disabilities. This is why Conservatives supported amendments at the human resources committee, which passed, to provide more certainty on this benefit, including indexing the benefit to inflation, ensuring the Canada disability benefit payment amount would stay proportionate to the cost of living. We also support the Senate amendments the government has brought forth.

The creation of the Canada disability benefit should consider the complex web of programs currently in place, which, for many Canadians with disabilities, including those with episodic disabilities, can result in benefit cuts and higher taxes as a consequence of taking on work. There are families that rely solely on benefits due to the nature of the disability, and people are living in poverty.

● (1840)

I want to be clear that I am concerned about the potential clawbacks that could affect people. These could be with interactions with provincial or territorial benefits, with interaction of benefits through insurance, or with interactions with federal benefits. While the minister has stated that potential clawback of provincial supports is a red line when negotiating the creation of the benefit with provinces, she has not been able to point to any specifics in the legislation or guarantee that this will not happen. Conservatives proposed an amendment to Bill C-22 at the human resources committee to prevent clawbacks at the federal level. This was written by the legal department of the House of Commons. Disappointingly, the Liberals voted against it and it did not get into the legislation.

There was an amendment put forth by the Senate to address clawbacks dealing with insurance, based on witness testimony at the Senate. I spoke to a constitutional lawyer about this, who pointed out that there are strong constitutional arguments in favour of this Senate amendment and that it was endorsed by all provincial

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trial lawyers associations in Canada. However, the Liberal government has not accepted that amendment.

I want to be very clear, on the record, that Conservatives are concerned with any form of clawbacks, and that this disability benefit act does not have anything in the legislation to give assurances to address this. We will be watching very closely over the next couple of years, once the regulations are developed and this benefit is all implemented and it plays out. Conservatives will be holding the Liberal government to account on this.

This is all at a time when the cost of rent has doubled and mortgages have doubled. Inflation has hit a 40-year high, and interest rates increased nine times in the past year. Liberal inflationary deficit spending led to high inflation, which led to high interest rates, which will lead to mortgage defaults. This is very concerning, and those with disabilities are among the hardest hit.

I want to comment on and clarify the parliamentary process and timelines the Liberal government went through with this legislation. The Liberals say that persons with disabilities are a priority; however, it took them six years to take action on this disability benefit. They finally introduced Bill C-35 in 2021, in the previous Parliament, and the Liberals then called an unnecessary election in the summer of 2021, which collapsed the legislation.

The minister said she was consulting with the disability community. However, she introduced the exact same legislation in 2022. It was a goal of mine, and of my colleagues in the Conservative official opposition, to ensure that Bill C-22 progressed through the committee process diligently and through adding needed amendments, though there are others we wished were agreed to. We managed to get the bill through the committee process quickly and passed in the House of Commons before Parliament rose at the end of 2022. On May 18, the Senate returned the bill to the House of Commons with amendments, and on May 30, at the human resources committee, the minister would not commit to a timeline on which the government would return Bill C-22 to the House of Commons. We have been waiting for weeks.

I and other Conservative colleagues were hearing from persons with disabilities that Liberal MPs were telling them that Conservatives have delayed this legislation. I want to be very clear that those comments are a fabrication and a falsehood. I would just tell people to look at the facts, the actions at committee and the parliamentary process the Liberal government has followed in bringing this forward. This debate could have been held weeks earlier than today if the Liberals had brought it forward.

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As I mentioned earlier, the level of disability poverty in Canada remains a prominent issue, and we have a responsibility to do better. The Conservative members of Parliament are committed to supporting Canadians living with disabilities, and not penalizing people and families. Therefore, I can say that we are all in agreement that the Canada disability benefit must be passed, and we encourage the government to immediately get to work consulting with the disability community, as the minister has said that the regulations will, in fact, take a year to develop. We heard that today in response to my questions for the minister.

With that being said, our Conservative caucus will remain vigilant in ensuring that the government fulfills its promises to the disability community.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know it has been a very difficult time to try to get the Liberal government to accept proposals that have been coming from the opposition parties, so I very much appreciate the work the member has been doing, and I certainly agree with her on our wanting to make sure that this is very strong legislation and that we really push the government on those clawbacks. I agree with her on that.

I do want to ask a question. We know there is going to be a time gap between when regulations happen and when the money is going to get into folks' bank accounts. In committee, I and the NDP asked for an emergency interim benefit, and I am wondering if the member is in agreement with that, now that these things have changed slightly.

• (1845)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I know that, jointly, the member and I had worked really hard at committee to make sure that some amendments got through. As I mentioned earlier, there were some that I wish would have gotten through that were not accepted. We worked on that.

With regard to that, we would have to look at it. I think part of the challenge right now, as I mentioned in my speech, is that inflation is so incredibly high. The actions of the government with the last budget, with its inflationary deficit spending, are only going to pour fuel on the inflationary fire.

It is going to be even more difficult for people. We absolutely need to make it a priority as well to bring inflation down so that interest rates can go down and people do not lose their homes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, given that the member's concerns regarding the clawbacks were not adequately addressed and that the act to restrict the charges from disability tax promoters was passed unanimously, yet took eight years to implement, how confident is she that this bill will come forth and be enacted and that people will not, instead, be faced with medical assistance in dying to lift themselves out of poverty? For all those years that the promoters were collecting money, it went toward the promoters instead of the people living with disabilities.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, we heard more than once in testimony at committee that people were considering MAID because they could not afford to live; I must say, that was absolutely heartbreaking.

It is unbelievable that people feel that way and are dealing with that in Canada. As I mentioned in my intervention, my Conservative colleagues and I have a lot of concerns around clawbacks, which is why we tried to put something in the legislation. Unfortunately, it was not accepted by everyone.

We are going to keep pressing the government on that. There should have been something in the legislation. As I mentioned, we had legal in the House of Commons draft something that was very simple in order to address that, specifically at the federal level, which is within our jurisdiction. Unfortunately, that was not supported.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my constituents in Guelph have been talking about clawbacks as well.

However, we accepted five of the six amendments from the Senate. In our government, two-thirds of amendments coming from the Senate are generally accepted. In the case of clawbacks, it is so important for us to work with provinces and territories. It is their area of jurisdiction. In Ontario, ODSP has to coordinate with what we are proposing. Although it might look good for us to tell the provinces what to do, eventually, it could end up in the Supreme Court.

Could the hon. member tell us how important it is for us to coordinate with the provinces and territories, to the benefit of all Canadians?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, part of the situation is that, in the legislation, there is so much that is so vague that there are really no assurances. Even if all the fine details were not defined, there is a lot of vagueness in here. That is part of the concern that we have. Not only that but, frankly, we heard lots of testimony about this at committee.

All the vagueness in this legislation is a real concern for people. That is why, as I mentioned in my speech, we will be holding the government to account on all the commitments they have made.

• (1850)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise this evening to discuss Bill C-22, which will be implemented. We should collectively congratulate ourselves for the work that has been done.

Of course, we could look back and talk about the pitfalls that we ran into in coming up with this bill, but I think that all the parties here in the House of Commons have always supported the many disability organizations and advocacy groups that have come out time and time again to express their desire to see this Canada disability benefit become a reality. We do not consider these people to be different. As one of my colleagues and friends would say, they are unique. I believe that the basic purpose of this bill is to lift these people out of poverty.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute the many organizations in my riding that are dedicated to this cause and that support and stand by people with disabilities. In particular, I would like to take this opportunity to salute the Mouvement Personne d'Abord de Sainte-Thérèse, which advocates for people living with an intellectual disability. This year, it is celebrating 25 years of defending and promoting the rights of these individuals.

I also want to acknowledge the many witnesses who met with us at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities during the study of this bill. I especially want to thank Disability Without Poverty, the Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec, the Fédération des Mouvements Personne d'Abord du Québec, the Québec Intellectual Disability Society, and all the others.

There is one thing we all agree on and must make sure of: Although this has always been the stated intention and objective of the government, this new disability benefit needs to be a supplement to and not a replacement of the support that currently exists for these people in Quebec and in the provinces. We will have to be especially vigilant.

That will be a major challenge because we know that, in both Quebec and the other provinces, the programs are not necessarily standardized. As part of our work, we have focused on the objective and guarantee of ensuring that they are complementary. As we know, a higher proportion of people with disabilities live in poverty than the general population. The pandemic has once again provided a powerful illustration of that reality. We know that the current economic climate is making it harder for people with disabilities to meet their basic needs, such as food, housing and clothing. Those are basic needs.

It is very difficult for people to break out of this cycle of poverty when they do not have access to sufficient income to begin with. We want people with disabilities to be able to participate fully in life and society. They are already doing so, but we want to give them every possible means to ensure that their inclusion and participation are as active as possible. That is why the benefit must provide a minimum of resources or a decent amount of income. It is about ensuring that these people's incomes are above the poverty line and that they can live decently and with dignity.

● (1855)

As has already been said, there was also a consensus that the groups representing these individuals should be able to actively participate in the process, so that the process is done “by and for” persons with disabilities. That is why the consultations will be so important, and as soon as the bill is in force, I hope we will be able to get this major regulatory work under way as quickly as possible.

Quebec recently developed its basic income program, which is aimed specifically at people with severe employment restrictions and has been in effect since January 1, 2023. I think it is a good model to follow. All this to say that, if we want to implement a Canadian benefit similar to the guaranteed income supplement, we have to make sure that it complements what already exists and that it will not take anything away from the flagship social programs that are already in place in certain provinces for these individuals.

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We all want this bill to pass as quickly as possible. Several amendments were proposed in committee to establish when this new benefit will be available and to set a deadline so that it does not take months and years to become a reality. We know that it will take a tremendous amount of work because agreements must be reached with the provinces and territories, which, as I mentioned, do not have the same social programs. Regulations will have to be created to cover a long list of elements.

We have some reservations about this bill. The amendment we wanted to move in committee concerned the regulatory work. We wanted to know the amount of the benefit, the eligibility criteria and the terms of payment. All of that is like a blank page because parliamentarians have no control over these terms as they will be established by regulation. We know that regulations can be rescinded at any time. If the bill had provided parliamentarians with some oversight of these terms, I believe that this would have provided more guarantees about what we want to achieve.

Unfortunately, these amendments were rejected. The amount of money going to people with disabilities will be significant, or at least that is our hope. It is quite unprecedented that such an amount cannot be approved by Parliament and is not formally enshrined in law, but rather set by regulation.

We also agree with the government's response to the Senate amendments. We had the same misgivings, particularly about the amendment concerning clawbacks for private contracts or insurance.

I even had the opportunity to speak with a few individuals. If there is one thing that people with a disability do not need, it is a constitutional debate over provincial jurisdiction. As far as private contracting and insurance plans are concerned, I think that we would only be delaying things if we had to have a legal debate about whether or not these individuals are entitled to the benefits in question. These are issues that warrant careful study. In our opinion, the response that was respectfully given to the senators who worked on this bill was more than adequate, and we are open to the other amendments.

What can we collectively hope for, not just for ourselves, but for all people with disabilities? When we look at all the organizations and individuals that make up our society, when we look at the status of women, indigenous or racialized people, we see that there are still other factors of discrimination that negatively affect them.

● (1900)

We can only hope that the government will be thorough and that members will exercise oversight to ensure that this bill will meet the objective of those—

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the Bloc for her thoughtful intervention tonight. I was particularly interested in her comments around working together with the provinces and territories to come to an agreement.

With respect to the Canada child benefit, we were the government that negotiated no clawbacks.

We are now putting into legislation the early learning and child care benefit that we have also negotiated with the provinces and territories.

We are developing a track record. In fact, we have one we are expanding, and this will become part of what we are doing together with the provinces and territories. Instead of telling them what to do, we will work together.

Could the hon. member talk about how important it is, particularly with us working with Quebec and the other provinces, to get this right together?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, it is a must, especially when dealing with issues such as this.

It was hard not to work with Quebec on child care. They drew on the Quebec model because it is recognized around the world. We have been using the model for 25 years, so yes, an agreement was required. This time it was asymmetrical. Members can understand the context.

To put in place a Canadian benefit for people with disabilities akin to the guaranteed income supplement we know from pension plans, it is a must. It is going to take more than co-operation; it is going to take agreements.

We already have social programs in Quebec. We already have support for these individuals. If they want to take additional measures that are complementary, they absolutely must have agreements with the provinces, which also have jurisdiction in this area.

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I want to express how shameful it is that it has taken us this long to get to the point we are at today. I know so many people living with disabilities in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith who have been legislated into poverty and struggling to make ends meet, keep food on the table and keep a roof over their head. It is time for us to get this done, so I am happy we are moving in the right direction today.

One thing the NDP has been pushing for through this whole process, and of course my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam has been fighting to ensure, is that people living with disabilities have enough money to be able to make ends meet. It is not good enough for us to just push this through and then they are still struggling to make ends meet.

My question for the member is this. Does she feel this is a step that provides her with the optimism we all need that people with

disabilities will not have to keep living in poverty and will in fact allow them to live with the dignity and respect they deserve?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I am equally optimistic. I would be more inclined to see the glass as half full than half empty. That is already a step forward.

People with disabilities are in great need of a boost to their abilities. Fortunately, there are programs that support them. In any case, I am proud of what is being done in Quebec, but I think we have to go much further.

What we need as parliamentarians to ensure that the work is done quickly, realistically and in line with the objective is accountability and regular updates on the work being done. Without this, a lot of time can be lost.

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a quick question for the member with respect to the timing.

We know the government has been working on this for years. It tabled the first legislation back in 2021. Then, because of the snap election, it stopped and had to start all over again, so it has been working on it for years.

We hear once it passes, presumably it will still take another year in order to negotiate with the provinces and develop the regulations.

I wonder if the member has a concern that the government is already years into it, yet it does not have regulations at this point.

● (1905)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, some situations make us wonder if we still believe in this.

I think it is also important to take into account people with disabilities. Overwhelmingly, they came and told us that they wanted regulations to be made by and for them, so we will have to go through this whole exercise.

What I want is for us to stop dragging our feet. Now that we have the tools and have established criteria, we must take action. We cannot change the past.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are here today debating the Canada disability framework bill because of the incredible work done by the disability community, individuals, advocates and allies who have worked tirelessly to express to all members of this House the urgent need to improve the lives of persons with disabilities living in poverty in this country.

Their work has been difficult and powerful, and it is not finished yet. As we speak, disability organizations and advocates are gathered in New York City, attending the 16th session of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, still fighting for equality and human rights for persons with disabilities in Canada and across the globe.

This is the work they should not have to do. Persons with disabilities should not have to face discrimination and should not have to navigate the many barriers that are currently in place. It is our work here in this place to remove these obstacles. That is what the NDP will continue to do, as we have always done.

My colleagues and I are disappointed that the Canada disability framework does not yet meet the requirement of upholding human rights and does not ensure every Canadian with a disability is protected from poverty.

That is why the NDP will hold the government to account, to work collaboratively with the disability community, to meet its expectations and to create regulations in Bill C-22 that will put an end to disability poverty.

Bill C-22 initially came to the House incomplete and clumsy. New Democrats worked to improve it, proposing an assurance of an adequate income that conforms to article 28 from the CRPD, which states:

... the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing...

The Liberals should have accepted that and yet, in committee, they would not even allow for the debate, and the Conservatives abstained from having a vote on that debate and from standing up for human rights based on that amendment, abstained from even considering it.

Fortunately, even without that opportunity to debate the need for adequacy, the NDP was able to include adequacy in regulations. That adequacy has been enhanced with an amendment from the other place, which I appreciate.

Making adequacy even stronger but not absolute in stature is better than not having adequacy at all.

It will now be left up to the minister, and order in council, to honour the intent of adequacy and to honour the trust extended by the community, and the House, and build a benefit amount with a foundation based on human rights and adequacy, and to protect from clawbacks of any kind, including public insurance companies and in the negotiations with provinces and territories.

We all know that provinces already offer unequal benefits and some claw back funds from those living with a disability. In Alberta and Nova Scotia, for example, a person can only make around \$10,000 annually before they experience clawbacks of their benefits. The provinces and territories do not have benefits that match the financial requirements to live in Canada.

The government must work to ensure that wherever one lives in Canada, one's location does not indicate the quality of life one has access to. New Democrats have stated that this benefit must be an amount that will actually lift people out of poverty.

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We know that Bill C-22 is urgently needed and it has been delayed for far too long, over and over again by the government. The community has been forced to wait and wait, and that delay by the Liberals has created a rush to the finish line. I have received hundreds of emails and phone calls asking for the government to get this bill passed and those voices can no longer wait.

The New Democrats will not ignore these Canadians. We will advance this bill while still holding the government to account, like we always do. The fight continues and the government must do the work to ensure that it meets the expectations of the disability community.

New Democrats will hold the government accountable for working with the provinces and territories to ensure that private insurance companies are not the beneficiaries of funding meant to go directly to people with disabilities living in poverty.

● (1910)

With the implementation, this benefit must do its work and not enhance the pocketbooks of corporate Canada. This Liberal government must not leave people behind again.

In addition, it is time for this government to acknowledge that an immediate interim support is needed. As the bill progresses into 2024, Canadians living with a disability in poverty cannot make ends meet. The reality is that, right now, poverty continues to be forced on them, and they must choose between paying their rent or buying groceries. One more year of waiting or more is not acceptable. The government must provide, in good faith, financial relief now for these Canadians who are suffering as they wait for this benefit. Financial relief is needed today.

The minister said that the government does not want to work on a disability emergency response fund while working on Bill C-22. However, those living in poverty do not have the luxury of that choice. Today, the NDP asks again for the government to enact an immediate relief payment, or what the community is calling "DERB", as the community is asking for it.

Government Orders

The delays in this process with the bill has shown Canadians that the Liberal government is not concerned about upholding the rights and dignity of persons living with a disability. Government members know about the inadequacies of provincial and territorial benefits, yet they sit by and choose not to act on it until they are forced to, unless, of course, they are acting on behalf of corporate Canada. The NDP has seen this government support legislation that put millions of dollars into greedy CEOs' pockets instantly while it drags its feet on investing in pharmacare, accessible housing, employment insurance reform and the protection of indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

Almost a million people in Canada with a disability live in poverty because of the discriminatory practices and ableist government policies that exclude them. This is unacceptable. The lack of accessible homes, inaccessible infrastructure and limited inclusion in the workplace creates barriers that have resulted in poverty; legislated poverty that past and present Conservative and Liberal governments have perpetuated.

Bill C-22 is a welcomed step forward to provide Canadians living with a disability new supports. I appreciate that. However, this new benefit must be adequate and accessible in 2024.

I will wrap up by acknowledging the toll that this process has taken on those in the disability community and all the hard work they have done to get us to this point. Their work has brought results, and I look forward to the co-creation to now begin. They can rest tonight on their win and know that the New Democrats will continue to fight alongside them again tomorrow.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must admit that I am a little bit surprised by some of the words that are being put on the record.

What we are talking about is a historic piece of legislation, and we can thank the community of people with disabilities throughout the country for the advocacy that they have done and conveyed to the member for Delta. From my perspective, in my decades of being a parliamentarian, I have never seen a parliamentarian who has been as strong an advocate for people with disabilities than the current minister.

Would the member not recognize that this is indeed historic legislation and maybe remind the House if she can recall any private members' bills on this? I, myself, cannot.

• (1915)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I think that when we are talking about Canadians who are living in poverty, we do not make comparisons. We are talking about people in Canada who are living in poverty. So, although the Liberals want to take a win every time they do something they should be doing on human rights, NDP members are disappointed that the bill is not stronger. We will continue to be disappointed until this government delivers adequate income supports for persons living with disabilities, who are disproportionately discriminated against in this country because they have a disability.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was nice working with my colleague on the HUMA committee to study this bill.

I have seen a lot of genuine and authentic effort from the minister responsible for this bill. I will absolutely recognize that. However, just having an authentic minister who genuinely believes in this and has lived experience, quite frankly, around this does not negate the bureaucracy that she has to face.

Does the member have faith that the Liberal government will actually be able to deliver this in a timely manner based on what we have seen so far?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, it is fair to acknowledge that the minister has a lot of trust in this process. The disability community has given her trust and members of this Parliament have given her trust. However, I am still nervous, because at the end of the day, this has to be a benefit that lifts people out of poverty. As I said in my speech, I am hoping that the trust and honour are rewarded, not for us but for the people in Canada who need this benefit to make ends meet.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for all the work that I know she has put into trying to make this bill better in what has been a frustrating process. We are working with a government that has promised, with its many opportunities, to bring forward this legislation expeditiously over two Parliaments, and we are only now just getting to the end of the legislative process.

As the member pointed out, the bill is not perfect. One of the issues with the bill, as I understand it, which I would be glad to get her commentary on, is that the program is largely set up in regulation. That means a future government that is not on board with providing this benefit, either at all or according to the terms and conditions the government will ultimately set in regulation, can scrap the program with the stroke of a pen at the cabinet table. It will not come back to Parliament if this program is destroyed.

I hope the member will talk a bit about the kind of protection we could have afforded people living with disabilities if we had legislated more of the program details instead of leaving that to regulation.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I want to thank very much the member for Elmwood—Transcona, because it was he who really moved this along before I was even elected. He was also the one who talked about the fact that persons with disabilities needed additional funds through CERB during COVID because it is more expensive to have a disability in this country. I appreciate all the work the member did.

The NDP pushed very hard to have within legislation, within statute, that this benefit provide an adequate income. Not having that protection, that minimum, in legislation is a risk, and I am worried about it. I am worried every time we talk about there being a new government, as we may lose things that have not yet been voted on. That is why it is so important that we get the bill through and get the legislation going. Then we really need to hold the Liberals to account for all the promises they have broken in the past.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 7:20 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier this day the motion is deemed to have been adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1920)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for Kelowna—Lake Country is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that the member for Kitchener Centre would like to speak to this, but because of the draconian motion the Liberals and the NDP put forward for restricting debate, he is not allowed to. Quorum calls are not even allowed in this place.

I note that the member contributed a lot at committee. He brought forth several motions, and my understanding is that he would like to speak this evening to this piece of legislation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member mentioned quorum and she knows what the motions that were already adopted in the House say. Unless there is unanimous consent, the motion before the House stands.

* * *

CANADA EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ACT

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.) moved that Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, be read the third time and passed.

She said: Madam Speaker, it gives me such tremendous pleasure to rise on the occasion of third reading of Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

Today is another historic step toward having federal legislation with regard to early learning and child care. I have spoken numerous times in this House about the benefit of early learning and child care. I have talked about the life-changing experiences it has led to for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

We are coming up on the two-year anniversary of signing the first agreement with British Columbia, and since then, as members know, all 13 provinces and territories have signed on. That has meant 50% fee reductions as of December 2022 in every single jurisdiction. Six jurisdictions, Quebec, Yukon, Nunavut, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador, have already achieved \$10-a-day child care in regulated spaces, which is well ahead of schedule, and we are on track to meeting our objective by 2026.

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We understand that what is important is making sure that all Canadian families have access to affordable child care, so we have also committed to increasing the number of spaces by 250,000 in that same time period. About 52,000 have already been created with the provinces and territories. It is so incredible to be at a groundbreaking or to hear from families that now have access to affordable child care.

Of course, we cannot do this without the talented and qualified early learning and child care workforce, which is the backbone and beating heart of child care in Canada. We recognize those tremendous workers, who go to work so the rest of us can go to work as well.

Having quality, inclusive, affordable and accessible child care is exactly why we are here at third reading debating Bill C-35, moving it through the legislative process and hopefully continuing to get the unanimous support of every single party and member in this House to move forward and do something that is truly historic and truly transformative for Canadian families.

Do not just take it from me. Since I have spoken a lot about the benefits of child care, what I would like to do tonight is share the voices of Canadians and share what Canadians across this country are saying about our Canada-wide early learning and child care initiative.

Candice from Burnaby, British Columbia, said, “we paid \$455 for TWO kids to be in daycare for the month of December. Is this real life? Three cheers for your hard earned tax dollars being put to our use. I love you all.”

Katie from Ottawa, Ontario, said, “Just paid our January daycare fees. Under \$500!!!! This is a 55% reduction from last year. This is going to make such a huge difference for so many families.”

