



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

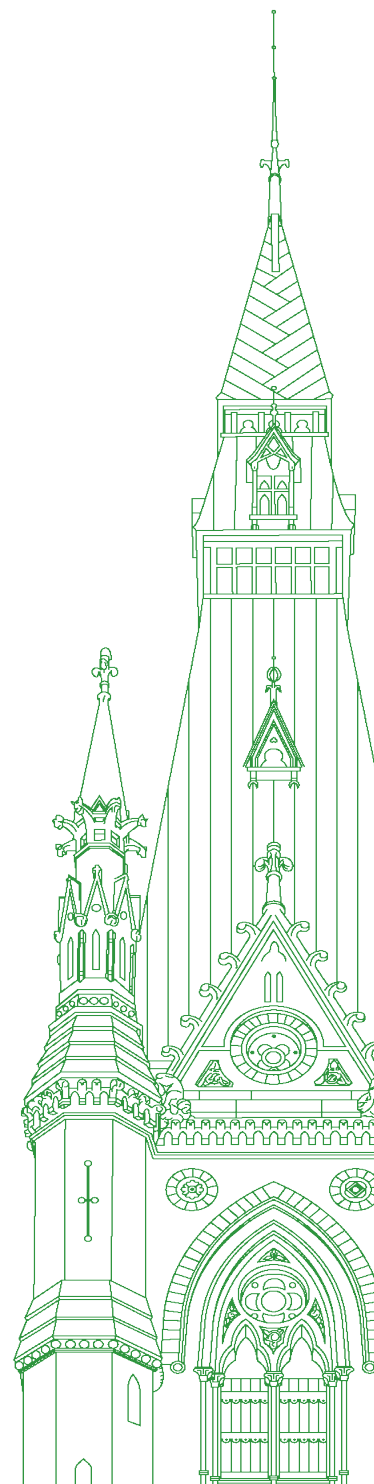
House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 221

Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 20, 2023

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1400)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back in the House after the summer break. Over the course of the summer, I met constituents across my riding of Whitby and they are rightfully worried about the rising cost of living. They expect our government to create real solutions that make a real difference in the lives of Canadians, and not make slogans and empty promises.

Canadians spoke and we listened. We are taking immediate steps to lower and stabilize the cost of groceries, which will help all Canadians by demanding that the five big grocers come up with a plan to stabilize food prices by Thanksgiving; extend the CEBA loan repayments to help small businesses; and incentivize construction of purpose-built rental units by removing the GST on the construction of new apartment buildings.

This is just the beginning. I am ready to roll up my sleeves and work even harder for Canadians. I am determined to address the affordability challenges, as we all are on this side of the House, that Canadians are facing today. It is good to be back.

NATIONAL HUNTING, TRAPPING AND FISHING HERITAGE DAY

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the ninth National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day, which is celebrated on the third Saturday in September every year.

For generations, our people have harnessed the resources of Canada's outdoors, building resilient communities, embracing the principles of conservation and fostering economic prosperity through sustainable practices. Hunters and anglers have devoted their lives to preserving our natural habitats, advocating for ethical practices and ensuring the continuity of these cherished traditions for future generations.

Unfortunately, after eight years, the Liberals have undermined our cherished heritage through attempts to ban hunting rifles and blaming hunters for the Liberals' rise in gun crime.

Conservatives understand the important role hunters, trappers and anglers play in both our economy and in conservation of our fish and wildlife. Conservatives, and only Conservatives, will always protect the ability of Canadians to hunt, fish and trap for generations to come.

WINDSOR—TECUMSEH

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my community of Windsor—Tecumseh is rising. Hundreds of workers are building the Stellantis battery plant that will soon employ 3,000 people.

Last week, I joined the Minister of Housing to officially open Meadowbrook Lane, the first affordable housing project in our community in 30 years. That same day, the minister and I stood on the deck of the Gordie Howe International Bridge as it nears completion. Over 9,000 workers have now worked on the largest infrastructure project in Canada.

This summer, the iconic Parks Canada beaver appeared in Ojibway with a sign that said, "Soon to be the home of Ojibway National Urban Park".

With strong Liberal investment, my community is thriving. At the heart of that optimism are workers. As our auto workers mobilize to fight for their fair share, we stand with them today, tomorrow and always.

Statements by Members

● (1405)

*[Translation]***QUÉBEC CAPITALES**

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec City's baseball team, the Capitales, are the champions for the second straight season. They beat out the Evansville Otters to win the Frontier League championship.

Once again, baseball fans turned out in droves, breaking the attendance record with a season total of 166,916. The team could not have secured its ninth title in its 24-year history without the talent and hard work of the players and the entire organization, who brought us some magical baseball moments.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the incredible work of manager Patrick Scalabrini and president Michel Laplante.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say happy retirement to Quebec City's own David Glaude, who hit a home run late in the game, scoring three runs.

I would like to congratulate the whole team and the entire organization. Once again, I want to thank them for making us so proud.

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NATIONAL FOREST WEEK

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is National Forest Week. The forestry sector has shaped the history of the Outaouais region.

In 1926, the Canadian International Paper Company built the Gatineau newsprint mill on the Ottawa River and the Gatineau River. From that point on, thousands of labourers, log drivers and raftsmen came here looking for work. Those pillars of heritage and identity created the underpinnings of the city of Gatineau.

The Gatineau mill has changed names several times over the course of its history, but it continues to dominate our landscape. It is now part of the Paper Excellence Group, which is committed to supporting the mill's long-term growth. This is great news for the dedicated workers and members of Unifor.

I would like to commend the courage and tremendous resilience demonstrated by the employees of the Gatineau mill over the years. I am very proud of them, as are we all. Have a wonderful National Forest Week.

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CARBON TAX

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this government, our country is broken. Inflation is already hurting families, and food prices are expected to rise by 34% over the next two years. Repeated interest rate hikes have doubled mortgage payments. One in two Canadians lives paycheque to paycheque.

What is the government's response? It is adamant about going ahead with its plan to increase the carbon tax.

Worse still, the Bloc members are blindly supporting it. They say they want to drastically increase the carbon tax. What does "drastic" mean? It means "extreme", "radical". That is what the Bloc-Liberal coalition wants: to make everything drastically, radically more expensive. Could a government be more out of touch? I think not. I want all families in Quebec and Canada to know that a vote for the Bloc Québécois in the next election will cost them dearly.

I want everyone to remember this: A Conservative government will bring back common sense by abolishing the Bloc-Liberal tax and bringing home lower prices.

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*[English]***INSITE SAFE INJECTION SITE**

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this last weekend marked 20 years since the first North American safe injection site, Insite, opened in Vancouver. Since 2003, it has proven to be a lifesaver, with 1.7 million visits.

I want to give a shout-out to those who looked at the positive evidence of harm reduction seen in Europe and took a chance on a pilot project with the Portland health society that proved successful.

The catalyst was Mayor Philip Owen, who convinced two other levels of government to sign the Vancouver agreement. The MP for Vancouver East was the provincial minister, I was the federal representative, and all three of us, together with UBC's Drs. Montaner, Kerr and O'Shaughnessy, who headed the pilot project, took a political risk based on evidence. Eighteen months later we saw 100% of lives saved and knew it was all worth it. It still is.

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● (1410)

LIAM FISHER

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we lost a dear friend last week, at just 34 years old: my pal from Pemberton, Liam Fisher.

Liam was a fellow paddler, who recently moved to Grenada to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor at St. George's University. He was not content with just being the fittest guy in the lower mainland of Vancouver, but dreamed of doing more, helping more people, and he aspired to help people as a doctor.

Liam used to own a gym in North Vancouver. He once raised over \$22,000 by flipping a 300-pound tire for over 10 kilometres to raise money for cancer research. He did that for his sister Riva.

Tragically, this week marks six years since Riva lost her battle with cancer. One of Riva's friends shared this quote after she passed six years ago:

Grief, I've learned, is really just love. It's all the love you want to give, but cannot. All that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go.

I say to Riva and Liam's parents Hugh and Hillary, on behalf of the Canadian paddling community, that we are so sorry and we love them so much.

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LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the House about the Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. Many know him as the common-sense leader our country needs. His schoolteacher parents know him as the boy they adopted and raised in their modest home in the suburbs of Calgary. His dad knows him as the son he took to early morning hockey games. His neighbours know him as the boy who used to deliver their morning newspaper. His children know him, in français, *español* and English, as “papa”. His colleagues know him as someone who is fighting hard every day for Canadians. Therefore, when he says, “It doesn't matter who you know or where you're from, but rather who you are and where you're going”, those are not just empty words; he has lived it. It is common sense. Let us bring it home.

* * *

MUNICIPALITY OF BAULINE

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with a population of just 500, the municipality of Bauline in St. John's East may be small in size, but it is big on addressing the pressing issue of climate change.

Perched on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, Bauline understands the threat of our changing climate and extreme weather events better than most. The town recently hosted its third annual Climate Action Day, bringing together the local council and residents of Bauline, with a shared determination to reduce carbon emissions through consistent and well-thought-out actions.

Bauline has set a high standard for all of us to emulate and is a true champion for change. If our smallest communities can make significant strides in reducing their carbon footprint, then it is incumbent upon us all to collectively challenge communities, both big and small, to follow suit.

Climate change requires all of us to act, and Bauline's exemplary leadership serves as an inspiration to us all.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in June, the finance minister said, “Canada's plan to bring down inflation is working.” She called it a “milestone moment”, taking credit for the reduction.

Yesterday, we learned inflation has gone up to 4%, an increase of 43% since she made those comments. Now inflation is higher here than it is in the United States. Mortgage payments are up 151%, to \$3,560. Rent has doubled.

Before the Prime Minister took office, it took 25 years to pay off a mortgage. Now it takes 25 years just to save for a down payment. The NDP-Liberal government wants to blow the bank. The Prime

Statements by Members

Minister has added more debt than all previous prime ministers combined.

Common-sense Conservatives would bring homes people can afford by reducing inflationary deficits and taxes to bring lower interest rates. After eight years, the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I have a special message for someone important in my life. To my daughter, I say happy birthday. I love her, and my life got a thousand times better the day she was born.

However, I worry about my daughter's safety: After eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, crime is up nearly 40%. Gang-related murders are up 108%. Worst of all, sex crimes against children are up 126%. Despite this, the Liberal-NDP government stands by its pillowy-soft sentences for gun, sex and violent offenders, who are an affront to ordinary Canadians.

Luckily, we are beginning to realize that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Conservatives and our leader are ready to work to reverse the wave of violent crime that has been ushered in by the Prime Minister. He is not ready to act; we are.

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● (1415)

[Translation]

HON. MONIQUE BÉGIN

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to express my admiration and gratitude for an exceptional woman, the Hon. Monique Bégin. Driven by the strong liberal values of feminism, equality, social justice and equity that guided her career, she cleared a path for all the women who entered the House after her.

In 1972, she became one of Quebec's first three women members of Parliament. A true pioneer, she also served with distinction as a minister, creating the child tax credit, supporting a guaranteed income supplement increase and passing the Canada Health Act.

After leaving politics, she made Ottawa—Vanier her home and continued serving others as a faculty member at the University of Ottawa. She also influenced and advised political decision-makers, and I am privileged to count myself among them.

Statements by Members

We owe Monique Bégin a great deal for her outstanding achievements. We also have a duty to carry the torch she passed to us.

[English]

I offer my sincere condolences to her loved ones. May she rest in peace.

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[English]

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work of Project EmpowHER and other women's health organizations that have come to Ottawa to advocate for universal coverage of contraception in Canada.

It is time that we end financial barriers that limit access to contraceptives. I heed Action Canada's call for "universal no-cost prescription contraception", which is "predicated on everyone being able to give free and informed consent, and on that consent being respected", as well as its call to "see an end to forced sterilization and discrimination in the healthcare system".

It is time to put in place a national pharmacare strategy that includes free contraceptives and get rid of the cost barriers that limit an individual's right to choose. It is time to respect people's bodily autonomy, including the right to reproductive choice, and to recognize reproductive rights as human rights and ensure free access to contraceptives in Canada.

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[Translation]

JACQUES-YVAN MORIN

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is only natural for Quebec to see itself as more than a mere province, since it was shaped by giants like Jacques-Yvan Morin, who passed away on July 26.

In 1973, he became leader of the official opposition with just six elected members from the Parti Québécois, which would transform Quebec three years later. He then served as deputy premier of Quebec alongside René Lévesque, and later as minister of education, minister of cultural and scientific development and minister of intergovernmental affairs.

Jacques-Yvan Morin was at the forefront of our nation's history as it was being written. He was a professor emeritus and prominent jurist who was trained at top schools like Harvard and Cambridge. He was the first full-time professor of international law at the University of Montreal. He belonged to a rare breed of distinguished Quebec intellectuals from that era, who took the plunge and devoted everything they had to serving Quebec.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I offer my condolences to his wife Élisabeth Gallat-Morin, his son Étienne, and all those who loved him.

I am grateful to Jacques-Yvan Morin, a towering figure in Quebec history, for sowing the seeds of a future that can now be reaped by younger Quebecers.

CARBON TAX

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, instead of celebrating this harvest season, farmers across Canada are shuddering at the thought of their first carbon tax bill. When the NDP-Liberal government triples the carbon tax, farmers will be forced to pay \$150,000 in additional taxes, all for the crime of working hard to feed this country. The NDP-Liberal government's punitive tax is felt all the way from the farmer who grows the food and the trucker who moves it to the Canadian who eats the food if they can afford it. Onions are up 60%, cabbage is up 70%, carrots are up 74% and even potatoes are up 68%.

After eight years under the current Prime Minister, families will pay more than \$16,000 more for groceries this year alone. With food banks lined up out the door, from Victoria-by-the-Sea, Prince Edward Island, to Victoria, British Columbia, Thanksgiving is going to be tough. The NDP-Liberal tax is truly farm to table, and the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

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● (1420)

GENDER EQUALITY WEEK

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise as the MP for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill to speak on gender equality, a fundamental issue for so many in my riding and all of Canada. Today marks the midpoint of Gender Equality Week, and in this place, we are just about at the midpoint to gender equality.

Over 100 years have passed since women could first run for office, yet only 30% of MPs are women. However, women make up more than 50% of the population. Women make up over 36% of the Liberal caucus; our policies encourage women to run, and we address the barriers they face and unequivocally support women's rights. Less than 18% of the official opposition's caucus is made up of women, and it is a caucus that is certainly not unanimous in its support of gender equality or a woman's right to choose.

In honour of Monique Bégin and other trailblazers, we must keep moving forward toward a just and equal society and not let regressive forces take us back.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister has said that times are tough for politicians. At his retreat in Charlottetown, he said that inflation would go down. We learned yesterday that it has actually gone up.

In fact, since the Minister of Finance declared victory over inflation, it has increased 43%. This could force the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates on Canadians, who are already carrying the highest debt levels in the G7.

Will the government finally reverse its inflationary taxes and deficits so we can cut interest rates before we have a mortgage crisis on our hands?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Leader of the Opposition would like an answer, so I will ask members to quiet down.

It is nice to see you all excited, but I would like to recognize the hon. minister.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see so much enthusiasm from my colleagues on both sides of the House.

During the summer, we did something important. We listened to Canadians. They told us three things. They want help with the cost of groceries and the cost of housing. One thing that Canadians did not tell us was to stop helping families, youth and the most vulnerable members of our society.

The Canadians who are watching us today know that we will always be there for them, and they are beginning to understand that the Conservative leader is just too risky for Canada.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me as though, for once, the Liberals are actually happy with the person leading them in question period. I would like to congratulate the hon. member on his new duties. He is a little guy from Shawinigan. Perhaps we will have another little guy from Shawinigan as Prime Minister one day.

I can understand why even the Liberals want to fire the Prime Minister. He costs too much and is not worth the cost or effort.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative leader is busy ranting, Canadians are clearly telling us one thing: They need our government's help.

That is why we are here to help on the grocery front, for example. We called in the CEOs of the major grocery chains this week. We are going to lower the GST on housing. We are going to take action to help Canadians.

If there is one thing Canadians are tired of, it is hearing the Conservative leader's slogans. One thing they understand is that he is

Oral Questions

just too risky for Canada. We will be there for Canadians every step of the way.

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at his recent retreat in Charlottetown, the Prime Minister said that life is really tough for politicians. Today he is off on another trip to New York for three days to give a couple of speeches and burn a whole lot of fuel, at the same time as he raises carbon taxes on Canadians for the crime of driving to work and feeding their families.

Yesterday, inflation was way up. It is accelerating. It is higher than in the States and in Japan, which could drive up interest rates.

Will the Prime Minister balance the budget and axe the tax to bring inflation and interest rates down?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I realize it is Wednesday, everybody is excited and emotions are running high, but we have to get through question period. Let us see if we can just calm down and hear the questions and answers.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that affordability is, of course, the top priority for the government. It is very clear that it is a huge concern on the minds of many Canadians. It has caused us to look at programs such as removing the GST from the construction of new rental units, providing money for home efficiency, the grocery rebate and a range of other things.

However, I would say that it is also important that while we are addressing affordability, we do so in a manner that actually will allow us to also address the climate crisis. It is an existential threat to the future of our children. Shame on the Conservatives for having no climate plan. On this side of the House, we can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can do both.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are prepared to thunderously applaud anyone, other than their own leader, who stands up in the House of Commons. No wonder the Prime Minister says that it is a really hard time to be a politician.

Oral Questions

Right now, speaking of hard times, he is off in New York for another three days, burning a lot of jet fuel while he applies a carbon tax, which he wants to quadruple to 61¢ a litre, on farmers, single parents and struggling working-class families who have to choose between eating and heating.

Will the Prime Minister park the plane, end the high-carbon hypocrisy and axe the tax?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, our government actually has a plan to support Canadians during this time. We have, for example, the grocery rebate helping 11 million Canadians. We are helping 4.2 million Canadians with the workers benefits and over six million Canadians with indexed old age security.

What is the Conservatives' plan? That is right; they do not have one.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our plan is to axe the tax and use technology, not taxes.

It is really incredible that this high-flying, high-carbon hypocrite is jetting around the world at the expense of Canadian taxpayers at the same time as he raises fuel taxes on everyday Canadians. The NDP supports him 100% in the 61¢-a-litre carbon tax they want to impose. That and the inflationary deficits have driven inflation back up.

Will the government finally end the inflationary taxes and deficits so we can bring down rates before Canadians go bankrupt?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over nearly two decades of Canadian politics, the member has not seen a program that helps Canadians that he does not want to cut. Over the course of my time in the chamber, I have watched him attack the programs that support my constituents, programs like employment insurance and the Canada pension plan.

We are going to continue to put forward measures that are going to support Canadians during their time of need. He may dismiss them as big, fat government programs; I call them programs that put food on the table for families who live in my community.

* * *

● (1430)

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, too many Quebecers and too many Canadians are having to choose between impossibly high rent and the threat of homelessness.

Removing the GST on rental housing cannot hurt, but it may also do nothing to help tenants, who so desperately need it.

Will the government agree to stop wanting to encroach on the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, and does it recognize that the ideal solution for everyone would be to release the \$900 million it is withholding for social housing in Quebec?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had many conversations with the people of Quebec. I have spoken with my counterpart, and my team is speaking to his team. We exchanged messages this morning. I hope to get a call this evening.

The fact of the matter is we both see building housing in Quebec and across the country as a priority. We must work together to achieve those objectives. I will keep working on this. I will continue to work with my counterpart and with Quebec.

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OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as long as Canada is bent on interfering, it should help the least fortunate cope with the rising cost of living and housing. It should also rein in its own spending so that it does not further contribute to inflation, yet Ottawa is giving billions of dollars to the oil industry.

Would it not be better for Ottawa to end oil subsidies and use that money to increase seniors' pensions, end discrimination against people between the ages of 65 and 75, and support social housing?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we have to fight climate change. Of course, we have to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors of the economy.

Regarding the oil industry, we ended fossil fuel subsidies two or three months ago, and we are going to build an economy that will make a major contribution to a low-carbon future.

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[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister admitted that he could have and should have done more to build affordable homes in Canada. Now, the reality is that we have a situation where we are losing more affordable homes than we are building as a nation.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to a renter who is living in a home he can afford right now but who lives in fear that one day that home will be renocted or demovicted and he will lose it? What does the Prime Minister have to say to ensure that people will be able to stay in the homes they can afford?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's concern about making sure some of the most vulnerable Canadians have a safe and affordable place to call home. That was in fact the motivation for the national housing strategy where our government re-entered the social housing space after decades of governments, I should say of different partisan stripes, vacated it.

