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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 27, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ACT

Hon. Filomena Tassi (for the Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-52, An Act to enact the Air Transportation Accountability Act and to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for this opportunity to speak today with respect to Bill C-52. I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered today on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe peoples. I come with respect for this land I am on today and for the past, present and future peoples who reside here.

Canada's vast and unique geography and comparatively small population necessitate an efficient and accessible national transportation system to move people and trade from coast to coast to coast. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed challenges in our national transportation network that have disrupted supply chains and left passengers bearing the brunt of delays, cancellations and frustrations resulting from same. These challenges exposed barriers to accessible transportation and highlighted a need for more collaboration, more accountability and more transparency within the system.

That is why I come today. We introduced Bill C-52, the enhancing transparency and accountability in the transportation system act. Today it is my pleasure to outline the rationale for the benefits of this proposed legislation. Bill C-52 would take concrete action to address transportation sector accountability, transparency and accessibility concerns that have had wide-ranging effects across our transportation system.

The bill focuses on three areas of the federal transportation system. Part one of the bill proposes a new air transportation accountability act. This proposed act would provide the authority to create

regulations that would require airports, airlines and other operators to create service standards related to passenger flights. The activities for which standards are to be developed would be defined in regulation. They could include things that directly impact the passenger and their experience on a flight and activities that happen even beyond the aircraft itself.

Examples could include how it would take for a passenger's bag to arrive on the baggage carousel after the flight arrives or the expected wait times to enter security screening. In addition, air sector operators subject to these regulations would be required to publish their performance against these service standards and explain publicly the extent to which they have been met, to ensure transparency.

We have seen in the past what poor communication and a lack of accountability and transparency can do to our air transportation system. The congestion issues experienced across our large hub airports last summer and over the winter holiday period were significant. It is time that we strengthened the accountability and transparency of our air transportation system by creating service standards for air sector operators.

This regulation-making power would help ensure that there are clear standards to meet, proper coordination between the parties to meet them and clear information available about the sector's success or failure in meeting those standards. This would ensure transparency for travellers and operators alike and also support better co-operation and communication among operators to improve the customer's experience.

This proposed legislation would also enable the minister to request information from airport operators, air carriers and any entity that provides flight-related services at an airport. The intent is not to create new regular reporting requirements but rather to establish the ability to request information that may be necessary in the development of policies to improve Canada's air transportation system.

Canada is signatory to various international obligations through treaties, conventions and agreements, such as the Chicago Convention and bilateral air transport agreements.

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● (1005)

Bill C-52 would help strengthen as well as maintain Canada's international connectivity by allowing the Minister of Transport to direct airport operators with scheduled global flights to take measures to uphold Canada's international commitments and ensure that there is a consistent approach across all airports with international commercial services.

I also recognize that aircraft noise is an area of great concern for communities located near airports, for travellers and for the aviation industry. That is why the proposed act would ensure that there is a consistent formal noise public notice and consultation regime in place. This requirement would be placed on airports meeting a threshold of 60,000-plus aircraft landing and take-off moments for three consecutive years. The airports that currently meet this threshold are Toronto Pearson, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg. As passenger levels continue to recover, more airports are expected to be captured by this noise notice and consultation process.

The proposed legislation would affirm the airport operator as the appropriate point of contact for the public regarding aircraft noise by requiring airport operators to establish a noise management committee if one is not in use presently. The committee would include representation from, at minimum, the airport operator, Nav Canada, the airlines serving the airport and the local municipality. The bill also outlines public notice requirements for temporary changes to flight paths or airspace design at airports and notice and consultation requirements for permanent changes. If requirements for public notice and consultation on noise were not met, the act would establish a complaints process to be led by the Canadian Transportation Agency. These changes would ensure greater transparency and accountability when it comes to alternative ways in which our airspace is designed and used and the related impacts on the surrounding communities.

The impacts of swift climate change are more apparent than ever and more needs to be done. Climate change adaptation plans are instrumental in addressing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing our airports for the anticipated impacts of climate change on their operations as well as their managed assets. Many Canadian airports are already taking action and have made significant investments to reduce their carbon footprint, namely by investing in infrastructure projects that are high-performing and efficient as well as resilient. Adopting electric vehicles for their ground support equipment and fleet has been a great start.

The proposed legislation seeks to strengthen the standards as well as standardize our airports' climate actions. This proposed legislation would require airport authorities with at least four million annual passengers to develop comprehensive, five-year climate change mitigation and adaptation plans. This threshold currently includes the Toronto Pearson Airport as well as Vancouver, Montreal and Calgary airports.