Greg from Kelowna, B.C., said, “My daughter's daycare fees have dropped from \$1200 to \$500 per month as well. It sure reduces the stress, including the strain on us grandparents.”

Ben from Toronto said, “Our infant's daycare fees have dropped \$500 (FIVE HUNDRED) per month, and on the 26th at her 18mnthaversary it will drop an ADDITIONAL \$200 (TWO HUNDRED!!) per month. Probably one of the largest pieces of legislation to personally affect me in my lifetime.”

Alana from Ontario said, “This is incredible work—I am so grateful as a mother to benefit from this and see my children thrive, as a RECE to feel hopeful for the future, and as an advocate to contribute to building this system.”

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Amil said, “We are finally FINALLY seeing real reductions in our daycare costs. It's genuinely life-changing to see fees reduced by just over 50%—this is how you support families, this is how you achieve real equity in the workforce.”

Jocelyne from B.C. said, “My daughter on Vancouver Island found out yesterday that her daycare will be charging \$10/day. This is huge for families! Thank you to the federal and provincial gov for collaborating on this excellent legislation. It truly puts families first.”

● (1925)

Isabelle from Toronto said, “It was absolutely surreal to see my daycare fees drop from a high of \$167.25. As of Jan, we will be paying less than 50% of that, on a path to \$10. Two kids, non-profit centre, Toronto.”

Clay from Nova Scotia said, “I remember when my grandmother who raised me on her own received \$20 a month baby bonus & how much it meant to her. The Liberals did that and improved it every time they formed government. I can't imagine what a \$10 dollar a day childcare would be single moms today.”

A tweet from someone in the Snuneymuxw territory said, “Thank you and your party for every one of these steps forwards for Canadians during these very challenging times. Though I'm not a member of any political party, I admire the progress made by @liberal_party despite the official opposition's grandstanding and obstructionism.”

Karen said, “Early '90's I paid \$900/mo for 1 preschool[er] and 2 after-schoolers. Thank goodness families today will have a better chance of getting ahead.”

A parent from Alberta said, “I paid a lot in daycare costs, and I didn't have a choice. I am more than okay with families getting help with costs. It benefits us all when parents are able to join the workforce.”

Another person said, “My highest daycare bill for 2 kids was \$2100. That's now over for me but working families should not have to pay that much. A break was much needed.”

The principal from Ataguttaalik Elementary School in Igloolik, Nunavut, said, “It helps students prepare in a more formal setting for school, kindergarten, grade one and up. When you can introduce students at the young age of three, four to a routine or a program I think it benefits them years down the road in their education.”

Meghan from Winnipeg said, “I can't bring my baby to work. \$10 a day childcare has been absolutely fantastic.”

A parent from P.E.I. said, “This is great news! This helps families, and will result in better outcomes for kids—the more support we give to early learning and childcare centres, the healthier and happier children are. The economic ROI is huge—and parents can choose to return to the workforce!”

Amy from Nunavut said, “I work in the field of ELCC in Nunavut and their multilateral and coinciding bilateral agreements with all P/T's have allowed for crucial initiatives and programs that otherwise would have been impossible.”

Let me tell members what Myra said. She said, “Thank you, Minister Gould. As a minority member of the society, I've witnessed friends and family members who struggle to keep up with inflation and high interest rates. This will surely help families, especially children and women.”

Sam said, “I just found out yesterday my daughter was accepted for a full time spot!! We'll be paying just 22\$/day! This is a MASSIVE help to our budget, we would have been paying 59\$/day if not for this program.”

Quinn said, “Affordable child care most importantly allows for my children to grow and develop in a safe, loving, and nourishing environment. The early years are so [important] and without the affordability, so many people were missing out on the perks of a licensed child care facility. They are shaping our little people into who they are going to be in the future. Secondly, it allows moms to work who may not have been able to before due to the high cost of childcare. For myself, I work in this field as well and the benefits for all my families in my centre are huge. This has been such a blessing all around!”

Finally, Natalia says, “This reduction in fees has meant that I can go back to work. I'm a mother of 2 boys, a 3.5 year old and a 16 month old. If the fees would have continued to be so unaffordable, I would not have been able to afford childcare for my children and would have had to stop working outside of the home for a number of years to care for my little ones. This means that as a woman I can continue to have a professional life while being a mother. It means that we can afford a better life for my family and most importantly, it means that I feel happy and productive because I want to work and have a career.”

These are just a few examples of what Canadians are saying across this country about what the Canada-wide early learning and child care agreements and this legislation mean to them. I think that last point is really important. It is really about choice. When someone cannot afford child care and cannot afford to work, they are not really making a choice. What we are offering Canadian women, Canadian families and Canadian children is a real choice, the choice that they can be a parent and can also be in the workforce.

• (1930)

The stats are backing that up. In the past year, from April 2022 to April 2023, unemployment among women over the age of 25 dropped 10% in Canada. That means that the participation of prime-age women in the Canadian workforce has expanded by almost 100,000 women. We have reached an all-time high of Canadian women in the workforce, and the Bank of Canada points to our early learning and child care initiative as one of the key factors.

[Translation]

Twenty-five years ago, Quebec established its child care system. Today, 85% of Quebec women over age 25 with children under four years old are in the workforce. That is the highest rate in the world.

Quebec economist Professor Fortin attributes this high percentage to Quebec's child care system. We know that making sure high-quality, affordable and inclusive day care centres are available is a powerful economic driver.

[English]

It is a strong economic engine for our country, for our society and, most importantly, for our families. What it means is that they now have that extra bit of disposable income to pay what they need to pay for, to make sure that they are providing the best start and the best quality of life to their children.

Debating Bill C-35 here is an exciting opportunity for us to enshrine in Canada, in federal legislation, the role of the federal government to ensure that future generations will not have to worry about the cost of child care. They will not have to worry about making that impossible choice between whether they want to continue to pursue a career or whether they want to stay home and raise their children, because they will actually have the opportunity to make that choice.

We know there is a lot of work ahead when it comes to affordable child care in Canada, but we would not be able to do any of this work if we had not put those bilateral agreements in place and if we were not bringing forward this legislation.

That does not mean that we do not see challenges and it does not mean that there will not be bumps along the road of implementation; that is what happens when we build a brand new social program, the biggest and most important social program in this country in probably 50 years. It means that we should keep pursuing that objective and keep building that new system, that transformational objective that is going to have such a positive impact on families across this country.

Indeed, those stories that I read into the record show that it is already having a positive impact, so I hope I can continue to count on the support of all members in this place to keep advancing this legislation so that we can keep working together to do what is right for Canadian families, for Canadian children and for our economy. This is smart economic social policy that I think is going to have a truly transformational impact on our country, and members do not have to take it from me: This is what Canadians are saying right across the country.

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With that, let us move expeditiously through third reading. We have gone unanimously through second reading unanimously through report stage. Let us get unanimously through third reading and send this over to the other place. Let us deliver affordable, accessible, high-quality, inclusive child care for all Canadians.

• (1935)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have an opportunity to speak as the critic and offer the other side to a lot of those positive stories. I think it is important to have that on the record also.

I would like to have on the record the minister's prediction of how successful she thinks this program is going to be in five years' time. Particularly, by how much does the minister think wait-lists are going to go down? I would like it read into the record today.

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, in contrast to the Conservatives, I am an optimist, and I believe that when one works hard, develops good policy and does things that actually help people, it is going to make a difference. We have already seen the creation of over 50,000 new spaces in our country, in provinces and territories and in communities big and small.

We are committed to creating another 200,000 spaces. Those are the commitments of the federal government, but provinces and territories, if they want to, can also create additional spaces. I believe strongly that in five years' time, this is going to continue to be a success and that we are going to have even more stories to read into the record about how transformational this initiative has been for Canadian families, Canadian children and particularly for Canadian women.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister not just for her speech but for the incredible amount of work that went into this. It cannot have been an easy task to go to every jurisdiction throughout the country to negotiate the various different deals and arrangements she was able to accomplish in a relatively short time span, given what would have been involved in it.

I note that despite the continuous objections from Conservatives when they come into the House and downplay the legislation, at the end of the day they ended up voting in favour of it. What I also find to be extremely remarkable is that this seems to have been, at least outside of this chamber, in the engagement with the rest of the country in provinces and jurisdictions, a non-partisan issue. Conservative premiers embraced the concept throughout the country.

I am wondering if the minister would like to comment on that process.

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, yes, it was a very interesting process, and at times a challenging one, to negotiate with the 13 different provinces and territories, but as my colleague alluded to, regardless of political stripe, in the end, every single province and territory signed on to the initiative and are now moving forward enthusiastically. In fact, the current Premier of Alberta, Danielle Smith, campaigned on \$10-a-day day care in the most recent provincial election, and Alberta was one of the last jurisdictions to sign on.

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However, what the premiers have come to understand and what they have seen borne out is that this is not only an extraordinarily popular program with parents but also an incredible economic driver. The return on investment to our economy is huge. The prediction is that anywhere between \$1.80 and \$2.60 will be returned to the economy for every dollar that is invested. There is a prediction that there could be an increase to the GDP of 1.2% over the coming years.

These huge contributions will take place because of additional people in the workforce, and we are already seeing that with the labour stats that I cited in my speech.

This is a tremendous policy that is having a tremendous impact on Canadians across the country.

• (1940)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, this program is not about choice. It gives money to certain people in certain situations who are not necessarily those who need the support the most.

The minister cherry-picked quotes that she had received. I would like to share and put on the record a quote from a child care operator in my riding, and I would like the minister's response to it. This person wrote to the HUMA committee, saying, "The child care industry in Canada is in crisis today as a result of the federal government's overreach through this program, and I fear that Bill C-35 does not sufficiently recognize that Canada's current child care system still depends on thousands of private operators, despite the directional preference for the not-for-profit business model."

"The on-the-ground experience of private operators reflects that this model is currently not meeting its promised intentions for affordable, equitable, accessible, high-quality child care for families as wait-lists soar around the country, creating inaccessible and inequitable access to the promised affordable child care, which is preventing parents from re-entering the workforce."

Further on she stated, "While both levels of government made flashy announcements about how they were creating affordable child care for families, small businesses, often run by women and new Canadians, are being forced into bankruptcy and staff face extreme burnout, while frustrated parents are, in fact, unable to access the promised affordable, equitable and accessible child care the governments have announced."

Why did the minister not read that quotation as part of her motivation for this bill?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, it is disappointing that the Conservatives focus on the negative instead of focusing on how we are trying to work to improve this bill. At the end of the day, they did vote in favour of the bill, so I hope they will continue to do that.

What is also important is that while the Conservatives keep saying that private operators are shut out, that is just not true, particularly in Alberta, where we have negotiated an increase in private for-profit operations of 22,500 additional spaces in the for-profit sector. They keep focusing on it and they keep saying it, but it is just not true. We want to see that increase in child care spaces. We do say that we want to prioritize not-for-profit growth because

these are public dollars, but private operators are absolutely not shut out. In fact, all existing private operators across the country are grandfathered in.

I did not say there would not be challenges. We are building something new. We have never had a child care system before, but instead of saying "Let us do nothing; those challenges exist, so we should rip the bill up", I am saying we should continue to work on this and build a better system that works for everyone.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know how important child care is. I have spoken in this House many times about the impacts on constituents in my riding. I wonder if the minister could explain the plan a little more for moving forward to ensure that we have skilled and qualified people in these positions.

We know this is not a workforce shortage but a pay shortage, a benefit shortage and a retirement income shortage. How are we making sure that we have qualified people in these positions and that they are paid appropriately so that children in Canada get the quality care they deserve?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question.

We will not have a high-quality, accessible, affordable, inclusive child care system without the workforce to deliver it. Of course, the workforce forms the backbone and the heart of our child care initiative. With every agreement we have signed on child care, we have ensured that the provinces and territories have to do a couple of things to access those funds, the first of which is to create a wage grid and make sure they are paying an adequate wage to our ECEs. They have work to do when it comes to building a workforce recruitment and retention strategy.

We have seen provinces and territories engage in different activities across the country. For example, Manitoba has brought forward a provincial pension and benefits plan for ECEs. B.C. is doing really important work on increasing the wages of ECEs and is working on new ways to ensure it is bringing qualified ECEs into the workforce.

I could go on and talk about every province and territory, but a lot of work is happening in that space.

• (1945)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I had a conversation yesterday with an intended mother who was telling me about the difficulties when it comes to surrogacy and the lack of time that surrogate mothers and fathers have with their children after the baby is born. She also talked about how this difficulty is compounded because they have a shorter amount of time to access child care, as they only get nine months of leave.

I am sure the minister knows that I have a private member's bill, Bill C-318, that would address this issue for adoptive and intended parents. My question, through you, Madam Speaker, is this: Is the minister willing to lobby at the cabinet table for a royal recommendation for it so that intended and adoptive parents do not have to wait to have time with their children? In essence, we know there are still wait-lists when it comes to child care, and this bill would give them that extra time. Is the minister willing to assist with the royal recommendation for Bill C-318?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for bringing forward what I think is an important private member's bill that is going to address an important need.

I think she is raising a really important issue that is affecting thousands of people across this country, so I look forward to having more conversations with her and with others on this bill.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier the member for Kelowna—Lake Country got up on a point of order with respect to the proceedings on Bill C-22 and said she was dismayed that the Green Party was excluded from having a speaking spot.

I think there has been some confusion over a long-standing opposition by the Conservatives to including Green Party members in UC motions to provide for extra speaking spots. If that has changed, I would ask that a Conservative rise in his or her place to affirm that change so that we can include Green Party members going forward.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I think that would be approaching debate. That has been addressed by the chair occupant.

I will give the floor to the hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a real privilege to speak to child care in this country and to be the critic for families, children and social development. It is obviously a great honour to rise and represent my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha.

Tonight, we are in what is called the third reading of Bill C-35. For people at home, this means that after this reading, we will vote on it and see what happens. There has been a lot of study and a lot of debate on this bill. There has been a lot of opportunity to meet with stakeholders and operators and to listen to parents and colleagues across the way in committee.

The reality is that the Liberal government loves to promise the moon and the stars but not deliver. Therefore, it is not very surprising that this universal child care bill is no different; it is not univer-

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sal. As critic to this file, I am here to elevate the alarm bells of parents and operators who are being silenced about the shortcomings of this bill. Do members know the ratio of private versus publicly funded child care in Newfoundland? It is 70%. Seventy per cent of Newfoundland relies on the private sector. Therefore, why would the Liberals purposely leave them out of Bill C-35?

Here is the exact language of the bill. Under “Guiding principles”, paragraph 7(1)(a) says:

(a) support the provision of, and facilitate equitable access to, high-quality early learning and child care programs and services—in particular those that are provided by public and not for profit child care providers....

Therefore, Conservatives put forth an amendment in committee, which read as follows:

(a) facilitate access to all types of early learning and child care programs and services regardless of the provider—such as those that are provided through traditional daycare centres, centres with extended, part-time or overnight care, nurseries, flexible and drop-in care, before- and after-school care, preschools and co-op child care, faith-based care, unique programming to support children with disabilities, home-based child care, nannies and shared nannies, au pairs, stay-at-home parents or guardians who raise their own children, or family members, friends or neighbours who provide care—that meet or exceed standards set by provincial governments or Indigenous governing bodies and respond to the varying needs of children and families while respecting the jurisdiction and unique needs of the provinces and Indigenous peoples....

That is a pretty well-rounded amendment, and it really speaks to what Conservatives have been saying from the beginning: The bill should deliver choice and flexibility and include everyone. The Liberals and NDP voted “no”. Why did they vote “no” to that amendment? This is where the politics and ideology really come in to play. They have an agenda, and it does not include everyone. They really believe in public and not-for-profit; they really believe that they can decide what is best for people's children. That is just the opposite of what Conservatives believe.

They think they know what is best for people's children. However, in reality, this bill would actually exclude 50% of children. Fifty per cent of children in Canada are living in a child care desert. The Liberals are quite talented, actually, at coming up with marketing slogans. What sounds better than a \$10-a-day day care? It sounds wonderful. The out-of-control cost of living created by the Liberals, with their inflationary spending, has made life unbearable for most Canadians. However, what they love to do is come in from the side, bring a distraction and say, “Do not look at that; we are going to make life more affordable for people. Here is \$10-a-day child care.” They give faulty solutions to the big problems they have created.

Therefore, it is really important to break down this \$10-a-day day care plan. Let us break down the fine print and the very important details that the Liberals conveniently forgot to mention. They will tell people we are negative. We would like to tell them that we elevate the voices of the people who speak to us, because that is what we were elected to do.

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This marketing campaign instantly and drastically increased demand. Of course it would do that. As a mom, I know that affordable child care is critical. However, if people cannot access it, it does not exist. The reality is that there are no systems or infrastructure in place to meet the demand. The children and the parents are then the ones who suffer. The quality of child care is being compromised because of this poorly thought-out and poorly executed bill. One operator told me that Bill C-35 is like putting a Band-Aid on a sinking ship.

● (1950)

How many people are familiar with budget airline service? This is the concept where the customer pays a lower fee but is nickel-and-dimed for all the basics. For example, one pays \$200 for a flight but then one also has to pay maybe 50 bucks for a seat, another 50 bucks for luggage, more money for food and so on. Members get the idea. By the time all is said and done, there is really not a deal, because the money has to come from somewhere. That is what is happening with this child care bill. Centres are being forced to charge parents extra fees to cover food, administrative costs and more. One operator told me they are 15 months into their provincial agreement, and there is no light at the end of the tunnel; this means that they do not know how they are going to manage the extra costs.

Erin Cullen is an engineer with a beautiful new daughter. She lives in Newfoundland and Labrador, and she cannot access child care. I think she really summarized it best when she compared the Liberal child care program to the government telling Canadians they are getting free groceries: "Everybody's getting free groceries. You get free groceries, and you get free groceries." The problem is that when we get to the grocery store, there is no food on the shelves.

I think the worst part about this bill and the story the Liberals want to sell is the promotion of gender equity. How is not having a choice equitable? Erin is one of many who has no choice. There is no choice because she, like many health care workers, shift workers and other workers, cannot go to work because there are no child care spaces available. Erin has said they have to leave the province. They have to leave her home. How is that equitable?

Jennifer Ratcliffe is the director of Pebble Lane Early Learning. She testified at the HUMA committee when we studied this bill. I want to read into the record what she said, because I think it is really important. For those watching, I note that CWELCC means Canada-wide early learning and child care. Many children require additional support right now. They are still reeling from COVID. There are so many special needs kids out there.

Ms. Ratcliffe testified:

Currently, the CWELCC excludes disbursement funding that is used to hire support staff. Without this funding available, we have to turn away children who require additional support in our programs. This must also change, so that we can meet the needs of all children.

She went on to say:

The pressure to implement this program so quickly has resulted in overpayments to providers, families double-dipping, and funding methods being overlapped. Parents are stressed and providers feel like they have no help. It is clear that the provinces are scrambling as they try to prove they can do this, but they are ultimately failing. You cannot simply throw money at a problem and expect it to change.

Wait-lists across the country are growing by the thousands each month, and families are left with no one to help them. Parents need to work and if they don't have care, their only option is social assistance. This doesn't seem right. Affordable child care is an empty promise to parents if it is not accessible.

Providers are doing everything they can to accept as many families as possible, but there are simply not enough spaces. Demand is increasing at a level that we have not seen in years. New spaces must be created in order to meet demand. Private operators need to be able to expand, but being excluded from funding for new spaces means they cannot afford to. The fee caps mean we are restricted when negotiating leases and working out operating expenses.

I really want the NDP members to listen to the testimony of this next woman who testified. This is what the NDP fight for, quite frankly, and I think it is important. Maggie Moser is the director of the board of directors, Ontario Association of Independent Child-care Centres. She said:

The CWELCC program has not delivered good value for taxpayers and does not meet Canadian standards of equity. The implementation provides undue benefits to higher-income families, who are sailing their yachts on the tides of the program, while those who need it most are left drowning.

Lower-income families were excluded from obtaining access to the CWELCC child care spots. Families who could already afford the fees of their centre were the ones who benefited from the rebates and discounts, while the rest were left behind on a long wait-list.

That is the reality of this bill, because if people already have a spot, they are going to take it up. Then there are people who need maybe a part-time spot, but they cannot access it; people are holding their own spots because they are so scarce. It is the people who have the lowest incomes, the most vulnerable, who are most negatively impacted by this.

I asked Maggie about her current wait-list, how many child care centres she oversees and how many spaces there are. Maggie responded:

We have 147 spaces as well as 24 half-time spaces, going all the way from infant up to kindergarten. Our centre is 100% full. There is not one empty space in our centre.

At the moment, we have around 600 names on our wait-list. They are for spots in the next year and a half.

● (1955)

That is the sad part. By the time some of these people are able to access this spot, their child has aged out of it. We have people who are thinking about having kids and putting their names on a wait-list.

I want to acknowledge to the minister and to everybody that, yes, for the people who were lucky enough to get a spot, this is helping them. I will not dismiss that at all. However, it is like winning the lottery. This plan is saving them money, if they are lucky enough to win the child care lottery. That is what this is. However, the money is also being taken in other spaces, such as food, gas and mortgages. I just think it is really important that we recognize where all of the gaps are.

One problem is all the women who have messaged me, because they cannot choose to go back to work. Kathryn Babowal, who operates Les Petite Soleils Inc., made a written submission to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I want to read it into the record: "From what I can see happening today as a result of the CWELCC program, and what will inevitably continue to happen through Bill C-35, many private child care centres will not survive this transition and the investments made by private, tax paying citizens, will be instead replaced by not-for-profit child care centres that will be funded through hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money in subsidies and supports." Kathryn says, "There are private childcare operators ready and willing to make the investments in their communities to create childcare spaces with no cost to taxpayers, but they are unable to access a free market and thus the families that choose these private centres are unable to receive the affordability support of the CWELCC Program. There are also substantial administrative costs being incurred by taxpayers to offer incentive grants to not-for-profits and to staff government positions to manage the use of funds, claims and audits. As a Canadian, as a tax paying citizen, and as a child care entrepreneur who has invested thousands of dollars and hours into building the best child care program I possibly could to support the parents and children in the community...[I find] this...extremely disheartening." Her voice matters too.

This email is pretty powerful: "My name is Rebecca and I am [a] lawyer practising in St John's Newfoundland and Labrador. I have an 11 month old and I am currently on leave from my position." Rebecca says, "The federal government brought in a subsidy so that parents could avail of \$10 a day daycare. Daycares collect 10 dollars a day from parents and collect the rest from the federal government, however the federal government only pays on a quarterly basis and often late. As such daycares end up operating at a loss with...minimal cash flow and many have had to shut down as a result." This part is so important: "The intention of the 10 dollar a day daycare was to allow women to access affordable childcare but it has had the very absurd result that women are being forced out of the workforce entirely with no income at all because they made the choice to have a child."

Many of these people, when they phone me, say, "Michelle, I am a Liberal" or "I am an NDP supporter." When we talk about partisanship, the child should be at the crux of this discussion, but it is not, because it is political. This is part of the supply agreement that the Liberals and the NDP signed together, and they checked it off. When we look at the political implications of this, at where the child care deserts are the highest, with Saskatchewan at 92%, how many Liberal seats are in that province? There are zero.

They know that. They have created a bill to try to divide us and, unfortunately, pit women against each other. I am not buying into that. I am here to elevate the voices of parents and operators.

It is urban versus rural. That is what this bill has done. It has left more people out. The reality is that so many people in rural ridings cannot access a centre. That is not how it works. One has to rely on one's friends, family, neighbours or grandma. It is not in this bill. If they really cared, they would have added that amendment. They would have said, "Yes, we will put that amendment in."

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This is a political game, because they are failing as a government in all areas, including housing and the cost of living. This is a distraction. They say, "We are giving out \$10-a-day day care."

This place is so upsetting. I really think that everyone in here came with the intention to help people. I believe that, and it is the biggest question we get asked, but this is the reality of what we are dealing with. It is just upsetting because one thinks that people come here to make a difference and to listen, but one gets sucked into these political games.