In reality, we know we need to do more. That is why we moved forward with eliminating GST on apartments that are going to be rented to Canadians. Part of the solution to the housing crisis is to build more homes, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, “I should have” is not what people want to hear. People want the job done.

Right now, finding affordable housing is impossible because there is none. Affordable rent for someone looking for housing or an apartment is non-existent.

What is this Prime Minister going to do to ensure the construction of housing that people can afford?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people unable to find a home they can afford are struggling. That is why we started implementing national housing strategies decades ago. These investments are necessary. We are starting to build affordable homes again.

[English]

In addition, he wants to see action. Last week, we eliminated the GST on the construction of apartments in this country. This is going to add to the supply. This is going to reduce the cost for people to rent and will provide protection for people who are struggling to find a place to call home. It is the right path forward. We are going to continue.

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[Translation]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals came up with the carbon tax and now the Bloc Québécois is proposing to drastically increase it. The Bloc Québécois claims to stand up for the interests of Quebecers, but let us be clear, the Bloc wants to take money from Quebecers and hand it over to the federal government. Voting Bloc is costly.

Will the Prime Minister reject the Bloc's request to drastically increase the carbon tax at Quebecers' expense?

● (1435)

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Quebecers understand is the cost of the environmental crisis. After all the forest fires and floods we saw all summer, and now with the hurricane season, what Quebecers understand is that pollution can no longer be free in this country. They want the government to keep taking action for future generations. We will keep going. It is a shame that the Conservative Party has no plan to fight climate change.

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FINANCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the minister thinks of a former Liberal finance minister, John Manley, who said that the Prime Minister's deficits are like stepping on the gas when it

Oral Questions

comes to inflation. This forces the Bank of Canada to step harder on the brakes by increasing interest rates.

Here is an example of completely ridiculous spending. The government spent \$284 million to redo Canadian passports. That is a third of a billion dollars, and it was \$123 million over budget. That is an outrageous waste.

Will the Prime Minister promise to stop burning Canadians' money?

[English]

Hon. Terry Beech (Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is my first chance to rise in the House as the Minister of Citizens' Services. I would like to thank my wife, my constituents and, of course, the caucus. I look forward to working with everybody in the House to improve citizens' services.

I am very happy to report that, thanks to the hard work of the now House leader, the passport backlog has been completely eliminated. In addition, our investment means that the printers are now five times faster and people can check their passport applications online. They will soon be able to renew their passports online as well. That is delivering better services for Canadians.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, eight years of the Prime Minister has punished Canadians with an NDP-Liberal government that spent billions of dollars to double the price of a home, to double the rent and double the mortgage payment, all because of the Liberals' inflationary spending. They are building fewer homes this month than they did last month. Inflation is up; homebuilding is down.

When will the housing minister stand up and admit that the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with enormous respect for my hon. colleague, when her party leader was the housing minister, he advanced a program with \$300 million that he said would build 25,000 homes. Fewer than 100 were built.

We have advanced programs that are going to build homes and that have been building homes. The reality is that we know we need to do more. That is why we are eliminating the GST on apartments to be constructed. That is why we are advancing a plan to change the way cities build homes. It is working.

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We cannot do it alone, but we will bring communities and provinces with us. It is the right path forward. I hope the Conservatives join us.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of a home has doubled in this country. The minister who made international students sleep on the streets and lost track of a million people is now in charge of building homes in this country. How does one lose a million people? He is recycling broken campaign promises from eight years ago that will not fix the fact that buying a castle in Europe is now cheaper than buying a family home in Kitchener.

Are Canadians supposed to trust the guy who broke immigration to fix housing, or anyone over there to fix inflation?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect, I think it is very dangerous when any member of the House starts playing politics with immigration. With respect, if the Conservatives think that breaking the immigration system is tied to the fact that we have welcomed—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Please continue.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, welcoming an ambitious level of newcomers is not breaking the immigration system, and we want to make sure communities are equipped to welcome them. We are not going to take lessons from the Conservatives, who failed miserably when it came to housing, by doing absolutely nothing. We have removed taxes on home construction. We are changing the way cities build homes.

We are going to build Canada and we are going to advance the measures to make it happen.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they lost track of a million people.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, housing prices are at an all-time high, and many Canadians have lost hope of ever owning their own home. This is a direct result of the NDP-Liberal government's reckless deficit spending that has poured countless cash into the economy, driving up inflation, which has driven up interest rates, which has doubled mortgage rates.

Will the Prime Minister finally stop his inflationary spending so Canadians can once again keep a roof over their heads?

• (1440)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope this feigned compassion on behalf of the Conservatives is not fooling Canadians, because on two previous occasions, the Conservatives voted against lowering taxes for the middle class in this country.

We have been criss-crossing the country over the course of the summer. Not a single Canadian has told us they would like us to cut our programs. Canadians are relying on the supports that our government is providing, and we are providing them in a fiscally responsible way.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, former Liberal finance minister John Manley said that the Liberal deficit spending is like pressing a gas pedal on inflation while the Bank of Canada is trying to press the brakes on it by raising interest rates. Eight years ago, Canadians could afford to pay off their mortgage in 25 years. Now it takes 25 years just to save for a down payment.

When will the Prime Minister stop his reckless spending so Canadians can once again afford to buy homes?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, just a few weeks ago, rating agencies confirmed Canada's AAA credit rating. That is because what we are doing is spending in order to support Canadians, but doing so in a responsible way.

We have just announced the next step in our plan to build more homes faster. What we will do is create more apartment buildings for more Canadian families right across the country. The response from the Conservative leader was that we do not need any more of those. Canadians do need their federal government, and this is the federal government that has their backs.

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[Translation]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, Calgary is hosting the World Petroleum Congress. Ottawa has sent three ministers there. That sends a clear message.

At the same time, they have the nerve to attend a United Nations meeting on climate change. Meanwhile, oil and gas companies are lining their pockets. Everyone knows that the main reason gas prices have gone up is oil and gas company profits.

Will the government announce an end to all oil and gas subsidies at the UN?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have put in place a framework to reduce and eliminate subsidies to the fossil fuel sector.

Of course I was in Calgary. I gave a speech about climate change and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors of the economy, and that, of course, includes the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is subsidizing rich oil companies that have absolutely no need of subsidies. At the same time, it is withholding money needed for social housing and refusing to adjust seniors' pensions, who are being hard hit by inflation. This inflation has been exacerbated by oil company profits.

Why does Ottawa not take the money it gives to oil companies and invest it in social housing and seniors' pensions instead?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but what my hon. colleague said is untrue.

We established a framework to reduce and eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. Obviously, this is a very important issue. We have to move faster on developing an economy that can prosper in what must be a low-carbon future.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the government taxes vegetable growers, the truckers who transport those vegetables and the processors, then Quebec families are bound to have higher grocery bills.

While half of Canadians are surviving paycheque to paycheque, the Liberal-Bloc coalition seeking to drastically increase taxes thinks that Canadians are not paying enough. Not only does the Bloc Québécois support the carbon tax, but its members want to drastically increase it.

Why have the Liberals and the Bloc joined forces to impoverish Quebecers?

• (1445)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing for Canadians to hear a question like that.

This week, Canadians saw that we, on this side of the House, are taking action. What have we done for Canadians? We met with corporate CEOs from across the country to share with them the frustration felt by millions of Canadians and to tell them that enough is enough and that we need to do something to stabilize prices in Canada.

Rather than coming up with slogans, the Conservatives should unite with the Liberal caucus to act in the interest of Canadians. That is what people expect of them.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we hear all sorts of excuses from the Liberal-Bloc coalition for drastic tax increases.

They say that the carbon tax does not apply to Quebec, but that is false. The second carbon tax, which the Bloc Québécois supports, will add 20¢ to the cost of a litre of gas.

After eight years, the Liberals have managed to convince the Leader of the Bloc Québécois to take more money from Quebecers and send it to Ottawa. That is totally irresponsible if the goal is to help families who are struggling. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly.

Why is the Prime Minister endorsing the Bloc Québécois's wish to drastically increase taxes at Quebecers' expense?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is drastic and irresponsible is denying that climate change exists.

Oral Questions

What the Conservative elites have been doing for years now is telling the 80% of Canadians who are keeping more money in their pockets that they do not deserve to have us make their lives more affordable. What is irresponsible and unacceptable is that just two years ago, the Conservative Party was proposing a price on pollution. Now, in 2023, they are changing their minds.

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[English]

FINANCE

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians want right now is for inflation to come down and for interest rates to fall, not to pour fuel on the fire of inflation. That was what the finance minister promised last year. Instead, mortgage interest rates are up 31%. Inflation is up 4% this month alone. After eight years, the Liberal-NDP government refuses to be the financial steward this country so desperately needs. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister finally stop his inflationary spending so Canadians can keep a roof over their heads?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be specific about what they are talking about when they are talking about cuts. When they are talking about dealing with global inflation, they want to do it on the backs of the most vulnerable, as if cutting from the most vulnerable people in Canada is going to somehow fix global inflation. That means, as an example, with the dental care program that we are rolling out, 3.5 million seniors would lose their dental care. That means 181,000 people with disabilities would lose their dental care. That means one million children would lose their dental care. That is what they are talking about. Let us be clear about what their real plan is.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely false and is empty, condescending rhetoric. Let us quote former Liberal finance minister John Manley: "This is a bit like driving your car with one foot on the gas and the other on the brake generally, especially if there's slushy conditions under your tires. That's not a good plan for controlling the direction of your vehicle, not a good plan for controlling the direction of the economy either."

After eight years, the Liberal-NDP government is still not able to address the housing and living crisis that it helped create. Again, will the Prime Minister finally stop his inflationary spending so people do not go bankrupt, yes or no?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in government, they had higher unemployment, lower wages and stagnation when it came to poverty rates. When they are talking about cutting, they are talking about cutting things like child care. They are talking about cutting things like dental care. They are talking about rolling back pensions, just as they did when they were in government.

Oral Questions

What Canadians need right now is a government that is there for them, and what they cannot afford are the risky ideas of the Conservative Party of Canada.

The Speaker: Before we go to the next question, I just want to compliment the hon. members for South Shore—St. Margarets and Dufferin—Caledon, who are very quiet during the questions. If they could just carry that through the answers, I would really appreciate it.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

* * *

● (1450)

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives and Liberals caused the housing crisis by cancelling the national co-op and social housing program 30 years ago. Canada is now among the lowest of the G7 countries in social housing stock. Seniors, families and everyday Canadians need a home that they can afford.

Under the Liberals' national housing strategy, it will take at least 125 years to build the community housing that we need. Talk is cheap. Bold action is needed. Will the Liberals put people before profits and commit to building two million units of co-op and social housing?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my hon. colleague's perspective that we need to build more housing in this country, including subsidized housing for low-income families. I also agree with the NDP that the reason we find ourselves with such an extraordinary housing shortage is that federal governments of different partisan stripes for decades have vacated the space.

We re-entered the sector in 2017 with the advancing of the national housing strategy. We are seeing hundreds of thousands of subsidized homes provide safety and security for low-income families. We will continue to advance more measures to build housing stock, including tax incentives to get builders building and to change the way that cities build homes, but we will not forget the most vulnerable along the way.

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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians, we should be making sure that all our kids feel safe, loved and supported. However, right now, anti-trans demonstrations across Canada are making this impossible, especially for trans kids.

In June, the Conservatives blocked an NDP motion calling on all Canadian leaders to condemn this rising tide of hate and violence. Will the Liberals join New Democrats in condemning this anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate by supporting our motion when it comes back to the House? Will they join us in demonstrating that Canada is truly a country where there is no space for hate?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I give a special thanks to the member across for his work, his advocacy and his lived experience.

Absolutely we stand with trans and queer youth. As I reflect on what has happened outside these walls today and the marches that we see, I remind everybody that as a parent I understand the need for parents to be at the centre of their kids' lives. However, I also very much understand the need to centre trans and queer kids and make sure they are heard and make sure they have safe spaces.

To those kids, we are with them and we hear them. I have spoken to them across—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we speak, the Ukrainian people are risking everything and sacrificing their lives to defend their homeland against Russia's genocidal invasion. Russia's invasion is not just an existential threat to Ukraine. It is also the primary reason for food and energy price inflation here in Canada and around the world. It is a major threat to global security and to Canada's security. Canada must stand with the Ukrainian people until they win.

Could the Minister of National Defence share with Canadians what Canada is doing to support the brave people of Ukraine?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for Etobicoke Centre for his exceptional leadership in support of Ukraine.

In the face of Russia's unrelenting brutality and aggression, Ukrainians have fought back with remarkable strength and courage. Canada continues to stand with them.

Canada has already provided over \$1.8 billion in military aid, and earlier this week, while visiting our soldiers in the United Kingdom, who are training Ukrainian soldiers, I announced that Canada will contribute \$33 million to a British-led air defence partnership. This investment will equip Ukrainians with the tools they need to defend their skies and protect critical infrastructure.

Canada, our partners and allies will always support Ukrainian friends, and the comprehensive military—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was at the International Plowing Match, which was in my riding, and I spoke with farmers from all across Canada. What is their number one concern? It is the carbon tax.

Whether it is drying grain or driving their combine, the carbon tax is crushing Canadian farmers. When farmers pay more, Canadians pay more at the grocery store.

After eight years of paying more, Canadians cannot afford the Liberal government. Will it come to its senses and axe the tax?

• (1455)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being a farmer, I understand the trouble and difficulties farmers have. Imagine going to a potato field and having to take a bulldozer to pull the potato harvest.

Out in the Prairies, there is not enough rain to grow a crop. Fiona blew our barns down and it killed our dairy cattle. It blew the wharves to pieces.

That is why we, as a government, have invested in climate change and will continue to invest to make sure that farmers and the country itself can grow crops and have fishing and harbours.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member says the government is investing in climate change. What they have are investments in a tax plan. If it was a climate plan that was going to fix climate change, carbon tax 1 and carbon tax 2 would have actually done something.

All of these things he talked about are still happening. Why? It is because it is a tax; it is not an environment plan. What this tax does is make everything more expensive for Canadians.

They say they are going to help. Will they actually help and axe the tax?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I represent a rural riding too, and what the member does not get is that farmers believe in climate change and they want to help fight it. I spent the summer with my community listening to their concerns and I heard them loud and clear. Affordability is a major issue and we are reminded harshly, through the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon would like to hear the response to his answer. Please, everyone, listen so that we can all have an idea of what the answer is.

I will let the parliamentary secretary continue.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, like the member, I live in a rural riding, and unlike the Conservatives, I spent the summer talking to my constituents and hearing their concerns. I heard them loud and clear. Affordability is a top issue, but we are also reminded harshly, through extreme weather events throughout the summer, that fighting climate change is more important than ever.

Oral Questions

We have a plan to address both. That is important. This is about environment and climate change as well as affordability, but the Conservatives do not have a plan for either. Our climate action incentive sends more money back to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Liberal agriculture minister claims that farmers support the carbon tax. How out of touch can a minister be? Only 2% of Canadian farmers think the Liberals even support agriculture, because they know that the Prime Minister is unaffordable.

Farmers cannot afford to pay close to \$1 billion in carbon taxes. They cannot afford it when diesel goes up 70¢ a litre. They cannot afford to pay more in fertilizer and feed and higher interest rates.

Does the Liberal agriculture minister truly support quadrupling the carbon tax on farmers, truckers and processors, knowing the consequences mean higher food prices for Canadians?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that farmers are fully aware of what is taking place in this country.

Hurricane Fiona blew down their barns and killed their cattle. Temperatures went to 50 below zero and extreme winds were over 200 kilometres an hour, blowing everything to pieces. Farmers fully understand that that adds costs to everything.

That is why the Liberal government has continued and will continue to invest in climate change and to stand with our farmers.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his ally, the Bloc Québécois, are driving up food prices by continuing to support the carbon tax.

Yes, the second carbon tax applies to Quebec, contrary to what the Bloc claims. Input costs continue to rise for our farmers and transportation costs continue to skyrocket, yet the Bloc wants to drastically increase the carbon tax. Yes, voting Bloc is costly.

Can the Prime Minister tell us if he is going to listen to the Bloc Québécois's request to drastically increase the tax?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague wants to talk about costs. How costly is it to deal with our burning forests? How costly is it to clean up overflowing lakes and rivers? How costly is it to rebuild after tornadoes and hurricanes hit our regions? How much does it all add up to in health care costs for our children?

One thing is clear: Canada cannot afford the Conservatives.

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MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the federal government finally appointed Davie as the third partner in the national shipbuilding strategy, we thought things would get better in Quebec City. Has anything changed? No, nothing has changed.

The federal government gave Irving nearly \$500 million to modernize its shipyard. How much did they give to Davie? Nothing.

How many of the seven icebreaker contracts the Prime Minister promised in April during a nice photo op went to Davie? None. It got no subsidies and no contracts.

As of today, how many dollars has the federal government committed to Davie?

● (1500)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to answer this question.

I would like to point out that my colleague also had the chance to attend the incredible announcement we made last spring. She was able to see, as she did today, just how happy the workers, the 1,300 suppliers and all the political and economic partners in the Quebec City area were with this decision and the choice we made to help the Quebec City area.

She should recognize—and I think she will when she is somewhat less engaged in this partisan effort—that we are there for workers, that we are there for suppliers and that we are there for the Quebec City area.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government gave Irving Oil \$500 million in public funds and gave none to Davie. The federal government is investing Quebecers' money against Quebecers, but we know how to get things done. Together, Davie and the Government of Quebec invested \$840 million to compensate for the federal government's unfairness. Despite Ottawa's inaction, Davie is ready.

This government promised \$8.5 billion in contracts last April, and 1,800 jobs depend on those contracts.

When will Davie get those contracts? We want a date.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to give my colleague a briefing.

I think she forgot what she heard last spring, and that is that the workers are not waiting for contracts. The shipyard has already

been given contracts. Nearly 1,000 people are working at the shipyard as we speak. There will be contracts for the next 20 to 25 years and thousands more workers will be hired, not to mention the tens of thousands of others who will work for the 1,300 suppliers.

That is wonderful news for the Quebec City region, and I would invite my colleague to celebrate that as we are.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every member of the House receives emails, letters and phone calls explaining how unaffordable life has become due to the NDP-Liberal government's punishing carbon tax.

After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, everything costs more, and inflation on basic necessities such as food continues to rise. The price of lettuce is up. The price of carrots is up, and the price of potatoes is up, all by more than 70%. Quite frankly, Canadians are fed up.

Will the Liberal Prime Minister cancel his plans to increase his inflationary carbon tax?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to take seriously a question from the hon. member after I read a news article, just a couple of evenings ago, indicating that he and some of his Conservative colleagues went on a \$45,000 trip to have \$600 bottles of champagne in the United Kingdom, so they could meet with people who oppose sensible policies to put a price on pollution.

The reality is that we are going to continue to put forward measures that grow the economy. I will take this moment to point out that the Conservatives, contrary to the will of the provincial Conservative government in Nova Scotia, are opposing a regulatory framework that would allow us to build offshore renewable energy. Conservatives need to get with the times. We are going to build a green economy for the future.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Liberal government would like to do is deflect from the things that are very important to Canadians, such as their inflationary carbon tax. Even the governor of the Bank of Canada has stated clearly that, with the carbon tax announcement that has it going up, inflation increases each year.

The ongoing punishment for Canadians simply trying to buy food, put a roof over their heads, for which the minister is failing again just as he did on immigration, and heat their homes, must stop.

After eight years, the Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost. When will he cancel his plans to increase his inflationary carbon tax?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a serious responsible government needs to have a plan to address both affordability and climate change, but all these Conservatives have are slogans and catch phrases to stick on T-shirts and bumper stickers.

Groceries are too expensive, but one of the main driving forces behind, for example, expensive lettuce in drought-prone places is climate change. While that member was hobnobbing with million-dollar climate change deniers in Europe, we were here continuing to address the issues that face Canadians and playing a leadership role in addressing the threats of climate change in Canada.

• (1505)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, eight years of the NDP-Liberal government have depleted Canadians' savings, raised their taxes and increased the prices at their local grocery stores. Cutting his carbon tax could bring immediate relief for Canadians, but the Prime Minister refuses. Even the Bank of Canada governor is now warning that the Liberals' carbon tax increases are causing inflation.

The policies of the Prime Minister are not worth the cost, and Canadians know it. Will he finally side with Canadians and cancel his inflationary carbon tax increases?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House a number of times, the price on pollution was put in place in a manner where eight out of 10 families get more money back than they pay in the price on pollution.

I would have to say that the hypocrisy coming from that side of the House is unbelievable. The last Conservative government, within which the Leader of the Opposition was a minister, proposed cap and trade, which is a form of pricing pollution.