Under the proposed legislation, these plans would include the following. First, each airport authority would be required to send a greenhouse gas emission reduction target providing a clear direction towards a more sustainable future. Second, the climate change and adaptation plans would entail a detailed description of the cur-

rent and anticipated impacts of climate change on the airports' operations and assets managed by the airport authority. Lastly, the plan would include a comprehensive set of actions to be taken to strengthen climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

These requirements, which are similar to the requirements for the Canadian port authorities under Bill C-33, the strengthening the port system and railway safety in Canada act, would ensure that Canada's largest airport authorities are publicly transparent about the environmental impacts they have. Under Canada's aviation climate change action plan, Transport Canada and other key departments will continue to engage and work closely with Canadian airport authorities to support and advance their decarbonization efforts.

● (1010)

Finally, the bill contains provisions requiring that federally incorporated airport authorities publish information regarding the diversity of their directors and members of senior management. These provisions are consistent with requirements that already exist for companies incorporated under the Canada Business Corporations Act. They are intended to ensure that federally incorporated authorities act in a way that is consistent with federal government standards and reflects Canadian society and our values here throughout this great nation.

Part 2 of the bill would introduce amendments to the Canada Transportation Act to support a transportation system that is barrier-free. Persons with disabilities currently represent approximately 16% of the world's population. In our country, more than 6.2 million people aged 15 and older have a disability. That is one in five Canadians. Of the 2.2 million Canadians with a disability who used federally regulated transportation in 2019 and 2020, 63% faced a barrier. We must do more, and we must be better, to ensure that persons with disabilities have the same rights, opportunities and quality of life as each and every Canadian enjoys.

Medical advances and new assistive devices and technologies have made it more possible for persons with disabilities to travel, meaning that an accessible transportation system is more important now than ever before. However, there continue to be incidents of persons with disabilities experiencing barriers in their travel journey, along with a lack of accountability and transparency by regulated entities.

As a priority sector in the Accessible Canada Act, Canadians expect a national transportation system that will help to advance the government's commitment to a barrier-free Canada by 2040. This means ensuring that there is a framework in place to identify and remove barriers and prevent new barriers, so that persons with disabilities can travel seamlessly throughout their journey.

That is why improved data on accessibility in transportation will provide important insights into the lived experiences and diverse needs of travellers with disabilities and the barriers they face. In fact, the absence of data was a key finding from the Auditor General's "Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities" audit report, published this past March.

The proposed bill, Bill C-52, introduces amendments to the Canada Transportation Act to enable regulations to be made applicable to federally regulated transportation service providers, such as air carriers and interprovincial ferries, as well as passenger trains; to collect and provide data on key accessibility metrics to the Minister of Transport and the Canadian Transportation Agency; and to set up a process for handling accessibility complaints to support an accessible transportation system.

The proposed changes would strengthen the accessibility performance and its monitoring as follows: First, they would create standards for reporting accessibility-related data to the Minister of Transport and the CTA, the Canadian Transportation Agency, which could include complaints, to support the realization of a transportation system without barriers for all persons. Second, they would allow the Minister of Transport and the Canadian Transportation Agency to publish accessibility data, which would provide Canadians with a greater awareness of the barriers experienced by travellers with disabilities and direct decision-makers in taking the actions needed to achieve real change. Third, they would ensure that all regulated entities have a process in place for handling accessibility complaints and require that records of these complaints be retained.

Improved data metrics on accessibility barriers in transportation would allow the government to act appropriately and quickly on issues impacting barrier-free transportation. This would drive change for Canadians with disabilities. This is an important first step to ensuring that we make the transportation system more seamless, more accessible and inclusive for all.

• (1015)

Lastly, part 3 of the bill would introduce amendments to the Canada Marine Act to enhance transparency and accountability for Canada's port authorities and how they set their fees.

The Government of Canada is proud of its port governance system, which, in 1998, established the Canada port authorities and charged them with managing our country's most strategic ports as part of Canada's strategic trade corridors. While these port authorities are incorporated by the federal government, they operate under a carefully constructed governance framework. This allows them to make the strategic, commercially oriented decisions and act credibly in the marketplace.

As every Canadian knows, the ports are key hubs in our supply chains. Ports are where rail, road and marine modes intersect to

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support export and import markets. They are, in fact, where road meets rail, which meets water and air.