● (2000)

When the Conservatives asked the Liberal government in a written Order Paper question how it could back up its claim that Ontario had 92% of licenced child care providers sign on to the CWELCC program, and that almost all of them had reduced fees by 50%, it responded, "The specific implementation of these ELCC [or Early Learning and Child Care] agreements falls within the legislative authorities of the provinces and territories, in accordance with their own unique ELCC systems." This is the proof I am talking about.

The Liberals are setting it up so that, when this fails, it will be on the provinces' backs. They are going to be the fall guys for all of these shortcomings, which everyone is ringing alarm bells about. It is not just Conservatives. Members can Google child care, and every single day there is an article about this.

The minister, in effect, will say, "Oh, the Conservatives say to do nothing". That is not what we are saying. We are asking the government to include everybody. We are asking the government to offer choice. That is what we are saying here, and I would ask for collaboration on this.

Conservatives put forth concrete amendments to the bill for the national advisory council to track data on the implementation of the child care program, including the availability of child care services, the number of families on wait-lists for child care places and any progress made in reducing the number of families on wait-lists. It is accountability and tracking. How do we measure success if we are not tracking it? Do members know what happened to this amendment? It was voted down. How are we going to track success if we are not measuring it?

I want to put into the record, because I think it is pretty powerful, something from Christine Pasmore. She wrote that she had a family share with her that they had to send their children back to a third-world country to live with their grandparents as they could not find any child care options in Grand Prairie. She said that families are being discouraged from moving there on Facebook because of the lack of child care in the area, and families are moving out of Alberta.

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She also wrote of how they had two YMCA after-school care locations announce that they will be closing permanently as of July 1, 2023, as they are unable to staff them. This will be a loss of a 127 after-school care spaces there. Parents are not enrolling their children into the education system for kindergarten because of the lack of child care options. Instead, they are leaving them in day care full time. She said that this is the first time in the 17 years she has been in child care that she is seeing this happen.

I will speak to another letter that was really important. We do talk about moms a lot, but I had this one dad write to me, so I want to give a shout-out to the dad, Curt. He said that he was writing in reference to a post and that he does not usually speak up, but affordable child care does not exist for most. He is a father of two children, ages six and eight and, unfortunately, they have been in day care since they were babies because both he and his wife have full-time jobs.

He says that they have been very fortunate to have always been able to find work and, until a few years ago, they have not struggled financially. Because of their jobs, they have to have their children in after-school programs. He describes how now, with the new rules for affordable child care, to recover costs for younger children, because the real cost of care does not go down simply because someone wants to, the fees for school-aged is going up. To add to the frustration, the amount of tax credits for child care for school-aged children is also decreasing. For Curt, it is getting to the point, like it is for so many other families, where the cost of child care is so great that one of them will have to quit their job. He said that he had no questions, and he knows it is the reality and there is nothing I can do, but he just wanted to make sure that I was aware of these unfortunate facts. He said that, like all the other things the current government is doing, it seems designed to break this once great country.

The reality is, we will honour the agreements that are signed by the provinces and territories, but I want it loud and clear and on the record where all the gaps are.

Conservatives will continue to fight for choice and freedom. We believe that parents are the best people to make the right choices for their children, and we believe that there should be access to all forms of child care. We believe in freedom, choice and flexibility, and we will fight to remove the ideological shackles from the bill.

● (2005)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there was a lot in my colleague's speech that was simply untrue.

Conservatives talk about fighting for choice, and there is nothing in this legislation that prevents parental choice about what kind of child care they choose to pursue. That is very much a Conservative ideological point.

There is nothing in this bill that divides Canadians. I really do not understand where the Conservatives are coming from in saying that child care is a divisive issue. In fact, when we talk to Canadians and hear from them, they are exuberant about this. It is cross-generational. It is not just folks who have little kids right now. It is, in fact, all generations.

After such a down and negative speech, why are the Conservatives voting for Bill C-35 if they are so against it?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I really think it is important to say that this is not down and negative. It is reality. There is a very big difference between telling everybody that everything is great and telling the reality that 50% of kids are left out.

Why would we vote in favour of this? It is because the toothpaste is out of the tube. We do not want to punish the families that have benefited from this. What we want to do when we are in government, and we will be, is fix this. Right now, there is no flexibility. There is no choice. There are ideological shackles on both the provinces and parents.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's work on child care. There is a lot to be said for parents collaborating together to implement real solutions for families and children.

One area that the member highlighted quite frequently throughout her speech, and this is similar to the question I asked the minister, was the gaps of people who are getting paid appropriately to work in the field. This is an ongoing issue in provinces and territories across Canada, where, in order to offer the spaces, we need trained, qualified people in these positions.

Could the member share her thoughts with us today on what steps need to be taken to ensure that people are in the positions that we need?

● (2010)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. There is no national labour strategy.

We have seen it. We saw it in the Order Paper question that this is what the Liberals are doing, but they are not going to track it. They are not going to measure it, and they are not going to include the labour minister.

That is the reality of what we have been pushing for. That is what I would say. I would say it is not being addressed. The government is not going to just pull people from the sky for these positions. In fact, there is a mass exodus from these positions. Early childhood educators are incredible humans, just as are all the people who care for our children in safe environments.

However, there is no national labour strategy, which we put forth as an amendment. The Liberals voted it down and unfortunately, so did the NDP.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, as Conservatives, we did move an amendment at committee.

It was to amend the function of the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care, which would include supporting the recruitment and the retention of a well-qualified workforce, conduct regular engagement and specific mandate to call out to maintaining and understanding the available child care spaces, the numbers on wait-lists and the progress made to reduce wait-lists for families.

I am wondering if my colleague could elaborate on why the NDP and the Liberals voted against having this workforce strategy, and an accountability of the federal government and council, so people would be identifying the gaps, and making plans to fill those gaps, to have an adequate workforce for our child care.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, my colleague is a fierce advocate and mom who has had two kids during Parliament. She has a wealth of knowledge. She also lives in a child care desert of Saskatchewan and knows wholeheartedly the real struggle of this. She sat on the HUMA committee with me.

I would love to tell the House something great. I would love to look into the camera and tell everybody at home that there is some great reason why they would do that. At the end of the day, it was because Conservatives put it forward. They have created some narrative that Conservatives hate child care. That is what they love to tell people.

The reality is that most of us women on this side are moms, too. We are not pitted against other women in this House. We are supporting everyone. We support women who breastfed for the first time. To the minister opposite, I say good for her. We support women and men of the NDP bringing their babies in here. We support everybody. That is what we are trying to say, over and over again. That is why we are trying to elevate the voices of all the people who are ringing the alarm bells.

Why did the NDP and the Liberals vote it down? The member would have to ask them.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's speech. I am a father, and my wife and I have three daughters, one of whom is in day care. We have seen the reduction in day care fees in the province of Ontario, and it is also great to see the provincial minister responsible for this area go out on literally a weekly basis to celebrate the child care agreement put in place in Ontario. This has been called for for over three or four decades. It is helping parents in every riding in every city in the province of Ontario, and it is saving them thousands and thousands of after-tax dollars. It is helping women re-enter the labour force and increasing women's participation rate.

I was wondering if we could not acknowledge the major benefits happening under the child care agreement, which we have signed with all provinces and territories from coast to coast to coast.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, I was very clear about that in my speech, and I will say it over and over again: There are lots of people who have benefited. There are tons of people, but we already have news articles coming up, headlined, "Should Alberta reconsider its child care funding agreement?" Most of these provinces were given no other options. They

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were bullied into it. If they had not signed, they would not have gotten any money.

On the record, for the hundredth time, I will say to members to wait and see, because there are tons of people benefiting from this, but there are just as many who are not. How is that inclusive? It is not, so until it is fixed, we are not going to say it is wonderful and great, because it is not.

● (2015)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to get up twice. I really appreciate that.

I want to follow up again on the labour discussion we were having. Conservatives moved an amendment at committee regarding the reporting clause of the bill to include the Minister of Labour in the annual reporting, and to say that the annual reporting must include a national labour strategy to recruit and retain a qualified early childhood education workforce. This was voted down by the NDP, the Liberal Party and the Bloc, and I just do not understand why, especially when the NDP members keep getting up and saying that we need a workforce strategy and a labour strategy.

I am just wondering if my colleague could maybe elaborate on why those parties voted against having this put in the bill, to make sure there is an accountability measure, when it comes to the labour force and workforce.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, "accountability" and "Liberals" are two words that do not go in the same sentence, and the reason I say that, today in particular, is that it is extra deflating today. We have a Minister of Public Safety who knew for three months that the worst criminal in Canadian history was going to be moved from maximum security to medium security. He did not tell the victims' families.

There is no accountability, and this is a pattern of behaviour. I wish it was not true, but the longer I am here, the more I see it. There is a pattern of behaviour. There is no accountability because the Liberals are immune and because their Prime Minister does not do anything, so that is the reality of what we are dealing with.

Why would those parties sign on to an amendment that would put in accountability? They do not want that because then they would have to do something.

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[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am so very pleased to speak to Bill C-35 this evening, especially since I prepared my speech by running the statements I am about to make by my colleague from La Prairie, who is an economist. They call him “the big softy of La Prairie” now because he is so nice. It makes a change from his former life in Quebec City, where he was known as the “butcher of Sanguinet”. That was my little introduction.

Why am I so pleased? It is because, in my former life, I taught a course on social policy to social workers, in which we discussed Quebec's family policy extensively as one of the best examples of a successful social policy. As we know, Quebec's family policy encompasses a number of measures, including child care services and parental leave, which were introduced by Pauline Marois.

When explaining to students how to grasp the scope of a social policy such as child care, I always began by identifying the different ways of looking at society. The fact that there are multiple ways of looking at society gives rise to ideological debates. We are seeing these ideological debates play out this evening. I find that a good way of distinguishing between the people I would call social democrats and those who espouse what might be called classical liberalism—or conservatism, as I should call it for the benefit of people here—is to look at how social policies are articulated.

I would define a progressive as someone who fights for individuals to be able to define themselves on their own. That is what progressives try to do. Why is that? As we know, there are people who are stuck in a predetermined social position. Here is a simple example: People whose parents are on welfare have a tougher time at school because they have fewer resources. They are at risk of becoming stuck in a predetermined position that they do not want, but that was assigned to them by their circumstances, because they were born into families with limited resources, or because they were born into a social group where education was not valued. These are people who are assigned to a predetermined social position.

As I see it, a progressive is a person who clearly knows that people born into favourable circumstances have enough social capital to achieve social fulfillment. Equal opportunity takes this into consideration and creates mechanisms that allow less advantaged individuals to experience upward mobility. The concept is nothing new. The member for La Prairie explained to me that this is the very basis of Keynesianism.

According to the liberalism of John Maynard Keynes, a free market is not enough. We also need a social safety net so that every individual can participate in society. We know what this social safety net is. Our social safety net is access to education and health care. This allows for greater equity and gives people in less enviable social circumstances the chance to fulfill their potential. That is how I would describe a progressive.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that this is the role of the market, that this is the role of the individual and that, if the individual puts in enough effort, they will succeed. That is what we call a meritocracy. I was basically trying to explain to students that these are two very different visions of society. My goal at the

time was not to participate in ideological polarization, but I did point out that, generally speaking, it is the more progressive people who will have a positive vision of social policy, and therefore a positive vision of a measure like \$5-a-day child care.

We are seeing that tonight in the House. My Conservative colleagues' speeches reminded me of the ones I heard in Quebec 25 years ago when child care was first introduced. Some people said that parents are in the best position to make decisions for their child. No one is in a better position to choose than the parent. No one is saying otherwise. No one is saying that it is not up to parents to decide what will happen to their child.

● (2020)

People also said that the lack of child care spaces was creating inequality. It was not just for the mother who wanted to send her children to a day care that had no more spots, and it was not just for the mother who wanted to keep her children at home either. To me, this is just rhetoric that does not offer any solution and just advances a political agenda, but does not account for specific situations experienced by individuals.

I say that because history has not vindicated those who supported this point of view. After Quebec's family policy was brought in 25 years ago, we realized that there were more women in the workforce. That was Pauline Marois's initial goal when she introduced this policy. We also realized children started school with fewer language delays. They will succeed academically because they are not starting at a disadvantage. We know that when a child enters school with language delays and has trouble integrating into the school curriculum, that child has less of a chance of moving up and succeeding than a student who has supportive parents. A child who is sent to a day care that provides good services could have those delays sorted out. That truly is what happened, looking back, 25 years later, at the benefits of Quebec's family policy.

This means that a successful social policy is one that takes into account a multitude of factors. Quebec's decision to introduce a child care system was about more than just enabling mothers to enter the labour market. It was also about enabling mothers to escape poverty. It was about enabling children to have initial contact with education, learn how to be independent and embark on a path towards an undoubtedly brighter future. As we have seen, it worked, because Quebec is a progressive society.

Let me provide a few examples. Not to be petty or mean-spirited, but Canada's family policy is 25 years behind, unfortunately. It happens. The federal government sometimes lags behind. The same can be said of medical assistance in dying. We are not blaming the federal government. It is slightly delayed, which is normal. It is also the same thing with secularism. In 25 years, perhaps the federal government will realize that a law on secularism is also progressive. However, that is a different debate that I do not necessarily want to get into.

It is important to understand how a social policy fits in. It is also important to realize that there is an ideological struggle going on between the two visions. That is what we are seeing tonight. However, the ultimate goal is to do good. The ultimate goal is to ensure that every child has access to quality services and will eventually be able to thrive and escape from conditions in which they could be trapped. As I was saying, a child born into a bad environment is more likely than others not to have access to education and, ultimately, to have a bleaker future.

Quebec has shown what successful day care services look like. I was saying that the federal government is lagging behind, but it will eventually catch up. All of this is fantastic, and it means the Bloc Québécois will likely vote in favour of Bill C-35. However, I would not be true to myself if I did not point out the fly in the ointment.

The fly in the ointment goes hand in hand with the disease that is eating away at federalism. It is a disease called the fiscal imbalance. I have no intention of reopening the debate on health care funding. However, as will be shown, the logic is undeniable. What does the federal government do all the time? I call it predatory federalism. It encroaches on jurisdictions that do not belong to it. Once inside these jurisdictions, it proposes policies and then it pulls out. In the process, it creates a sort of dependency and obligations. Then it avoids paying the costs associated with these obligations. This is what we saw happen in the health care system.

• (2025)

If we look back to the early 1960s, we will find that under the legislation that created the public health system, for every dollar invested in or spent on health, 50¢ came from the federal government and 50¢ came from the provinces. That was in 1960.

Over the years, health transfers went through a series of reforms. The 1970s was when the first change was made to substantially reduce the federal contribution to health care.

In the 1990s, Canadian-style neo-liberalism arrived with Paul Martin. At that time, transfers were slashed outright, and Canada's budget was balanced on the backs of the provinces. If I can use 1996-97 and 1997-98 as benchmark years, the federal government repeatedly cut transfer payments by \$2.5 billion a year, if I remember correctly. This created intense pressure on the provinces.

In one of his occasional moments of lucidity, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien told his colleagues at a G7 meeting that he could balance the books at any time without paying a political price, because it was the provinces that had to deal with the financial difficulties he created.

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A child care system is now in place and Quebec will be given \$6 billion over five years. There are no guarantees, however. The government is currently in a minority, which is good. The NDP is supporting it, barely. That is good because it means the Liberals cannot do everything they want. Sooner or later, there will be a financial reckoning. That makes the Conservatives' mouths water. This is what gets them excited, like a kid in a candy store. Sooner or later, we will have to return to a balanced budget.

When the government loses its alliance with the NDP, it will have to propose measures to return to a balanced budget. What will it do? Will it cut its own spending? Technically, it will be tempted to lower the payments it makes to the provinces. The despicable thing about all of this is that, generally, the government does this after having previously set standards.

As we have seen, the government wants to impose health care standards. The government is telling the provinces that if it sends money back to them to reinvest in health care, they will have to invest it in specific services, such as long-term health care or mental health care. The particularities of each province are not even taken into account. The federal government does not have the expertise, but it is telling the provinces how to behave. It is doing it with health care, and there is no guarantee that we will not see the same thing with child care.

The \$6 billion announced in 2021 by the Prime Minister and Premier Legault is fantastic. However, there is no guarantee that when the government goes back to its old ways and wants to balance the budget, it will not slash these transfer payments and make the provinces bear the brunt once again. The provinces will have to bear the brunt and face their residents as services are cut and access to services becomes more difficult.

This is the blind spot with child care and Bill C-35. We cannot totally agree with what the government is proposing. We know very well that, in the future, when the federal government intrudes on our areas of jurisdiction, that could translate into Quebec and other provincial politicians paying the price. They might have to deal with the federal government's predatory federalism reflex, which leads it to encroach on jurisdictions and then to pull out, refusing to pay the political price and instead foisting it onto others.

I say this because that is generally what happens. In my opinion, my Liberal and Conservative colleagues resemble each other in this respect. Ideologically speaking, they are willing to provide certain services to the public, but when the time comes to pay, they are much more tight-fisted.

• (2030)

The political instinct is to secure their own future, without thinking of the future of provincial politicians or the people's needs.

In my introduction, I said that I considered Quebec to be a progressive society. As we can see with child care, Quebec is 25 years ahead of the federal government. That 25-year head start is also reflected in the federal government not being ready right now to meet its obligations, at least when it comes to health care.

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The Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-35 with all due reservations. I urge my Conservative colleagues to stop using the sterile rhetoric about how they want to defend everyone's freedom to choose whether they want to send their children to a public day care or keep them at home. It is not constructive at all and it does nothing to combat the fundamental problem of poverty in all advanced western countries.

Whenever we look at poverty indicators, who tops the list? It is single mothers. That is how it is in Quebec and every other province.

The best way to support these individuals and get them out of the disadvantaged conditions they are in is to have proper child care services. However, let us remain vigilant, because if the past is any indication, I am convinced that in five, six, or seven years, we will see a Liberal or Conservative government ready to cut the financial support currently offered to the provinces.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was interesting that the hon. member who just gave his speech set up this binary situation where either children are taken care of at home or they are in a publicly funded day care. The reality is that folks do a whole gamut. Whether it is family members who take care of their children while they work, it is a neighbour or it is a church community, who knows how it all is? This system would fund just one of those possible options to the exclusion of the others.

That is what we are talking about as Conservatives when we say that this would not allow for the choice that happens. Whether it is a grandmother who comes in to take care of the children or the kids go to the grandmother's house, those kinds of situations are not recognized by this program. That is what we are dealing with. Does the member not recognize that?

• (2035)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, this is no different than if I asked why we bother to have a state-run health care system. Why do we go to a hospital for care? Why not go see a grandmother? Why not go ask a friend for treatment?

We know full well that that would not work. It would be completely ridiculous to tell a person with cancer to go ask their neighbour for help. As everyone knows, that is not how it works.

All major social policies require resources, and those resources are controlled by the government. It is not possible to create a national policy and assign part of it to the neighbour, another part to the church, and the last bit to the schools. That is not the way it works. This is the Conservatives' vision of society. What they really want, without being too obvious about it, is for women to stay at home and raise their own children. They want a traditional family unit, where the woman stays at home, nice and quiet in her private space, while the man goes out to work in the public space.

I get a sense they are trying to keep that under wraps a little.

[English]

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition stated previously that the Liberals think it is up to the federal government to decide how children should live and how their care should be delivered. The Bloc members think the Government of Quebec should have this responsibility. However, the Conservatives realize that the issue of child care is neither a federal nor provincial jurisdiction; it is a family matter.

Does my colleague from the Bloc agree with the Leader of the Opposition when he claimed that the Government of Quebec has no business being involved in the administration and delivery of child care in Quebec? He does not seem to, but I just want to check.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, the same criticisms we are hearing now were expressed by certain politicians in Quebec 25 years ago. I can guarantee that there is not a single soul in Quebec, not one Quebec politician, who would be prepared to stand up and say that the child care services we now have should be discontinued.

As for what the Leader of the Opposition said, this is not the first nonsense I have heard from him. He has claimed that people are asking for medical assistance in dying because they cannot afford to eat. These ridiculous comments reflect poorly on the member and damage his credibility, to the point that anything else he says will be tainted by his lack of judgment. I say this without malice.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, although, at the end, I was somewhat hurt by the fact that he did not talk about the possibility of an NDP government in five or six years. I will try to rise above that this evening.

I completely agree with him that Quebec led the way with its accessible public child care program. That program changed the lives of tens of thousands of Quebec families. It is good that the rest of Canada is finally following Quebec's lead today. We, in the NDP, insisted that accessible public child care be subsidized by the government or provided by non-profit organizations.

I would like to ask my colleague a question about the matter of choice that the Conservatives have been talking a lot about. When a parent is forced to stay at home because private child care services cost \$50, \$60 or \$80 a day and it would cost them more to go to work, that is not a choice. What the Conservatives want is a lack of choice where a parent has to stay at home because private child care services are too costly. That is what the Conservatives want.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, rarely do I agree with my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, but it has happened tonight.

The proof is in the indicators from the 25 years that followed the implementation of Quebec's family policy. Quebec is among the societies in the western world with the highest number of women in the workforce and a steady decline in the number of single mothers living in poverty. This means that something we are doing must be working.

As for the beginning of my colleague's question, I apologize if I did not raise the possibility of an NDP government, but I did raise the possibility that, 25 years from now, this assembly will realize that secularism is also progressive.

• (2040)

[English]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed working with the Bloc in committee on this. I just want to say, for the record, I am a Conservative woman and I am not at home raising my kids, but it would be fun if I could be home with them at the same time. He did make reference that Conservatives only want women to stay at home, so I just want to have it on the record that is not the truth.

I was curious about his term “predatory federalism”. I thought that was kind of an interesting term when we look at overstepping jurisdiction and wading into waters that are not the federal government's. I am curious to know his thoughts. I know they are supporting. I know Quebec has been a champion in child care, and it is progressive in many regards, but does he think the Liberals have overstepped with this bill?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I was talking about predatory federalism simply to point out the dynamic that has been in place since the establishment of the health care system. The federal government does not respect the division of powers, which dictates that anything that has to do with social matters should be left to the provinces. It does not respect that; it creates provincial dependency with a much larger tax base, and then it strangles the provinces by cutting transfer payments without paying a political price for it.

This approach may sound very cynical and sinister, but we heard it straight from a former Liberal prime minister. Jean Chrétien once candidly admitted that this was the trick that he used to achieve balanced budgets without ever paying a political price. That is what I call predatory federalism.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have four children, and they are all grown up or almost. The younger ones are 13 and 15 years old. The oldest is 24, and she started day care about the time that the program was created. My children were in different types of day care, which were all subsidized. They were in day care centres or in home day care. Those were the options.

I would like my colleague to speak a little more about the options in Quebec for people with atypical schedules, for example, those working nights, whether they are pilot projects or permanent programs.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I know that in the early days of Mrs. Marois's family policy, there were a number of issues due to a shortage of day care spaces. Let us look at what is avail-

able now, however. A woman who works nights has access to child care. Child care services are being seen and developed in workplaces and universities. I know that there are some early childhood centres currently in universities. There are many different ways that child care has been made available over the past 25 years.

Not only that, but there is now even a college program to train early childhood educators. This training is essential for those looking to work in an early childhood centre.

We have a policy in place that meets the population's wide range of needs. We have a well-developed educational service with trained staff. This explains the policy's success over the past 25 years. Credit is owed to Pauline Marois, who had the genius to do this at the very time when the federal government was making the worst possible cuts in transfer payments to Quebec health care.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to share my time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have received notice from all recognized parties that they are in agreement with this request.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Today, I am speaking in favour of Bill C-35. It is something that New Democrats are proudly supportive of. It is a bill that establishes a national early learning and child care system.

Why this bill is so important is because it is transformative. It is another example of New Democrats never giving up. We fought hard for years alongside many advocates who said that we needed affordable child care. Affordable child care really is a transformational thing in the lives of people. Let us think about the reality for families right now and look at what people are going through with the cost of living so high, mortgages so high and the cost of groceries so high. A lot of families who want to have children look at the costs and say that there is no way they can do it, especially if they both cannot continue to work. That is a reality for many families. Many women who often fall into the role of having to be the primary child care provider want to get back into their careers and continue to work. When they look at the cost of child care they say it is simply impossible. To ensure that families across this country can have affordable child care is literally a transformational thing in the lives of so many. We believe this is so important.