In the last election, the Conservative Party and everybody in this chamber ran on putting a price on pollution. Now the Conservative Party campaigns actively against a price on pollution. How can the Canadian public believe anything these people have to say?

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[Translation]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot about affordability these days, but we also need to build an economy that will create good jobs and a better quality of life for Canadians. The Outaouais boasts tremendous ecotourism and recreation potential.

I would like to hear what the Minister of Tourism plans to do to help the Outaouais achieve its full potential.

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Pontiac is quite right. Tourism is the economic engine of our regions. That is why, through Canada Economic Development, the government has allocated \$700,000 in financial assistance to eight

businesses in the Outaouais region to increase lodging availability, because we want people to come and stay for more than just a day.

I would encourage everyone to visit the Outaouais region because there are so many recreational and tourism activities. I thank the member for Pontiac for all the work she does for the economic development of our regions.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, new documents show the Liberals billed Canadians more than a quarter of a million dollars for a three-day cabinet meeting supposedly focused on tackling inflation. Instead of coming up with any real plans to make life more affordable, the out-of-touch Prime Minister and his cabinet spent their time eating expensive meals at high-end restaurants. Inflation is out of control, but the Liberals will not stop living large.

Will the Prime Minister take the silver spoon out of his mouth, axe the carbon tax and show respect to Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the government has been focused on for the last eight years is making sure that we are advancing measures that help Canadians. We increased the Canada child benefit, and instead of sending cheques to millionaires, we made sure that the poorest and most vulnerable were getting the maximum they could have. When it comes to child care, we have cut fees in half by over 50%. When it comes to child poverty, we have lifted 450,000 children out of poverty.

What the Conservatives do not understand is that we have been not only listening to Canadians, but also acting on their behalf, and we continue to work hard for Canadians every single day.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, somehow life is less affordable than it has ever been because there is this punitive thing called the carbon tax, which the Liberals have applied to every single heating bill of Canadians, every single grocery bill of Canadians and every single fuel cost that Canadians incur at the pump. Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, and the government does not care.

There is a very tangible action that could be taken on behalf of Canadians, and that is to scrap the tax. When will the government find itself on side with the Canadian public and finally get rid of the punitive carbon tax?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly disappointing to hear from the members opposite when it comes to being there for Canadians because, over the past summer, there have been hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have been displaced from their homes due to wildfires and climate change-related disasters. In fact, an entire community in Yellowknife was evacuated because of unprecedented wildfires.

The Conservatives can continue to bury their heads in the sand. We will continue to act to fight climate change because this is existential. Our job as a government is to protect Canadians, and we will continue to do that.

• (1510)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the hon. member concede that, despite the carbon tax, nothing is being accomplished in taking care of the environment and getting us to a better place. Canadians are certainly worse off.

They are struggling to afford the basic necessities of life. They are going to the grocery store, literally spending hundreds of dollars and walking out with nothing more than a couple bags of groceries. That is not okay, and after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are fed up. They cannot afford the cost anymore.

When will the government finally make the right decision, axe the tax and give Canadians hope?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is 2023, and if one does not have a plan to address climate change, one does not have a plan for affordability or for the economy either. It is clear that every single idea the Conservatives put forth makes it clear that they are out of touch. In fact, the only recommendations those Conservatives have put forward would cut social programs.

I am talking about things that actually support Canadians, such as the Canada child benefit, child care, dental care and the guaranteed income supplement. The Conservative plan to fix global inflation by cutting people's services and benefits is no plan at all. It is irresponsible, and it is risky. It would put Canadian families at risk.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the backbone of communities across our country, making up 98% of all businesses and employing two-thirds of Canadian workers, but many Yukon business owners have reached out to me over the past few months outlining their struggles with rising costs while still trying to recover from the pandemic.

Could the Minister of Small Business outline how we are continuing to support small business in Canada, including CEBA loan holders, at this time?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was also a small business owner during the pandemic, and I really understand the struggles many continue to face. That is why we are offering additional flexibilities for small businesses to repay their CEBA loans, which are both balanced and fiscally re-

sponsible. This includes a full one-year extension on the repayment deadline, more flexibility on refinancing and more time to access the loan forgiveness.

We will keep listening to small businesses across the country, and that includes all Canadians.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, farmers in northern B.C. have been hit hard by extreme drought, another symptom of the worsening climate crisis. Hay harvests are down as much as 90%, and many farmers are struggling to feed their animals. We are seeing herds sold off, and we are seeing family farms lost.

For months we have been calling on the government to provide support to source hay from other parts of Canada and the United States. Local governments and the provincial government are waiting, and farmers are waiting for the minister to finally come to the table. How long will they have to wait?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question and fully understand the stress farmers are under. As he is fully aware, his provincial government in B.C. has sent the papers to my department. We are analyzing the situation, and as soon as that is done, we will make sure the farmers are compensated. This is what the business risk management plans are for: to make sure we help farmers in difficult situations. We will continue to do so.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, since last fall, I have been pressing the federal government to provide emergency support to the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, which may have to close its doors because ticket sales have not returned to prepandemic levels.

I was told in question period back in February that a solution would be found. When nothing was done, two months ago, four other Waterloo region MPs and I wrote to the Prime Minister, imploring the federal government to step in with a one-time support. We have not heard back, and on Monday, the symphony cancelled its entire upcoming season. Will the federal government step in to ensure the symphony avoids insolvency?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are actively in touch with the organization about its ongoing financial struggles. Recovering from the pandemic remains a challenge for performing arts organizations, which is why we took extraordinary measures to support them during the pandemic. We continue to support arts organizations through a range of programs, and we will work with the organization to see how our programs could support it.

* * *

• (1515)

[Translation]

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That whereas all parties have agreed on the parameters for the establishment of a public and independent commission of inquiry into foreign electoral interference on Canadian soil,

whereas all parties have agreed to the appointment of Judge Marie-Josée Hogue as Chief Commissioner of this inquiry,

all parties and parliamentarians pledge their full cooperation to this inquiry.

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House resumed from September 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-318, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (adoptive and intended parents), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:16 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-318.

[English]

Call in the members.

• (1535)

[Translation]

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

Private Members' Business

(Division No. 409)

YEAS

Members

Aboultiaf	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Arya	Ashton
Bachrach	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blaikie
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Fortin	Fry
Gallant	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hallan	Hoback
Hughes	Idlout
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
MacGregor	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Masse	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McPherson	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	Patzner
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards

Routine Proceedings

Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seebach
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Small
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zarrillo

Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Singh
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Tochor
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Mendès
Miao
Murray
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid

Mendicino
Miller
Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sorbara
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Tassi
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Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
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NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Atwin
Bains
Battiste
Bendayan
Bibeau
Blair
Boissonnault
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Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Cormier
Dabrusin
Dhillon
Dong
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fergus
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Gainey
Gould
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hutchings
Ien
Jones
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
McDonald (Avalon)
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)

Alghabra
Anand
Arseneault
Badawey
Baker
Beech
Bennett
Bittle
Blois
Bradford
Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Coteau
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Gaheer
Gerretsen
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jaczek
Jowhari
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Louis (Kitchenier—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McGuinity
McLeod

PAIRED

Members

Drouin

Godin— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 16 minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities entitled “Addressing Port Infrastructure Expansion in Canada”.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to table a supplementary report on behalf of my Conservative colleagues on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Routine Proceedings

I would echo the words of the committee chair and express our gratitude to the analysts, staff and witnesses, as well as the staff of the seven ports that we did visit during this study.

While we agree with some of the recommendations in this report, we must note our opposition to some of the recommendations. For example, we oppose the recommendation that adds binding emissions targets to our ports, because that just creates more red tape and bureaucracy for no productive outcome, and stretches our supply chains. Ports have actually had a good record in meeting their emissions targets while the Liberal government has not. In fact, there was a UN study that found that the government ranked 58 out of 63 in meeting its own emissions targets.

More details on this and other recommendations are in our supplementary report.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food entitled Bill C-280, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (deemed trust – perishable fruits and vegetables).

Sometimes Canadians watch this House and think that we cannot get along, but I want to give special credit to the sponsor of this bill, the member for York—Simcoe. During the opportunity for the member to come to our committee, he is in the soup and salad bowl of Canada, and he brought a whole bunch of vegetables to the committee as a sign of goodwill.

We are in full support of this legislation. It is a great opportunity for the parties to work together in the House. I would like to congratulate the hon. member.

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 47th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 47th report later this day.

• (1540)

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill S-224, An Act to amend the Criminal Code regarding trafficking in persons.

The Committee has studied the bill and has decided to report it back to the House with amendments.

[English]

BUILDING HOMES NOT BUREAUCRACY ACT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-356, An Act respecting payments by Canada and requirements in respect of housing and to amend certain other Acts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to introduce the building homes not bureaucracy act, and now, more than ever, it is necessary. After eight years, the Prime Minister had doubled the national debt, which has ballooned mortgage rates, and he has funded local bureaucracies to block homebuilding. We have the fewest homes per capita of any country in the G7, even with the most land to build on. Now he has a program that will add even more bureaucracy. It has taken a year and a half for the first announcement and has not built a single home.

My common-sense plan is based on the success I had when I was minister, when housing costs were half of what they are now. The approach that I take in this bill is to keep the existing GST rebate on purpose-built rentals, but also extend it to all new construction of rentals for which the rent is below average to encourage affordable home building, not \$2-million penthouses.

Second, we will cut the bonuses of CMHC officials if they do not provide decisions on financing new homebuilding construction within the promised 60 days.

Next, we will make it a legal requirement that municipalities approve and allow construction of affordable housing around every single federally funded transit station, and the dollars will not move until people are moved into those apartments.

Finally, we will incentivize cities to speed up and lower the cost of building permits and free up land by linking the federal dollars they get to the number of homes that actually get completed. There will be a target of 15% more homebuilding per year, which would double home construction within five years at a compounding rate. Those that beat the target by 1% will get 1% more money; those that miss it by 1% will get 1% less. It is a simple mathematical formula for which no new forms, no new bureaucracy and no new delays are required.

It is common sense of the common people united for our common home. Now let us build some homes.

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

* * *

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES COMPENSATION ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-357, An Act to amend the Government Employees Compensation Act.

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a bill in support of the Union of Safety and Justice Employees' long-standing call to ensure more federal public safety personnel have access to workers' compensation for mental health-related injuries so that federal public safety personnel do not fall through the cracks anymore.

Dr. Rosemary Ricciardelli highlights that hundreds of dedicated federal parole officers who supervise Canada's highest-risk offenders are experiencing untenable levels of occupational stress and compromised mental health. My bill would fix the current inequitable system for federal government employees whose benefits and entitlements depend on the province where they live. We must ensure all federal government employees are treated equitably.

[Translation]

I would like to thank my seconder, the excellent MP for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

This bill supports the long-standing call of the Union of Safety and Justice Employees to ensure that more federal public safety personnel have access to workers' compensation for mental health-related injuries. The bill will correct the current inequitable system for federal government employees, whose benefits and rights depend on which province they live in. These employees must be treated equally.

I want to thank David Neufeld, the union president, who is here today, and Nancy Peckford and Kristy Howard, from the union, as well as Penny Becklumb from Legislative Services.

I hope all members will support this bill.

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

* * *

• (1545)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the good people of the riding of Waterloo are looking forward to this report. If the House gives its consent, I move that the 47th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

U.K. PENSIONS IN CANADA

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, petitioners in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon who paid into the U.K. social security regime are asking the Government of Canada, in any negotiations related to a Canada-U.K. free

trade agreement, to address the discriminatory practice of freezing U.K. pensions in Canada. These citizens paid into the U.K. pension and are asking the Government of Canada to address this discrepancy on a social-security-related matter during any future free trade agreement.

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by Canadians who are urging the government to use all tools available to it, including invoking the notwithstanding clause, to override the Supreme Court's Bissonnette decision, which gave judges the discretion to apply consecutive parole ineligibility periods to killers convicted of multiple murders. The effect of this decision has been to significantly slash the sentences of some of Canada's worst killers.

MENSTRUAL LEAVE

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week is Gender Equality Week, and the fight continues for women's rights. Whether it is for political freedom or equal access to health care and reproductive rights, equity has still not been achieved.

Today, I table a petition related to state-funded paid leave for people who suffer from painful periods. Women, and all people who menstruate, continue to manage any pain during their menstrual cycle while having minimal accommodations at work. For those who experience painful periods, this has a negative effect on their health and the ability to have equity at work.

The undersigned petitioners are supportive of designated time off, three to five days a month, to manage period pain. This is not only a matter of compassion but also an equitable workplace strategy. By recognizing this, governments and employers can create a more inclusive and fair work environment.

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise virtually today on behalf of petitioners in Saanich—Gulf Islands who are concerned with the fate of old-growth forests.

The petitioners have identified and raised to the House assembled the need to pay attention to a risk to a specific endangered species of plant, specifically of lichen that is found only in the old-growth forest of yellow and red cedars. It is down to a very small remaining population on Vancouver Island. It is the old-growth specklebelly lichen.

The petitioners call on the federal and provincial governments, of course in this case, the federal government, to pay attention to this threat under the Species at Risk Act, and for the Minister of Environment to take steps to preserve this very endangered, rare old-growth forest lichen.

• (1550)

JUSTICE

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this petition is calling on the Government of Canada to use all of its tools to respond to the Bissonnette decision, including invoking the notwithstanding clause.

One of the most important things to Canadians is that when the justice system does not work, it fails Canadian people. We are seeing this time and time again. We want to ensure that there are consecutive sentences going forward. We are asking that the Minister of Justice look at invoking the notwithstanding clause and override the Bissonnette ruling.

CHEMICAL BAN

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition signed by the great people of Cypress Hills—Grasslands, who have been facing consecutive years of drought.

One of the many ways the Liberal government has made life difficult for farmers is that it banned strychnine for dealing with out-of-control gopher populations. The petitioners are calling on Health Canada to reverse the decision and support the province of Saskatchewan and the province of Alberta, which have both spoken against this, because there is already sound scientific evidence proving that strychnine is effective and also safe to use when used properly.

JUSTICE

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to present a petition on behalf of Canadians from coast to coast asking the government to use all the tools it has at its disposal to respond to *R v. Bissonnette*, including invoking the notwithstanding clause.

The Bissonnette case overruled section 745.51 of the Criminal Code, making it easier for those who commit murder to get parole. This flies in the face of the will of the House and, of course, the common sense of the common people, the Canadians who signed this petition. They ask the government to correct this injustice.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table today a petition dealing with members of, in particular, our Indo-Canadian community who have recognized the growth in that community here in Canada and want to see more direct flights from Canada going into, ideally, India. I know that many of my constituents would like to see a direct flight going from Winnipeg to India. The petitioners want to make sure the House is aware of that and to pass on their concerns to airlines and international airports here in Canada.

FOSSIL FUEL SUBSIDIES

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present a petition on behalf of those who recognize that we are in a climate crisis. They recognize we are spending at least \$4.8 billion a year on fossil fuel subsidies. Recent estimates actually have it much higher, at more like upwards of \$20 billion a year.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners recognize that by subsidizing fossil fuels, we are making it cheaper to produce and consume more fossil fuels. As a result, the petitioners call for the Government of Canada to immediately end all fossil fuel subsidies, both international and domestic, to all corporations, buyers, sellers and users of fossil fuels.

CHEMICAL BAN

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by various Canadians from across the Prairies who would like to highlight one of the decisions Health Canada has made that puts the livelihood of livestock farmers at risk in our country, and that is the banning of strychnine. Strychnine, when used properly, is not something that puts wildlife populations at risk. However, this ban is leading to an out-of-control, year-over-year increase in the population of gophers.

The petitioners are asking for the government to use common sense to trust farmers and ranchers with the safe usage of strychnine, and restore the ability for farmers across the Prairies to properly use this chemical for the management of gopher populations.

JUSTICE

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise for the 10th time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba to present a petition with respect to the rising rate of crime. The people of Swan River are fed up with the Liberals' soft-on-crime policies that have allowed crime to haunt the community. Folks are forced to increase their security by barring the windows and installing alarms on their doors. Business owners are forced to ask themselves whether they can even afford to stay in business among the crime and chaos. We cannot expect rural communities to thrive when the local economy is held hostage by the same repeat offenders.

The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies that directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

• (1555)

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to table a number of petitions on behalf of my constituents and other concerned Canadians.

The first petition deals with the issue of political discrimination and the growing fear some Canadians have that they will face discrimination in the workplace, including, perhaps, bullying, risk of employment consequences, etc., on the basis of their political views.

Routine Proceedings

While the Canadian Human Rights Act provides protection for Canadians against certain kinds of discrimination, there is not protection against discrimination on the basis of political views. That is why I have tabled Bill C-257, a bill that would add political belief and activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Petitioners support Bill C-257, which is great, and they have prepared this petition, which I am, on their behalf, presenting to the House. The petition asks the House to support Bill C-257, which would ban discrimination on the basis of political belief or activity and defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

I will refrain from expressing a personal view on that petition at all. I just wanted to share the views of petitioners. I know my friend from Winnipeg North is watching closely to ensure that the rules are observed.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from constituents concerned about proposals to legalize the killing of children in Canada under the so-called MAID regime. They note in particular that one of the witnesses at a previous committee was calling for the legalization of euthanasia for babies.

The petitioners call on the government and the House to strongly oppose any effort to legalize the killing of children in Canada.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition deals, similarly, with an issue involving discrimination on the basis of political views. It references a 2021 platform commitment from the Liberal Party of Canada to politicize charitable status determination, that is, to deny charitable status for certain pro-life organizations. The petitioners note this would 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 matters of conscience.

The petitioners note this would apply a values test for charitable status, similar to what we saw with the Canada summer jobs program, and jeopardize the good work of organizations that are not doing anything controversial but simply wish to be sincere about the private convictions of those involved in the organization.

The petitioners call on the House 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 the imposition of another values test, as well as to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition today concerns the discrimination against and persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in the People's Republic of China. The petitioners note that Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline that consists of meditation, exercise and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. The petitioners go on to explain a

decades-long campaign of violence and persecution that has targeted Falun Gong practitioners. They also note the work of David Matas and the late, great David Kilgour on uncovering the campaign of forced organ harvesting targeting Falun Gong practitioners.

The petitioners call on the government to strengthen its response to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, to do more and to stand with them and other victims of violence at the hands of the Communist regime in Beijing.

I commend these petitions to the consideration of my colleagues.

* * *

• (1600)

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the revised response to Question No. 1621, originally tabled on September 18, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled in electronic format immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1621—**Mr. Philip Lawrence:**

With regard to wrapping or other advertising expenditures for the exteriors of buildings since April 1, 2019, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) what is the total amount spent on wrapping or advertising, broken down by individual building; and (b) what are the details of all wrapping, tarp, or similar type of advertising on government buildings, broken down by individual building, including the (i) vendor, (ii) description of good or services provided, (iii) date, (iv) amount, (v) file number, (vi) address of the building, (vii) message on the wrapping or the summary of advertising campaign?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

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, I 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?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed

[English]

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

THE ECONOMY

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have received notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to request an emergency debate, following yesterday's news that Canada's CPI inflation is once again on the rise. It has increased 43% in the last two months to reach 4%, double the Bank of Canada's target rate. This is at a time when Canadians are already suffering the cost of living crisis following two years of inflation brought on by the Liberal government's inflationary deficits. As former Liberal finance minister John Manley has said, that is like pushing on the gas while the Bank of Canada slams on the brakes as it raises interest rates to levels not seen in over 20 years.

Insolvencies, bankruptcies and mortgage delinquencies are on the rise. A quarter of mortgage holders say they are struggling to pay their monthly mortgage bill, and food banks estimate they will see a 60% increase in usage this year. Canadians can no longer afford basic necessities, the cost of rent or a mortgage. According to the IMF, our country is the most at risk in the G7 for a mortgage default crisis.

The pain felt by Canadians is real, and the risk for even more serious economic problems is very real. Therefore, I request an emergency debate to address this crisis.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn for his intervention. However, the Speaker is not satisfied that this request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved that Bill S-12, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am here today to discuss Bill S-12, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

[Translation]

This bill is yet another example of our government's ongoing efforts to make the criminal justice system more effective in the fight against sexual offences and more responsive to the needs of victims and survivors of crime.

The main purpose of this bill is to respond to the Supreme Court decision that found sections of the sex offender registry unconstitutional. If we do not pass this bill by October 28 of this year, judges will not be able to add newly convicted sex offenders to the sex offender registry. I think we can all agree that none of us in the House from any party wants that outcome. Police have told us that this is an important tool for them in their work. We do not want to let police lose this tool.