Now, more than ever, in the wake of a pandemic, supply chain disruptions, climate change events and labour unrest, our port authorities are being called upon to be more adaptable, as well as more responsive to a constantly evolving context, creating fluidity and, once again, strategically placing this country to perform and strengthen our international trade performance.

With adaptability and responsiveness, however, comes an increased need for transparency. Some port users and stakeholders have expressed concerns about the way Canada port authorities establish the fees that they charge to industries and sectors. Some of these same voices have raised similar concerns regarding lease rates for terminal operations.

The government recognizes and is committed to ensuring that port authorities have the tools they need to be financially self-sufficient and self-sustaining, as well as to meet their business plans, as established by their respective boards. At the same time, we are committed to having a transportation system whose operators are transparent and accountable to their users, as well as their stakeholders.

We recognize that there is room for improvement in terms of oversight of our Canada port authorities. That is why the measures being proposed to amend the Canada Marine Act seek to align Canada port authorities' actions with modern experiences and, more importantly, expectations of transparency and accountability.

As managers of key public assets, port authorities are expected to carry out their operations while remaining responsive to users, industry and stakeholders. Proposed Bill C-52 would require Canada port authorities to follow certain principles when establishing or revising fees, along with the related complaint process. Moreover, it would create an authority for the Governor in Council to make regulations to set out dispute resolution.

While the autonomous nature of Canada port authorities would be maintained, as well as their capacity to generate the revenues they need as critical components of their supply chains and the infrastructure attached to them, the overall proposal would strengthen the government's strategic oversight. It would also provide a consistent approach across port authorities to enhance their responsiveness to port users and to be more transparent to their operations with respect to fixing fees and leases.

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• (1020)

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Madam Speaker, I look at this bill, and there are a lot of big promises in it, but it is short on details.

For one thing, the bill proposes to require airport operators to take measures to help Canada meet its international aeronautic obligations. What international obligations is Canada not currently meeting in the standards, and how would this bill improve the air travel experience for Canadians?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, we have numerous obligations internationally with different countries and carriers. Of course, the intent of this bill is to ensure accountability and transparency. If there are complaints by passengers or even jurisdictions, the minister would have the authority to step in and make sure that those obligations are met and, if they are not, to come up with some solutions so they will be met and continue to be consistent.

Once again, it is about being accountable and transparent, so the issues can be recognized and simply be dealt with.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think it is important, and even fundamental, that the federal government consider the matter of air transportation, which, it is important to remember, falls under federal jurisdiction.

In this context, I want to talk about the situation in Rouyn-Noranda. We have a new airport that is subsidized in part by the federal government. It is wonderful and ready to welcome people, but the problem is that there are no flights available. Regional air transportation is an area sorely neglected by the federal government, which is responsible for it.

How is it that the airlines are unable to offer service in the regions? There is one flight a day. We are the third busiest airport, particularly because of charter flights to the north, but people can only fly to Montreal once a day and those flights are fully booked. Why? The reason is that the federal government is putting money in its coffers by taxing airports rather than subsidizing them like they do in the United States.

Would it not make sense for the federal government to take action and help airlines provide the fundamental service of regional air transportation?

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing that up. You are absolutely right. That is something that, when other members of the Bloc, like Mr.—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. parliamentary secretary to address the questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the member.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, the question has been brought up at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, and our intent, quite frankly, is to look at this and look at ways the government can work with different airlines, whether it be the bigger ones or the smaller ones, especially in the areas the member brings up. We are looking at areas in the north.

The member for Yukon is in discussions with me personally about that.

Once again, our intent is to work with the industry and the jurisdiction to hopefully bring some much-needed flights into those areas, not only in Quebec but also in northern parts of the country such as Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

• (1025)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciated that the member went into the realities of persons with disabilities and their inability to travel equitably in this country. My question relates to further discrimination in this bill in relation to persons with disabilities. The climate change plans use international standards, but the government has not asked for international standards to be used for persons with disabilities. Why is there unequal treatment?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, this bill addresses something that has been a long-standing problem. We will work in partnership with the airlines to ensure regulations are put in place with transparency and accountability of the airlines to deal with those discrepancies we have been recognizing for the past few years.

However, it is fluid. Although we have it here in the bill, the intent is that once this passes second reading, we will hear from the airlines, members of Parliament and the users to see how we can enhance areas identified in the bill, such as those areas attached to disabilities. It is a start. The bill does address it, but yes, there is some work to be done. I know the member sits on the TRAN committee every once in a while, and we welcome her comments with respect to the part of the bill that addresses disabilities.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad this bill would require the airport authorities to inform the public about diversity among the directors and senior management. Back when I met the board members of the Ottawa airport, I had to point out the lack of diversity among the members.