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Bill C-35 represents a long-standing commitment of the New Democrats to see national child care introduced. That is why we included this as a requirement in our agreement. This is a specific element we forced the Liberals to include in our confidence and supply agreement to legislate it and make it permanent so we do not rest on the whim of a one-time negotiation, but that we forever in this country have child care that is available and affordable for families. That is exactly what New Democrats do. We commit to fighting for people. We fight for people, we never back down, and we continue to fight until we win, and we deliver for Canadians. This is an example of New Democrats delivering. We promised to deliver permanent child care. We delivered it using our power in this minority government and forcing the Liberals to include this in our confidence and supply agreement.

I want to also acknowledge my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, for all of the hard work she did on this file. It took a lot of work. She has been a strong advocate for child care generally and she played a crucial role in the shaping of this bill.

One thing that is really emphasized in the bill is that it not only provides an opportunity for investing federal dollars into child care but to also build the type of child care we want for the future. The choice is, like many choices when it comes to providing services for people, whether we allow a for-profit system to continue to grow or we make it clear through legislation that New Democrats believe this is our opportunity to build up the public and not-for-profit sector. That is exactly what this legislation does. It prioritizes public and not-for-profit child care, which builds child care that is of the highest quality, where every dollar goes toward the care of our children, and does not provide an opportunity for rich corporations to make more money.

● (2045)

[Translation]

The NDP fought hard to have public, not-for-profit child care prioritized in this bill. We know that this approach means affordable, high-quality child care that is accessible to families who need it, not child care that puts profits first to the detriment of parents and children. This means better salaries and better working conditions for child care workers, who play an essential role in our children's development.

[English]

I also want to make a clear contrast here. While we used our power to force the government to legislate child care to ensure that it will be there moving forward, we have seen the Conservatives oppose this bill every step of the way and say they want to scrap it. As the member from the Bloc mentioned, in Quebec there was a time when there were people like the Conservatives who said we needed to get rid of child care, but it is so clearly beneficial to families that no one in Quebec would dare oppose it. I dare the Conservatives, once millions of families are benefiting from affordable child care, once people in their constituencies are benefiting from it, to try to remove this bill and try to fight against child care.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha is rising on a point of order.

● (2050)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I am not sure why the member is telling the House that Conservatives are not supporting this bill. That is not true.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is not a point of order. The hon. member may ask a question in questions and comments and refer to it then.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party made it very clear that he would scrap this bill and that he is opposed to it. New Democrats are very clear on our position: We are here for people. We are not here to protect the profits of billionaires. We want to ensure that families are able to get access to affordable child care, and that is what we are delivering here.

[Translation]

The NDP worked with experts in the sector to strengthen this bill during committee stage. We presented constructive proposals to improve the provisions in the bill on reporting and accountability. We also fought to get a commitment on decent working conditions for child care workers, who deserve to be treated with respect. I am proud to say that our amendments were agreed to and they strengthened the bill considerably.

[English]

I am proud to say that one of the things New Democrats always bring to the table is a focus on workers. We know that to ensure that the highest quality of care is delivered for children, we need to make sure the workers are respected and have good salaries and good working conditions, and that is something that we are really proud we were able to deliver in this bill.

Every parent in our country deserves access to high-quality, affordable, accessible child care. That is what we are focused on and that is what we are committed to delivering. This bill would enshrine that vision in law. It would commit that the federal government will continue to deliver long-term funding to provinces and indigenous people. It is a victory for parents, and it is a victory for workers and for all the advocates who have fought for years to see national child care established. It is a step toward gender equality and toward a solid economic recovery plan that ensures that more people can participate in the labour force.

Government Orders

We have come a long way and we are proud of that. There is still a lot more work to do, but we will continue to fight for better wages, better benefits and a workforce strategy for child care. We will continue to fight to make sure that these investments go toward building up a public, not-for-profit sector. We can build a child care program across this country that Canadians will be proud of. It will be a testament of the commitment we have to take care of one another. That is the vision New Democrats have. We are stronger and better off when we look out for one another, and that is the vision of this child care legislation.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the leader of the New Democratic Party and the entire NDP caucus for their collaboration and for their support of Bill C-35. This is something that all parliamentarians can be extraordinarily proud of. It is historic and it will transform this country.

We have heard the Conservative leader of the official opposition call the support that the federal government is providing to families through child care a slush fund. Tonight the Conservatives said this is just slogans, meaningless and a false promise, although, as I mentioned, thousands of Canadian families are directly benefiting from this program already.

I am wondering, first, what the leader of the NDP thinks about those comments and, second, how he thinks Canadian families take those comments when they are seeing thousands of dollars returned to their pockets every year.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, we are already seeing some of the benefits. I have already spoken to families that are seeing that child care that was once \$30-plus a day will be \$12 a day come January. We are already seeing that families are looking forward to the benefit of this legislation. It is going to lower their costs. Some families could never have afforded child care before, and that meant that some close friends of mine said they were never going to go back to work until their kids were old enough, because they just could not afford child care.

This law is going to literally transform so many lives. We have already heard from people, and the fact that the Conservatives are attacking this bill shows they are not committed to ensuring people are able to get back to work and they are not committed to families being able to have access to affordable child care. This shows the Conservatives' values, and their values are not in line with Canadian values and are not in line with the thousands of families that need access to child care. This shows how out of touch they really are.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find this really interesting, because as I said in my speech, the NDP often advocates for the most vulnerable, which is wonderful, but we have on record Ms. Maggie Moser, who has said in committee that:

The implementation provides undue benefits to higher-income families, who are sailing their yachts on the tides of the program, while those who need it most are left drowning.

Lower-income families were excluded from obtaining access to the CWELCC child care spots. Families who could already afford the fees of their centre were the ones who benefited from the rebates and discounts, while the rest were left behind on a long wait-list.

How does the member reconcile that?

• (2055)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I think it is fair to point out that the program needs to ensure that we are responding to the needs of those who are most vulnerable, and that is something we need to work on. If there are problems with the implementation, those are things we can work on, but we made the commitment to ensuring that families have access to affordable child care. We have a relationship with provinces to make investments to lower the cost of child care and to ensure that when we make those investments, they go toward public and not-for-profit child care spaces. That is the type of work that is needed to ensure that lower-income families are able to access this program.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the leader of the NDP for his inspiring speech. It is true that, in Quebec, early childhood centres and public child care has been accessible for 25 years. This program should help fathers as much as mothers, but because of the inequity in family-related and domestic tasks, this kind of program is more advantageous to mothers.

Economist Pierre Fortin even estimated that, in the first years of the program in Quebec, 70,000 women were able to return to the labour market thanks to these accessible, public and universal child care centres. According to the NDP leader, what are the benefits for families in Ontario, British Columbia and just about everywhere else in Canada?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, this will allow the rest of Canada to enjoy what Quebec already has. It is wonderful, and something that we want to share. It is one of the areas where Quebec has been a trailblazer. Lessons can be learned from the way that Quebec implemented this program, which has had an enormous impact on peoples' lives.

My colleague said that it should help fathers too, but that mothers will benefit disproportionately in light of historical inequities. I am glad he raised this positive point. For the time being, we need this program. It will help a lot of families and a lot of mothers. I am proud that we forced the government to introduce this bill. We are going to pass it.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to speak in the House in support of a historic piece of legislation, Bill C-35.

Government Orders

I want to begin by acknowledging the hard work of my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, who has worked tirelessly on this bill and who has worked alongside our team to push the Liberals to create a stronger version of this bill on behalf of children, families, Canadian women and all of us.

For me, child care hits close to home. As many of us know, and as my constituents certainly know, I am the proud mother of five-year-old twins. I, like many mothers in Canada, faced real challenges when it came to accessing child care after I had my kids.

I was on a waiting list for child care in Ottawa for over two years, and then, of course, as soon as COVID hit and, knowing that our child care needs had entirely shifted to my constituency here in Manitoba, I was again on a waiting list, and of course, like all families, I faced the insecurities and disruptions caused by the pandemic.

Many who may have tuned into our online sittings throughout that time would have seen one or even both of my children popping up on Zoom during working hours, because that is what it was like to work from home with kids at home without access to child care.

While I treasure the time with my kids, as many mothers know, juggling all of that without access to child care when we want it and when we need it can be a real nightmare.

The reality is that the lack of access to child care in Canada has absolutely held women back and held families back. This legislation is an important step in standing up for women in our country, for families and for a better future for all of our children.

As I begin this speech, I want to say that this victory would not have happened without the decades of activism, of work that has been done by women across our country.

I want to acknowledge the groundbreaking work of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, with leaders like Judy Rebick. I want to acknowledge the many activists involved in the national action committee throughout the country, including people like my mother, Hariklia Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton, who has certainly shaped who I am and who was part of an organization that made it very clear that equality for women and justice for women means child care.

I also want to acknowledge the many women in the labour movement who have tirelessly fought for decades for access to universal, affordable not-for-profit child care. They include leaders like Barb Byers, Vicky Smallman and Bea Bruske, the current CLC president, and her team.

I want to acknowledge women across the country who have made it their aim to speak and fight for child care. In B.C., they are people like Sharon Gregson. Many women here in Manitoba have been part of this fight. Martha Friendly and many more have fought for child care for decades. They and many others are the reason we are standing here today.

I also want to acknowledge a former colleague who is in the news a fair bit right now and who I think many of us hope will soon be the mayor of Toronto, former New Democrat MP Olivia Chow, who, when she was in Parliament, fought tirelessly for child care. She was the first to propose an early learning and child care pro-

gram for Canadians. Her leadership created the framework for a universal, high-quality, affordable and not-for-profit national child care program.

New Democrats have long called for universal early learning and child care in this country, and it has been a long road to get the other parties on board. I am thinking of long negotiations just to include this in the supply and confidence agreement with the Liberals. Our demands that this be implemented by the end of the year are the reason we are here, and I am proud that due to NDP pressures, we will see this bill adopted before the end of 2023.

Let us look at the figures. Roughly half of Canadian children under six years old do not have access to either licensed or even unlicensed child care. This impacts primarily women, delaying their capacity to return to work at a time of their choosing. Of the women in families that do not have access to child care, 42% end up postponing their return to work.

● (2100)

This is unacceptable. Our current piecemeal system leaves far too many women without the choice to decide for themselves, ourselves, when we can go back to work. Those lost years mean less income for women and fewer opportunities for promotions and furthering careers. It means being punished for starting families.

Every day that we do not have an early learning and child care program in Canada is a day when Canada shows the extent to which it devalues women and how little it wants us to succeed. Let us be clear. The provinces know this. Everyone in the House knows this. We have had commission after commission and report after report. Over half a century ago, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women identified publicly funded universal child care as one of 167 recommendations. For over 30 years, we have heard Liberal promises around child care. It was just around the corner, red book after red book and often heard about during the election, only to have the Liberals complain how hard it was to enact when they got into government.

Far too many women are waiting for far too many men, and some women, to figure out how to treat us with basic dignity and respect. Whether it is our earning power's resembling that of our male counterparts, our capacity to live safely and without fear of violence, equitable abortion access in communities in rural and northern parts of our country, or access to child care, women in Canada are tired of having to prove their basic humanity.

This bill is important, and no one should diminish that. Every parent across Canada deserves access to affordable, accessible, high-quality child care. This bill would enshrine this vision in law and would commit the federal government to long-term funding for provinces and indigenous communities. This bill sets out the vision for a national early learning and child care system and the principles guiding federal investment in that system.

Speaking of funding, we need to be clear. There needs to be long-term, sustainable core funding directed at not-for-profit, accessible and universal child care programs. We need to make sure that ECE workers, who are incredible individuals and amongst the most patient people I know, make a living wage and beyond for the work they do. We need to make sure there is investment in infrastructure. I am thinking of indigenous communities here in our region, with some of the youngest populations in our country, that do not have access to adequate day care spaces. We need to make sure the federal government works with first nations, with Inuit communities and with indigenous communities across the country to make sure adequate child care centres are being built.

It is important to acknowledge that this bill would establish a national advisory council on early learning and child care and set out reporting requirements on the progress being made regarding national child care and the federal investments being made in the system.

Finally, it is meant to contribute toward the realization of the right to child care services, which is recognized in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This bill acknowledges Canada's international obligations under the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, as well as that a national child care system must respect the rights of indigenous peoples as affirmed by the Constitution Act of 1982.

Today's work in Parliament and the passing of Bill C-35 is nothing short of historic, but we need to make sure that subsequent governments live up to their obligations in this bill and ensure that there is adequate funding to invest in our most prized resource: our children and our future.

I end by thanking those who have come before us: the feminists, the women, the many people who fought for this day to be a reality and who will continue to fight to make sure that children, women, all of us, get the chance and the support that we all deserve.

• (2105)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I had our babies around the same time, so I experienced a lot of the same challenges she did, although I had just one, whereas she had two at the same time. I commend her for that.

I really want to thank her for her support of this bill, and I really want to thank her for talking about all the advocates who have come before us, because, really, we stand on their shoulders, and this moment is the result of their hard work. I could not be more appreciative of those advocates who have fought for literally decades to get us to where we are today.

Government Orders

I also want to thank her for speaking accurately about the bill. Unfortunately, when the Conservatives were speaking, they said that there was no reporting requirement. However, as my colleague just mentioned, the bill actually already outlines annual reporting requirements by the government to Parliament, and I am grateful for that.

I am just wondering if she could elaborate on how this is impacting families in her community already and what difference this is going to make for families in Manitoba and across the country.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge the minister's work on this critical piece of legislation. I know it has been very important for us to work with the minister and make sure the government lives up to the vision that, as the minister pointed out, so many advocates have fought for for years.

We are, absolutely, already seeing positive impacts when it comes to investment in child care. In fact, just a couple of months ago, my neighbour across the street, also the mother of twins, ran over to tell me that her family was one of the ones that were going to be able to get reduced child care fees as a result of our actions in Parliament. I was so proud that this was already making a difference here in Manitoba, in the north, where our child care needs are significant. We are known as being in a child care desert here, given the demands of our communities.

I also want to acknowledge that much work needs to be done when it comes to making sure there is adequate child care in indigenous communities, some of the youngest communities in the country, with a real lack of infrastructure. I am looking forward—

• (2110)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give another member the opportunity to ask a question.

The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I did not know she had twins. That is a great fact. Sometimes when we are sitting around the House late at night, we learn great facts about our colleagues, and twins are definitely a blessing.

I want to talk about what we did in committee when we were studying this bill. I brought this forward to our leader, and he agreed with me. Conservatives brought forth an amendment to ensure that lower-income families were prioritized and that Bay Street lawyers were not getting priority. It was voted down.

What are her thoughts on that?

Government Orders

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, if the member had been here during the first two years of my twins' life, she would have seen them in the House as well, prior to Zoom.

For us, in the NDP, what is really important is universal access and that we make sure all families have access to affordable child care no matter where they live. We obviously need to have special recognition of the barriers facing low-income families and women who are facing economic hardship. Today's legislation is an important step in that direction.

We need to make sure there is adequate funding, which also involves making sure ECE workers, many of them also mothers who need child care, have a living wage, and we need to make sure we are making the necessary investments in the program.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to touch on the issue of fair wages and working conditions being essential. As we know, part of the challenge we face with child care is the inability to attract and retain child care workers, early childhood education workers, in the sector.

What do we need to do, as government, to support early childhood education workers getting into the sector, and how do we retain them?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, clearly, we need to work very closely with early childhood education workers and the sector to make sure fair wages are prioritized. We need to ensure there is dedicated funding for that and that there is oversight of this very important fact. We also need to invest in ECE education and make sure we are attracting and retaining the best. For the people who are already doing this work, we need to make sure we are continuing to invest in—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what a pleasure it is to rise and talk about substantive legislation that would have a profound impact, not only for today but also for future generations.

I think we would have to go back quite a way to find a government that has been so progressive in providing advancements in a wide spectrum of areas to support Canadians. I often hear, whether from the Prime Minister or one of my colleagues, that the issue for us is that we want to see an economy that actually works for all Canadians. We often talk about Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be part of it, and how we could develop policies and initiatives, and take the budgetary measures to advance that. That is what Canadians expect.

Through the last number of years, we have heard the Conservatives focusing on other things, outside of what is important to Canadians. Today is a good example. We see a government that is listening to what Canadians are saying and delivering on that in a very tangible way. For example, an hour or so ago, we were talking about Bill C-22. It is historic legislation. For the very first time, we are saying that Canadians with disabilities need to have support that

would ensure that there would be fewer people with disabilities living in poverty. This would be as a direct result of Bill C-22, a wonderful, progressive piece of legislation.

Now, we are talking about Bill C-35. In many ways, Bill C-35 would have such a positive impact, no matter where, what region, in Canada one looks at. Getting these agreements is not necessarily an easy task. The current minister has reached out and contacted provincial and territorial stakeholders, not to mention, as she made reference to in response to a question, numerous advocates. In a very humble but accurate way, the minister acknowledged the input of those advocates who have been working, trying for years to put in place what Bill C-35 would do.

In some of those years, we have experienced a great deal of frustration. I have talked about the Conservative hidden agenda. Let me tell the House why there is a Conservative hidden agenda and why Bill C-35 is so critically important. Members across the way might recall the Stephen Harper days.

I would not say “hear, hear” to that.

With respect to child care, the first action former prime minister Harper took was to get rid of child care agreements, 15 years or so ago.

I want members to imagine, if they will, what would have happened had Stephen Harper and the Conservative government at the time recognized the real value of what Paul Martin, Ken Dryden and the Liberal government had put into place. It was a substantial, extensive program. I know that Ken Dryden, in particular, put so much effort into it in terms of working with some of the advocates the current minister has no doubt had to deal with. That plan was put into place, approved and signed off, and provinces were onside. Then the Conservative government, led by Stephen Harper, cancelled it outright, on day one. What was the cost of that policy decision?

● (2115)

A couple of years ago, after we made many other initiatives that have been really important to Canadians, we took the bold step to bring this thing back in a very real and tangible way. Once again, we have a national minister recognizing that there is a role for the federal government to ensure that we have child care from coast to coast.

All one really needs to do is to take a look at what is happening in the province of Quebec. Quebec has had this model for many years, and we see the benefits to Quebec society as a direct result in terms of things that have been achieved, whether it is women engaging in the workforce far more than in any other jurisdiction, from what I understand, in North America, to providing an improved, quality standard of child care to ensuring that there are more equal opportunities, not to mention how the economy benefited by it.

We understood this many years ago, and now we are forwarding it. However, it is because of the goodwill and support from Canadians from coast to coast to coast that we were able to work it out with the many different stakeholders, in particular, the provinces and territories. I believe Ontario was the last one to sign on board back in March 2022. By Doug Ford's signature, we had a true, national, coast to coast, child care program, and that is something we should all be very proud of.

As a Liberal caucus and as a team, we understood the benefits of the program, and it is an issue we promoted. In fact, as my colleagues will recall, we only need to take a look at the last federal election. We had 337, 338 candidates going door to door talking about the importance of child care, and that if we were re-elected into government, we would materialize a child care program.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, said that they would tear it up, that they did not believe in what we were doing. So, when a Conservative member stands up and says “Well, we're voting for the legislation”, I encourage members to read some of the speeches that were given by Conservatives. Look at what they did on the first run. This is why we need the legislation. We do not want a potential Conservative cabinet 15 years from now making the decision to get rid of the program. We want this program to be there for future generations, because by making that sort of commitment, we know that society here in Canada will benefit greatly.

We cannot trust the Conservative Party, quite frankly. It has demonstrated that time and time again when its members talk about progressive policies for the betterment of Canadians, and I do not say that lightly. I actually sat in the chamber and listened to many of the Conservative MPs speak on this legislation, and I could not tell how they were going to vote. I think someone put their finger up in the air and felt the political wind and thought, “Oh, jeez, it might be tough for us to vote against this, so let's support it.”

Some might use the word “delusional”, but I would suggest, after 30 years of being in Parliament and watching the Conservatives at play, that it is more of a reality issue. I would suggest to members that the Conservatives actually recognize the true value of this program. They should be bold and go against their own leadership if need be and make some of the statements that are really important in recognizing the value of this program. They will say that, yes, they want to give more child care dollars to a certain degree, but they are not talking about the same sort of child care program that we are talking about.

● (2120)

What does this program do? It provides \$10-a-day day care, which is life-changing. It is going to enable so many people the opportunity to afford, for the first time, child care services and the educational program that goes along with it.

I was really encouraged, and I think it was back in September, when the Prime Minister came to Winnipeg North and we went to Stanley Knowles School and visited the child care facility. We could see relief in the faces of the individuals who are recipients of what we are talking about today. It was relief, joy or just appreciation that there is finally a government trying to do the things that are important to citizens.

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Winnipeg North is not the only riding the Prime Minister has visited. As he has gone through the country, he has attended town halls in other constituencies and has spoken to parents and been there with the children. I always enjoy the playful attitude the Prime Minister has toward the children of Canada because it is so genuine.

We have a Prime Minister who is committed not only to providing \$10-a-day day care but who understands the needs of our young people. He is there to talk, answer questions and listen. As a result, whether it is him, the Minister of Families or my caucus colleagues, they take a look at the issues that come up in our constituencies and bring those issues to Ottawa so we can develop the budgets and the legislation necessary and that is going to make a difference in the lives of Canadians.

What are the issues today we often hear about? Inflation has to be one of them. I feel a great deal of empathy and sympathy for what Canadians need to overcome as a direct result of inflation, even though Canada is doing quite well on inflation compared to the U.S. and many of the European countries, our allied countries, and so many others. This is not to mention other economic indicators. It does not take away from the fact that as a government we still need to do what we can to help Canadians at a time of need.

With this program, we are talking about hundreds if not thousands of dollars every year that are going to be left in the pockets and purses of Canadians from coast to coast to coast as a direct result. That is action. That is going to make a difference in a very real and tangible way.

On other actions to support our children, remember the dental program. The Conservatives actually voted against this particular program. As we implemented the dental program, the first thing on the agenda was children under the age of 12. We do not want to recognize, by their smile, a child who is not able to get the dental work they require. Far too often children are going to hospitals to get dental work because their mom, dad or guardian do not have the financial resources, for some reason or another, to bring that child to a dentist.

Again, through this program, we are seeing literally dollars going into the pockets of families to assist children in being able to get the type of dental services that are necessary.

Government Orders

● (2125)

I started off by talking about national programs. I talked about the historic program of disabilities. Then I talked about children. Now I am making reference to dental work. I would challenge any member of this House to demonstrate any government before this government that has developed and put into place programs to support Canadians. It has been a wide spectrum of programs and I want to spend just a bit of time to emphasize that. It clearly shows why Bill C-35 is a part of a larger plan that is very comprehensive and shows Canadians that, whether it is a legislative measure or a budgetary measure, this is a government that has the backs of Canadians in a very real and tangible way. We have a government that has now negotiated, for example, an incredible \$200-billion plan to ensure that future generations of Canadians are going to have a health care system that is based on the Canada Health Act.

We have a government that, within the first couple of years, understood the importance of retirement and worked with all the provinces, as it has done with the three programs I have just mentioned, and had CPP addressed, which is something that Stephen Harper completely ignored and said that he would not do. Before he was the leader of the Conservative Party, he advocated getting rid of the CPP. We as a government worked with the different provinces and stakeholders, including small business and labour groups and were able to get the agreement on CPP.

I say this because, like Bill C-35, these are initiatives that really make a difference in the lives of Canadians. That is why I am encouraging members opposite to change their attitudes toward the way in which government spends its money. Let me give a specific example by using Bill C-35.

The Conservatives have this mindset: If they spend a dollar, it is a bad thing if it is government dollars. It is cut, cut, cut. One day, I even had one of the members suggest that we could always cut money from military defence. I can say that when the government invests in programs, more often than not we get a pretty decent return. For example, yes, the child care program is going to cost a lot of money; there is no doubt about it. However, if we recognize the value of that investment and start acknowledging some of the benefits, we quickly find out that it is not costing as much as one might think.