We hear a lot of rhetoric from members in the House at times, including from the Leader of the Opposition, about ensuring consequences for serious offenders and about keeping Canadians and victims safe. This bill is about doing exactly that. I look forward to collaborating with members on both sides of the aisle to ensure that it is passed and receives royal assent by the court deadline.

I want to start by thanking the Senate for its work on this critical legislation and indeed the many witnesses whose important testimony provided the impetus for the amendments the Senate has proposed. In particular, I want to thank the victims and survivors of sexual violence who lent their first-hand experience to the legislative process. I have listened and I have heard their pain. We need to do better as a nation. I thank them for helping us shape this critical reform. Senate members put in the work to ensure that we got this legislation in a timely manner in the House of Commons, and I thank them for their expeditious work.

Bill S-12 is a fundamental priority for me and for our government. I know it will improve our justice system, particularly for victims and survivors of crime. Along with responding to the Supreme Court decision and strengthening the sex offender registry, this bill also makes victim- and survivor-centric changes to the publication ban regime and to how victims access information. I will explain each of these elements.

First is the response to the Supreme Court decision. The urgency to pass this bill stems from the court's October 2022 decision in the *Crown v. Ndhlovu* case, which struck down two provisions of the Criminal Code relating to the sex offender registry.

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The first provision that the Supreme Court struck down required judges to automatically order an individual to register with the sex offender registry when they are convicted of, or found not criminally responsible on account of a mental disorder for, a designated offence. The Supreme Court held in that case, from last year, that the law was too broad because judges had to issue an order in every single case, including in cases where offenders do not pose a risk of reoffending. The court gave Parliament one year to respond to the striking down of this provision.

The second provision the Supreme Court struck down required a mandatory lifetime registration for those convicted of or found not criminally responsible for multiple offences within the same prosecution. To that category, the Supreme Court said that because people who are convicted of more than one offence during the same prosecution did not necessarily pose a higher risk in some circumstances, the provision went too far by requiring mandatory lifetime registration when a shorter period might be appropriate. The striking down of that provision was effective immediately upon the decision being rendered last year.

The bill before us now, Bill S-12, responds to the Supreme Court's decision. It does so by improving the approach to mandatory registration. The bill maintains mandatory registration in two circumstances: those involving serious offences against children and those involving repeat sexual offenders. In all other circumstances, the bill before Parliament proposes a rebuttable presumption of registration. This means that individuals convicted of or found not criminally responsible for a qualifying offence will be required to register unless they can demonstrate to the court that registration would unduly affect their rights. Thus, it is rebuttable.

• (1605)

By adding narrow judicial discretion back into the sex offender registration regime, we are directly responding to the court's direction. However, we are also, at the same time, ensuring that we continue to have a robust sex offender registry, the registry that police have asked us to maintain. That means a registry that gives law enforcement the tools it needs to investigate sexual offences and to keep our communities safe. My fundamental job is to do just that.

The approach is essentially what was suggested by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security back in 2009 when it reviewed the Sex Offender Information Registration Act. However, the Conservative government, at that time back in 2009, decided not to heed the public safety committee's advice and proceeded instead down a path that was deemed unconstitutional.

It is not a coincidence that this is similar to what we see today from members across the aisle. The Leader of the Opposition has repeatedly said that he is willing to ignore the charter when he does not like a court decision, and that is something that troubles me. In fact, I will note anecdotally that a few of the petitions that were just read into the record talked about the invocation of the notwithstanding clause because of perceptions and views about certain Supreme Court judgments.

Returning to the bill, I want to highlight the circumstances in which we believe the automatic registration to the national sex offender registry would be justified. These are all for repeat offenders

and for child sex offenders convicted of indictable offences and sentenced to two years or more of imprisonment.

The Supreme Court of Canada has made clear that automatic registration in all cases is unconstitutional. It violates section 7 of the charter. Our government, nevertheless, believes that it is important to maintain automatic registration in two categories. The decision to retain automatic registration for these two categories is informed by evidence that shows an objectively verifiable risk of reoffending.

The first category, as I mention, is sexual offences against children. They are among the most heinous criminal acts. Based on the evidence, which we have reviewed, sexual offending against children is a known risk factor for sexual recidivism. Second, we know from experts that repeat sexual offenders have a high risk of reoffending, a risk that is five to eight times higher than individuals who have non-sexual criminal histories. For all other cases, other than the two categories I just mentioned, offenders would be required to register unless they can prove to a court why it would be inappropriate in their case based on the criteria I mentioned earlier.

This approach, outlined in Bill S-12, is respectful of the charter. Again, one of my fundamental duties is keeping Canadians safe while all the time respecting charter rights. It is also consistent with upholding public safety.

To respond to the court's decision about the automatic lifetime registration, Bill S-12 would give courts the discretion to order lifetime registration in cases involving multiple offences in the same proceeding where the pattern of offending indicates that the individual poses a risk of reoffending.

• (1610)

[Translation]

In addition to certain aspects that respond to the Supreme Court decision, Bill S-12 contains a number of elements to strengthen the sex offender registration system as a whole.

These elements were developed through ongoing consultation with our provincial and territorial partners, including law enforcement agencies.

[English]

Bill S-12 would add new offences to the list for which registration may result, such as extortion for a sexual purpose, or sextortion, and non-consensual distribution of intimate images. These are inexcusable crimes that have inflicted real damage on Canadians' lives, especially those of women and girls. We take them seriously and are ensuring that offenders of these deplorable acts are held to account.

Changes would also require those who are already on the registry to provide 14 days' notice of any travel, as well as the specific address of their destination. When Attorney General Garland and Secretary Mayorkas were in Ottawa in March for the cross-border crime forum, they applauded this very important change to our legislative structure. These changes would strengthen our partnership with our American allies in maintaining safety and security across our shared border.

Furthermore, Bill S-12 would enact a new warrant provision that would allow police to arrest an offender who is in breach of their obligations and bring them to a registration centre.

[Translation]

Essentially, the changes to the national sex offender registry proposed in Bill S-12 will make the registry more effective and will make it easier for law enforcement agencies to investigate and prevent sexual offences. I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting these changes.

As I mentioned at the start, Bill S-12 also includes important and useful reforms of publication ban provisions. These reforms aim to empower victims of crime by ensuring that their wishes are respected when it comes to issuing, lifting or changing publication bans, and that their right to information about their case is fully upheld.

[English]

For a long time, these changes have been called for, including more recently by victims' and survivors' groups, such as a group called My Voice, My Choice.

The support for these reforms spans across all parties. I want to thank the member for Victoria in particular for her leadership on this very issue. At an event hosted by My Voice, My Choice this spring, members of the Conservative Party, the NDP, the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party all heard heartbreaking stories from survivors of sexual violence.

Across partisan lines, a promise was made to deliver changes to the publication ban regime, as called for by these brave survivors. We now, in this chamber, have the ability to fulfill this very promise. I hope members from all parties will join me in doing so.

One survivor of sexual violence who has spoken out on this issue sought to lift a publication ban on her name to protect her children. She was abused as a child and came forward to tell her story as an adult, after hearing that her abuser was working in the child care sector. It took months, legal fees and a complicated court process to finally get the ban lifted before she could try to protect her children and other children who she feared risked the same abuse as she had suffered.

When someone has the courage to reopen an immensely painful chapter in their life in order to lift a publication ban, I firmly believe our justice system needs to make it easier for them to heal and not retraumatize them. That is critical.

• (1615)

[Translation]

Calls for these changes have been advocated for a long time, including more recently by victims' groups like My Voice, My

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Choice. Calls for reform were also heard in the December 2022 report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights entitled "Improving Support for Victims of Crime". I am proud to be part of a government that finally took action on this matter.

[English]

While publication bans can be a useful tool for protecting victims, they can also unduly silence them. I want to assure Canadians, in this chamber, that our government's intention is for victims and survivors of sexual crimes to have ownership of their stories. That is absolutely critical as a priority for our government, and it is a priority for this legislation.

The publication ban amendments in Bill S-12 were the subject of significant discussion in the Senate. There was broad support for the policy objectives grounding these changes, but there was also a belief that more could be done to give them better effect. Our government worked collaboratively with survivors, experts and advocates to make some important changes. The bill was amended in a number of ways.

Generally speaking, I believe these changes have made Bill S-12 better, and I am thankful for that. I am thankful to the witnesses who shared their stories and their insights during the committee study. They also shared their stories with our colleagues in the Senate, who listened and proposed such thoughtful amendments.

What would Bill S-12 do in the area I am describing? First, it makes it clear that if a publication ban has been imposed, the court must, at the first reasonable opportunity, inform the recipient of their right to apply to revoke or vary the order. It is empowering the individual.

The bill also requires the court to ask a victim or witness if they wish to be the subject of a publication ban, if they are present in court. If they are not present, the court would be required to inquire of the Crown if they sought out the wishes of the victim or witness. Again, this is further empowerment.

The bill clarifies obligations that the prosecutor has toward the victim or witness with respect to information on their right to seek, revoke or vary a publication ban.

[Translation]

All of these changes place victims and witnesses at the centre of the publication ban process. The goal is simple: If wanted, a publication ban should be requested.

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[English]

At the same time, we know it is not always possible to reach the victim or witness in the early stages of criminal proceedings, and it is important to safeguard their interests prior to knowing what they may wish to do. That is why the bill would not prevent a publication ban from being sought in cases where the views of a victim or witness cannot be ascertained. It is my expectation that it would only be impossible to seek the victim's wishes in very rare instances.

The bill would also make important changes to codify and clarify the process for varying or revoking a publication ban once imposed. Again, the perspectives of victims and survivors are at the centre of these changes.

Bill S-12 would create a new section of the Criminal Code to clarify and streamline the process of seeking to change or revoke a publication ban. If the person who is the subject of the publication ban wants it to be revoked, the court would be required to do so without holding a hearing.

The only exception to that rule would be where the court believes that the privacy interests of another person who is subject to a publication ban would be impacted by the revocation or variation. For example, there could be a situation where there are two victims of sexual assault; one wants to have the ban removed, but the other wants her privacy maintained. A hearing should be held in that case to make sure that removing one of their publication bans will not inadvertently identify the other victim against her wishes. That is an important safeguard.

I want to make it absolutely clear that the accused would not have any say in the process of modifying or revoking a publication ban. We are not focused on the accused here; we are focused on victims and witnesses. This is about empowering victims to decide what is best for them.

In response to concerns expressed during the debate on Bill S-12, there are now provisions in the bill that make clearer when prosecution of a breach of a publication ban by the recipient shall not occur. Specifically, the changes make clear that prosecution shall not occur in situations where a person breached their own publication ban, unless they compromised the privacy of another person who is also protected by a ban and where a warning would not be appropriate. These changes are important to me, to our government and to the many victims who have long advocated for reforms in this area.

Earlier I indicated that I believe Bill S-12 was generally improved by the amendments passed in the Senate. I do, however, want to ask the justice committee to consider whether there are any changes that need to be made; it should do so quickly, given the imminent Supreme Court deadline of October 28.

The final piece of the bill for victims responds to calls from victims groups and the federal ombudsperson for victims of crime to make it easier for victims to tell the court system whether they want to receive ongoing information about their case after trial. Under the Victims Bill of Rights, victims can decide whether they want to stay informed about all case developments, such as appeals or parole. They can also decide that they do not want to be contacted

about the case. They have the right to move on and not have to hear about it again. It is their decision.

However, as advocates told the justice committee, many victims who want to receive ongoing case information are slipping through the cracks. They do not know that they need to register to receive ongoing information. To address this acute problem, Bill S-12 proposes to significantly simplify and streamline the process for registering by making the judge ask the victim their preference and by making it a simple box to tick on a form. I am grateful to the advocates who brought this to my attention, so we can address it with this important bill.

In conclusion, I would say that Bill S-12 is a tremendously important piece of legislation. It has victims and survivors at its core. It would contribute to public safety and respect charter rights at the same time. I look forward to the debate on this bill, and I am confident we can work together across party lines on both sides of the aisle to ensure and facilitate its speedy passage. This will show the importance not only of the continued operation of the national sex offender registry but also of the continued strengthening of the criminal justice system's response to victims of crime.

• (1620)

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, and I listened with great interest to the minister's speech. He spoke about sexual crimes. One thing I have noticed here is that a number of sentences have been struck down for sexual offences, as they have been for firearms, yet the government has legislated when it came to firearms but not to sexual offence sentences.

We all acknowledge that sexual offences have a very significant impact on their victims. Sentences should reflect the gravity of the offences of those abusing our most vulnerable, who are serving a psychological life sentence based on the abuse they suffered. Will the minister commit, here and now, to amping up sentences for sexual offenders and reducing the use of conditional sentences?

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, what I would say with respect to sexual offences is that these are some of the most heinous crimes that we know. The specific targeting of sexual offenders, particularly those who would sexually offend a child, is at the heart of what this bill is about.

What we are doing is working to protect victims, to ensure their safety and to ensure they are healing after the fact. That relates to the publication ban provisions I outlined. It also fundamentally relates to ensuring that the sex offender registry is maintained at the end of October of this year.

It is in every parliamentarian's interest to ensure that the sex offender registry is maintained. The registry is what law enforcement wants; it is helping to keep our communities safe and addressing the sexual offences mentioned by the member opposite. I look forward to the member's co-operation and that of his party to ensure that we are able to do so expeditiously.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the new Minister of Justice on his appointment.

I was surprised to hear him talk about My Voice, My Choice in his speech. I attended the meeting of its members on Parliament Hill, and I was particularly struck by a personal story shared by Jessica, whom I invited to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

She was there to speak out against the circumstances surrounding non-disclosure agreements. She also called for an independent public inquiry into sport that the previous minister of sport, the member for Brome—Missisquoi, promised to set up—she publicly stated she would—and a reformed approach to non-disclosure agreements.

Five months on, we see no political will on the part of the new Minister of Sport to take action.

On behalf of My Voice, My Choice, which he held up in his speech as a model, and out of respect for victims, could the Minister of Justice pressure his colleague, the Minister of Sport, to launch this independent public inquiry?

• (1625)

[English]

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, My Voice, My Choice does tremendous work.

[Translation]

I would like to acknowledge the work that this organization is doing.

The most important, poignant and workable thing about this bill is that, when the representatives of this organization advocated for victims of violent sexual crimes, they asked us to reinstate this registry. They also asked for more autonomy, more dignity and choice regarding their role in the system. This is what this bill will and must do. I think the challenge is clear. We must co-operate and work together in a non-partisan way to get this done before the end of October.

I am very comfortable continuing to work with my Bloc Québécois colleagues. I hope I can count on their support.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech on Bill S-12, and I assure him that New Democrats will do everything we can to move the legislation forward expeditiously. However, we want to take a close look at it to make sure we get it right.

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The minister emphasized the Supreme Court deadline, but I would like to emphasize that there are prosecutions of women who have violated publication bans happening in this country. There was a very famous case in 2021, where a woman had been sexually assaulted by a relative. When she made this fact known to other friends and family, to help keep them safe, she was prosecuted and given a fine of \$2,000 and a victim surcharge of \$600 for violating a publication ban.

I believe there is also an urgency in getting this done so that we do not end up with the gross injustice that happened in this case, of a victim being fined for trying to keep others safe and having to pay a victim surcharge on top of that fine, when she herself was the victim of the crime.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for his contribution today and his contributions over many years at the justice committee.

The member is highlighting an important situation. Obviously I cannot comment on a particular case or a particular prosecution, but I think it underscores the points that I was making in my opening remarks. When individuals make an autonomous decision that they want to speak about what has happened to them, we need to enable and empower them to speak about their trauma and not retraumatize them thereby. That is what this bill tries to do.

The bill has two components. The critical component is maintaining a registry that would keep people safe from sexual violence. When sexual offences occur, we have to be focused on the victims and empowering them so that they do not face the type of situation that the member just outlined. That is not a situation we want to replicate. What we want to do instead is empower people to have control of their situation, their own healing and their own path.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just two days ago, the minister brought forward legislation, the bail reform bill, which is a reflection of a great desire of many Canadians. Today we have yet another justice bill, on just the third day into the fall sitting. It is a bill that has come to us, in essence, because of a Supreme Court decision.

The minister made reference to the need to have this bill pass by October 28. I want to highlight that, when we talk about passing it, we are talking about, from what I understand, it passing through the House of Commons and ultimately receiving royal assent. It is a fairly lengthy process. We also have week-long break, a constituency week, in the month of October, so timing is of the utmost importance.

I am wondering if the minister could provide his thoughts regarding why it is so important that we meet this deadline.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, it is important because we see who is behind this bill. We have women's advocates such as LEAF behind the bill. We have the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police saying these proposed legislative amendments recognize the rights of victims, promote public safety and respect the rights of the accused. We have the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime behind this bill.

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I am very proud to say that, in my first week in this role, I have had the ability to address community safety and the protection of victims in two different instances. On the bail reform piece, Bill C-48, I am thankful for the co-operation that we had to get that passed and sent over to the Senate quickly. Today is no less important. In fact, it is critically urgent given the court timeline we have.

It is a proud day when I am able to stand in the chamber to say that we are doing everything we can to work as expeditiously as possible to protect people's safety and respect victims while promoting their protection and their autonomy. That is fundamental to my job, and that is what I will continue to do.

• (1630)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask about something the justice minister referenced in his remarks. He chastised the Harper government for bringing forward what he called unconstitutional legislation, but the reality is that every party in the House unanimously supported the Harper legislation in 2011, including the Liberal Party. I believe the reason all parties supported it was that, before the registry was mandatory, when it was left solely up to judicial discretion to have a sex offender added to the registry, as I am sure the minister knows, less than 50% of sex offenders were ever added, which compromised the efficacy of that registry.

I am just wondering if the minister could comment on whether he is concerned that the situation will now return to what it was before, when for that reason, all parties supported Harper's legislation in 2011.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I would say a couple of things. What is critically important is understanding that, when we have automatic registration, as we are proposing, for child offenders and repeat offenders, and we also have a rebuttable presumption, we are going to end up with the vast majority of individuals who are sexual offenders maintaining to be registered. That is the first point. That is critical to public safety and to empowering victims.

The second point is a critical one about what happened in Parliament before I was ever elected, and that was that there had been a notion and suggestion coming out of the committee to remove prosecutor's discretion but maintain judicial discretion. That is exactly what we are proposing to do here today in compliance with the Supreme Court of Canada.

As the Attorney General of Canada, my fundamental role is promoting safety, always in compliance with the charter. When the courts give me a directive that says one aspect of our pieces of legislation is not compliant, it is incumbent upon me, on behalf of all Canadians, to ensure that we are enacting new legislation that complies with the charter. This bill would do just that by ensuring that there is judicial discretion guided by important criteria. However, in the main and in the majority of the cases, people will be registered, which is, I think, the important point the member opposite is making.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to quite a heavy topic. We are talking about sex offenders and, of course, when we are talking about sex offenders, we are primarily talking about the very vulnerable people who they assault, the lives they ruin, the children they violate and the

women they violate. We know this is primarily a women's issue and a children's issue.

Unfortunately, over the past eight years, under the Liberal government, sexual assaults have gone up 71%, and sex crimes against children have gone up 126%. That is over the past eight years. Under the Liberal Prime Minister's watch, sex crimes against children are up 126%.

This bill from the Senate, Bill S-12, concerns the sex offender registry. I do believe the gravity of the situation is felt by all, but when we talk about this, we are really talking about some very vulnerable people who have been absolutely violated in the most horrific way. That is the reason the sex offender registry was first brought in, and it is the reason that this piece of legislation needs to be given extra care to ensure that it keeps the justice system serving those who most need it. That is, of course, the most vulnerable, particularly the women and children who have been violated.

I would like to ask for unanimous consent, which I hope to receive, to split my time with the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. He will bring excellent discourse to this, so I ask for unanimous consent to split my time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about is that there is an incredible weight behind the decisions we make. We know most of the laws we pass in Parliament have a lot of weight behind them, but in particular, when it comes to things like this, I think extra consideration needs to be given. I do believe that all parties will do so, but again, we do have a few concerns. I will outline some of them in my remarks today.

Ultimately, we are talking about Bill S-12 which would of course amend the Criminal Code, and notably make changes to the Sex Offender Information Registration Act, among other things. I am just going to give some background about how we came to this point and the history of this in Canada and why it was so important that this registry was brought forward in the first place.

The Sex Offender Information Registration Act, or SOIRA, was first passed by the Liberal Martin government in 2004 with all parties supporting it. That does happen from time to time when there is tremendous gravity in the weight of the decision. It is good to see when sometimes all parties come together.

However, under Prime Minister Martin, the enrolment on the registry was at the discretion of the judge. It introduced the idea that registered sex offenders were required to report annually to registration centres, as well as declare any changes of residence, travel plans or changes in employment. They were certainly also subject to police checks. Failure to comply would result in fines and up to two years in prison. Frankly, this is rightfully so, in my opinion. It really brought in that accountability and that police watch on people who sexually violate other people. That was a very important move forward in Canada back in 2004.

A few years later, an enormous step forward again was made in 2011 under the Conservative Harper government. It introduced and passed Bill S-2. There was with unanimous support yet again in the House with all parties supporting Bill S-2, which made inclusion in the registry mandatory for those convicted of any sexual offence, and made inclusion for life mandatory for those convicted of multiple offences.

Under the Harper Conservative government, of course, an extra step forward was taken to really crack down and hold accountable those who sexually violate other Canadians. That change was very critical in the sense that it made it mandatory. The motivation behind that was because, when it was left to judicial discretion following the 2004 Martin government's initial legislation, nearly half of all convicted sex offenders were not being added to the list. As I just mentioned, basically half of all sex offenders had no accountability mechanism prior to it being built into the registry. That was very concerning and it certainly compromised the efficacy of that registry. If only one in two sex offenders is on there, it really undermines the safety, accountability and tools that police use all the time to ensure that we are kept safe from people like sex offenders and others.

That was a very important step forward. Again, it had unanimous support in the House at the time for those very reasons. However, we can fast forward to a year ago, October 2022, when a Supreme Court decision, *R v. Ndlovu*, struck down two sections of the Criminal Code as being unconstitutional. It first struck down the section of the Criminal Code that required mandatory registration to the sex offender registry of anyone found guilty of a sexual offence. That was struck down in a split decision of five to four. I will get to that in a moment.

Ultimately, this means that it was no longer the case that the personal information of every sex offender had to be added to Canada's national sex offender registry. It is important to remember the reason that section was brought forward in the first place, which was that half of all convicted sex offenders were not being added, but the Supreme Court struck that down.

The second area of the Criminal Code that was struck down was the section that imposed mandatory registration for life for those who committed more than one such offence. That was struck down unanimously. Everybody in the court agreed that mandatory registration for life was unconstitutional.

As was outlined previously, the clock is ticking on this. Unfortunately, it took the Liberal government quite a while to get this legislation through. We have about a month to get this through all stages. I am going to guess that is going to be difficult to do. I have

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been here for four years. It is pretty rare to see that happen, but we will see if the Liberal government prioritizes. We will find out. They may have to ask for an extension because again, if it does not pass, then no one can be added to the registry at all. That is deeply concerning, so hopefully they are doing their due diligence to make this happen. We will find out. Again, the registry is a very important tool for police. It is also very important to hold sex offenders accountable, so we need to have this in there.

Despite the Supreme Court striking down these two areas, Bill S-12 does make registration automatic in a few cases, including child sex offenders sentenced to two or more years in prison and any repeat offender who has previously been convicted of a sexual offence. The bill would also allow judges the ability to impose lifetime registration for sex offenders who are found guilty of more than one offence at the same time if the offender poses a risk of re-offending. That is good. I am glad that is in there.

• (1635)

However, I am going to outline in brief the other cases that would not be automatically added. For example, sexual exploitation of a person with a disability would not be automatically added. Sexual assault with a weapon is another example. If someone sexually assaults someone with a weapon, they would not be automatically added to the sex offender registry. It is very concerning. People should be concerned about that, especially given the courts' record before, where only half were added. Another example is aggravated sexual assault with the use of a firearm, and there is a very long list of concerning circumstances where people would not necessarily be added if they violate someone like this. For me personally, and I know it is the same for our party, it is deeply concerning that this could be the case, given the track record before 2011.

I did want to go into the decision of five to four a bit because I thought that the dissenting arguments were quite compelling. Again, this was respecting mandatory registration. I will read a bit from the dissenting opinion. I do think it is relevant to this discussion. The minority dissent argued that Parliament was pursuing a rational objective in mandating that all sex offenders be included in the registry because this group of people as a whole possess an increased risk to reoffend, and the previous system of judicial discretion had resulted in up to 50% of sex offenders staying off the registry. The dissent, referring to those who struck us down on the court, went on to further argue:

But in substance they cherry pick just one such example: an exceptional case involving an offender who was wheelchair bound. That my colleagues can point to only a single, extreme case where it was clear at the time of sentencing that the offender did not pose an "increased risk" tends to prove my point, not theirs.

The dissent argued:

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In finding it unconstitutional, my colleagues fixate on the removal of judicial discretion to exempt offenders who do not pose an “increased risk” to reoffend. But the exercise of discretion was the very problem that prompted Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to provide for automatic registration of sex offenders under the Sex Offender Information Registration Act.

In conclusion, the Supreme Court, at least in the dissent, argued:

Specifically, many judges had exercised their discretion to exempt offenders in a manifestly improper manner, and the Registry’s low inclusion rate undermined its efficacy. The evidence is clear that even low risk sex offenders, relative to the general criminal population, pose a heightened risk to commit another sexual offence. It is also clear that it cannot be reliably predicted at the time of sentencing which offenders will reoffend. In the face of that uncertain risk, Parliament was entitled to cast a wide net.

I thought that was very compelling. I am concerned. I do appreciate that the legislation seems to be doing what it can. I am not convinced it goes far enough. I think it could go further. We are looking to see if we can improve that throughout the stages of legislation in Parliament and in committee.

Just to conclude again, there was a reason this was mandatory. I recognize the Supreme Court decision, but as outlined in the dissent, we are talking about sex offenders and some of the most vulnerable people whom they impact. We want to see legislation that can go as far as it can in light of the Supreme Court decision, and we are not quite convinced that we are there yet. We will be looking at that very closely throughout the stages.

• (1640)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite’s contribution.

I would say that we are enacting what we believe would be the strongest possible regime against sex offenders in compliance with the Supreme Court’s direction. It is crucial that victims and survivors of sexual crimes can feel safe and can have confidence in our criminal justice system.

We must pass this legislation quickly. It must receive royal assent before October 28 or else the national sex offender registry would cease to function going forward. Will my colleague opposite join me in supporting this legislation and preventing this dangerous outcome?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, again, it really is up to the government. It took it a while to bring this forward. That is on the government; that is not on the opposition. The government did not do its homework quickly enough. We do recognize the deadline, but I know the government has asked for extensions when required. I believe it did for MAID legislation and other things. That is up to the Liberals. They make up the governing party.

Perhaps the minister could ask another question and put his answer in that question, but I am not clear how the two or three circumstances that do require mandatory registration are in the legislation. How are those deemed constitutional despite the ruling, and why could the government not put more circumstances in there? That is really unclear. These are some of the legal opinions that we need to find out through committee and the other process. Again, we are not looking to slow this down, but we want to make it as tough as we can. That is our commitment as opposition.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I can already confirm that the Bloc Québécois is pleased with this bill and intends to support it. That said, I look forward to studying it in committee because, as with many bills, questions do arise. I will come back to that in my speech in a few moments.

I am going to ask my colleague a question that I would have liked to ask the minister. I was unable to do so because I arrived just a little too late. I see that this bill is in response to a Supreme Court decision handed down on October 28, 2022. The bill, however, was introduced on April 26, 2023, six months later. Furthermore, it was not introduced by the government, but by Senator Marc Gold in the Senate. I have a number of questions because we face a legislative gap in a month. The Supreme Court said that there will no longer be a registry in a month., so we are going to have to rush the parliamentary process a bit to get it passed more quickly, unless we accept the upcoming legislative gap.

How does the minister see this? Why did six months go by between the Supreme Court decision and the bill’s introduction?

What does the government intend to do to ensure that the bill is passed before October 29?

• (1645)

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I have wondered the same thing. Why did the government take so long to table this bill?

I wanted an answer from the Minister of Justice but I did not get one. Now, the government is telling everyone that we have to get a move on, when it was the one dragging its feet. It is telling us that we need to do all the work. I want this bill to be outstanding, and we want it to take a strict approach to sex offenders. A lot of work needs to get done. I want the minister to explain why everything is taking so long.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I found the member for Kildonan—St. Paul’s speech a little bit curious in that she made no mention of the other part of this bill, which is the part that allows sexual assault victims to have agency over whether there is a publication ban.

Many of them feel that publication bans restrict their right to help keep members of their friendship groups and families safe, since 80% of perpetrators in sexual assault cases are family or friends.

Does the Conservative Party support those aspects of this bill, which will give that agency back to sexual assault victims?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I would say that I believe it is up to members to decide what they keep in their speeches. We have about 10 minutes. There is a lot to talk about. I can talk at length about the importance of getting tough on sex offenders and crime in general.

What I would say is that the Conservative Party, more than any other party, has the clearest track record of supporting victims' rights. We have brought forward the Victims Bill of Rights in the Senate.

Out of all the parties, we put forward first the rights of victims, not the rights of criminals, unlike the other parties in this chamber.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Before I begin, I want to recognize that my wife's nephew, Dustin Rise Dempsey, passed away this week. Obviously, this is quite unfortunate. He was quite young. He leaves behind his father, Raeo, who is my wife's brother, and his mother, Vivian. My condolences go out to the whole family. May perpetual light shine upon him.

I also want to send my condolences to a high school friend of mine and her family, Stacey Gagnon. Her father, Leslie Gagnon, or Les as he was commonly known, passed away recently. I offer my deepest condolences as well to her family. May perpetual light shine upon him.

I find it interesting that I am here talking about this. There is something that I would have likely spoken about with my students when I was teaching an advanced criminal law or sentencing class at Thompson Rivers University in the Faculty of Law. It is a course that has since been taken over by one of my mentors, Judge Greg Koturbash. He is teaching tomorrow, so this may come up.

I would have spoken about the notion of dialogue. That dialogue is between a ruling from the Supreme Court of Canada and Parliament. What we have often seen when it comes to criminal matters is that the courts speak and Parliament is supposed to respond. However, it feels as though often, with the Liberal government, the courts speak and Parliament does not respond.

One of the things that I noticed here is that Parliament has not responded when it comes to sexual offences. I put the minister on the spot and I anticipate he is going to ask me a question, and I invite him to ask a question.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to look directly at him. I asked the minister, in a question, whether he supports restricting the use of conditional sentence orders, that is house arrest or jail in the community, particularly for people who offend against children. Yes or no? I really hope he addresses that question when we have time for questions and answers.

There is something that struck me and stuck out to me. This is the first provision. It is speaking about changing one of the provisions, somehow it got missed, section 153.1(1)(a) from five years to 10 years. I believe that is the sexual exploitation of a person with

a disability. It says a person will be liable, on indictment, to 10 years.

Here is what is interesting about that, and it really frustrates me. It is not that we are raising it; it is that we are not raising it high enough. I tabled Bill C-299. I was heckled by the Liberals when I did it, but this is the thrust of Bill C-299. I am going to go through it one more time because I think it is extremely important and it is germane to this discussion when we talk about protecting children, which the Minister of Justice has said is a primary aim of this bill.

We have various offences in the Criminal Code that will end with a potential life imprisonment, as in life is the maximum sentence, and the one I always go to is robbery. Robbery is the deliberate taking of property without consent. Theft plus violence is robbery. It is the most basic thing.

What is sexual assault? What is a sexual offence? A sexual offence is a sexual element, violence and a lack of consent. What is the maximum term here? It is 10 years. The maximum term for sexual assault against an adult is 10 years. The maximum for most sexual offences against children is 14 years, yet we are falling into that same trap here.

We actually are valuing and saying that the taking of property without consent is more serious than taking somebody's sexual dignity without consent. It is only 10 years. That is what someone's dignity, inviolability and consent is worth: 10 years. It is incumbent on this chamber, and I will say to every single person here, that Parliament address this.

I would ask every single person here: Do members prefer to be robbed or prefer to be sexually assaulted? I can tell everyone right now, a hundred times out of a hundred, most people here would say, "I would take the robbery." Why? It is because there is something about our bodily dignity. There is something about our bodily integrity.

● (1650)

There are victims, like the people with My Voice, My Choice, who spoke so eloquently to me in the past, who I found to be so compelling in their presentation. People in that position are often serving a psychological life sentence. When I ask the Minister of Justice whether he supports house arrest when these people are in a psychological jail themselves, there is a reason for it.

We, as legislators, have not kept up with the research that tells us the pernicious effects, and sometimes the insidious effects, of sexual violence against children. Yes, a registry is one step, but punishment itself is a primary step. I do put it to the Minister of Justice and hope he answers a question. It will just be a simple "yes" or "no". Does he support the elimination of conditional sentence orders for sexual offences, particularly sexual offences against children?

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My message here is not just for all of us here. We talked about a dialogue. Mr. Iacobucci talked about that in one of his decisions from many years ago. This is a dialogue I wish to have with judges, Crown prosecutors, of whom I was one, defence lawyers, and most importantly, victims: that those of us who are in this chamber will stand up for victims every single chance we get.

I have said it before and I will say it again. If we, as Conservatives, if I, myself, as the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, am ever given an opportunity to legislate in this area, I will not take my foot off the gas pedal until the views of every victim in this country are represented and the gravity of offences, particularly offences of a sexual nature against children, are adequately reflected in the punishment received by those who would take the innocence of a child.

I do have some experience with the publication ban end of things. It is something my colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke asked my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul after her excellent presentation. I can remember, and it is one of the first times I can ever remember this happening, where a victim set aside her publication ban. We did have a number of people from My Voice, My Choice come forward and say, “I have been a victim. Please leave it to me whether or not I get to speak.” That will debated at committee. My hope is a representative from that group will be permitted to attend.

This legislation also imparts a new application for a victim that they can put an application forward and that the court must hold a hearing to determine whether the order is revoked, and will include the victim's wishes. Far too often we do not incorporate the victims. They are an afterthought.

Sentencing is so often an offender-centred approach, and I understand why. They are the person. However, when we ultimately look at who is impacted, it is not just the offender who is impacted, particularly when we are talking about sexual offences. One of the primary offences, for instance, is section 163.1 listed here as “child pornography”. It is my hope that term will never be used again in this legislation.

Bill C-291, which I drafted and my colleague from the Okanagan put forward, is currently at third reading in the Senate. It would change the name of “child pornography” to “child sexual abuse and exploitation material” to reflect the actual harm done.

I see I am running out of time. I hope the Minister of Justice rises right now in questions and comments to indicate whether he does favour eliminating house arrest for those who would steal the innocence of children when those children are themselves abused.

• (1655)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this bill was initiated in the Senate and studied extensively over some months and carefully considered in that chamber. That is the first point.

The second point is I absolutely share my colleague opposite's conviction and commitment to eradicating the scourge of sexual offenders in this country in keeping people safe. What is important is this bill helps to do that by maintaining a sex offender registry.

I have a simple question for him. Given we must pass this legislation quickly or else that registry will cease to operate for convictions that occur from October 29 and following, will the member opposite join me in committing to prevent that dangerous outcome and help to get this bill to royal assent before October 29 or is he willing to lose that sex offender registry going forward?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I gave the minister two chances and he talked about dangerous outcomes.

Do members know what I call a dangerous outcome? I am going to look right at him and say that a dangerous outcome is the potential for somebody to abuse a child, significantly at that. There was actually a case that was overturned on appeal of an eight-year-old abused by their own parent. It was overturned on appeal because that parent received a conditional sentence order. That was the potential.

I have given the minister a chance. I am really disappointed that he would not answer that very simple question. He asked the same question of my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul. He is going to get the same answer.

Here we are, a month in advance. Is the Liberal government asleep at the switch? We know it is asleep on housing. We know it is asleep on inflation. Is it asleep on crime? Clearly. This bill originated in the Senate. The Liberal government did not bring it forward. How long does it take to draft a bill with an army of lawyers and the help of the Department of Justice? However, we are being told it is our problem.

We will look at this bill at committee, and I am committed to doing everything I can, through this bill, to protect children. I just hope the minister answers the question next time.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He hit on an important point. The provisions of the Criminal Code pertaining to sexual assault, particularly against children, must be examined more closely.

That being said, I want to again ask him the question that I would have liked to ask the minister and that the minister asked him. The minister asked him if he would support this bill so that the registry does not cease to be on October 29. I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks about that.

The minister just told us that the Senate studied this bill for some months. By “some months”, he means two months. The bill was introduced on April 26 and it was passed in the Senate on June 22. Third reading was already complete. Two months is not a lot.

On the government side, there were six months between the time when the Supreme Court of Canada delivered its ruling on October 28, 2022 and when the bill was introduced on April 26, 2023. During the six months of winter when we were sitting, not including the two months of summer when we were not, nothing was done.

At the end of six months, the Senate acted quickly in just two months. Today, we are being pushed and asked to forget about the rules of Parliament because this is behind schedule and needs to get done.

What does my colleague think about that?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

I almost feel like I am talking to my child when I talk about this. They say, “Dad, I didn’t do my homework. It’s an hour before bed-time and I have two hours of homework to do. Can I stay up a little later?” I sit there and think, “Why did they not prepare?”

Obviously it is of critical importance that we address this. In respect of my colleague’s question, I am left with the same question: Why are we here on September 20 with an October 28 deadline? That is 38 days, and the government is putting it on us.

The government knows that the bill has to go to committee. The hon. minister was the parliamentary secretary, and he sat at committee for many months, if not years. He knows the routine. We first have to vote on it at second reading, and then it has to go to committee. Then it has to come back for third reading. The government is putting it on us.

We will scrutinize this bill, and I can say this: I will do everything possible in my power to ensure that we have the best possible bill in a timely manner.

The Deputy Speaker: Here is where I will give everyone a little reminder. The quicker we can ask questions, the quicker we can answer them and the more people get to participate in this debate. Now we are out of time and we have to move on to the next speaker, the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, indeed, these are debates that speak to us and that may be why we end up spending more time on them than on other bills.

That being said, I must say that this bill seems not only welcome, but essential. The sex offender registry helps police officers in their work. It allows them to better monitor repeat offenders and serious offenders.

The Bloc Québécois will support Bill S-12. Are we going to propose amendments in committee? We will see. Essentially, I think that it is a good bill. The first thing I will do is thank Senator Gold for introducing this bill last spring and ensuring that the Senate moved quickly.

Two months can seem like a long time, but it can also seem short. In parliamentary life, bills that are introduced and adopted at

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third reading at the end of two months are few and far between. I think there was some diligence on the Senate side. I want to commend that diligence and thank the hon. Senator Gold for his work.

After it was passed by the Senate on June 22, the bill is now before us this fall. I spoke about it in the questions I asked earlier. I would have liked to hear from the minister. I understand that that will not be possible today. I hope that we will be able to get some clarification on the timelines over the next few days.

That being said, it is a good bill that will provide better safeguards and strike a better balance between the rights of victims and the rights of the accused. It is important to remember that we have a legal system where people are presumed innocent until proven otherwise. We want offenders to be rehabilitated, especially in Quebec, where a lot of legislation has been passed in that regard. We want these people to be able, in many ways, to improve the behaviour and attitude that caused the problem and reintegrate into society. We want them to become or get back to being active members of society. We believe in rehabilitation.

In that sense, one could argue that the sex offender registry could, in some ways, thwart rehabilitation efforts by sending offenders the message that, not only are we going to punish them for the crime they committed, but we are also going to add their name to a registry for a certain period of time. How do we resolve that dilemma? I think that exceptions need to be made for some crimes.

We can see that in the bill, when we talk about sexual assault, we are not talking about someone who drank a little too much in a bar and patted their boyfriend or girlfriend on the behind. We are not talking about a crime that could be described as accidental or even trivial, as some might say. We are talking about repeat offenders who have frequently been convicted of sexual offences, or people who have sexually assaulted children.

I do not know of anyone in society, at least among my friends and contacts, who claims that sexually assaulting a child is not a serious crime. I know people who were sexually abused as children. I can say that it leaves a mark on people for their entire lives. That said, it does not always mess them up. Not everyone ends up on medication for the rest of their lives. Yet it does leave a mark in all cases.

I believe that someone who is unable to control their behaviour and takes the liberty to assault a child deserves an appropriate punishment and also that society protect itself a little better from them. In that sense, the sex offender registry allows police to track and monitor those individuals. I think that is a good thing. That said, not everyone is registered the same way.

● (1705)

The Supreme Court made a ruling last year. In about a month, it will have been a year since that ruling was handed down. The court indicated in that ruling that the automatic registration of all sex offenders contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

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I think that ruling was well founded. Bill S-12 seeks to remedy the problem by saying that offenders will not be automatically registered, indiscriminately, in every situation. Only offenders who have been sentenced to more than two years in prison for this type of crime, including offences against children, and repeat offenders will be subject to mandatory or automatic registration. That covers automatic registration. I think that, in such cases, automatic registration is a good idea.