For example, specifically as a direct result of Bill C-35 and the budgetary measures by this government, there is no doubt that we will see an increase in the workforce. We are going to see more, in particular, women participating in the economy. As a direct result of that, when more women are participating in the economy, more taxes are generated. When members say that there is a cost for child care, there is a cost benefit that also needs to be factored in. That is not to mention the other benefits that I have already cited: to the community, to the family unit and to the child receiving that quality child care.

In conclusion, I would encourage members to realize the benefits of not only saying they are voting for this particular legislation, but I am going to be looking to see the Facebook and social media commentaries coming from the Conservative Party, saying how wonderful this program is, and be—

● (2130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member's time is up. Perhaps he will be able to finish up during questions and comments.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, at committee, and even in the House, we have heard the minister and the parliamentary secretary bragging about the pillars of this legislation: equality, affordability, availability, accessibility and inclusiveness. I think we would all agree in the House that those are very important measures that should be taken into consideration, especially when this is a piece of legislation that is supposed to include all children in the country.

What is very interesting is that at committee the parliamentary secretary intended to remove two of those pillars from one of the clauses in the bill. They were affordability and accessibility. Would the member not agree that it would be absurd to remove accessibility and affordability when we have a lack of spaces and the majority of children in this country are on wait-lists?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the legislation we have before us this evening would put in some fundamental pillars that would make a difference in the lives of Canadians. Even for Canadians who do not have children, there is going to be an impact on society as a whole, and that includes the issues of affordability, accessibility and so on. We know that, and we recognize that.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is why we brought forward the legislation, and we look forward to being able to see the reality, as we witnessed in the province of Quebec, which clearly demonstrated the benefits of a \$10-a-day day care.

● (2135)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that she had an opportunity to ask a question. I am not sure if she was thinking out loud or if she was heckling the member, but I would say, if she is thinking out loud, she may want to jot things down for the next question and comment period.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is nice that the member for Winnipeg North mentioned a variety of programs, including dental care.

Did anyone know that in two days it is going to be the two-year anniversary of when the Liberal Party voted against Jack Harris's Motion No. 62, which was first seeking to bring in dental care? I am glad that as New Democrats we have forced Liberals to see the value in such programs, and I am similarly glad that, through our confidence and supply agreement, a bill such as Bill C-35 is a part of that agreement. I would agree with the member that we are delivering programs that are going to be hugely important for Canadians.

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I would like to know from the hon. member, when it comes to a bill such as Bill C-35, could he talk about why it is so important to put in a legislative commitment so that we do not suffer from any possible future policy lurch? This bill would really guarantee that the funding would be there for future families and their needs.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I will provide a quick comment on the dental issue. I appreciate all the types of support and encouragement, whether it is received from New Democrats or many of my colleagues. I know I, for one, have been a very strong advocate for the pharmacare program. There is still work for us to focus attention on, such as dental and pharmacare. Let us not just sit back because we have already accomplished a great deal. We have many more things we would like to explore and work on, to see if we can improve them in some ways, as much as possible, and this is whether it is New Democrats or Liberals.

I have a friend who says that a New Democrat is a Liberal in a hurry. I would suggest that it is good if we can work together for the betterment of Canadians. I am game to do that, and I will try to answer the member's question in the next question.

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the beginning, the member took us back in time when he talked about Ken Dryden and the work he did to create universal child care back then. When he was doing that, I worked for a little organization called the YMCA, and we had a huge child care program under our watch. I was very excited about that potential and really disappointed to see it collapse under the Conservatives.

I am wondering if the hon. member could maybe contemplate what it would have been like today if we had been able to get that universal child care in place.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me attempt to answer both questions with the same answer.

The member is right that Ken Dryden had a wonderful program. It was universal and all the provinces and territories were on side. That is why I say to please not trust the Conservatives on this because the first thing Stephen Harper did was he got rid of the program. It is unfortunate we were in a minority government at that time, but I will not comment on what happened with the NDP or the Bloc.

At the end of the day, this legislation would prevent a potential Conservative government 15 years from now from being able to decide in cabinet, without a thorough debate, to get rid of a fantastic program. Had it been put in place back when Ken Dryden brought it forward, we would be so much further ahead. One only needs to look at the province of Quebec and the impact it has had on its workforce. In particular, there are more women engaged, as a percentage, in the workforce.

• (2140)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, the YMCA was brought up. I have a letter here from Christine Pasmore, a day care provider, who talks about two YMCA after-school care locations that will be closing because of this bill. I thought I would tie that in.

The hon. member brought up trust. Tonight we have breaking news that the Prime Minister's Office also knew about Paul Bernardo's transfer three months ago and did not tell the families.

Housing prices have doubled. We have a cost of living crisis, and public safety is eroding rapidly, so how could we trust the Liberals with our children and child care?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is because, when it comes to child care, there is only one party that has been in government that has demonstrated a genuine interest and is taking the initiative to put child care in place. There is also only one political party in this chamber that tore apart a national child care program.

When the member talks about trust, I would suggest no one can trust the Conservative Party. If anything, Stephen Harper is more of a centrist compared to the current leader of the Conservative Party because the current leader of the Conservative Party is so far right wing that everything could potentially be on the table. No doubt, it has to be the genesis as to why this legislation is so important and why I am hoping members of the Conservative Party will talk about it glowingly on Facebook. After all, they say they are going to be voting in favour of it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am very strongly in favour of Bill C-35, but I think we had better not ignore the concerns that we are "Not Done Yet". That is the title of a report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, co-authored by economist David Macdonald and Canada's leading champion for early childhood education Martha Friendly.

We have child care deserts in this country. We have areas where children are not yet in kindergarten and parents have no hope of getting their child into a child care space because there is only 20% coverage for children in those communities. The worst in Canada is Saskatoon, then Kitchener, then Regina, then Vancouver. There is 24% space availability for the 100% of children who need a place.

Is the government open to reading this report, accepting its recommendations and working hard to provide the incentives and decent wages for early childhood educators to create the spaces for the children whose parents are going to benefit from \$10-a-day child care?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the Green Party is supporting the legislation, which is a good thing, but the leader of the Green Party needs to recognize that there is jurisdictional responsibility. We have a national government that says it wants to ensure there is a child care program that is affordable and accessible across Canada, from coast to coast to coast, but we need to work with the provinces. The provinces, in many ways, are the ones who have to play the lead at the level the member is referencing.

We can all individually encourage our respective provincial governments to go even further in supporting the children of our country.

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Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to note I will be splitting my time this evening with the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

We know, and there is no doubt, that child care is an important conversation to be had. We know it is a conversation that parents are also having on a regular basis across this country. Child care needs can look different, not just from one region to another, but also from family to family.

Public policy and the development of a national program should respect and take into consideration those differences. It has been very disappointing that, throughout the deliberations of this bill, whether in the chamber or in committee, the approach of the NDP-Liberal coalition has been narrow and exclusionary. The Liberal government has sought to divide and disparage child care solutions outside of their own prescribed form. This is even more disappointing given many reports would suggest in some regions, such as Saskatchewan, most families do not have access to child care.

The demand for child care remains far greater than the available spaces. Child care providers, in all streams right across the country, have long wait-lists. Access remains a main concern when it comes to child care, but it is not solved by the existing agreements, nor is it resolved in Bill C-35.

We have heard accusations from members opposite that Conservatives have tried to obstruct this legislation. In reality, Conservatives have been working to elevate the voices of parents who are raising serious concerns with the government's child care program.

We have articulated those concerns from child care providers. It is completely disingenuous to suggest that this, in any way, is hindering the delivery of the Liberals' program. The facts are that the child care agreements are already signed with the provinces, and the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care is already formed.

If anything, this should be an opportune time to examine the delivery of the program so that we can understand its shortcomings and take stock of its limitations and its potential reach. However, that was never the goal for the Liberal government. It put forward this legislation to pat itself on the back.

However, the bill, like many of the policies put forward by the Liberal-NDP government, creates winners and losers. The Liberals' self praise is an insult. It is an insult to the moms and the dads who are left out. They are left out in the cold and find themselves on the outside looking in with no spaces for their children in child care facilities.

Let me highlight some of the testimony and voices the government seems very eager to ignore. This includes voices of child care providers who find themselves excluded from the program and the Liberal government's vision for child care in Canada.

Amélie Lainé, representing indigenous friendship centres in Quebec, told the HUMA committee, "funding is only administered through indigenous political institutions, and it does not give service organizations like the indigenous friendship centres in Canada access to funds to develop early childhood and family services."

Krystal Churcher from the Association of Alberta Childcare Entrepreneurs told the committee, "Bill C-35 does not sufficiently recognize that Canada's current child care system still very much depends upon thousands of private operators despite directional preference for the non-profit business model."

● (2145)

With wait-lists surging across the country, it is only logical that we use every tool at our disposal to meet the needs across this country from coast to coast to coast, and that we not purposely shut out child care providers who are providing quality care currently. In fact, in the study of this bill, the HUMA committee heard about how the exclusionary structure of the program could actually be to the detriment of the quality of care. We heard about a parent who felt that she now had to choose between the quality of care for her daughter and more affordable costs. It is a decision that she was faced with because her preferred care provider falls outside of the current agreements and would not be captured by the vision laid out in this bill.

The rollout of this program has not even provided much of a choice for many families and more often even less of a choice for lower-income families. We heard in committee that more often lower-income families that cannot afford child care costs are wait-listed because they do not have children enrolled. Excluding child care providers is in the exact opposite spirit of achieving accessible, affordable, inclusive and high-quality child care for all children.

To really tackle child care in Canada, our approach should be comprehensive. The passage of my private member's bill, Bill C-318, would support that goal. Allowing adoptive and intended parents equal access to EI leave to care for their new child would give those parents more time to bond with their child and more time to find a child care solution. It could also help to alleviate some pressure on the child care system. I would hope that, if not the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development would herself see the merits of her government's keeping its promise to these parents and offering the royal recommendation that is needed for Bill C-318.

It is also clear that any hopes of making real progress toward accessible, affordable, inclusive and high-quality child care for all will require a labour force strategy. There is a clear crisis in the childhood educator workforce. There needs to be a plan to recruit and retain labour. The success of a national child care program will depend on this. We cannot flick a switch to create more spaces if there is not a workforce to handle it.

That is why it is particularly frustrating that the NDP-Liberal coalition rejected amendments put forward by Conservatives in committee to address these particular shortcomings. They rejected an amendment that would have explicitly directed the national advisory council to support the recruitment but also the retention of a well-qualified workforce. It would have given the council the mandate to track availability, wait-lists and the progress made in improving access, which is one of the pillars of this bill. It is not clear why the NDP-Liberal coalition would oppose this being a core function of the council. Similarly, the NDP-Liberal coalition rejected an amendment that would have explicitly required the minister to report annually on a national labour strategy.

The rejection of these amendments tells parents and those in the child care sector that the Liberals are not taking this workforce crisis seriously. It certainly does not give them confidence that the recruitment, education and retention of early childhood educators are a priority for them. Just as the recommitment to their exclusionary vision for child care does not give parents on wait-lists hope that universal access is within reach, the rejection of these amendments to include all types of child care providers in the program and to have a more fulsome representation at the table ensures that there will continue to be winners and losers. The reality is that there will be parents who receive no support and there will be qualified and quality child care providers who will continue to be vilified because of their business model by the NDP-Liberal government.

• (2150)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, if someone were to come into this House, sit in the gallery and listen to the speeches on this debate, they would leave with no conclusion other than the fact that Conservatives are against this bill. However, when it comes time to vote for it, they will vote in favour of it, all of them. I personally think that is because they have done the political calculation on it and know there is absolutely no way they can afford to vote against it because it would be so detrimental to them politically.

Can the member explain to the House why Conservative after Conservative gets up to speak, including the member, to talk negatively about the bill but then they will ultimately vote in favour of it?

• (2155)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for respecting me on this side.

This whole process has been very frustrating for me. I am the mother of four children. I have a 10-year-old, a seven-year-old, a three-year-old and a one-year-old. I have had two of those children while elected to office. I know the real struggles of trying to find child care. My husband and I have really had to balance, and we know that it literally takes a village.

It is so frustrating to me that when we have parents and child care providers coming to committee explaining and pouring their heart out about the real struggles that parents are dealing with, we have partisan games.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Then vote against it.

Government Orders

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, honestly, we should just listen to the parents whom this model does not work for. It does not work for them, and it is unfortunate that the Liberals just want to play partisan games instead of actually making it inclusive for everyone.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do not know if the parliamentary secretary was thinking out loud, but he had the opportunity to ask a question. I do not think he wanted to heckle, but if he did, he knows that he should not be doing that.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I respect everyone's views in this place. We all bring stories. I am the father of three daughters. My eldest twins were born in 2012, before I was elected, so my wife and I are also familiar with the struggles of raising children and trying to find care.

The situation the member described is one that has existed for many of my constituents before we had child care agreements, before Bill C-35 even came into being. I do not see how those particular issues could not be helped by the bill. It is trying to enshrine a payment system, a funding system, that is trying to address the very issues that she raised as concerns in her speech and that are affecting constituents right across this country.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, there is a five-year limit with the agreements, so this is not forever. That is one thing to make note of.

Bill C-35 does not create new spaces. Sure, there are parents who already have their kids in a child care centre or use whatever model is accepted by their province and works for them. However, if they are not already in there, too bad, so sad; they are still on a wait-list.

The Conservatives moved a motion at committee to recognize labour, as we need a labour strategy. The NDP voted against it, so I would ask the member why his party voted against the labour force strategy for child care educators.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really admire my colleague from Lloydminster, who sits beside me. I am a father of four. We brought in the universal child care benefit back in the Harper days.

I was listening across the way to the disinformation that we do not care about child care on this side. We absolutely do. We ran on it.

It was obvious from the member's speech that the Conservatives care about child care, but I think for the audience watching out there, can my colleague from Saskatchewan explain why the Conservatives do care about child care?

Government Orders

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, it is funny that the member asked me that question. I got involved in politics because the current Prime Minister's 2015 platform negatively harmed my family in how we wanted to raise our children.

Absolutely the Conservatives care about families. We care about children and we care about parental choice.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is wonderful to have the opportunity to once again speak to this bill.

I think I can sum it up with a question I was asked following the last time we spoke about this bill, at report stage. It was a question that came from a Liberal member. His question was very simple. He asked, "Why do Conservatives hate child care so much?" I was dumbfounded, because I really thought perhaps he missed my speech, although he was sitting in the chamber for it. I thought, "Oh my gosh, somehow there is an entire void here."

I want to continue with all of the great work that my colleague from Battlefords—Lloydminster talked about, because she is on the front lines of this, not only being a member of the HUMA committee, but also being a mother, just like so many other individuals here who have young children and who need care for their children.

Yesterday I was reading the Oxfam report, which looks at care in Canada. I wanted to look at both unpaid care and paid care. One of the biggest things it talked about was that, yes, we have this new child care program and all of the benefits, but the problem is that at the end of the day, we are losing people in this sector. I remember this is exactly what the member for Peterborough—Kawartha talked about. The fact is that we cannot retain people in this sector for a good length of time.

I talked about seeing \$22 an hour in Langley, B.C., just five years ago. That is not keeping people in this sector. Let us be honest. The cost of living is making it so that the people who have chosen to do these jobs, which at one time may have seemed lower income, are not being respected for their great work, and now they cannot afford to do something that they are passionate about and love to do.

What I want to do today is read some articles into the record, because the member for Peterborough—Kawartha said that every single day, we are seeing a brand new article on this from the media. What I did when I was thinking about this speech is I popped "child care in Canada" into a search, and it populated all of these stories. It does not matter what part of the country we are from, whether it is Nunavut, for which I will have a media mention, or other parts of the country. They are all talking about the same things: child care spots and labour. Sometimes the labour issues create the spot issues and vice versa.

When the government came forward with the bill, I recall the minister saying that they wanted to enshrine this in legislation because of the Conservatives. We know it was all about political intentions; it really was not to do with children. It is because of those political intentions that they wanted to enshrine it into law, but they did not take the time to do the work.

A lot of the time when we are playing political games, we do not look at the consequences of our mistakes, so when we try to move amendments in committee, we are too busy trying to play partisan games. Then simple things like a labour force strategy are denied because of the individual who has put it forward. It is really common in the House that if we do not like the individual who sponsors something, we are not going to support it. That is what we see in the House of Commons.

As I indicated, I have a number of articles that I would like to read, because this is exactly what we talked about. These articles were not written by Conservatives. They were written by journalists, people who are going around and reporting on what is happening in Canada. Looking at where some of the articles are coming from, these are not Conservative journalists but people who are looking on the ground and addressing these issues.

The first article I want to bring forward was published on May 8 and written by Natasha O'Neill, a writer with CTV. I will read it into the record:

A new report details a lack of child-care spaces is at a crisis level in Canada and why it has worsened.

The report, published in April 2023 by the non-profit Childcare Resources and Research Unit, shows just one spot in a child-care setting was available for 29 per cent of children who need it.

Holy schnikes, that is just horrific. That is one spot for 29% of children.

"I think one of the things that's driving the shortage of licensed spaces is that child care has been in the news a lot." Morna Ballantyne, who is an advocate, said that. Anyone who has been working on this can talk to her. She has talked about the fact that, yes, there is a huge demand, but what we see is that the demand is not keeping up with what the government has put in place.

● (2200)

Why are the Conservatives supporting this bill? As we said, we are supporting it because it is about child care. However, we have seen this being used as a political wedge each and every time.

That is why all I have ever heard is that Conservatives are voting against this. I am not voting against children. I am voting for families. I am voting for women so that they can go to work, members of the families can go to work and men can go to work. Everybody in that family unit can ensure that their child has a place. Many times, I speak as a women's advocate. I think it is because, at 8:59 a.m., when a person is trying to get off the road to go into work and their child is sick and they need to find that last minute child care, because they are trying to balance getting to work and having that job and keeping their children safe and cared for, who are they going to call? I say thanks to my mom, by the way, for all those times. She is always available for those 8:59 phone call moments.

As I indicated, Ballantyne had said that the crisis is not new. She said, "Particularly getting access to licensed child care [is a problem].... Governments for decades now have essentially relied on individuals, organizations, whether they be for profit or not for profit, to set up child-care centres."

That is the reality of it. I think we have to ask why they do that. That is because we are in Canada. We cannot look at this incredible nation we have from coast to coast and not look at the diversity, the diversity of communities and population.

I spoke to my friend from Saskatoon. To get from one edge of his riding to the other is 20 minutes. I can say that, for some people who are in Toronto, that might be five minutes, maybe walking, definitely not by car. That would be 20.

In some of our ridings, it is eight hours from door to door, to get from one end to the other. To put that into perspective, we can think about what that looks like when it comes to populations in child care and how one can find something that is going to be successful.

That is why families, businesses and many women have come up with business plans and business models, so that they can support their community. It does not have to look like this or that, but they are filling in that gap. That is why we are cautiously supporting this. We know that there are still gaps, and these gaps have to be filled by other things.

I want to turn to another piece, because I found this one to be really interesting. This was written by Mike Crawley on CBC. It was posted on March 14, 2023, and it gives the following subheading: “Average ECE leaves sector after 3 years [indicates the] regulator”. According to this article: “Becoming a registered ECE,” which is an early childhood educator, “requires at least two years of post-secondary education, with training in child development. However, compensation has lagged behind that of other sectors that also require a post-secondary diploma because the work of child care is not valued, according to advocates. ‘We are not babysitters,’ said Maxine Chodorowicz, a registered ECE and supervisor of child care at the West End YMCA in Toronto.”

I worked on a child care board back in the nineties and early 2000s. I think this goes back to the fact that, at one time, we saw people who were ECEs making rates that, at \$15 and \$16, although low, could still pay the bills. Now, we are talking about the costs of mortgages, interest rates and everything else, as well as the cost of living and carbon tax. When we add all these things together, that \$16 an hour may have been okay at one time; now, it is so far from it. That \$22 an hour in Langley, B.C., does not cut it anymore.

After eight years under the government, life has gotten so unfriendly to Canadian families, because the cost of living just continues to explode. It does not matter if we are buying something at the grocery store or anything that we touch. There has been a huge increase in cost because of the Liberal government and its horrific policies, which continue to affect Canadians.

I want to say one last thing; this was also something that I found in the newspaper. It is a headline that says, “Ontario could be short 8,500 ECEs [by 2026]”.

We have a problem here. If we do not have a labour strategy, if we are not going to figure out how we are going to do this together, we are not going to impact the children's lives that the government is trying to impact. We are not going to make it easier for families.

I want to say we can do better. Let us start listening and working together.

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● (2205)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague from across the way and I always have very meaningful conversations when it comes to women's issues, families and children. I always value what she has to add to the discussion, including tonight. However, let us be realistic. The demand for child care spaces existed far before. It was already there. Frankly, tax credits do not build spaces, and they do not build a workforce. The former Conservative government ripped up agreements. That happened previously under the Stephen Harper government from when Minister Dryden did them.

We have to build the system. This legislation is about enshrining those values to make sure that there are federal dollars and a federal commitment to continuing to build that system. Does she not value that?

● (2210)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to say happy 20th birthday to my son, Christian Vecchio. He is out there today. The reason I say this is that his older brother is probably still on that wait-list I put him on in 1994.

That is the concern that we have here. During previous Liberal governments under Chrétien and under Martin, all these different things were promised continually, time and time again. Dakota never got into that child care, and now he is 29 years old. It just continued to exist.

The government has been here for multiple years, eight years, and it is getting worse.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I cannot wait for interpretation to email my colleague for the spelling of “schnikes”.

I appreciated that she talked about the conditions of work for early childhood educators. My mum was an early childhood educator, and my sister-in-law is an early childhood educator. We do not pay early childhood educators nearly enough. It is not only that the cost of living has gone up but also that we did not pay early childhood educators enough 10 years ago, and we still do not.

There is language in the bill, thanks to an NDP amendment, that references the conditions of work as being essential to ensuring the success of this program. Could the member help me understand if there are other ways that this bill could be improved to ensure that early childhood educators are properly compensated for the important role that they play?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate that, because I recall looking at agreements back in the nineties. At the time, the city of St. Thomas was being compared to the city of Woodstock. We were looking at the cost of living and trying to work out what the rates should be.

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When we want to talk about a labour strategy, with all due respect, I know that there was an amendment put in there. I have heard from my colleagues. We have talked about a labour strategy amendment that was denied by the government, the NDP and everybody else.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague touched on something. We were both elected in 2015. There are partisan games played around this place when good ideas are presented. It should not matter whether they come from the Liberals, the NDP, the Conservatives or the Greens if ideas benefit Canadian families. Some of the amendments that we proposed at committee were rejected by the NDP-Liberal coalition.

Should it matter who proposes amendments to make legislation better, if Canadian families benefit?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, to my colleague, it has been wonderful working here with him for almost eight years, with all the things that we have seen. When we talk about partisan games, this is exactly what we see. We have seen good things being brought in by other parties, specifically, the party that I am proud to be a member of, the Conservative Party. Because we are Conservatives, it is bottom line; people come up to me saying I must be a Liberal. No one owns being in one party or another. The Conservative women have great ideas, and we know that we can work collaboratively with everybody so that we can get this going and work for Canadians.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague and friend from York Centre.

It is always a pleasure and privilege to rise in the House and speak on behalf of my constituents in the wonderful riding of Brampton East. I want to thank the hon. members who have spoken before me to this very important bill, Bill C-35, the Canada early learning and child care act. Their messages, stories and questions have proven that Bill C-35 would have lasting beneficial impacts across our country. This is a bill that would improve the lives of Canadians, their children and future generations to come.

I would like to stop and thank my wife, my mother-in-law and my mom for helping to take care of my two daughters so that I can be here today. I am lucky to have that family support, but there are many in my riding who do not have that support and are utilizing our \$10-a-day child care strategy to save money and enrol their children in child care. When I speak to constituents in my riding, I hear stories first-hand, but I also hear about the added stress they have to endure just to find affordable, accessible and quality child care. I can hear the frustration in their voices. I can also hear that they share a common goal, which is being able to provide for their children and give their children the best start in life. This is a straightforward and simple goal that every parent has, but when one's entire paycheck is going towards child care fees, that goal can start to become out of reach. Our government has a plan in place to help parents give their children a better start in life; this is a plan to nurture their minds and help elevate them to their fullest potential.

Let me tell members about my constituents Matthew and Jennifer, both of whom are full-time nurses. They welcomed their first

child, Sebastian, into the world in 2021. When the time came to consider child care options for Sebastian, they quickly learned that their options, like those of many parents, were very limited or beyond their means. Paying for child care meant that Matthew and Jennifer's goal of home ownership would have to be put on hold, but not anymore. With our \$10-a-day child care strategy, families in Brampton East who used to pay upwards of \$1,300 a month per child are now paying roughly \$700 a month. Being able to save families like this one over \$5,000 a year is very important because it helps with the cost of living and helps them to buy groceries or put money toward housing.

Another constituent I spoke with remembers, as a child, seeing one parent in the morning and one at night every day because they worked opposite shifts to be able to save money versus spending it on child care. She mentioned that this would sometimes come up in conversations when she was older, and her parents even said that they would not see each other until the weekends; that was very tough on her upbringing. This constituent told me about the leaps and hurdles her parents had to navigate through, back in the early 2000s, just so she was cared for. The only opportunities she had to participate in organized early learning were through free programs that were offered by the local high school, which facilitated ECEs as co-op students. This is another reason why having access to affordable, high-quality and inclusive child care is vital.

One of the guiding principles of Bill C-35 is that it would enable families to have access to child care. Parents would not have to work opposite shifts to make sure one of them is home, and they would not have to initiate the difficult conversation of considering putting one of their careers on hold because the cost of child care is too high or inaccessible.

As I mentioned before, within its guiding principles, Bill C-35 encapsulates that all Canadians have access to quality, affordable and inclusive child care. This is a lasting commitment built on a collaborative framework approach with provinces and territories across Canada. Within this commitment, the Government of Canada recognizes that first nations, Inuit and Métis children and families are best supported by programs that are culturally appropriate and led by local communities. This recognition extends to our neighbours in Quebec, who have successfully led the way for over two decades, with the development and implementation of their provincial child care plan. Our government will continue to learn from Quebec's system to improve our Canada-wide child care system. Our government is grateful to be able to reference Quebec's example of how to lead a government-funded child care program successfully.

I also want to highlight some of the impacts that Bill C-35 would have on the Canadian economy. While many people, including me, consider Bill C-35 to be smart social policy, it is also policy that makes good economic sense. When we invest one dollar into early learning and child care, the broader economy will see roughly two dollars in return. This could help raise our real GDP by over 1% in the coming years. Some of my hon. colleagues may have already mentioned these numbers, but they are worth repeating.

• (2215)

The \$27-billion investment made through Bill C-35 over a period of five years will help boost our economy, provide real and beneficial growth and help parents, especially women, enter or re-enter the labour force, a sector that we all know is experiencing shortages throughout various occupations and fields within Canada. Empowering women who want to enter the workforce and stay is good social and economic policy that helps eliminate gender inequality. Women, who statistically are more likely to take on the duties as the primary caregivers, will no longer have to choose or bear the burden of choosing between a career and caring for their children. Bill C-35 is empowering women to have the benefit of a choice, without being forced into making one.

As the hon. Minister of Families, Children and Social Development so powerfully put, Canada has the potential to gain an additional 200,000 workers entering into the workforce, should this trend have the same trajectory of involvement that Quebec experienced when it implemented its child care program roughly 25 years ago. Our government is adding additional options and opportunities for parents to make smart financial decisions and not limit their aspirations of career advancement.

When I speak with constituents at the doors, child care has always been a recurring topic that has come up from time to time. Even before parents have welcomed their new baby into the world, they are already researching various child care options to see if centres have space available, or how long the wait-lists are to get in, and calculating costs to figure out if they can afford it. Hon. members in this House have attested to their own experiences when trying to find child care for their little ones and how stressful this process can be.

Constituents in Brampton East are excited to hear about our government's agreements in place with our provincial and territorial partners to increase the number of child care spaces by over 250,000 in the next five years. Constituents are relieved to hear that active steps have been taken toward meeting this target: Roughly over 50,000 spaces are already committed to being built. Significant progress is being made, and the passing of Bill C-35 would mean that none of this progress would be lost or reversed. This legislation is meant to be multi-generational and will continue to operate and improve via the oversight mechanisms put in place to ensure accountability, transparency and sustainability.

Reporting on our government's progress has always been a key factor with Bill C-35, because transparency and accountability are critical components when analyzing the need for improvement and sustainability. The National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care comprises 16 individual experts who offer their invaluable knowledge and expertise within their respective fields.

The importance of having members who reflect the diversity of Canada is a key consideration, because this legislation will help all Canadians, no matter their background or beliefs. Having this third party expert advice creates a forum to help address the challenges that are currently being faced within the early learning and child care sector. We are also held accountable by our partners, and Canadians as a whole, to get this right. The annual reports to the

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Minister of Families, Children and Social Development will help our government enhance its efforts.

Bill C-35 is multi-generational. It is a long-term commitment to Canadians, and it gives families the assurances they need, knowing that their children, grandchildren and future generations will be able to enjoy the same benefits as children today. This is another reason why having the proper oversight and mechanisms in place that provide transparency and accountability is so crucial to Canadians.

When this bill passes, and I have every hope that it will, I can provide constituents and their families the comfort of knowing that this legislation cannot simply be cancelled or taken away. In those same conversations, I can reassure parents that more spaces are being added to help shorten wait-lists. I can also tell them that Bill C-35 will bring a sense of financial security through savings of thousands of dollars a year for their families to help with affordability.

Parents are already seeing the results of a Canada-wide system with significantly reduced fees across provinces and territories. These reductions are in line with our goal of achieving an average of \$10-a-day licensed child care by March 2026.

As I conclude today, this legislation respects the notion that child care is not a luxury, but a necessity. The bill is a necessity that respects provincial and territorial jurisdiction due to its collaborative approach with a shared commitment to strengthening and protecting this Canada-wide system for future generations. I trust that the hon. members of this House will do same to continue to support women, children and families through this legislation.

• (2220)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the point about certainty for the long term.

The Liberal government has run up more debt in its period of office than the country has in its entire history up to that point, and is continuing to fund these and other promised expansions of social spending through deficit spending. The fiscal context actually leaves a lot of Canadians uncertain that any of these kinds of programs would be there in the future, not because of political debates or the positions of any particular individuals but because of the fact that the Liberal government is making promises on the basis of deficit spending, promises that would in fact continue to cost more. This is in a context, by the way, where many Canadians still do not have child care.

I wonder how the member could justify his claim that this is providing multi-generational certainty, when in a substantive sense these programs are not funded?

• (2225)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Madam Speaker, this bill is about certainty. I would ask the member opposite what Conservatives would place in this bill to ensure that there is certainty?

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Roughly two years, that same party was stepping up their campaign pledges to cancel this very program. They stepped up to say that we do not need to be there for families. I remember when Ken Dryden, our member in a previous government, brought up a plan, and the Conservatives were the ones who stepped up and cancelled it.

We need to ensure that families are given that certainty. It would not be fair to future generations should the Conservatives decide to cut this program in the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Obviously, we in the NDP support Bill C-35. It is a good idea. We have been saying for a long time that child care is needed. The strange thing is that the Liberal Party has also been saying that for a long time. The first time they put it in their election platform was in 1993. I was still a student at the Université de Montréal. It took them 30 years, but it is better late than never.

However, I do want to stress one point. While the Conservatives say that it is incredibly expensive, it is an incredible rebate for families who will be able to access day care at an average cost of \$10 a day. This will save them money. When a family is paying \$50 or \$60 a day in child care costs, no tax cut will be able to put as much money into the family income as access to \$10-a-day child care.

I would like to hear my colleague comment on the fact that this is a program that puts money back into the pockets of families.

[English]

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Madam Speaker, I am still working on my French, and hopefully one day I will be able to answer in French.

When we are talking about savings for families, we know things are tough right now. Families need more support, and through our CCB program and through this child care program, we are saving families money. I will give an example. Ajit, who was paying \$1,300 a month is now paying \$700 a month. He is able to take that additional savings and put it towards his mortgage or his grocery costs.

It is very important that we are still there and we are always going to be there for families who need help with affordability right now.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the speech given by my colleague, who works very hard and obviously has command of the issues, including this one.

Could the member elaborate on the points raised relating to the economy? He said that not only is this good social policy, but it makes very good economic sense.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Madam Speaker, I want to thank member, who does hard work in the House, for his very important question.

When we talk about the economic value this could add to Canada, the program would give back to Canadians in many ways.

Women would be able to re-enter the workforce. Our economy would benefit from the added value. Our GDP would go up. We will see that the program pays for itself in terms of economic returns to Canada.

I am in full support of this program. I know a lot of Canadians in my riding are in full support of this program.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise here. The hour is getting later, but nevertheless, we are in the third reading of what is historic legislation, Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

There are child care advocates, families and women who have been waiting for this for over 50 years. We need to pause and really reflect on that, because for over 50 years families, women and child care providers in this country have known what we needed to do to give our children the best start in life. They have known what we needed to do to ensure there was gender equality progressing in this country, where women could enter the workforce when they wanted to, how they wanted to and in the careers they wanted.

I think of Anna Care, who is the director of Blaydon day care in my riding of York Centre. When I went to visit her, she showed me a picture of her demonstrating at Queen's Park in the seventies holding up a sign demanding for this to happen. Here we are today in the third reading of Bill C-35, where we know that for Anna and for families and children across this country this will remain the future. It will be the future for women to continue to support themselves and their families and to set an economy that will just grow and flourish, from our youngest generation to the women who are holding the steering wheel on this today alongside our partners in this chamber.

It could not have happened without the collaborative nature of this work between the federal government and the provinces. Every province and territory in this country signed on to this agreement. The \$30-billion investment we as a federal government made in partnership with provinces and territories and indigenous peoples is making a difference. We know this because we are seeing the fee reductions that are putting money in pockets of families from coast to coast to coast.

The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development shared so many of those amazing stories earlier in the evening. We know what that means to them. It is tangible and impactful on an individual level to each and every family who participates in this program. It is more money to buy groceries, to purchase school supplies and so many other essentials when affordability is an issue right now. We know we are making a difference.

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Many of my colleagues tonight have talked about the good value of this investment, where every dollar we invest in our children and families is \$1.50 to \$2.80 back into the economy. That is good money well spent. We know this. We know it by the expansion of the women's workforce. The data shows it from January of this year.

We know we are on the right path for building a Canada-wide system that takes the planning, care and thoughtfulness of these agreements and enshrines these principles and values, so when the next round of agreements come forward, when we evolve to the next stage of this amazing Canada-wide system, we know, Canadian families know and Canadian children will benefit from knowing no one will be left behind.

The provinces and territories are already showing that collaborative work, and they have announced more than 50,000 new spaces since the first Canada-wide agreement was signed in British Columbia. The work continues. We have a goal, which is 250,000 new regulated early learning and child care spaces, supported by our federal investments, by March 2026.

The Conservatives asked why we are doing this. They said that we could cut cheques to people or give tax credits. Tax credits do not build spaces. Tax credits do not create a workforce. Federal investments, investing in our workforce, and investing children and families is what makes the difference.

The principles in Bill C-35 are creating the progress of that ultimate goal, which is a system that provides children in this country with access to affordable, inclusive, accessible and high quality early learning and child care no matter where they live, today but also for the future. It is for future generations, because this is a generational nation-building project that every family in this country is impacted by.

We are providing our children today, and in the future, in this country with the best possible start in life. This is not just about the big numbers we are talking about such as the \$30 billion or the 250,000 spaces. It is about how we are supporting Canadians on an individual level, family by family, community by community, urban and rural, across this country and the direct benefit they are seeing. We have heard many of those stories tonight.

• (2230)

The real-world differences we are making with the system are impacting the lives of Canadians, particularly when it comes to rural communities and space creation.

For example, Nova Scotia has announced 1,500 spaces since signing its Canada-wide agreement, and more than half of them are in communities outside of Halifax.

In the town of Bridgewater on the South Shore, there are eight new infant spaces that will be made available this summer. Infant spaces are the hardest spaces to come by.

This summer in Hubbards, six new toddlers and preschoolers are being welcomed to the Through the Years Early Learning Centre, which is near the intersection of Lighthouse Road and Highway 3, for those who are from our Nova Scotian community.

In Lunenburg County, there are 16 new family homes with the Family Matters home child care agency, and eight new licensed spaces for infants will be available later this summer in the Lunenburg Day Care Centre.

Step by step, communities are stepping up, provinces are stepping up, and the federal government has stepped up for our children.

These new licensed spaces are making life easier for hard-working families across this country, particularly in our rural communities. Members do not have to take my word for it. They can ask Yvonne Smith, the CEO of the YMCA Southwest Nova Scotia, who said the expansion will “make a real difference for families in this community. There is a significant need for infant care in rural communities across Nova Scotia, including the South Shore.”

These spaces are already making a difference, and with more to come by 2026, more Nova Scotian families will soon see those benefits as well.

As we cross the country and hear more of these stories, I can share thoughts from Manitoba. Manitoba has seen more than 2,800 new spaces since it announced the signing of its agreements. Similar to Nova Scotia, Manitoba focused its efforts to support families where the need is the greatest. That is the whole point.

Here in the chamber, we have heard a lot of “Ottawa first” talk about how the federal government is directing this. No, the provinces are working collaboratively with us. They are identifying needs in their communities. Each province is unique, and they are facing these challenges head-on and working with us in partnership to make sure that we meet the needs of families and our children.

More than 1,600 new spaces, half of Manitoba's total thus far, have been announced under the province's innovative Ready-to-Move child care project. I was there for the announcement of the 1,700 spaces in rural communities. Multiple levels of government worked in partnership to provide land, do the build-out and provide services, including the indigenous first nation community of Peguis.

The point is that it is a collaborative effort of all levels of government and communities to make sure that these spaces are created over time. They are identifying them with us, and we are working together to build them, because new spaces do not get built overnight, they do not get built by tax credits and they do not get built by cutting cheques to millionaires. They get built by the will, by the work, by the planning that goes these systems to build an infrastructure province by province.

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Families in first nations and rural communities have the greatest need, as we know, and they will be the first to benefit, just like the Peguis community, with these spaces all expected to be operational in Manitoba by the end of this year. We went decades without work being done to create spaces, and by the end of this year, 1,700 new spaces will be created in Manitoba.

Armand Poirier, the mayor of the Rural Municipality of Taché, put it like this, “The new child-care spaces in our rural municipality open up opportunities for our community members, enabling them to put their children in daycare close to home and fully participate in the workforce.”

We are building rural communities. People can work close to home and grow these rural communities into places they want to stay in and thrive in. There is added value in every level for families, children and the communities themselves, because these investments are supporting and strengthening our rural communities in Manitoba.

In B.C., the first province to sign, its ChildCareBC strategy is really the one to watch. Just last month, ground was broken on a new project in Invermere, the hub of the Columbia Valley, a project that will see a brand new child care facility built that will include 148 new licensed child care spaces, including 100 preschool spaces.

Investments like these are where we are going with this legislation, from Taché to Lunenburg. Every member of this House should be joining us in building that vision.

• (2235)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am so glad the member started with British Columbia, because last fall the provincial government said it was going to open 237 new spots in Central Okanagan, specifically in Kelowna. Guess what? Over 200 spots are said to have been closed because private day care was not facilitated. In fact, private day care operators said that because of the confusion and the regulatory environment, they decided not to continue their operations.

When the member says it is all roses and sunshine for day care, can she see how pushing only certain types of day care is actually taking away spots that are important to families in the Central Okanagan?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, I am quite familiar with the member's riding and the area in the Okanagan Valley.

That is simply not how the agreements were designed. Private child care providers were grandfathered into these agreements. B.C. made the decision to incorporate them into the agreements to keep those spaces and to work with them and make the investments, but when it is taxpayer dollars, good stewardship of federal dollars means public spaces and high-quality, licensed child care to ensure that our children get the best start in life.

• (2240)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, obviously, we are delighted with the bill, even though, as I said earlier, it took the Liberal Party 30 years to

get there. Our confidence in the Liberals was so low that we were careful to include this in the 27-point agreement we negotiated with the minority government.

We pushed hard for this, and my colleague from Winnipeg Centre fought to ensure that accessible, public, non-profit child care was given priority. We also stressed that child care educators had to receive good wages and good working conditions.

I would like my colleague to speak to the importance of having high-calibre, trained professionals care for our children.

[English]

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, we have been very clear. We know how valuable our early child care workforce is in making sure that our children get the best start in life. That is why every agreement has very specific wage grids, retention plans and recruitment plans to ensure that we are growing the workforce over time and to make sure that we have the best people in place to give our children the social skills and developmental skills they need.

It takes time. We know that there is more work to do, but we are fully committed to it, and that is why good work across the benches is what is most important for Canadians. I am glad that we value it together.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, earlier in her speech, my colleague mentioned that the previous government was giving out credits and that this government is giving out cheques.

Can she elaborate on that? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, just to be clear, in building a Canada-wide, early childhood, high-quality, affordable system, we are not simply doing what the Conservatives did in cutting cheques to every family across the country.

An hon. member: You cancelled that.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: We cancelled that. That is right. We cancelled it because we know we need to invest in families over time, and investing in that way means investing in their children through an evidence-based, high-quality system that works for every family.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, in reference to the child care workforce, the member said we have to have the best people in place to raise our children.

Does she want to elaborate on what she meant by that?

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Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, time and again science shows us the evidence that placing children in publicly funded, high-quality, licensed child care gives them the best start in life for good social skills and good developmental skills and helps us raise the kind of children we want in Canada, a country that is diverse, open and inclusive for everyone.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Midnapore.

It is a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on behalf of my constituents of King—Vaughan. It allows me the opportunity to speak about Bill C-35, which is labelled an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development said that the bill would create more spaces. Conservatives support affordable, quality day care; it is crucial. However, if we cannot access it, it does not exist, and Bill C-35 would do nothing to address accessibility. The bill is good for families who already have a child care space, but it would do nothing to address the thousands of families on child care wait-lists or operators who do not have the staff or infrastructure to offer more spaces.

James and Leah in my riding are a young married couple who just had their first child. As new parents, they were excited and anxious about welcoming their new arrival. They tried to do their due diligence to ensure that everything was in place and were ready to go back to work once they could locate a child care spot. Their friends and family advised them to start looking, because there are not a lot of spaces available. So, when Leah was just a few months pregnant, they began the search. They quickly realized that there was, on average, a two-year wait-list. Maternity leave is not that long. However, they continued to look and hoped that something would become available for them before Leah's maternity leave was over and she needed to get back to work.

The bill would do nothing to address labour shortages. The bill would increase demand, but do nothing to solve the problem of frontline burnout or staff shortages. There are not enough spaces in the system to help run the facilities; they are at full capacity. The government itself projects that, by 2026, there could be a shortage of 8,500 early childhood workers. The minister stated that she plans to build 250,000 new spaces. Accordingly, 40,000 new child care workers would be required in order to accommodate.

Over the next 10 years, it is reported that more than 60% of the workforce already employed will need to be replaced, meaning that around 181,000 will need to be replaced. Once we add those two figures, we will need over 200,000 workers. Currently, 27% of child care centres in British Columbia are forced to turn away children due to a lack of staff.

A news article quoted a child care provider who stated that “In the past two years, we've had to close programs temporarily, whether it was for a day or two, or shorten hours for the week in order to meet the licensing regulations....”

The Conservative Party supports affordable child care and recognizes quality care in many forms, unlike the bill before us. Who better to nurture our children than their grandparents? I cannot think of a better solution to kill two birds with one stone.

• (2245)

Seniors are struggling to make ends meet due to the big rise in inflation the government has created over the last eight years. What a wonderful opportunity this could be to provide an income to struggling seniors while reducing the wait-lists and nurturing our children in a healthy environment.

I was one of the luckiest children in the world. I had the benefit of a loving and caring environment, provided to me by my grandparents. I was taught not only the facts of life and the value of hard work, but also that it does not matter where people come from; Canada is the land of opportunity for everyone. I consider myself to be a really good cook. My grandmother not only taught me the facts of life, not only taught me about math, and not only taught me about history; she also taught me how to live from the land. I would come home from school, and she would turn her garden into a playground for us. She explained the benefits of, and how to grow, fresh vegetables, and how to nurture one's children with one's own hands. She also taught me the importance of volunteering. If we had neighbours in our area who were ill and needed our assistance, my grandmother would take our hand, walk us down to the neighbour's home, and we were there to help each other.

That is what community building is like. That is what children need to learn. They need to learn that at a young age, so that when they develop into grown-ups, adults, they can teach their children to help, the way I was taught to help. My grandparents instilled that in me and ensured that I would grow up to be a responsible adult. We are not going to get that from anyone else. They taught me all the things I needed to do and all the things I needed to be, and that is the woman I am today.

As a young widow with two small children, I found day care very challenging, given my work schedule. I was fortunate that I had a job that could support my children. However, when my husband passed away and two incomes were reduced to one, there was no choice but to find affordable child care. I did not have a nine-to-five job. I did not have the luxury to have day care and to make sure I got there on time to pick up my children.

My question for the Liberal-NDP government would be, why can we not implement the beauty of allowing the flexibility for parents to choose their child care, so that their children can have the same opportunities I did? We could have our parents nurture our children, and reduce the wait times, because right now, there are no wait times because there are no places to put children. Let us look at some of the amendments our party put forward, and let us try to implement them, amending Bill C-35 so it could accommodate more children.

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Marni Flaherty of the Canadian Child Care Federation testified at committee. She said, “We would like to see strong language in the bill that promotes sustained investment in a national strategy for the recruitment, education and retention of the early childhood educators workforce.” This led my colleagues to put forward such an amendment. However, it was voted down by the Liberal-NDP coalition. As I said in my opening remarks, Conservatives recognize that affordable, quality child care is critical, but if it is not available, it does not exist. This bill would do nothing to help James and Leah find affordable, accessible day care when the time comes for Leah to return to work. This is not a child care strategy; it is a headline marketing plan.

● (2250)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad that, when the member was growing up, she had the opportunity to be cared for by her grandparents, but we know that for many people in Canada, that is just not an option. They do not necessarily have family nearby or a family that is able to do that, so having access to affordable child care is really a lifeline for most parents in Canada.

When the member opposite talks about this bill not creating spaces, she is absolutely wrong in that. We would create 250,000 additional spaces. Already, 56,000 spaces have been created, over 30,000 in Ontario. That number is set to grow in Ontario, to 86,000. She talks about the fact that there needs to be consistent, sustainable funding in this legislation. This legislation says that there would be consistent, sustainable funding from the federal government to provinces and territories.

I hope that the member will support this legislation, because it would help thousands of parents and families in her community. I also hope she recognizes that, at third reading, there are no more amendments. I hope we can count on her support.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, I spoke today to a constituent in my riding, and maybe the minister could help me understand how I can explain to this single mom who has been on the wait-list for a year. She has to get back to work. If she does not get back to work, she will lose her job. If she loses her job, she has to go on employment insurance. The minister said there were more spots created in Ontario. I live in a very populated community, yet this woman cannot find child care.

● (2255)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, notwithstanding some provincial efforts in subsidies, and I think Quebec stands out as a particular exception, we have largely had a market-driven child care system in Canada for as long as anyone can remember. We have had non-profit operators operate in that space and we have had for-profit operators operate in that space, yet, despite consistent demand over decades, the market has not provided the number of spaces needed in order for families that want child care to get it.

We have largely had a market approach to child care for a long time, and we have seen an incredible and persistent market failure. How does the member make sense of that market failure, and what does she think are the causes of that market failure?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, I would say that everybody jumped on the bandwagon for \$10-a-day day care, but here is the problem: Everybody jumped on it. There are no spaces, so people are waiting and waiting. Why not make it flexible and allow parents to choose who will raise their children? It would avoid the need for a lot of those spaces.