Now, for the other offenders, we are told there will be a presumption. That means that the Crown will not be asked to prove that an individual needs to be registered. There is a presumption that the individual has to be registered. The individual will be asked to prove that there is no need to register them on the sex offender registry because their offence is completely unrelated to the objectives set out in the legislation that creates this registry or, still, because their registration would be completely disproportionate to the crime they committed.

I will give an example. A person who touches someone else's bottom at a bar has committed sexual assault and could be sentenced for it. Does that warrant adding this person to a sex offender registry for life? I do not think so, but it is debatable. We have to make a distinction between that crime and the crime of raping a 12-year old girl, for example.

Bill S-12 will in some way balance the process of adding offenders to the registry by making registration automatic for serious crimes, while allowing individuals who commit less serious offences to show the judge that registration is unnecessary for a given reason. If it is shown that this registration would have absolutely no bearing on the registry's objective of assisting the work of police officers or that it would be completely disproportionate, the individual will not be added to the registry. This does not mean they will not be convicted. A trial will be held, and if the individual is found guilty, they will be sentenced. In this case, the offender would be sentenced but not added to the registry.

I think this is an acceptable and honourable compromise that would let us improve the registry provisions. In this regard, I think we can only applaud the Supreme Court's ruling last year, as well as the introduction of this bill by the hon. Senator Gold.

Now, Bill S-12 does more than that. It also enhances victim participation in legal proceedings. I have been a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for some time. We have done studies on this issue, including a review of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. Many victims testified that some of them wanted to be more involved in the trial, to be better informed and to be called upon by the Crown prosecutor when there were important decisions to be made. Other victims said they would rather stay home and not be involved in their attacker's trial. Both positions are valid. I think we should respect the victim's right to participate or not. That is what this bill provides for.

I was talking about participation in the broad sense, but there is one thing in particular that victims want a say in, and that is publication bans. A number of years ago, provisions were adopted whereby, in some cases, the judge can order a ban on publication of proceedings. In such cases, the identities of those involved remain unknown so as not to identify the victims. The goal was to prevent

victims from being identified if they did not want to be, from being stigmatized and from having to answer for acts that were not theirs, but their attacker's. The intent was to ban publication of proceedings. There is also another point at which in camera proceedings can be ordered, but we are not talking about that right now; we are talking about publication bans.

• (1710)

At the time, that was done in good faith to help victims, and everyone likely agreed it was a good idea. Victims now tell us that, in some cases, they are glad there is a publication ban. In other cases, however, they do not want one. There are victims who want to talk about the crime committed against them, either with journalists, on television, or publicly, through social media and other venues. Then there are victims who feel it is therapeutic to talk about their experience. However, as things stand, if they do so when a publication ban has been issued, they are contravening the ban and could face consequences. Victims have told us we should let them decide. If we are doing this to protect them, as we claim, we should ask for their opinion. If they do not want to be under a publication ban, one should not be issued. If they want to seek a publication ban, then one can be issued.

I think this is a wise approach that will help improve federal criminal legislation, in other words, the Criminal Code. I can only applaud this provision of Bill S-12. This is consistent with the report tabled by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights last December. I can confirm that this is consistent with what we heard from witnesses in committee. I think it makes sense.

What this provision will do is require the Crown to consult with victims before issuing a publication ban. As I think the minister said earlier, if there are two victims, and one of them wants the information withheld but the other wants it published, the court will have to take that into account and ensure that the identity of the victim who does not want to be identified is protected, while allowing the identity of the victim who does want to be identified to be released. There will be a process, with the court having to weigh the best interests of the victims when the time comes. I think there is a way to do it. Victims will then have a say on whether a publication ban is issued or not.

What is more, they will be able to ask to have the publication ban lifted, if one is imposed. Initially the victim may not want to be identified, so a publication ban is a good idea, but after three months, six months, a year or three years, the victim might say that enough time has passed for them to have processed their thoughts and that they feel like talking about the crime that was committed against them. That was not the case before, but now victims will be able to ask for the publication ban to be lifted, which, again, seems reasonable to me.

Lastly, this bill will allow victims to get updates on their attacker's case. Is the offender in prison? Where is the offender? Victims will be able to get information from correctional services and will then be informed about the individual's release date, parole conditions, and so on. This will help victims prepare themselves for the possibility that the offender might be released, enabling them to protect themselves or intervene when the time comes.

I feel these are reasonable, desirable provisions that are consistent with what victims asked for and with the report tabled by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in December.

I will now come back to the current government's inaction. I do not know how to say it anymore, because I feel like I am repeating myself, and people will think that the member for Rivière-du-Nord is like a broken record that just keeps repeating the same thing over and over. That is not it. The member for Rivière-du-Nord has been dealing with the same government for eight years, and he feels that the government is dragging its feet on this issue. I say this with all due respect for the Minister of Justice and his predecessor, because I am convinced they mean well, but I have no idea what the holdup is. Nothing was done for six months. My colleague from the Conservative Party was asking earlier what they have done, and rightly so.

• (1715)

I would like to hear a member of cabinet, or even the Prime Minister himself, offer an apology for the delay and the fact that this has fallen through the cracks. I cannot even imagine what excuse they could possibly come up with. I would like an explanation because this has become a nasty habit, one that causes enormous harm, especially to victims. Right now, there is a distinct possibility that we will no longer have a sex offender registry as of October 29. It is going to expire. The Supreme Court said so last year. We cannot blame this on the court. It gave the government a year to take action. That took six months, and even then, it was not the government that took action, it was a senator.

What is going on with this government? Is there anyone still at the controls? I would really like to know.

Earlier, the Minister of Justice said he hopes the opposition will collaborate because the bill needs to pass by October 29. I completely agree. I want to say that we will collaborate in order to once again ram the provisions through so they come into force quickly. This week, the bail provisions in Bill C-48 had to be rammed through. However, ramming things through has negative consequences. The procedural rules and principles we have adopted do serve a purpose.

Do not try and tell me that studying bills in committee is pointless, because I will take it personally. If that is the case, our work over the past eight years has been for nothing. Others have been here longer than eight years. For example, my colleague, the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, has been here for almost 40 years. Who is going to tell him that his work has been useless all this time? I doubt it. People worked to draft these rules and have us adopt them. Was their work all for nothing? I do not think so. The rules must be followed.

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There are exceptions, of course. This week, Bill C-48 was one of them. It was an exception to the principle of presumption of innocence. The bill would involve keeping someone in prison before they are even convicted. That is far from the presumption of innocence, but we agreed that this was an exception that was justified in certain cases. That is what we did, and the bill was passed.

Now we are being asked to do the same for the sex offender registry. I am not suggesting that the registry is not important. It is very important. We would like the registration requirements to be amended, as proposed in Bill S-12. However, I am very upset and worried about yet another government attempt to ram things through the parliamentary process.

I do not want to refer to the presence or absence of a member in the House, but maybe the minister could stand up here at some point and explain to us why, for the second time in two days, parliamentary procedures are being rammed through.

How come the government twiddled its thumbs for six months in this case, until a senator suddenly said it needed to be done, and now, we are being told to wake up, agree with him and pass this as quickly as possible?

They cannot be serious. I would like the government to take this seriously because the government is asking us to take it seriously. I feel like saying that we will take it seriously if the government could also take things kind of seriously when it comes to passing bills that are introduced in the House.

• (1720)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, Public Safety; the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, Democratic Institutions; and the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, Small Business.

[*English*]

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing that always amazes me about this House is how much time we spend debating things we agree on. Today appears to be one of those occasions. We have talked about how long it took to get things done and how this began a year ago.

We are here now and have a good piece of legislation before us, so my question for the member is whether he is going to support it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague on being named Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. I can assure him of my full cooperation, as far as Quebecers' interests permit.

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I understand his question. I, too, am often surprised when we spend days debating things we agree on. This debate, however, is not a needless debate. The sex offender registry is serious. I do not want to engage in needless debate. I want to study the bill in committee. I want to listen to the opinions of experts, reread the bill and hear the minister give us explanations.

My colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, may think that examining the bill amounts to needless debate, but I cannot agree.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the speech from my Bloc Québécois colleague on the justice committee.

I obviously share the concern that this bill took a while to get here, but now that it is here and we have a month, I am looking for a commitment from people to work hard together to get this legislation passed. When this gets through second reading, and if the parties do not put up too many speakers that should be soon, will he support making it a priority at the justice committee so we can get to work on it without any delay?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I too very much enjoy working with him at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human rights. We often have different points of view, but it is always constructive to add them up to create better bills.

That being said, I agree with him. The Bloc Québécois will work to ensure that this bill is passed as quickly as possible, but still in a serious way.

I am willing for us to return to committee this week. We have a committee and there is a free slot tomorrow evening. If we have a chair who is designated by the government and if the other committee members are available, so am I. We will begin tomorrow evening and ask to start working on this bill. If not, it will happen Tuesday or as soon as the fastest members on the government side are ready to go.

• (1725)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord for his work at the Standing Committee on Justice and for the speech he delivered today.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been trying to get in, as you know, to ask a question since the minister spoke, so I will speak very quickly.

It may be my only occasion to say that the Green Party will be supporting Bill S-12. My only concern is that I really want to make sure we do the proper consultations. When I last spoke to members of My Voice, My Choice, they had concerns and wanted to see some amendments.

[Translation]

Since my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord also talked about the challenges faced by victims of sexual offences who were not aware that they were banned from disclosing information, I just want to say to him that it is really odd for the system to punish them for talking about their situation and themselves. That is not fair.

[English]

I am hoping that my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord is also going to be eagle-eyed when we get to the justice committee so that this bill adequately solves the problems facing victims of sexual violence, who are then under a publication ban without their permission.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I totally agree with her that it is illogical and absurd to punish victims of sexual offences for talking about the crime.

That is what I meant at the beginning of my speech when I talked about the second part of the bill, which will probably, at least in my opinion, solve this problem.

I will therefore obviously support this bill, including the part that will let victims have a say in deciding whether or not a publication ban should be issued in their case.

[English]

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

My colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke just asked a question expressing, as I understand it, that as this bill is before us, we should really get it moving. I am paraphrasing quite a bit here. Another colleague, though, who just spoke to this bill, asked how we got to this point where we have 38 days to get it through the House and then through the Senate. I understand both sentiments.

We have talked about different victims and different victims groups, like My Voice, My Choice. What message does it send to victims and victims groups, in his view, when we say we have to get this done, which everybody is saying, yet the government waited essentially until the last moment to do it?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I have also worked with him on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and have always appreciated his interventions. We do not always share the same point of view, but there is always respect there, and that is very helpful.

That said, to answer his question, I have to say that I do not understand either. My answer to these groups is that there are really only two ways to interpret this way of doing things.

It may be that the government considers that the national sex offender registry is not important, as was the case the day before yesterday with Bill C-48, when the bail provisions did not seem important. Indeed, that is how it is with many other bills: just not important. Since it is not important, bills keep getting pushed back and dealt with when it suits them. If it never suits them, it is no big deal.

If it is not because the subject is not important, then it is because the procedural rules are not important. They think the opposition members are not that bright. They know the opposition will say yes to anything, so, at the eleventh hour, they tell us the bill has to be passed. Then the opposition says, oh, the national sex offender registry is so important that we have to set aside the House's procedural rules. That is what the government hopes. Let us call that option B.

Here is my question for the government. Is it A, the government does not give a fig, or is it B, the government does not give a fig about parliamentary rules?

• (1730)

[English]

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick out one thing. This is my first time rising in the House as the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. For colleagues who know my work and advocacy since setting foot in this chamber, it has been about having a trauma-informed lens in everything we do and understanding the lived experience of Canadians, especially with respect to something such as this, the sex offender registry.

I would like to focus on the victims and say that this is an important discussion; we need to get the bill to committee so that we understand the agency. It is so important for victims to have agency in what they have gone through and to be able to feel safe in sharing their story.

As I heard from my colleague from the Bloc in his discussion, he spent some time really talking about that victim-centred lens. That is why I would like to ask him this: In terms of the publication bans and what the government is supporting here with respect to empowering agency in the hands of victims and survivors in their stories, will you support us on that?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that she is to address all questions and comments through the Chair. I know that she knows that and it was just a slip.

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and I congratulate her on her cabinet appointment.

I simply do not understand why my colleague is telling us that this is so important and urgent when her government let it slide for

six months. Now, at the eleventh hour, a month before the expiry of the one-year period granted by the Supreme Court, the government is telling us to get a move on. I do not know what to tell her.

Government Orders

Yes, it is important to us, and I am certain that the same holds true for my NDP colleagues and even my Conservative colleagues. While we may have differing views, we all want Bill S-12 to pass. At least, I believe that is the case.

I do not want to put words in their mouth, but I think we all agree that the national sex offender registry is important and that it is important to allow victims to weigh in on publication bans.

Why am I being told to get a move on? The Supreme Court decision was handed down 11 months ago. Now is an odd time to ask.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I start on Bill S-12, as one of the openly gay members of this Parliament, I will make a brief mention of the events outside the House today.

I was very pleased to see that, in Ottawa, there was a large turnout of counter-demonstration against the wave of anti-trans and anti-2SLGBTIA hate that is sweeping this country. I am pleased to hear a commitment from the government to work with us on a motion that will condemn hatred and the destruction of public events and public institutions, such as school boards, on very misinformed and hateful grounds. I look forward to working on that. However, one of the things it requires is for the justice committee to meet.

One of the pieces of urgency here, obviously, is Bill S-12. However, I have to say that I am a little disappointed that we have had no meetings of the justice committee this week. I would urge leaders of all parties in the House to come together, get the justice committee reconstituted and get it operating as quickly as possible. We not only have Bill S-12, but we also have my motion, which deals with the wave of hate; I would like to get it dealt with in committee.

Government Orders

Turning to the bill itself, we have had lots of comments about why the bill was late getting here. I share the concerns that the bill could have been here earlier, although there is one piece that I will give the Liberals some credit for. People are asking why it went to the Senate first. Actually, that was an attempt by the government to move more quickly by having the Senate do some of this work and get the bill to us. When we are finished with the bill, it will already have been passed in the Senate, and therefore, we can get things going very quickly. However, this requires that we not have what I think a member referred to before, which is a lot of people giving the same speech over and over in support of the same bill. We have some important work to do at committee, and I hope that all parties will make sure that we can get the bill to committee as soon as possible and do that work.

Now, there are two things in the bill. Again, some members have talked about only one part of the bill in their speeches. However, there are two parts, and the part that is most important to me looks at victims of sexual offences and making sure that we change the law to restore agency to those victims, so that publication bans are not imposed on cases against the wishes of the victim.

Publication bans sometimes serve a very important purpose, and some victims will want to have them imposed. However, to me, publication bans are a relic of old thinking that somehow sexual assault victims have done something wrong, and therefore, their names should not be exposed to the public. Nothing could be further from the truth. However, what is more important is what we heard from the My Voice, My Choice group. Often, victims of crime actually want to help prevent there being more victims, and they feel that publication bans end up inadvertently protecting the perpetrators and keeping important information from other members of the community about who might be a perpetrator.

In one of my questions, I made reference to the case in 2021 in Ontario, where a victim of sexual assault was actually prosecuted for violating the publication ban and received a fine of \$2,000 and a victim impact surcharge of \$600. What did she do? She was assaulted by a friend or family member, as happens in 80% of cases, and she felt that other members of her friend group and her family should know who the perpetrator was. She said the names, against the publication ban, of herself as the victim and of the perpetrator, to help protect other people in the community. Bill S-12 would correct that fault in our law and restore agency to victims of sexual assault. To me, that is the very most important thing in the bill.

I salute the members of My Voice, My Choice who came to the justice committee when we were doing our study on victims of crime. They very bravely retold their stories and, in many ways, re-traumatized themselves in order to be of service to other victims.

When we talk to victims of crime, and I know this from my experience in the criminal justice field, the most important thing for almost all victims is that what happened to them not happen to someone else. Their first response is not always what members of another party in the House tend to say, which is to demand punishment. They demand prevention and education so that this does not happen to someone else. The lifting of publication bans will help prevent there being other victims of sexual offences. Once again, to me, that is the most important part of the bill.

• (1735)

The other half of this bill is the part that results from the Supreme Court decision about the sex offender registry. Let me say the obvious: We all support the operation of the registry. However, the court found that, in many cases, we are overly broad in the automatic registration of offenders. While any kind of sexual offender is not a popular person to talk about, there were some cases where people with intellectual disabilities or people who were neurodiverse, who failed to understand the rules of social conduct and properly read social cues, ended up convicted of sexual offences. I know of two such cases in my own community.

I am not going to say it was through no fault of their own, because I do not wish to put it that way. However, it was through a lack of understanding. They are very unlikely to reoffend or to repeat their behaviour, yet they ended up registered as sex offenders for life. What did it mean in those cases? It meant they could not live in social housing and could not get lots of the social supports they needed, because they were registered sex offenders.

What this bill would do is restore the discretion of judges in a very limited number of cases to not register those people permanently as sex offenders. The analysis of this bill that was done by the justice department says that over 90% of the people who are registered now will continue to be automatically registered. Perhaps as many as 10% will be able to apply to a judge and argue why they should not be registered, but 90% will still automatically be registered.

We are preventing an injustice to those who may have intellectual or other challenges preventing them from understanding their behaviour; however, we are also making sure that the resources that the sex offender registry uses are concentrated on those who are most likely to reoffend. That, to me, is a very strong reason for parties in the House to support this bill.

If we do not get this work done and the sex offender registry ceases to function, that is a big problem. While, yes, I will join in saying I wish this had gotten here sooner, I will also point out that the report on victims of crime, which included the material from My Voice, My Choice, was only tabled in the House last December. The material that came forward in that report from committee was taken by the government and incorporated into this bill.

Some of this work was done fairly fast and was done at the request of victims, so we have an obligation now not to spend a lot of time on it. I know I am not going to get the full amount of time today, but that is okay, because we in the New Democratic Party support this bill. We think it is an important bill, and we want to get it to committee without delay.

There are other things we must do. The report from the justice committee on better support for victims of crime has not really been acted on. I think we should all take seriously the recommendations that are there. The federal ombudsperson for victims of crime has also suggested that we can improve support for victims of crime; this bill is one of the ways we can do that.

I urge all members to support this bill and get it to committee without delay, and I urge those on the justice committee to make this bill a priority in our dealings. However, going back to the leadership of the House from all parties, we have missed all our meetings this week. Could we get the justice committee constituted and meeting?

• (1740)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, some time ago, and I hope it is not the situation today, victims of sexual assaults were further victimized in the courts. Their characters were called into question. It was a very tough time to endure that.

Is the hon. member satisfied that the conditions have either changed or are solid enough that the lifting of publication bans will not lead to the person being victimized in society in general?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, here is the important message that I think we got from My Voice, My Choice: It is up to the victims to make the decision about whether they wish to have the publication ban. It is not really up to me, the prosecutors or the judges to make that decision for them.

Yes, I share concerns about the way victims of crime are still treated in the courts, particularly victims of sexual assault. However, sexual assault is the one area where we take away that agency and say that they are not allowed to talk publicly about what happened to them. That is the message we received quite clearly in the justice committee from My Voice, My Choice. It is to give that agency to the victims, to let them make that decision for themselves.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague has identified that it would have been better if the bill had been here sooner than later, but it is here now.

What can be done to improve the bill? Are there any other opportunities to make up for lost ground? Can he reinforce some of the potential improvements for this bill?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, there are two parts that I did not talk about, which I think are significant improvements in the sex offender registry. There would be two more offences added to a list for automatic registration.

One of those is sextortion offences where so-called revenge porn is used by an ex against their partner who has left them and they are angry, so they post intimate images without consent. The second is

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that any posting of intimate images without consent would result in automatic registration as a sex offender.

I think those are two very important steps. They are already in the bill. I just did not have time to mention them in my speech.

There were some changes made to the original text of the bill in the Senate. I think it is important that we look at those closely. I think it is important we hear from My Voice, My Choice once again to make sure this bill meets their objectives.

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• (1745)

[Translation]

INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, children are our greatest wealth. Each of them has different interests, abilities and goals. Motion No. 78 highlights the wealth that our children represent.