There are seniors in my community who are still healthy enough, but, unfortunately, due to age discrimination, cannot go back to work. Why not allow them to work for their children and nurture their grandchildren, which would reduce the wait time for everyone else?

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, what the member for King—Vaughan brings up is exactly why we brought in the universal child care benefit. It was to respect parents. Some are professionals but chose to have the husband or wife stay at home to take care of the kids. It was a career decision. Nevertheless, we supported both. We supported everybody in their decisions.

Can the member speak to the amendments we brought forward, when we tried to offer child care benefits to both types of families?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, we proposed amendments to ensure that the child care opportunities were available for everyone. The Liberal-NDP coalition turned them down.

I do not normally talk about this, but I was a foster child, and I babysat so I could save money to go back to school. I was not registered, but I was a damn good caregiver for children.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and speak, especially to a bill as critical as Bill C-35, which would truly play a big role in determining the future of our nation.

I just want to take a moment to recognize the member for Peterborough—Kawartha, who I think has done an incredible job of giving a voice to so many mothers, fathers, parents and entrepreneurs, many of them women and many of them new Canadians, who needed their voices heard here in the House of Commons. I congratulate her and her team, who are ensuring that we can get the best bill possible, not only for women and families, but also for all Canadians.

I am going to go through three things in my speech. I am going to provide an overview of some of the points many of my colleagues have laid out. After that, I am going to give some testimony from the many Canadians we have heard from across this country. I will then conclude with perhaps the most challenging and disappointing aspect of this bill, at least for me, as a woman and as a parliamentarian.

Government Orders

I will just review some of the points my team has outlined. Affordable, quality child care is critical, but if someone cannot access it, it does not exist. We have said this time and time again. Frankly, the number of spaces that currently exist, or that are forecasted to exist, just does not meet the demand. Even though there are many Canadian families that want this service, this solution, as provided currently by the government, would not address the issue.

Bill C-35 is not a child care strategy; it is a headline marketing plan. Again, we see the Liberals promising what they cannot deliver; \$10-a-day day care does not address the labour shortage and the lack of spaces. I alluded to that in my last comment. We have seen the government, time and time again, promise the sun, the moon and the stars, but it consistently falls short. Unfortunately, we are very concerned that would happen with day care spaces under Bill C-35 and that this would continue to happen.

Conservatives recognize that Canadian families should have access to affordable and quality child care, and should be able to choose child care providers that best suit their family's needs. We have heard from many Canadians that this one-size-fits-all approach does not necessarily suit many Canadians and the needs of many Canadian families. I just want to reiterate that.

Bill C-35 is good for families that already have a child care space, but it does not help the thousands of families on child care wait-lists, or the operators who do not have the staff or infrastructure to offer more spaces. I certainly recall that, as a mother, I was very grateful when my husband the foresight to put our name on a list. I think it was probably two years ahead of our son's requiring that space. This is a very tangible problem, and we will see it exacerbated as we see this program implemented throughout time. Bill C-35 would increase demand for child care but would not solve the problem of frontline burnout, staff shortage or access to more spaces. I think this is a very critical consideration, given the labour shortage we have seen since the pandemic, and we truly need to consider this as we consider implementing Bill C-35. There are not enough qualified staff to keep all existing child care centres running at full capacity, let alone to staff new spaces.

Bill C-35 would discriminate against women. The majority of child care operators are women. The language and intent of the bill would prevent any growth or opportunity for private female operators. How does the Liberal government expect more women to be able to go to work when there are no child care spots available? Wait-lists, as I mentioned, are years long. Ontario's Financial Accountability Office projects that, by 2026, there will be 602,000 children under six whose families will want \$10-a-day day care, and the provinces will be able to accommodate only 375,000 of them. That leaves 227,000, or 38%, without access.

• (2300)

Government estimates also suggest that by 2026 there could be a shortage of 8,500 early child care workers. That is an astounding number. In British Columbia, 27% of child care centres turn away children due to lack of staff. I know my colleagues from B.C. have certainly been very adamant in expressing this shortage. One child care director, who oversees 13 child care programs with 350 spaces, said, "In the past two years, we've had to close programs

temporarily, whether it is for a day or two, or shorten hours for the week in order to meet the licensing regulations..."

We also talk about the child care deserts that exist across this country and that is very much a problem. I have here, as I said I would, some commentary from Canadians who have written in, expressing some of these problems which I have outlined. Katie writes, "Finding people who start at 6 a.m. or end at 11 p.m. is impossible. More flexible hours for people who work shift work. Adequate child care is a huge barrier within health care."

Cheryl writes, "Something that many of my co-workers and I have talked about many times is how beneficial a day care that had extended hours or was nearer the hospital would be. So many health care workers struggle to find child care that is available for the shifts we work. I have been raising my granddaughter for 14 months now and have spent so much time and energy finding child care that will work for us. It has been incredibly stressful and I am so grateful for the care provider we have now who has worked in the health care field and takes Ava at 6:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. for me."

Both of these individuals writing in to us indicated that this one-size-fits-all approach does not work for them and that day care solutions and solutions for families do not come in a box; they have to be flexible. Therefore, in bringing forward amendments for this bill, we were trying to improve the bill.

Let us see who else. Shannon writes, "I'm going back to work full-time in July. I put my daughter on six day care lists and have heard it takes years to get into a licensed day care. I think start times are an issue as well. At most day cares, the earliest start time is 7:30 to 8 a.m.", which is a challenge I remember, as a mother. Shannon continues, "...and I start work at 6:30 so I need something earlier than that."

Again, the government is looking at a one-size-fits-all approach.

Laura writes, "Before- or after-school care.... The reduced fees have been welcome for my 20-month-old, but the cost for my six-year-olds' before- and after-school care are now more expensive than full day care and this comes with a reduction of the CCB, so my family is now spending more on care as my children get older and my children attend school."

There we see some Canadians who have written in saying that this one-size-fits-all day care does not work for them. As members can see, I have outlined many challenges with this legislation.

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I will get into what is the most problematic thing about this bill, which I do not even think is necessarily addressed through the policy within this House. I believe that this bill is a tool that has been used as a divider. I believe that this bill has been used to divide rural versus urban. I believe that this bill has been used to divide those mothers who want to stay at home versus those mothers who want to go to work. I have seen on social media, very unfortunately, women judging other women. Why would the government put forward a piece of legislation where women are put in a place to judge other women?

That is where Canada is at today. It is broken. Household debt is at a record level. Inflation is at a record level. Interest rates are at a record level. This country is in crisis and the current government really thought it had us with this bill in dividing us further. However, the good news is that when the leader of the official opposition becomes the Prime Minister of Canada, this hateful division would end and Canadians would once again be united. It starts with our supporting this bill and improving this bill.

• (2305)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech because in it she points out all the reasons why Bill C-35 is important. As my colleague in the NDP had said in his last question, when we had a market-driven system these issues existed before, and they are only going to be fixed with intention and with purpose. Therefore, I am glad to know that the Conservatives are supporting Bill C-35. It is funny to me that the member is calling this a divisive bill when this has passed every stage so far unanimously. There actually seems to be much more agreement than my hon. colleague is letting on.

There is, in fact, nothing in this bill that is looking to divide Canadians, or divide women for that matter. In fact, there is nothing that would limit choice in this legislation. I am glad to hear that the member is supporting this bill. I am glad to hear that Conservatives support child care. I hope that we can count on the member's support at third reading as well.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, all the government has left now is to divide, whether it is by pitting region against region or sector against sector; maybe it is gender or religion. One need only look at the social media on the bill to see that it has stoked division, unfortunately, and Conservatives are here to unify.

• (2310)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, as a proud representative of a rural riding, I beg to differ. When I first ran in 2015, child care was a huge topic in that election. I can remember knocking on doors throughout communities in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I have heard Conservatives talking about choice; there was no choice. I frequently met parents who were desperately wishing that they could afford to get a second job, but all the money from that income would have just gone to the extremely high child care space costs.

I would just like to ask my hon. colleague to reflect upon that. There was no choice in the beginning. This is an attempt to resolve that, to enshrine these funding agreements in place. I am just not

sure where she is getting the division from. I see this bill as a positive step to addressing a long-standing problem; this has been called for by child care advocates for more than 50 years now.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I actually think that the member and I agree in that, here on this side of the House, we are looking to make this program as inclusive as possible. In this way, it can fit families of all shapes and sizes, and all providers will have the opportunity to participate. Right now, that is not the case.

We have said that we will honour the provincial agreements, but we want to improve upon them. We just want to allow as many families and female entrepreneurs as possible to participate in this program.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario has spoken about how female entrepreneurs are cut out of this program. What is my colleague's analysis of why that might be the case and, perhaps, how changing that could actually make this program more accessible and readily available?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to serve on the executive of the IMF-World Bank parliamentary network with my colleague. As he can imagine, the economy is always on our minds, whether locally, domestically or globally; I am glad he is thinking like that. I think that the government and the minister should think like that as well. We should be thinking about everyone prospering within Canada, not just a subset that works for the government in this program.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to say right off the top that I will be splitting my time with the member for Lethbridge.

I note that this has been a long debate and that we are here late at night. I want to note that as well.

I think that this bill is one in which the issues that we are discussing today are being framed in the wrong way. The issues are being framed as what the government is proposing. This is the prerogative of the government, and this is often the challenge that we find ourselves with as the opposition. The government frames the issue, and we as the opposition must then respond. We end up with an issue that is already framed and we end up debating inside that issue.

The government is identifying a problem, and I would generally say that it is narrowcasting the issue. The issue is that Canadian families are struggling, and they are struggling in a whole host of ways, but then that also is borne out in the fact that they cannot afford child care.

That is a narrowcast. One of the band-aid solutions that the government comes up with is to just say that it will pay for the child care situation directly. It will just hand out money to child care operators, and that will reduce the cost of the child care.

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That is a solution, but it does not bear on the broader issues that we are seeing in Canadian society. We are seeing that everything in Canada feels broken and that Canadians cannot afford to live their lives right here in Canada.

That is one of the things. The other thing is around the whole idea of family policy. In doing some research on this, I ran across an organization called Cardus and a gentleman named Peter Jon Mitchell, who has written a lot about this idea.

I would like to quote extensively from an article that he wrote called “Canada Needs a Family-Formation Policy Framework”.

He had some very interesting things to say about this. He says:

The promotion of \$10-a-day child care as economic policy illustrates the problem with Canadian family policy, which is that we don't have one. Yes, we have substantial direct cash benefits to parents, generous parental leave, and plenty of funded services. Yet we still lack any coherent strategy for encouraging strong, stable family life. As University of Windsor political scientist Lydia Miljan writes:

“Generally speaking, family policy in Canada may be characterized as an uncoordinated hodgepodge of policies, based on assumptions that are not always clearly recognized or even consistent, and delivered by an assortment of institutions including not only agencies of all three levels of government but also privately-run organizations like provincial Children's Aid Societies, Big Brothers Big Sisters, family planning clinics, and so on.”

A new Cardus report, *Envisioning a Federal Family-Formation Policy Framework for Canada*, argues for a clear-eyed vision for Canadian family policy. Canadians value family life, but for complex reasons are partnering and marrying later and having fewer children than they say they would like. While all stages of family life are important, Canada needs to pay [particular] attention to the transition into partnership and marriage, and to having children.

These are Peter's words, not mine.

The federal government is only one actor among state and civil society institutions that can help families. Even as one of the most distant actors from daily family life, by reforming current programs and pursuing innovative policy options, the federal government can increase opportunity for family formation by removing barriers.

The hodgepodge collection of policies affecting families are often directed toward individual family members rather than respecting that families make decisions as a unit. For example, an expressed intent behind national child care is to increase the number of mothers in the workforce, while paternity leave in Quebec is intended to nudge fathers toward a larger share of caregiving. These may be laudable policy objectives, but families make these decisions as a unit, not as individuals. Families are social institutions that form their members, and they act in the collective interest of those members. Individuals negotiate their interests within families, but do so with consideration for the family as a unit.

● (2315)

Individuals negotiate their interests within families, but do so with consideration for the family as a unit.

The tension around the role of the state in intra-family decision-making is most noticeable in how the state directs public policy towards children. Political scientist Jane Jenson and her co-author Caroline Beauvais describe two paradigms for Canadian public policy. The family responsibility paradigm identifies families as the primary authority in determining the well-being of children. Policy approaches under this paradigm maximize flexibility for family decision-making. Direct government involvement is reserved for situations where children's well-being is in danger. The second model is the investing in children paradigm, focused on early intervention through services that come around children and their families. Parents are important, but the paradigm emphasizes the expertise of state and civil-society actors.

The preferred approach [for most Conservatives] is to empower families as the primary caregiving community around children, with the authority and obligation to ensure the well-being of children. Institutions can best help children by working in partnership with children's caregivers. In most cases, public policy should maximize flexibility that allows families to make decisions best suited for the family.

That is an extensive quote from this article by Peter Jon Mitchell. It lays out what are probably the major discussion points or the differences that we see between what the Conservatives and everybody else in this place really feels, that the family model is what we need to note.

Even the CBC is noticing this as an issue across the country. A CBC headline coming out of British Columbia, posted in March of last year was, “Young B.C. families are having fewer children, opting out of parenthood as cost of living skyrockets.”

Once again, the bill we are debating today is only tackling one of the many issues that Canadian families are having. This is also having an effect on family formation. Again, what Peter Jon Mitchell was calling for in his article was a strategic and thoughtful family policy rather than a social policy or an economic policy.

It was very interesting to me when the member for Winnipeg North was up on his feet, talking about this bill. He noted that this also happened to be good tax policy in the fact that if we had more people participating in the workforce, there would be more taxes for the government.

This is what we have seen from the Liberal government, over and over again. It comes forward with a policy proposal that it says is one thing, and in reality it is another thing. On his part, the member for Winnipeg North actually said that quiet part out loud when he said that this is actually tax policy, that the government wants Canadians to be able to pay more taxes. It is precisely the opposite of what Conservatives are about.

Conservatives are about making sure that Canadians pay the least amount of taxes possible. Conservatives, particularly on tax policy, say that we have a country to run, what are the things we need to pay for in order to run the country? When we have the list of things we need to pay for, we ask how we are going to pay for them and how are we going to collect taxes.

The Liberals have a completely opposite theory or policy around taxation. Their policy is, how much tax money can we wring out of Canadians, and then where can we spend all this cool tax money that we have collected. That is the fundamental difference between Conservatives and Liberals. I think the member for Winnipeg North kind of said the quiet part out loud when he said that this policy would increase the tax revenue to the federal government.

That seems to me to be the focus of everything that the Liberal government does, it is to increase the tax revenue to the federal government. They also have a carbon tax, which does the same thing. It does not affect the environment at all, but it creates tax revenue for the federal government.

With that, I would like to thank folks for listening tonight, and look forward to questions and comments.

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• (2320)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, on the tax revenue part, I think that is actually secondary.

The member skipped a step, because in order to get that increased tax revenue, there would actually have to be an increase in income. That is why we have seen groups like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and its provincial affiliations all throughout Canada, strongly support this kind of a policy, as well as labour. I do not think there are many policies out there where we see both business and labour onside. They recognize that a policy like this allows more women, more parents to enter the workforce to increase their family's income and to actually provide a better life for their family.

This is about giving choice, about giving freedom of choice for those parents to make more income if they wish. I would like to hear the member's comments on that.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, the fundamental point of the first part of my speech was about Canadian families struggling, and because they are struggling, they are choosing to have fewer children than they wish they could have.

People are getting married later and having fewer children than they thought they would when they were younger. This has been well documented. Even the CBC recognizes this in the article I referenced.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge that the member has the most adorable children, one of whom is here with us tonight in the House. He is adorable. It is nice to see all the children who are often brought to Parliament as we include our kids in it.

I think the member has talked about this, but it is nice to put it on record because it is what Conservatives have been advocating for. How do we close that gap and that need? Ultimately, the demand went through the roof when this was announced, but the infrastructure and systems are not in place. How do we close the gap without including private child care operators as well?

• (2325)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, that is precisely the question we have been asking about this bill the whole way through. I would also note that this bill would not do a whole lot. The most substantial thing about this bill is that it would set in place a board or council, which would just be another group of people advising the government on this. I am not opposed to that per se, but that is about the extent of what the bill would tangibly do. All of the other things mentioned in the bill are already in place. The government has already signed deals with the provinces, put in place frameworks across the country and now it is asking for an endorsement of that in this bill, so it is more of a motion than a bill.

However, what Conservatives have been calling for is a child care system that respects the different choices families make.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what the Conservatives are actually calling for is the cancellation of child care. We saw in their last platform that they said families do not need child

care, they need tax credits to help them with the cost of child care, but we know that does not create spaces or help families.

I would like to know if the member is going to support this legislation today and our federal child care program.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, we have been fairly clear that we are opposed to the way the Liberals have outlined their child care system. We want one that is flexible for all Canadians, no matter the choices they make.

What I would also note is that the only tangible thing this bill would do is create a committee or council. We will be voting for this bill to recognize the creation of this council, and we will see how the rollout of this system goes, the impacts and unintended consequences this bill would have.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a tremendous honour and privilege to stand in this place and to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the constituents of Lethbridge, whom I represent. Tonight, I have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-35, which has to do with universal child care.

I think what we will discover in this conversation tonight is that, actually, it is not universal, even though we like to use that term; I will get to that in just a moment. However, I would like to point out that, as a member of His Majesty's loyal opposition, it is in fact my job in this place to talk about the legislation that is before the House in such a way that I highlight, yes, some of the good but, more importantly, the opportunities to make it even better. I will be doing that tonight.

Some in my riding have expressed support for this legislation. Others have no support for it and have been very opposed. Still others fall somewhere in the middle; they like parts of it, but they see flaws in other components.

To be clear, in many ways, Bill C-35 is not actually a child care strategy, which is what the Liberal government would like it to come off as. Rather, it is more of a marketing plan. It is something that these Liberals use over and over again in their talking points, but when we actually ask them for substantiated evidence of a program that has been rolled out with great productivity and provision for Canadians, they are not able to actually show us that. This is problematic, because it is over-promising and under-delivering. Ultimately, at the end of the day, it is Canadians who suffer.

I would like members to imagine that they are taken on an all-expense-paid shopping trip. I believe this is most women's dream. They are told that they can look through all the shop windows and have anything they wish. They arrive on Fifth Avenue in New York City and get to work. They look around, and a shop window attracts the attention of an individual. She walks over to the store and tries the door, only to find that the shop is closed. She takes another look around and finds another shop window that has another outfit she thinks is quite nice; she goes to the shop door and tries to open it, but it is closed. This poor woman repeats this over and over again, only to find that the stores are all closed. The promise was great and exciting, but it did not deliver. This is exactly what the Liberals have presented us with: a promise without a premise. A promise without a premise is absolutely worthless, which is what so many Canadians are facing with the bill before us.

The reality is that affordable, quality child care is critical, if we can find it. It is needed for many families in this country; there is no doubt about that. Many families need to have two individuals working, and many are single parents who need to work. In these cases, they would need child care of some sort. Now, the problem with the bill is that it actually dictates where that child care needs to be found. It cannot be a family member, a neighbour or friend. It has to be a state-run or non-profit day care, which is a problem, because—

• (2330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I think somebody forgot to shut their mike off a while ago. It is taken off now.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, the point is that ultimately, at the end of the day, Canadians do desire choice, and unfortunately this bill just does not make that provision.

I will point out another flaw that needs to be pointed out in this bill, and that is overall access. We know that already there are many individuals who, when they know they are expecting or oftentimes even before they know they are expecting, but perhaps anticipating, will put their family on a wait-list in hopes of being able to have a spot, but what we know with this legislation is that it actually favours those who already have a child in care.

As such, rather than being able to provide for those who would be entering into the need for care or those who would be most vulnerable or most in need, this legislation favours those who already hold a spot. Who are those who are most likely to already hold a spot? It is often those who already have a bit of money or wealth behind their name, because they have already secured one or maybe even two spots for their kids ahead of time and now they have a spot for the next child as well. That is a problem, because it is actually those new parents or the most vulnerable who need to be able to access those spaces. That is what has been promised by this legislation, but it is structured in such a way that it is not what actually what ends up being delivered at the end of the day.

I think it needs to be said that, certainly, making sure that a child is looked after in a caring, loving and kind way is top of mind for parents, and it is probably one of the things that stresses in particular moms to the greatest extent. It matters, but in order to be able to

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provide parents with that peace of mind and that security, one has to not only provide the accessibility, but also there has to be a provision of choice. A parent needs to be able to make that decision on their own, knowing that they are entrusting their child to the person or entity of their choice. Again, this is where this legislation simply falls short, because it does not provide for that.

There is a lack of accessibility and a lack of choice. Right there, we have two fundamental problems or massive flaws with this legislation.

One mom shared this: "I would love to see initiatives ... that support kids being raised in their own homes with their parents past maternity leave - it doesn't feel like much of a choice right now, the government is only focusing on 'one type' of parenting model. Not all parents want to place our kids in childcare or schools so young but with the lack of support, we can feel we have no [other] choice." In other words, sometimes parents do want to pick an elder, a grandparent, a friend or a neighbour, but under this legislation, what this woman is expressing is that she does not feel she has that option.

The question also needs to be asked: What about those who work shift work? Maybe a parent goes to work super early in the day, or maybe they work super late into the evening. Then, what are their options? Again, this legislation fails to address that. Further to that, many of those who are indigenous in my riding have come, talked to me and said they would like their children to be cared for by an entity that takes their culture into account. Again, this legislation does not actually provide for that.

What about those who come from a religious background or a faith background, who want their children cared for according to their values or according to their ways of life? Again, this legislation falls short. Instead, it is a one-size-fits-all approach, and it just simply does not work.

I could talk a bit more about the fact that there is this tremendous amount of burnout that takes place in this sector; I could talk about the fact that there is a massive labour shortage in this area as well; and I could talk about the fact that my colleagues at committee actually brought these concerns forward and asked for them to be addressed, and the government ignored them.

Again, it is legislation with a whole lot of promise but no premise. It is an over-promise and an under-delivery. It is altogether disappointing.

The fact of the matter is that we have seen this in many ways from the government. In eight years we have seen it blunder one budget after another and drive our economy into the ground. We have seen what it has done with health care; we have seen what it has done with folks who are dying from the opioid crisis; we see that consistent mismanagement across our country across different sectors.

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• (2335)

Why would child care be any different? It will be an abundant number of promises and an under-delivery of services. Canadians will be left in the cold.

I should also highlight that it did not need to be this way. My colleagues offered several helpful amendments around protecting choice and making this accessible. My colleagues stood up for parents and for their needs. Unfortunately, the NDP and the Liberals voted against my colleagues, which is sad and is to their shame.

When people say the Conservatives do not really support child care, that is not true. We support the principle. We just believe that it should be rolled out a whole lot better. When we form government, we look forward to doing this much more efficiently, much more effectively and in a much more parent-centric way than what it currently is.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, when we look at the country overall, the poorest population is senior women. I find it interesting how many people at the doors I have knocked on in my riding and how many people who come into my constituency office have talked to me about them being women and the fact that by the time they pay for their child care, they hardly make anything. It seems to me that we have a cycle.

Does the member not agree that by creating affordable child care, not only will it support families, not only will it support women having the ability to make choices about their futures in terms of employment, but it will also address the issue of poverty as women age?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I do not know that I fully understood the question. It seemed to have a lot to do with aging and I did not hear a lot to do with child care.

Nevertheless, I will highlight that when this bill was brought forward to committee and was studied there, we received extensive testimony on the fact that the bill, in its current form, actually hurts those with lower incomes and benefits those who are wealthier.