For those listening to us now, I would like to make a small clarification concerning the content of the motion tabled by the hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. Essentially, the motion asks that Canada recognize its own commitments as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also asks that Canada recognize that approximately 50% of children with disabilities across the world are estimated to be out of school and that they were 49% more likely to have never attended school. Finally, the motion asks Canada to spend money on education, domestically or internationally, in order to ensure the maximum inclusion of people with disabilities, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I would also like to mention that primary and secondary education is not within the federal government's jurisdiction, but rather within that of the governments of Quebec and the Canadian provinces. Moreover, Quebec has had a special education policy since 1999. I will return to this later.

I can see in this motion the dignity and desire for fairness that drives the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. To illustrate the merits of this motion, I will provide a few figures to demonstrate the inequity and inequality people with disabilities have to face on a daily basis. I also have a caveat about the Canadian aspect of the motion. I will provide some examples of federal missteps when it comes to Canada's rights abroad.

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Having a child is a treasure, as I said at the outset. When people find out that their child will live with a disability, that is an added weight on their shoulders. Some parents find out at birth or even beforehand. Others find out later either because the child has an invisible disability or because there was an accident or an illness.

My colleagues will forgive me for becoming emotional. I was a special education teacher, and while I am talking about these children, I am thinking about my students. I am thinking of Vicky, who was born healthy, bright and full of life. She was what some people would call a normal child. She was eventually diagnosed with brain cancer twice. Vicky stopped growing very early on. Even in high school, she was a tiny, petite girl. She was a spirited little devil, and the only way I could get Vicky to learn something, to get it into her head so she could memorize it, was to turn everything into a game or a joke. It worked.

That is what special education is all about. We need to treat children with disabilities in a way that enables them to succeed. We have to adapt our teaching and our schools to what they are going through and meet them where they are. If Vicky is watching, I salute her.

At the same time, I am thinking of Alexandre, who hated my jokes. He thought they were really bad. I thank Vicky for restoring my faith in my jokes. I have several examples. I could talk about Steven, a child with multiple disabilities who will never learn to read. He is physically unable to show that he understands what we are trying to teach him.

At the time, I was a vice-principal and I wanted to see what was happening with special education, to reacquaint myself with the reality on the ground. When Steven saw me coming, he smiled because he knew that he could go to the computer and that we were going to play a computer game together where he could show me letters and figures. It was his way of showing that he understood, despite his disabilities.

● (1750)

We have that opportunity because we live in a privileged, industrialized country. It is not an opportunity that children in every country have. No, the system in Quebec is not perfect, but there are reasons for that. It takes health care specialists to diagnose a child. It takes special education teachers, speech pathologists and occupational therapists to help these children. However, after 30 years of cuts to health transfers, there are fewer and fewer of these specialists in the public sector and people are forced to turn to the private sector.

Although a child with a disability is a blessing, raising them can be a burden on poor families. These families do not have any money or insurance and they are left sitting on a waiting list that I will refrain from describing here. The federal government has not been sending health transfers, or has been sending only a half or a third of the amount for over 30 years, and parents are the ones who are paying the price. At some point, these children may not get the care they need. By signing the convention, Canada committed to ensuring that children with disabilities are included in society, not excluded. When a provincial government is forced to make cuts to health care to the point where services are compromised, children with disabilities are the ones who suffer the most. At some point,

that government needs to make cuts in another area, and then cut its second-largest budget.

The second-largest budget item is education. That is how children with special needs end up in classrooms too crowded for their needs, without the support they require. No specialized educators are there to help the teacher. They have no special education teachers, speech therapists or occupational therapists. Yes, schools need them too. Sometimes all that is needed is a chair lift to help a child get to the washroom. When children in wheelchairs grow into teenagers, they can be six foot four or six foot five. Thanks to widespread budget cuts, there may not even be wheelchairs that fit them. These children's dignity is at stake. Canada has to address this too.

It is hard to change mindsets around the world. However, if we do not act now, mindsets will never change anywhere. We will miss opportunities to have young people like Vicky, who transitioned out of special education and into a regular classroom. She earned her high school diploma. She finished her studies because she was accepted, assisted and supported throughout her journey. Steven, who I was talking about earlier, is able to do simple tasks with a bit of support. Now cuts are being made everywhere. Governments are not investing in our own young people. Having a disability is no reason to be cast aside. Gone are the days of ancient Greece, where children would be cast off if they were missing the end of their finger or leg. There are artists across Canada who are living proof that having a disability is not the end of the world.

This motion is important because, as I have often said in the House, every time we help the smallest among us, we show just how big we are as a society. Every time Canada cuts health transfers, which forces provincial governments to cut funding for education and services to the public, we show just how small we are.

The smallest among us are our strength. Together with them, by giving them the training, education and support they deserve, we can become a great society and, I hope, a better world internationally.

● (1755)

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to stand and speak to Motion No. 78 this evening on the inclusion of people with disabilities, put forward by my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

This motion speaks to article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Canada signed and states a signatory “shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life long learning directed to... Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.” This motion calls on the federal government to ensure, when spending money on education domestically or internationally, that there is clear consideration given to the maximum inclusion of people living with disabilities, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities..

I am happy to stand in support of this motion alongside my NDP colleagues, as it is clear that, despite Canada's signing on to this convention, Canada is not living up to this promise. I have spoken to my colleague who put this motion forward, and it is clear that his heart is in his work to ensure those living with disabilities are provided with maximum inclusion. As I have mentioned in this House before, I am a mother of two and a previous school board trustee, and I worked in education, mental health and addictions. As a single mother who very much understood what it was like to live paycheque to paycheque, my work focused on ensuring and fighting for access to basic human rights and supports so that everyone had access to equitable opportunities, including those living with disabilities.

In my former roles I saw first-hand so many dedicated individuals. To name a few, they were educators, parents, caregivers, volunteers and workers in non-profits doing all they can to fully support students, but the funding made available to students who need it is nowhere near enough. I have seen incredible people using collaborations and creativity to make ends meet, but unfortunately inadequate funding also means long wait times to access educational or health specialists and a lack of required supports.

Despite the Liberals' promise to people living with disabilities, school boards, provinces and territories are not provided with the necessary funds to ensure the supports, infrastructure and professionals required are in place to provide those living with disabilities the necessary supports to thrive. If the federal government were to truly follow through with its commitment to those living with disabilities, it would ensure the appropriate funding was in place from the onset instead of underfunding and downloading the responsibility onto provinces, territories, municipalities, school boards, first nations and regional districts.

Today I spoke with Stz'uminus First Nations' Chief John Elliot about the availability of supports for students living with disabilities at Stz'uminus Community School. Chief Elliot spoke to me about the need, desire and commendable work to support and set up all students for success at the school. It is clear there are many who are dedicated and working tirelessly to provide quality education and equitable opportunities. Despite this, all too often students living with disabilities are not receiving the level of supports required due to a lack of adequate funding.

Chief Elliot discussed the high need for supports at the community school with many students living with disabilities and the struggles that result from not having appropriate and adequate funding in place. Chief Elliot discussed with me the ways in which underfunding not only creates barriers in supports for students who need them, but also creates barriers in better understanding the challenges being experienced by students. This lack of access means delays in diagnosis, which we all know also means a delay in required supports.

There are so many items related to this motion that I can speak to today, but I would be remiss if I did not also speak to the importance of increasing Canadian grants for post-secondary students living with disabilities. My friend Anne is just one example I have spoken about before in the House. We attended post-secondary school together. Anne lives with disabilities and, with appropriate supports, thrived in post-secondary, completing her undergrad and

then going on to complete graduate school, but the student loan that follows her to this day is completely unaffordable for the income she is making and the expenses required.

If we truly want to remove barriers for those living with disabilities, strapping a student loan to them at a time when they are trying to get ahead and to contribute to our communities in endless ways is not the way forward. It is time we saw the changes necessary that set people living with disabilities up for success, not debt for life.

• (1800)

I am certain my colleague would agree that in addition to Motion No. 78, there is much work to be done to support those living with disabilities. As the cost of living continues to increase, people living with disabilities are particularly hard hit.

My NDP colleagues and I know that people living with disabilities need help now. My NDP colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam has been fighting tirelessly to have the voices of those living with disabilities heard. We know that the Liberals dragged their heels endlessly on moving forward with a national disability benefit, while people living with disabilities were unable to afford even the most basic of necessities: a roof over their heads, food on the table, life-saving medications and funds for transportation to appointments. I could go on.

There is no denying that if it were not for the work of the NDP, we would not have seen the much overdue national disability benefit become law. This never would have happened without the pressure of community advocates, those living with disabilities and their loved ones, with the NDP right by their sides ensuring their voices are heard here in Parliament and that decisions made about people living with disabilities include people living with disabilities.

This benefit is a huge win for so many, but now those living with disabilities once again wait. It is another long delay with uncertainty for people living with disabilities. We know that there are solutions that could be implemented. A vital national disability benefit that people need today is one. It is a benefit that people needed long ago.

If there continue to be delays on a national disability benefit, why are we not seeing the Liberals implementing an emergency relief benefit, or DERB? People living with disabilities deserve to be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve and to have access to the supports necessary to make ends meet.

We have seen that when all parties agree with a priority, we can make it happen. This is a priority. Enough with the delays; enough with the inaction. Let us do what is right for those who elected us to represent them and get the DERB into people's pockets, followed by putting in place the national disability benefit. People with disabilities need to see less delay from the Liberals, less inaction from the Conservatives and more solutions put into place by all members of this House.

Private Members' Business

I would like to talk a little about my experience in Nunavut. When I was in Nunavut last summer, I met with families living in Iqaluit. One family had a son who was living with a disability. They expressed to me the additional stress and burden they were experiencing from not having access to the health care they needed and not having access to the specialists they required to provide their son with the life that he deserved so he could thrive and be successful. It really spoke to the importance of not only an increase in health care transfers to provinces and territories, but also particular attention being paid to those in rural communities. Indigenous people on reserve, off reserve and in rural communities deserve to have access to health care to remain healthy and happy. This is just one example.

When I met with this young boy and his family, there was so much potential, but the family had to travel so far in order to access even the most basic necessities. I was reflecting on that while I was thinking of this motion and the importance of us having all of the things that people living with disabilities need to be successful and to have their basic needs met.

People living with disabilities need to have access to inclusive education. This we know for sure. That is why I am happy to support this motion. We also need to look at what people living with disabilities require and the ways in which communities will thrive: access to truly affordable housing, head-to-toe health care and a guaranteed livable basic income, to name just a few. Allowing people to access their basic human rights needs to be a priority for all of us.

• (1805)

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this evening to speak to this very thoughtful motion by my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

Before I get started on this speech, I did want to give a special shout-out and acknowledgement to the members of Canada's Special Olympics teams who participated in the 2023 World Games in Germany this year and brought home significant amounts of hardware, including 46 gold medals, 20 silver medals and 30 bronze medals. I do not think we did enough as a country to congratulate our Special Olympians when they came home, but better late than never. They did a fantastic job, and the coaches and the volunteers who helped them excel and put Canada on the world stage for athletics are to be commended.

In the same spirit, we have worked very hard as a country to be inclusive of individuals with disabilities with respect to sport, but we have much to do when it comes to education. Canada has done some great things over the years, but we have a long way to go.

I was very pleased to hear my colleagues, both from the NDP and from the Bloc, speak just before me. In particular, the intervention from my Bloc colleague, who is very passionate, shared some very heartwarming stories of lived experience about what progress, joy, purpose and dignity we can provide individuals living with unique abilities in our society.

I think that too often in this place we end up focusing a lot on the differences we have between parties. We like to draw the contrast of how we are different from the others. Of course, the media like

to play that up. However, at least on this issue, every once in a while, there is something that comes before the chamber that has what appears to be unanimous support. I very much look forward to seeing the outcome of the vote next week.

I want to take a few minutes to commend the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. I have known him for over 15 years. He has been elected since 2006. If I can quote former finance minister Bill Morneau's book, which recently came out, he said that some people go to Ottawa to be someone, and some people go to Ottawa to do something. The member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin has come to Ottawa to do something. He has put his passion and his purpose into this issue, among many other issues, of course. We all come here to serve constituents. We all belong to a party. We all support our party and our priorities, but each of us has an ability to lean into something we care about. The member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin should be commended for choosing this issue over his very long public service career, to support those living with unique abilities, or disabilities as some say, in our society.

Inclusion and education are important. We spend a lot of money around the world trying to help those in developing countries find education opportunities. Why do we do that? We do it because education is one of the single best predictors of lifting someone out of poverty. We should be expanding that education to be as inclusive as we can so that we can include those in our communities, our neighbours here at home in Canada who have disabilities, and also in the work we do in other countries. Canada has done so many great things, and I will touch on those later, but we do have a leadership role to play on the world stage when it comes to helping other countries be inclusive with respect to education.

Of course, one would expect a Conservative to talk about how it is good for the economy. Obviously that is the case. There are over 500,000 underemployed or unemployed individuals in this country who have disabilities. If we get those individuals into the workforce, it absolutely helps with our GDP. There is no question about it: this represents hundreds of billions of dollars of additional GDP.

However, it is the things we cannot measure in a bank account. It is the purpose, the dignity and the joy one can see in someone's face about being part of and welcomed in their community. It is the proper human thing to do. We owe it to our neighbours here at home and abroad to see what we can do to involve as many people as possible in the economy and in our education, by being inclusive to give them proper vocational training.

I am pleased that the motion talks about the international piece, but, as I said, we have a lot of work to do at home.

• (1810)

I was also very proud to be in and around Ottawa during the previous government, which laid the foundation for a number of very strong initiatives with respect to persons with disabilities. I just want to highlight a few. One of the single most important advancements with respect to supporting those with disabilities was the implementation of the registered disability savings plan that was brought in by former finance minister Jim Flaherty, under the leadership of former prime minister Harper.

Some other initiatives include the Canada disability savings bond, which actually deposited money into that account for low-income Canadians; Canada disability savings grants; the enabling accessibility fund to help with renovating and retrofitting infrastructure to make it more accessible; the disability supplement for the working income tax benefit, although the government has renamed that the Canada workers benefit, a little bit of branding; new labour market framework agreements for persons with disabilities; enhancements to the disability tax credit by extending eligibility; increasing the child disability benefit; exempting GST for training services related to assisting individuals coping with the effects of an intellectual disability; exempting GST for medical devices, including for service dogs; and enhancements to the medical expense tax credit.

One of the key things that the previous government did prior to the 2015 election was to start a program called Ready Willing & Able, to help employers and provide vocational training to employees with intellectual disabilities. I commend the government for continuing to support that program up until today.

I could go on, but those are some of the initiatives that happened under the previous government. This is not a partisan issue with respect to supporting those vulnerable neighbours around us. It transcends politics. These are our neighbours, our community members. These are our family members in many cases.

Having worked in the previous government, I got to see the advocacy of the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. When we considered a number of these measures that were introduced, it was the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin who was involved in supporting and advocating for those individuals and those measures every step of the way.

As I said, this is not really a partisan issue. I think that has been clear today. I look forward to the vote next week.

If colleagues do not want to listen to me, as some people do not always want to in this place, I would just like to read a few quotes from some of Canada's leading authorities on this subject.

Community Living Toronto wrote, "Knowledge is the most powerful thing we can use to change the world. Thank you [to the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin] for your support in promoting equal opportunities for a quality, inclusive education. It is a crucial step in improving the lives of people with intellectual disabilities!"

Danny Glenwright, President and CEO, Save the Children Canada, wrote, "Thanks for your work on this... this is an important step to support this critical education work and inclusion in Canada & internationally. I hope all MPs will agree and support this, furthering Canada's leadership on education, inclusion and rights."

Right to Play Canada wrote, "Happy to see parliamentary support for more quality and inclusive education, so that every single child, wherever they live, has the opportunity to learn."

Finally, Tim Shriver gave his thanks to the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin "for your steadfast support for @SpecialOlympics and inclusive education for people with disabilities".

That is not small praise. Those are some of the leading voices and advocates for those living among us with unique abilities or

disabilities, as some say. That they have chosen to throw their support behind this motion from the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin speaks volumes.

I am heartened by the speeches that I have heard here tonight. I look forward to the vote next week. While this is a motion and not a bill, I think it is an important step, a step we must make. We must hold each other accountable to follow through on these measures to make sure we are welcoming and inclusive of those living with disabilities in our communities here at home and around the world.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have risen as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities.

I would like to thank the Prime Minister for placing his trust in me. I would also like to thank the people of Pierrefonds—Dollard for their support.

[English]

I would like to thank the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin for his motion and his deep and personal concern for persons with disabilities, including children and youth. When it comes to creating a more inclusive and equitable country for persons with disabilities, we strongly must agree together. This must remain a government priority and a priority for all members of this House.

[Translation]

I am pleased to tell the opposition member that our government supports his motion.

[English]

In fact, this motion is consistent with the government's priorities. It is also consistent with our legislative program to promote the full social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities. When it comes to educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, Canada is committed both domestically and internationally.

In the next moments, I will speak about our government's actions toward building a fairer and more inclusive Canada for all. This includes channelling our efforts through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Employment Equity Act. I am especially proud of the historic Accessible Canada Act, which became law in 2019; and Canada's first-ever disability inclusion action plan, introduced in 2022. These are importantly supported going forward.

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The member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin specifically seeks greater support for the inclusion of children with disabilities into the education system. This motion ties federal spending to specific measures to achieve that goal, here in Canada and through our international commitments. As we know, education falls within the jurisdiction of provinces and territories, except for the first nations education on reserve. However, the federal government does play a key role in building and maintaining a system of quality education across the country. We provide specific block transfers to the provinces and territories through the Canada social transfer, including for post-secondary education. We will not intervene in matters under provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

In the spirit of “Nothing Without Us”, we remain committed to directly engaging with the disability community. Of course, we work with our provincial and territorial colleagues to use every tool at our disposal to remove barriers to quality education. Part of that collaboration with provincial and territorial and indigenous partners has been the establishment of the Canada-wide early learning and child care system. Inclusive and equitable access to the system is built into the government's agreements with provinces and territories. Federal funding is being used by our provincial and territorial partners to provide supports that can address these unique circumstances with each and every individual child and family.

In addition, last June, our government announced a \$12.5-million investment under the engaging accessibility fund, small projects component. This supported 225 early learning and child care centres to buy specialized equipment for children with special needs so they can thrive in those environments. Through agreements we have reached with provinces and territories, we are building an affordable child care system that is accessible and inclusive to all Canadians in every region of the country. It is disappointing that the Conservative Party does not see the value in this historic program.

All this is in addition to supporting lifelong learning and skills development opportunities for working-age persons with disabilities, for example, the workforce development agreements program and the opportunity fund.

Let me briefly circle back to the disability inclusion action plan. The action plan has four key pillars. First is financial security; second, employment; third, accessible and inclusive communities; and fourth, a modern approach to disability across the federal government. We know that when persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to contribute to our society and to Canada, our economy grows and strengthens. We achieve the Canada we want through this: a country that is a richer and more vibrant and inclusive country.

• (1820)

There is still much work to do, but we are making important progress. We are working alongside the disability community.

A good, quality education is key to being lifted out of poverty and to one's social advancement. It increases the chances of finding a good job and earning higher wages. There is always the opportunity to learn on the job and develop additional skills.

Persons with disabilities often face barriers to attaining higher levels of education. This can lead to a lifetime of inequality. It can

also deny capable and willing Canadians the opportunity to fully contribute, which takes away from the economy.

Statistics Canada has the data. The percentage of school-aged youth with disabilities drops considerably as they transition from high school to young adulthood. Women with disabilities are more likely than men with disabilities to quit formal education or training because of their condition.

First, we know that greater educational opportunity means greater participation by persons with disabilities in the labour market. Second, we are living in a time of labour market shortages and market transitions as we gradually shift away from traditional jobs to a greener economy. This brings us to the logical conclusion that when persons with disabilities achieve their full potential and thrive so does all of Canada.

That is why we, as a Liberal government, will continue to invest in persons with disabilities. We want and need persons with disabilities to have the financial supports they need. This is to help them complete their studies and successfully move into the workforce.

This past June, Bill C-22 received royal assent. This was a very significant victory for the disability community. We must savour that win and take in that moment. The Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities will be moving forward to deliver the Canada disability benefit to those who need it the most. This significant, transformative piece of legislation is unique. It will lift hundreds of thousands of people out of poverty and will genuinely improve the lives of Canadians.

I know and fully understand that many are anxious to bring this benefit to the finish line. As we bring it to the finish line, we must not cut corners with the quality of the engagements the minister is leading with the disability community. We must make sure the benefit is what the disability community needs. We are focused on getting this right. We will get it right.

I hope to see all members of this House support the Canada disability benefit. It is not enough to say that we need to be more inclusive. We must also take concrete actions. We will take more concrete actions.