Amendments were brought forward by my Conservative colleagues at that committee in order to make sure the most vulnerable were given priority. Unfortunately, the member who just spoke, who is an NDP member, as well as her colleagues and our Liberal colleagues, voted against that very common-sense amendment, which would have stood for the most vulnerable. Shame on them.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her thoughtful and common-sense speech. I know she comes from a riding that I am sure she has stories from. She started off the beginning of her speech by alluding to them a bit. I am wondering if there is anything she wants to share in the House about constituents in her riding and how this bill affects them.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I come from a riding of incredibly hard-working, common-sense individuals. They are people who value family, value freedom and value their faith in many regards. These individuals simply want two things. They are actually quite simple. Number one, they want those in leadership to function with integrity. If they make a promise, deliver on the

promise. Number two, they want choice. They want to make decisions for their families according to what their needs are as individuals, rather than having something put down their throats by the government according to its agenda.

• (2340)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, on that last part about choice, I could not agree more with my colleague. Of course families want choice. However, I have to go back to an earlier point. When I first ran in 2015, parents were complaining to me about the lack of choice in the private system. They did not have choice because the costs were too high, and it was not economical for them to go out and get a second job to further the economic interests of their families.

By lowering fees and creating a legislative framework to ensure funding, we are giving families choice where it did not exist before. I speak from personal, first-hand accounts from my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. Choice did not exist before. This initiative is going to create choice for families and I am proud to be supporting it.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, if someone wants to know about choice, they should always ask a socialist. That is a good place to start. I will leave it at that.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was a great response by the hon. member. I would note that at least in capitalism, the bread lines up for us. That is one of my favourite lines in the debate between socialism and capitalism.

I just want to recognize the hon. member and her work in this place. We were elected at the same time and I call her a friend. I want to thank her speech on this as well, and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Can the hon. member just ask the question? We are running out of time.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Let us just call it a comment, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thanks, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak again to Bill C-35. As I said in my previous speech about this bill, no parent is perfect. I can attest to that first-hand; I make lots and lots of parenting mistakes. However, parents are the best proxy decision-makers for their children because parents have a deep and natural love for their children. This love that parents have for their kids generally ensures a rectitude of intention. “Rectitude of intention” means that parents always want what is best for their children. If they make mistakes, they at least do so from a place of love, wanting to give their children the very best that they can.

I trust parents to make decisions for and about their children. There are, of course, extreme cases in which external authorities have to take over parental decision-making, but the possibility of these extreme and rare exceptional cases should not be used to justify a general policy of having the state interpose itself between children and their parents. While the state can aspire to a kind of general goodwill for all people, this general goodwill is nothing compared to the fierce and natural love that leads parents to always want the best for their children.

Before I come to the particulars of the child care issue, I want to say that we are seeing broader challenges in many areas to the idea that parents should be trusted to shape the direction of their own families. We see movements to have teachers, school counsellors and therapists facilitate dramatic and potentially irreversible changes in the lives of young people without the inclusion of parents, in fact with the explicit exclusion of parents. Why does anyone want to exclude parents from important conversations about the lives of their children? Parents love their children and want the best for them. Of course parents make mistakes, but someone motivated by deep love is less likely to make mistakes and is certainly quicker to correct their mistakes than an official, institutional bureaucracy driven by politics and constrained by inertia. That is why everything that happens in a school, in a child care centre or in any out-of-home program should happen in the context of an openness to conversation with parents. I remember my parents' telling me, as a child, "If anyone tells you not to tell mommy or daddy anything, make sure to tell us right away." That is still very good advice.

This country has a history of parental alienation, of a state bureaucracy taking children away from their parents in an explicit effort to disconnect them from the culture and values of their families. This was wrong. Today, I am hearing from families, and, most recently, especially from Muslim families, who are concerned about parents' not being included in conversations about how the state and state institutions are relating to their children. This is something we have to be vigilant about.

Going forward, Conservatives will always stand on the side of parental choice and on the side of not excluding parents from important conversations that impact the lives of their children, because the role of the family is at the heart of a Conservative belief in the importance of subsidiarity. The federal government should not stick its nose into the business of the province, and neither the federal government nor the provincial government should stick its nose into what is properly the business of the family. In our federation, this constant sticking of noses into other people's business has led to redundant and inefficient expenditures in many areas and has obscured what should be clear lines of accountability.

With respect to parents and parental involvement in the lives of children, I noted one line in particular from the minister's speech about this child care program. It was a quotation from someone else that she read, but a quotation that I think she read approvingly. She said of these programs, "They are shaping our little people into who they are going to be in the future." That is undoubtedly true. Part of the reason parents want to choose so judiciously what child care options they select is that child care providers do play a role in shaping critical aspects of how a child sees the world. All education is informed in some way by underlying world views. There is no

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such thing as value-neutral education, so parents will generally want to pursue an alignment between the values they are teaching at home and the values being promoted in programs outside the home. Therefore, when the range of options is narrowed, it becomes harder and harder for parents to find that alignment. Choice and flexibility in child care make it easier for parents to find programs to facilitate a good alignment between child care provider and family.

• (2345)

Parents should have an opportunity to seek to pass their core beliefs on to their children. Of course children grow up, and there is a natural process of children being exposed to more of the world as they grow more and more, in due course coming to their own distinct conclusions on things. That was certainly my experience growing up. However, parents can and should be able to provide an intellectual foundation that allows children to know where they come from and receive the wisdom of those who love them most and best.

In my last speech, I focused on the practical and economic arguments for choice in child care, but there is more to it than just that. I believe that parents should be able to make decisions about the kinds of child care arrangements that are best aligned with the economic and practical needs of their families, but even more importantly, I believe in choice in child care because I believe in respecting the role of parents making choices about how they will seek to train children in virtues, traditions and practices that are particular to their families. Children should begin life knowing and growing upon the firm ground of their families, and this requires that parents are able to shape the environments that their children are in.

Having said that, I would like to shift to another point, that of workforce participation. This has come up a few times in different ways in different speeches that have been given tonight. Liberals champion, as a feature of this plan, that it would increase workforce participation. By increasing the cost the taxpayers pay and channelling those dollars into a particular model of out-of-home child care, this puts more financial pressure on families that do not use the state system, which likely forces some of them to opt to enter the workforce.

By taxing all and subsidizing some, this approach tips the scale in a certain direction, and I think the argument goes that this tipping of the scale leads to higher levels of workforce participation, which is identified as one of the goals. The Conservatives' preferred policy is one that supports families without tipping the scale. That is that it finds ways of supporting families that do not involve the arbitrary redistribution of resources among families based on their different child care choices.

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On the issue of workforce participation, I want to clarify an important distinction. Workforce participation measures the proportion of people who want to work while the employment rate measures the proportion of those people who are actually working. Therefore, people who choose not to work are not considered unemployed. They are considered not in the labour force. People are considered unemployed if they are in the labour force, that is if they wish to work, but they are not able to find a job. Again, people are not in the workforce if they are choosing not to be in the workforce, and people are unemployed if they are choosing to be in the workforce, wanting to work, but are not able to find a job.

Clearly, we should seek to minimize the unemployment rate. We should seek to have as low as possible the number of people who want to work and who are not working. We want as high an employment rate as possible, but it is not obvious to me that we should always aim for the highest possible workforce participation rate. There are many good and legitimate reasons why people might choose not to be in the workforce. It could be because they are studying, retired, of sufficient means and would rather spend their time volunteering, or attending to the needs of their families. All of these are, of course, forms of work, but they do not formally count as being in the workforce. That is that they are not forms of work that are commodified.

There is nothing wrong with people making these kinds of choices to opt out of the workforce. We should not be so narrowly mercantile as to suppose that the only way for a person to live a good and productive life is by generating income and paying taxes. Rather, we should focus on the advancement of overall happiness and well-being on the discovery of the true, the good and the beautiful, and on facilitating this by trying to build a society in which people have the prosperity and the freedom to maximizing their own happiness and well-being with choices.

I do not see any reason why we should set a goal of public policy to achieve the greatest possible participation in the formal workforce. If someone has well-considered reasons for not working inside the formal commodified marketplace, such as the ones I described earlier, I do not see a problem. Why should the state seek to push or incentivize someone to move in a different direction than they wish to go when it comes to workforce participation? Ideally, I would like to see people be able to study if and when they want, to take time off work if and when they want, to retire if and when they want and to stay home with their children if and when they want.

• (2350)

For plenty of practical reasons, this is not always the case, and personal preference is not the only factor that shapes our lives, but why should the state aim for the highest possible labour participation rate by increasing taxes and subsidizing those choices that involve higher workforce participation? Why tip the scale in this direction?

The state should aim to allow people to make their own choices, presumably choices that they believe will maximize their own happiness and the happiness of their families. If a woman or a man, having the means to do so and with a view to their own assessment of what is best for their family, decides that they want to work part time or not work at all for a period of time for the sake of being

with their children or for some other purpose, I do not understand why we in the House of Commons should presume to tell them that there is something wrong with that choice, nor should we in the House of Commons presume to tell a dual-income family that there is anything wrong with their choice.

However, the government's policy is to use higher taxes to subsidize certain kinds of families to make certain kinds of child care choices over others. Increasing taxes to subsidize certain kinds of choices over others does not advance freedom or choice.

The Conservative policy of offering direct support to families allowed parents to have the means to freely make their own choices, motivated by love for their children and unfettered by economic coercion. It is support for all families without tipping the scale.

Regardless of the particulars of the child care policy, nobody has made the argument in this place, as far as I have heard, that higher workforce participation is a good in and of itself. Presumably, existing retirement and post-secondary support programs are an acknowledgement that higher workforce participation is not always desirable. If the government cancelled existing retirement supports, I suspect workforce participation would then go up, but this would still be a bad policy, because it would limit the ability of the retirees to choose to leave the commodified workforce during their golden years.

Of course there is a gender dimension to this workforce participation discussion. Statistics suggest that women are more likely to opt out of the workforce for some portion of their child-raising years. I suspect that we would find women are also more likely to opt out of the workforce for post-secondary education, since right now women are attending university at much higher rates than men.

Certainly, we should seek to ensure all people are able to make their choices freely, without any kind of coercion. Regardless of the reasons or the circumstances that lead people to want to opt out of the workforce, we should seek to maximize choice and flexibility for everyone, but it seems to me to be grossly paternalistic for the state to presume some kind of false consciousness operating in the choices that many women make in this respect. The state should seek to promote prosperity and freedom; how people then choose to use that prosperity and freedom inside or outside the workforce should not be the business of the state.

I want at this point to highlight some of the key points I made previously in this debate.

Number one is that this bill substantively does nothing, other than establish an advisory council. All of the agreements are already in place; this bill is merely an active self-congratulation by the government.

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The government has put in place a system that is not effectively achieving its own stated goals. In fact, what we see with the current system is that by subsidizing child care but in fact not sufficiently to align with the promises it has made, and at the same time by regulating prices, it has put a great deal of strain on child care providers.

The people one would expect to be most enthusiastic about this program, child care providers, have actually been in many cases the most vocal in expressing concerns about it. What they are saying is that combining subsidies, at the level they are, with price regulation makes it very difficult for child care operators to invest in and grow their business and offer those additional spaces over time.

What we are seeing is a kind of ticking time bomb created in the system: The government is over-promising at the same time that it is imposing enormous strains on those who are actually providing child care services.

• (2355)

I would warn the parents who feel they are benefiting in the short term, because some families have seen reductions in their costs while many families are still on waiting lists and many families are paying higher taxes because of the current government, those who are experiencing short-term reductions in costs, that the structural damage the government is doing to the child care system, by putting strains on child care providers, is not going to allow child care to deliver in the long term.

One of the speakers on the government said that this is about establishing a generational long-term promise. Not at all. What the government is doing is using deficit spending to underfund while over-promising child care operators, who now face enormous strain, cannot bring in new staff, cannot expand, and creating a system that is simply not going to work over the long term. It will not fulfill the promises it has made. We have seen this in many aspects of this government's record, the over-promising and under-delivering. I would encourage those who are following this debate to listen to child care providers to hear from those who are working in the system.

When we raised these concerns with the minister, she asked why we were so negative. She said that Conservatives are always criticizing and being negative about the things the government is trying to do. I think our job in this place is to tell the truth, even if telling the truth about the trajectory of government policy involves pointing out that there are flaws and risks. We hear this accusation a lot from the government by the way. A couple of years ago, when our leader was talking about how overspending was going to lead to inflation, the Liberals said we were being negative, but it was true.

We will continue to speak truth to power and highlight the problems of the child care approach.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (2400)

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight about a grave problem involving our immigration system and an injustice done to a number of well-meaning students who came to this country with the best of intentions. They were victims of fraud, and they are now being revictimized by the Liberal government.

I want to start tonight by recognizing the leadership of the Ontario Gurdwaras Committee and my friends at the Malton Gurdwara in particular. They brought this issue to my attention and helped facilitate interactions for me with a number of the students who were affected by this issue. I know that many people in the Sikh community and other communities have been speaking out about this, but I wanted to provide that particular recognition because it was through leadership that I became aware of this issue, met some of the students affected and was able to support this advocacy in the House as well.

What happened in these cases that we are talking about is that students were given fake acceptance letters to real colleges here in Canada by an unscrupulous consultant in India. Those students thought they had received real acceptance letters. They provided those fake acceptance letters to Canadian immigration. For whatever reason, Canadian immigration failed to detect this fraud. They did not verify with the colleges, I suspect. They issued real visas based on fake acceptance letters. Then these students came to Canada.

When they got to Canada, the students were told there was a mix-up; the school was full. However, the students knew that, as a condition of their visa, they had to go to school right away. The consultants then offered them another opportunity with a smaller college that was less well-known, saying they could study there instead.

These students came to Canada, and they were duped through no fault of their own. They put a lot of money into being able to come to Canada. In many cases, these were poor families that would have sacrificed enormously to allow a member of their family to come to Canada and have this opportunity.

The students came here, and they studied; in many cases, they got work permits. Then, just as they were applying for permanent residency, somehow, the government found what had in fact been the government's own error. The government was able to look back and say, "Oh, actually, we screwed up. We gave you real visas on the basis of fake acceptance letters."

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The students have been threatened with deportation. We have seen a number of instances of stays of deportation. Very clearly, if we look at the timelines, this has only happened following the public advocacy of the opposition. Great promises have been made by the minister and others, saying that they would treat these folks fairly. They should not worry. They are going to do it on a case-by-case basis, and so forth.

The reality is that those commitments were only made in response to heightening pressure from the community, engaging with the Conservative opposition. In fact, we put forward motions to study this at committee, and these motions were repeatedly voted down by the Liberals and the NDP. However, from what I understand now, the committee is finally able to move forward on this.

There is a question of the fairness to these students, but there is also a fundamental question of the integrity of our immigration system. How did this screw-up happen? Let us make sure these students are taken care of, but let us also address how such a massive screw-up took place. Somebody could simply photoshop fake acceptance letters, which should be a pretty easy thing to do, and was able to fool immigration, potentially hundreds of times. I would like an answer to that.

● (2405)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his questions because they allow me to share some news and to validate some of the concerns that he expressed with today's announcement by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, which addressed these concerns around the report of international students and graduates facing removal from Canada. As he said, letters of acceptance submitted as part of their study permit applications were determined to be fraudulent.

The minister today announced that he has created a task force that will see officials at IRCC working closely with the Canada Border Services Agency to identify victims of fraud. He has directed officials to approach every incident on a case-by-case basis and to do so with expediency, flexibility and compassion. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act provides the minister with discretionary authority, which he has indicated he will exercise in the present context.

Therefore, if the facts of an individual case are clear that an international student came to Canada with a genuine intent to study and without knowledge of the use of the fraudulent documentation or participation in criminal activity, instruction has been given for immigration officers to issue a temporary resident permit to that individual. This will ensure that these well-intentioned students and graduates remain in Canada. It will also ensure that they are not subjected to the five-year ban from re-entering Canada that normally follows in cases of misrepresentation. While this process runs its course, a preliminary temporary resident permit will be issued as required in order to prevent an imminent deportation.

While we are focused, of course we want to support those who have done nothing wrong. It should also be kept in mind that there are also other foreign nationals who had no intent of pursuing higher education, including some involved in organized crime who may

have used fraudulent acceptance letters to take advantage of our immigration system. Officials are currently investigating to identify the innocents and those who are aware of the fraud.

IRCC has always taken fraud seriously and it is working with its local and international partners to detect and deter fraud, including working even more closely with post-secondary institutions, provinces and territories, and organizations representing our colleges and universities. The minister of IRCC is taking every opportunity to improve our detection of fraud and crackdown on dishonest consultants. IRCC is also continuously improving the system to detect the evidence of fraud. When fraud tips are reported, IRCC will continue to look into each one of them.

To uphold our system, a full review of the international students program is actually under way. The review aims to strengthen program integrity and enhance protections to address the students' vulnerability, unethical recruitment and unscrupulous actors.

As I am sure the member is also aware, the government has cracked down on dishonest consultants and is requiring that they be licensed under the college of immigration consultants. Our government has made investments to improve oversight, strengthen enforcement and increase accountability.

For students specifically in India, IRCC has also run media campaigns to deter fraud. As recently as March of this year, IRCC ran a campaign in India targeting potential visitors, students and workers to decrease the misuse of permits—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member's time is up.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I would just put two follow-up points to the parliamentary secretary.

The first is that it took far too long for the government to respond at all. Those who were involved and were victims of this had been meeting and were trying to engage with local Liberal MPs in the greater Toronto area for a long time to get a resolution. It should not have taken questions in question period to get the government to change course on this. I am glad the official opposition was able to lead on this, but it should not have taken so long for the government to act.

Second, I would like to hear an answer about how this happened in the first place. I think we need to know not just about the issue of justice for the students, although that is critically important, but also how there was such a significant hole in our immigration system's integrity. Is the parliamentary secretary trying to get to the bottom of how this happened?

● (2410)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I want to clarify a few points for the member.

First of all, I think that, collectively, all members of the House are generally concerned about the situation that has arisen over the last few months. I can assure the member opposite that several members on the side of the government have been strong advocates on this.

The member refers to one instant where motions were tried by his colleagues in committee. I would remind everyone who is watching this evening that legislation has precedence in committee, and we were in clause-by-clause at the time the filibustering was happening by members of his own party.

However, we are here today to announce that we will continue to advocate for those who are victims of fraud, and our government is taking every action.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, we hear so often from the government's talking points about how seriously it allegedly takes the issue of foreign interference, and I implore them to please stop with the talk and show Canadians some action.

Honestly, I shudder to think what the Chinese Communist Party must think of the Liberal government's handling to date of foreign interference. They must be wondering just how pathetic this government can get with its flimsiest of efforts to crack down on foreign operatives roaming around our country. It seems of little consequence that Chinese operatives are free to interfere in our electoral system, intimidate our citizens and open any number of police stations across the country, all at will and even with some financial abetting from our government.

The recent bungling must have sent Beijing into convulsions of laughter when our government gave up to \$200,000 in funding to a Quebec charity that the RCMP itself has said might be hosting a secret Chinese police station. I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary if the talking points have now settled on the number of Chinese police stations in operation in Canada, or does that number conveniently fall under the rubric of national security? I want to get this straight.

Canadian citizens can be followed, confronted, threatened, intimidated and live in fear on our soil, and their government is unable to stand up to defend them. What kind of government is that? When will Canadian citizens of Chinese ancestry, or not, finally get some answers?

How long does an RCMP investigation into Chinese police stations operating in Canada take? Has anything been done? Has anyone been arrested or declared *persona non grata* and sent packing?

The most important question that remains is this: Why has there been such a reluctance by the Canadian government to take definitive, concrete action against foreign interference in Canada? Does Beijing have something on the Prime Minister or the cabinet? Is there some vested financial trade deal at play? Is our government still haunted by the Huawei heiress and the Prime Minister does not want to receive another public dressing-down from President Xi?

Canada expelled a Chinese diplomat who targeted the family of an MP, and the government seems almost more apologetic than an-

gry. Is our government even capable of informing China, in no uncertain terms, that we as a country are neither its personal plaything nor a doormat? Canada has the right to stand up for our national security and sovereignty, just as China does on the slightest perceived indignity, real or imaginary.

It is clear that the matter of illegal foreign police stations, just like the overarching issue of foreign interference in Canada, either of Chinese or Iranian persuasion, can only be fully addressed by the convening of a full and independent public inquiry. Will the government call a full, independent public inquiry in our lifetime?

● (2415)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to address the ongoing concerns of foreign interference in Canada.

Canada is a country with open political systems, democratic processes, social cohesion, academic freedoms and prosperity.

Although there are many reasons why people choose to come to Canada, our open society makes us an attractive target for foreign interference. Foreign interference, including acts targeting our democratic institutions and electoral processes, is not a partisan issue. Regardless of our political affiliations and stripes, as parliamentarians and leaders, it is our responsibility to protect Canada and Canadians from these threats.

We recognize that individuals in Canada subjected to intimidation, harassment or manipulation by foreign states or their proxies suffer the effect of foreign interference directly. These activities are a threat to Canada's sovereignty and to the safety of our communities and individuals in Canada.

The Government of Canada takes these threats very seriously. Our government has taken steps, including, among others, disrupting foreign interference through available legal mechanisms, such as publicly denouncing threats, leveraging existing legislation or through other efforts, as well as investigating suspected illegal activities and seeking to address them through criminal prosecution where applicable, providing mechanisms for public reporting through the CSIS and RCMP websites and national security threat phone lines, engaging with communities at risk in Canada to help them better protect themselves against foreign threats, and consulting with the public and key stakeholders on the design and implementation of a foreign influence transparency registry.

While those actions are not exhaustive, they highlight the real work that our government is doing to safeguard our democracy and citizens.

Adjournment Proceedings

Our government is well aware of the serious allegation that Canada is being targeted for foreign interference, in particular the allegation of overseas police stations reportedly affiliated with the People's Republic of China. I can assure members of the House that the Government of Canada is taking swift action to deal with these concerns and has a strong, robust strategy for combatting foreign interference.

To summarize the latest action, on March 6, the Prime Minister announced further actions to combat foreign interference. These initiatives included the establishment of a new national counter foreign interference coordinator at Public Safety Canada and requesting reviews of NSICOP and NSIRA on the state of foreign interference in the Canadian federal electoral process and how national security agencies have responded to develop a plan to address the outstanding recommendations from the NSCIOP Rosenberg report and other reviews on these matters, which were delivered on April 6, and an investment of \$5.5 million to strengthen the capacity of civil society partners to counter the disinformation.

Public Safety Canada also launched public and stakeholder consultations on March 10 of this year, to guide the creation of a foreign influence strategy registry.

On that note, our efforts are backed with budget involvement. Budget 2023 is there in support, with a significant amount of dollars to help.

Let me be clear. The government is keeping Canadians safe. While we cannot broadcast every effort, Canadians need to know that they are safe and secure.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, these are more very strong words but what is the action and, more importantly, what are the results?

With all due respect to the parliamentary secretary, she can list all of the government's talking points and all of the things that it has allegedly done, but what matters are the results. The results clearly demonstrate that what it is doing is not working.

At least three MPs have been targeted and the Chinese Communist Party is setting up illegal police stations. The government is even sending them money. Is that considered success?

Diaspora groups are still sounding the alarm. Does the government interpret that as "mission accomplished"?

I ask again. Why has there been such a reluctance by the Canadian government to take definitive, concrete action against foreign interference? Does Beijing have something on the Prime Minister? What will it take for the government to finally wake up to the need for an independent and public inquiry? Does someone have to really get hurt or worse? Does someone have to die before it acts?

● (2420)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, while my colleague is speculating and somewhat making allegations, I will say what the government is actually doing.

We are very committed to combatting foreign interference by protecting the Canadians and communities targeted by foreign state actors, safeguarding our democratic institutions and promoting economic security. This will not change.

We are aware, as I mentioned, that certain foreign governments, including that of the People's Republic of China, have attempted to threaten and intimidate individuals in Canada or their relatives abroad. Canada's security and intelligence agencies use the full extent of their mandates to respond to these threats. The RCMP is currently investigating reports of illegal activities in relation to the allegation of overseas police stations.

As they are ongoing investigations, new information cannot be revealed at this time. However, the member can rest assured that if there is evidence of state-backed harassment or intimidation, CSIS and the RCMP will apply the full measure of their mandates to investigate these threats. We are working—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the hon. member's time is up.

[Translation]

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:21 a.m.)

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