It is important to recognize that there exists an array of disabilities. This community is not a homogenous group. Disabilities vary in type and severity. The barriers that one person faces might be different from those of another.

[Translation]

Our government is committed to ensuring the full participation and inclusion of all persons with disabilities.

[English]

Through historic milestones such as the Accessible Canada Act, the Canada disability benefit and the disability inclusion action plan, we are moving away from an ableist mindset of what is possible. There are many possibilities. They are now being put into action and they will become a reality, because inclusion benefits everyone.

I would like to close by giving thanks to the disability community and the advocates involved in this space. I thank them for their work, for pressing and pushing, for getting us to where we are thus far and for helping us get across the finish line.

● (1825)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this issue. I would like to thank my colleague who moved the motion today.

It feels a little like Groundhog Day with this motion. I was listening earlier to the speech by my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou, as well as the speeches from my other colleagues. Basically, this motion could be called “Canada is not doing enough for the less fortunate” or “Canada is turning its back on a bunch of people”. That pretty much sums it up. We would not need this motion today if Canada were doing enough for people with disabilities. Today, we are talking about children with disabilities.

I have often spoken on various issues. I have just returned from a tour all over Quebec. I visited all of Quebec's regions this summer, including Abitibi, Gaspé, Lac-Saint-Jean, the Eastern Townships, Montreal and Gatineau. Every region is facing extremely difficult situations. According to a recent report by the Quebec government, there are 10,000 homeless people in Quebec. How can we accept that? Winter is coming, and those people are going to be left to live outside. Some of them will die because of our inaction and our lack of commitment to the least fortunate in our society. I do not know how anyone can accept that.

We do a lot of debating in the House and all sorts of bills are introduced, but sometimes I get the impression that we are not making any progress. This motion is a sad reminder of that. We are talking about children with disabilities, and earlier I spoke about homelessness, but we can also talk about housing. The government is aware of the statistics. Everyone here is talking about them. The housing crisis was the major theme of the summer. Canada needs 3.5 million housing units to address this crisis. The numbers are astronomical. That is related to the issue we are considering now. We need a national plan so we can take care of the most vulnerable members of our society.

We need 1.1 million housing units in Quebec. We should stop everything and discuss just that, especially with winter on the way. What are we going to do about it? We need an industrial plan. We need measures that are just as broad as those that were proposed at the beginning of the pandemic. We stopped everything. I remember

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one evening when we adopted an \$82-billion plan that involved sending cheques to everyone across the country to help industries, workers and individuals pay their rent. We stopped everything to deal with that crisis. We are in a major crisis right now that is at least as serious, but we are not dealing with it. We are not doing enough. I cannot understand it.

I will never be as moving as my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou in discussing these issues. However, I have some relevant personal experience. One of my nephews has Asperger syndrome. He is 33 now, and has spent the past 20 years or so in his room, playing video games. Now and then he comes downstairs to get a glass of juice or milk from the refrigerator, a sandwich or a cookie, then goes back upstairs to his room. He never speaks to anyone. What could be more devastating for a parent than to think their child will never have a social life or friends?

I had an experience that ties in with the motion we are considering today. When my son was in kindergarten, he was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Alarm bells go off in a parent's mind. My nephew had already been going through this for 20 years and I know that he had a very difficult life. He had no friends. It was hard for him to get to school, to go outside or even have a simple conversation with someone. It was the school psychologist who told us that my son might have this disorder. It is thanks to him that a light went off in our heads, but then we needed to find a clinic to get a proper diagnosis so that the school psychologists and professionals could offer him good care to help him learn.

● (1830)

Members can imagine our panic. I remember living in that reality for a year. We looked for a specialist but could not find one. How is it that, in this country, people cannot get the services they need for their children?

This ties in with a story that ran on television this week. It featured a young, single mother who has two children with disabilities. She, too, was unable to find the services to simply have her children diagnosed. It is an uphill battle. What exactly do we mean when we are talking about this? How can we take action?

Health is a provincial jurisdiction. My colleague from Beauport—Limoilou mentioned that. Why is it that, in the negotiations a few months ago, the provinces were asking for \$6 billion, but Quebec did not even get \$1 billion? It is as though it is not important. Who is getting let down when this happens? Who is not getting taken care of when Quebec gets a cheque for a measly \$800 million, when there is need for \$6 billion? All of the Canadian provinces were in agreement. Everyone was asking for it. All the provinces were asking the same thing. As my colleague just mentioned, the government gives to oil companies. This country refuses to put a roof over the heads of the most disadvantaged. A single mother is denied the support she needs to have her children diagnosed. What are we doing instead?

Private Members' Business

According to the International Monetary Fund, \$50 billion was invested in the oil industry in 2022. How can that even be? I would remind the House that, in 2022, the five big oil companies cleared \$220 billion. In other words, Canada is making billionaires richer, but doing nothing for 10,000 homeless people in Quebec. It is doing nothing for parents who are worried sick about the future of their children who have all kinds of problems. People talked about the autism spectrum and children with a visual or physical disability. These are tragedies. These are not easy lives. These people need support. As a country, do we not have the means to help all these people? Do we want to make other choices, such as enriching billionaires instead of supporting our society's least fortunate? I simply will not accept that. I want us all to be aware of the real issues. Instead of looking up at the billionaires, we need to look down where the needs are.

For example, we also need housing units that are adapted for adults with disabilities. We were talking about the needs of children, but children become adults. In my riding, there is a wonderful housing resource for adults with intellectual disabilities. It is called L'appart à moi and it consists of six amazing housing units. In the basement, there is a shared kitchen where people can meet up. They gather, they hold meetings, they organize activities and they go on outings. In the spring, they even came here to Parliament. I brought the people from L'appart à moi to Parliament. I am talking in particular about Étienne Grutman, who follows politics and spends his time liking my posts on Facebook. Perhaps he is watching right now. I want Étienne to know that we are going to work here in the House to make sure that all of the people like him across Quebec and Canada have access to a resource like L'appart à moi. We will never stop. I promise him that. We will not stop until we fulfill our promise to work for the less fortunate, the most vulnerable and the marginalized, the only promise that should be important, the only lasting promise, the only promise that should guide us. This motion talks about exactly that.

I thank my colleague for moving this motion. I promise him that the Bloc Québécois will support it and that we will never give up the fight for the less fortunate in Quebec and Canada.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin has five minutes for his right of reply.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, John F. Kennedy once said, "Things do not happen. Things are made to happen." That is the spirit with which I approached this important debate tonight. That is the spirit with which I will approach the call to action that will follow to help create an environment where every single person has a chance to thrive and contribute to their full potential.

Next Wednesday, when we gather in the House to vote on this motion, 338 members of Parliament will stand in their place and, one by one, publicly indicate whether they believe in this statement: "in the opinion of the House, where the federal government spends money on education, domestically or internationally, clear consideration must be given to the maximum inclusion of people with disabilities, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities."

It is important to point out that this is just a motion. It is not a piece of legislation. While it is an important step in the right direction, the vote next week should not be viewed as an outcome, let alone any form of comprehensive outcome. A unanimous vote for this motion would do absolutely nothing on its own. The interim outcome of this debate and of the subsequent vote will be the consensus that is formed.

I believe the motion will pass, because it is designed to pass. It is very intentionally designed to find some common ground in a world where common ground is very hard to find. Once this motion passes, it would create an accountability mechanism working to ensure that inclusivity is a part of every conversation a Canadian federal government has around education, because the people having those conversations will have publicly committed to that.

When the federal government negotiates agreements with indigenous leaders around education, we will be agreeing that clear consideration must be given to the maximum inclusion of people with disabilities. When the federal government spends money on education through the Canada social transfer or other federal programs, we will be agreeing that clear consideration must be given to the maximum inclusion of people with disabilities. When the federal government spends money on education internationally, as it does through hundreds of millions of dollars in investments to organizations like Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education, we will be agreeing that clear consideration must be given to the maximum inclusion of people with disabilities. Next week, each member of the House will stand to clearly indicate their individual position on and, I hope, commitment to this statement.

Earlier, I talked about outcomes. Ultimately, these outcomes will be realized person by person, as individuals with disabilities and, in particular, intellectual and developmental disabilities, are included in education systems along with their brothers and sisters, neighbours and friends, regardless of where they live in Canada and around the world. These potential outcomes are not limited just to education, because if we get inclusive education right, every single young person, regardless of their abilities or whatever label we attach to them, will come out with a more diverse perspective. They will have a different understanding, and they will bring that understanding to the places where they live and the places where they work, so our living places and our workplaces will become more inclusive as well.

These potential outcomes are not limited to vast improvements in the lives of people with disabilities, because as we work to build and support systems domestically and internationally that reach the most vulnerable people in the world, we will reach everyone else along the way. When we wire our hearts to include girls with disabilities, including intellectual and development disabilities, in education systems in the most challenging contexts in the world, we will reach every girl in the world. When we wire our hearts to include boys with disabilities, including intellectual and development disabilities, in education systems in refugee camps and war zones, we will better reach all kids in refugee camps and war zones and, of course, every less challenging environment in the world. Most importantly, when we include people with disabilities in all aspects of our societies, when we work to mitigate the challenges they face and unlock the skills and abilities they have, just like we do with everyone else, our societies will benefit from an immense potential previously unrecognized.

In a world where we seem to disagree on almost everything, this is one area where we should have some agreement. My sincere hope is that, next week, every member of the House will stand in common agreement with the words of this motion, and then understanding that the mission the motion seeks to advance will not advance itself, we will continue to work together to make it happen. Things do not happen. Things are made to happen. Let us make this happen.

• (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

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

• (1840)

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 27, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, in 2018, the House was seized with a very emotive and serious issue. This was the transfer of Terri-Lynne McClintic, a child killer, from a maximum-security prison to a much less secure facility, a healing lodge. I remember the debate in the House and reading the stories of how the families of the victim were re-traumatized through this decision. That was five years ago.

Adjournment Proceedings

Before the summer constituency break, we had a very similar debate in the House. This was when it was revealed that a mass murderer, mass child killer Paul Bernardo, had been transferred from a maximum-security prison to a less secure facility.

Five years passed. I do not understand why the government did not make changes to ensure that this type of revictimization of families in the most serious crimes did not happen again. How did it happen again?

The former minister, Ralph Goodale, who was overseeing the McClintic file, failed upwards into an ambassadorial position. In fact, the Liberals, in 2018, actually amended the Criminal Code to require that inmates are held in the “least restrictive environment possible.”

It has been five years. Out of respect for victims and families, I would like to see some unanimity in this place on two things. First, the government should acknowledge that this is not appropriate. I would like the government to say that mass murderers should stay in maximum-security prisons. I would like to hear this from the member who is responding to this question, that the government agrees with that principle. Second, very importantly, the government should agree to rescind the amendment that they made in the former bill, Bill C-83, and say that the “least restrictive environment” should not apply to mass murderers and child killers like Paul Bernardo and Terri-Lynne McClintic.

The other thing that I would like the member who is replying to this question to say is whether the Prime Minister has agreed to issue a directive to require all mass murderers to remain in maximum security for their entire sentence. That should be done so that this does not happen again, so that we are not having this discussion and revictimizing families again.

This should be a principle that every person in this House agrees to, and it is the government's job. The government has the responsibility and the capacity to do this. The buck stops with the government.

Those are the three things I would like to hear: that mass murderers should remain in maximum security prisons for the duration of their sentence; that the government will repeal the “least restrictive environment” provision that it put forward and passed; and that the government will issue a directive to require all mass murderers to remain in maximum security for the entirety of their sentence, so that we do not have another family of a victim of a child killer or mass murderer being revictimized.

• (1845)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate having the opportunity to rise tonight to speak about this incredibly important issue and thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for bringing it forward.

Adjournment Proceedings

The discussion around the revictimization of families and loved ones who have been impacted by crime is incredibly serious and something our government takes incredibly seriously. I remember the debate of both instances the member opposite referred to. It is incredibly painful not only for the families and loved ones of the victims, but for all Canadians who saw those dark times. Those crimes have really impacted so many people across this country. That is precisely why we made changes, to ensure that the sentences for the people who commit these heinous crimes reflect that, so they are not out to commit crimes again.

The decisions to reclassify and transfer offenders, which goes specifically to the question here today, are taken independently by the Correctional Service of Canada, CSC. Its mandate is to help maintain the safety and security of our communities by managing the correctional institutions of offenders in their care. It is important to acknowledge that these operational decisions are not taken by elected officials. Our job as members of this House is to continue to push for best practices, like my colleague mentioned, and to increase transparency in our criminal justice system. That is why earlier this summer our government issued new ministerial directives to establish additional information-sharing procedures in cases involving high-profile offenders. The new directive instructs that, "Prior to transferring a high-profile offender to any reduced security level, the Commissioner of CSC or their delegate will notify the Minister of Public Safety, formally and directly."

Additional efforts will be taken to ensure that CSC takes a trauma-informed approach that considers victims in these cases of transfers and security classifications. This can be facilitated, for example, by providing registered victims with the opportunity to share uploaded victims' statements for consideration during the security classification and transfer decision-making processes. What this means is enhanced engagement opportunities for victims to share important input throughout the offender's sentence. It means that the needs of victims and their families will be taken into account, and that CSC will place extra emphasis on the need to not retraumatize those who are most vulnerable.

While elected officials do not make the operational decisions, it is important for us as legislators and the public at large to know why these decisions are made. To that end, the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada has shown her willingness to listen to Canadians' concerns over these additional reviews of high-profile cases when needed. These reviews are undertaken by committees with external representatives. We take this incredibly seriously and want to ensure that victims are at the forefront of these decisions.

• (1850)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, there is a common theme among Liberal responses. After eight years of the Liberals being in government, they say it is not their job. That is what the member opposite is saying here. The reality is the buck stops with the government. It and Parliament write the directives and rules under which these decisions are made.

Now, five years since Terri-Lynne McClintic, the families of Paul Bernardo's victims have been revictimized because the government put forward legislation to put mass murderers in the least restrictive

environment and refused to issue a directive to ensure that mass murderers stay in maximum-security prisons.

I will ask again. Does the member opposite agree, can she just say she agrees, that mass murderers should stay in maximum-security prisons, and that the provisions around a least restrictive environment the Liberals put forward and voted on in Bill C-83, as they apply to mass murderers and child killers, be repealed?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, what I will say and what I will reiterate is that the offenders of these violent and heinous crimes absolutely deserve these severe consequences. I will just point out, because I think we want to take this subject incredibly seriously and as legislators we need to be responsible, that some of the information being shared is not actually correct. In fact, that member sat around the cabinet table when these same directives existed, but what we have done is change them to ensure that victims are at the forefront.

The member opposite raised fair criticisms, unfortunately they were criticisms of her government as well, but we take the matter incredibly seriously, and that is precisely why the minister ordered new directives to put families, victims and loved ones at the forefront, and to ensure that the retraumatization of these heinous crimes is not done again.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is nothing more disingenuous than a government implying it has delivered on the requests of constituents when the reality is anything but.

Prior to the summer break, I rose on behalf of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, small businesses across the country and called on the government to extend the repayment deadline for the CEBA loans. These are the Canada Emergency Business Account loans, which these businesses took out during the pandemic to help during an extraordinarily difficult time. Many of these businesses did not recover as fully as they had expected to, and they were faced with the additional costs of inflation and a tight labour market.

A few weeks ago, I received some excited texts from business owners who had read on social media that the government had indeed extended the terms of the CEBA loans and the regional relief and recovery fund loans for small businesses. Of course, a few minutes later, when they had had a chance to read the fine print, they realized with disappointment that what the government had done was something very incremental and not at all what had been asked for by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and thousands of small businesses, including businesses in northwest B.C., the area I am proud to represent.

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The most attractive part of the loans for small businesses that were struggling was the fact that the government had offered a significant loan forgiveness program. If small businesses took out \$60,000, the maximum amount allowed under these loan programs, they were able to keep up to \$20,000. That is money these small businesses could invest in improvements to their business to make them safer, to make them more efficient and to keep their doors open during some of the toughest economic times this country has seen, so we saw huge uptake of this program. Businesses were asking the government to do something that is very reasonable, which was to extend the repayment terms for that program by one year. They would still pay back the portion of the loan that they originally were required to, but because of the unique conditions of rising inflation and the tight labour market, they wanted some more time.

I think that is something that was very reasonable to expect, so it was disappointing to see that, while it did extend by one year the deadline for avoiding a 5% interest charge, when it came to the loan forgiveness portion, the most significant aspect of these small business loans, the government, and this is quite surprising, extended the deadline by three weeks. I am serious. Businesses still have to pay back the money before January of the coming year or they are going to lose up to \$20,000 in loan forgiveness.

This is incredible. What the government did was not at all what small businesses had asked for, yet it is trying to take credit for helping small businesses.

What I am looking for from the parliamentary secretary this evening is, first of all, an opportunity to express the disappointment of these thousands of businesses and, second, a clear and succinct explanation, not smoke and mirrors or distraction talking about other programs, for those businesses. I am looking for an explanation of why the government refused to extend the loan forgiveness portion of the CEBA and RRRF loans.

• (1855)

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business and to the Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has been there to provide unprecedented support to Canada's small businesses across the country. That is why, at the onset of the pandemic, we launched the Canada emergency business account program. This is in addition to critical and much-needed supports like the Canada emergency rent subsidy, which helped more than 200,000 businesses pay their rent, and the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which kept nearly half a million Canadians employed.

CEBA provided \$49 million in support to nearly 900,000 businesses. Let me say that again: The CEBA loan supported over 900,000 small businesses in neighbourhoods across the country. It kept their lights on and helped workers remain employed. CEBA offered interest-free, partially forgivable loans up to \$60,000 to eligible small businesses. The program was designed to allow for a rapid deployment of credit to a wide range of recipients, because although the Conservatives may have forgotten about the pandemic, Canadians certainly remember how challenging those days were.

Early last year, to support hard-working business owners as they continue to recover from the pandemic, our government announced that the CEBA repayment deadline for partial forgiveness would be extended by one year. The repayment deadline to receive forgiveness of up to \$20,000 and avoid interest payments for all eligible CEBA loan holders was initially extended from December 31, 2022 to December 31, 2023. Since then, the government has heard and responded to calls for greater flexibility in the face of ongoing economic challenges.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, I know very well how the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many unique challenges for Canadian businesses. I know my colleagues also have been hearing about the difficulties our small businesses face. That is why, on September 14, 2023, the Prime Minister announced several changes to the CEBA program, aimed at supporting economic recovery and offering greater repayment flexibilities to small businesses.

We have extended the deadline for partial forgiveness, allowing businesses additional time to repay or refinance their CEBA loans and take advantage of the partial forgiveness. Businesses that repay by January 18, 2024, or submit a request for refinancing by this date and successfully refinance their CEBA loans prior to March 28, 2024, will benefit from partial forgiveness. Additionally, the deadline for CEBA loan holders that elect to not repay or refinance by the partial forgiveness deadline will have their term loans extended by one year, from December 31, 2025 to December 31, 2026.

These steps will provide those who are unable to secure refinancing, or generate enough cash flow to repay their loans by the forgiveness deadline, an additional year and to continue repayment at a low interest rate. Only interest payments for these term loans will be required until the full principal is due on December 31, 2026. Small businesses asked for more flexibility, and we listened. Our government will continue to have the backs of Canadians and Canadian businesses every step of the way. We are focusing on growing our economy and building a stronger, more resilient Canada for everyone.

• (1900)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, it is incredibly frustrating. I asked for a clear and succinct explanation of why the government did not extend the loan forgiveness by an additional year, which is what small businesses and small business advocates were asking for. Instead, he read into the record the government's decision in detail, which I think I had just summarized.

Adjournment Proceedings

I will ask the parliamentary secretary one more time: Why did the government refuse to extend the full loan forgiveness until the end of 2024, and instead gave small businesses only three extra weeks? Why did it make that decision? It is clearly not what businesses were asking for.

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, the government will continue to support small businesses and entrepreneurs across the country. We have heard loud and clear that small businesses needed additional flexibility and options in these difficult times, and we are taking action to have their backs. Through these flexibilities for CE-BA, we are giving small businesses additional breathing room because we know that small businesses are the hearts of our communities. Our government is also supporting small businesses through cutting credit card transaction fees, cutting taxes for growing small businesses, and helping them digitize through the Canada digital adoption program.

Moreover, we are ensuring that all entrepreneurs have the opportunities they deserve. That is why we launched the historic women entrepreneurship strategy, the Black entrepreneurship program, the 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurship program and targeted supports for indigenous entrepreneurs.

We will continue to support small businesses across this country.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon not being present to raise during Adjournment Proceedings the matter for which notice had been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:02 p.m.)

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