My question is regarding airport noise and the complaint process. I am glad a new requirement is being brought in. Unfortunately, it does not cover aircraft noise from low-flying aircraft, such as from flying clubs. In my riding of Nepean, there is a community called Country Place, which has been directly affected by the noise made by low-flying aircraft. To prove how low they are flying, they are also dealing with the federal government and Nav Canada. Is there any chance that a mechanism will be established to deal with noise complaints about low-flying aircraft?

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Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, this bill, Bill C-52, does not propose but would impose a process by which complaints are received and dealt with. It would do this in a way that is grassroots. It would attach the local municipality, the residents, the airline and any others identified within the complaint to enter into, first of all, creating a committee. With the dialogue they would otherwise have at that committee, regardless of what that complaint may be, as outlined by the member, there would be a resolve to that. It would allow us, as a government, to ensure that transparency and accountability are undertaken and, therefore, solutions are brought forward to deal with the complaints brought to our attention and to the attention of the airlines.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the bill before us, as well as anything that provides transparency toward the operation of airport authorities, is welcome. Airport authorities and harbour authorities operate at arm's length and unaccountably across this country.

I am concerned about something that we have not seen yet. The former minister of transport took a stab at it. I wonder whether there is any progress on improving affordable, reliable low-carbon ground transportation for Canadians. That is the area most in crisis, particularly for low-income people, and as the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls pointed out, without affordable, publicly available transit in rural and remote areas of Canada, indigenous women continue to be at risk, forced into hitchhiking to get from one place to another.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, although I am not part of Bill C-52, it is a point well taken. We are, through committee, through the department and through the Minister of Transport, working with the provinces as well as municipalities to look at providing more ground transportation and transit, to be provided with territories and in local areas. The contributions we have made through the grants we have provided for municipalities throughout the past five or six years prove that the government has an interest in that, but I do want to emphasize the fact that it is a three-government partnership among federal, provincial and municipal governments.

The member is correct; there is a lot more that can be done. We hope to get to that point with the partnerships that have been established and also with the contributions that we are making at all three levels, to ensure that we actually hit the capacities that are currently available and to increase them, especially in the areas of the country that, quite frankly, do not have the same luxuries that other areas have. We are working to that end, and I encourage the member to approach me off-line with some of the ideas she may have.

• (1030)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member brought up the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. I could not agree more with him. One of the things the government has recently acknowledged is that the carbon tax is a challenge to people in the affordability crisis. No one has been hit harder by the affordability crisis than persons with disabilities. Whether it comes to heating or transportation, they often feel isolated.

Would the member recommend to the Prime Minister that there be an exemption to the carbon tax for people with disabilities?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, it is a great question. Quite frankly, it is the reason we came up with the disability credits that we actually introduced in the spring under the new act. With that and the help that those new incentives do give those with disabilities, our expectation is that it will, in fact, deal with the issues and the challenges they may have with respect to their daily lives and the expenses that we all try to keep up with in our daily lives. Of course, the help we are giving is hopefully going to deal with those issues.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to address the House today with respect to Bill C-52, on behalf of the official opposition and on behalf of my constituents in Chilliwack—Hope.

I think we are seeing a trend here with transport legislation from the government. It likes to put things into a press release that make it look like it is doing something, like it is taking action. When, in fact, we get into the details of the bill, no action is actually being taken.

The bill was in response to a disastrous summer 2022 travel season overseen by the Liberal government, when we saw unprecedented cancellations, delays and waits in airports. It was an absolutely catastrophic reopening after the government shut down the industry during the pandemic. In the fall of 2022, the minister brought together a group of airlines, airports and executives in Ottawa because that was apparently going to solve the problem. It reminded me, quite frankly, of the industry minister's calling up the CEOs of Loblaws and other grocery stores to address the affordability crisis. In the end, it did nothing. It did not affect food prices. It did not bring down grocery inflation. It was just a photo op.

The minister of transport gave the idea, assuring Canadians with a photo op he held with airports and airlines in the fall of 2022, that the winter holiday travel season would be different and that the Liberals would come together and solve the problems. We have seen that they had not solved the problems. There were more disastrous delays, cancellations and people sleeping on the floors of hotels because they could not even get into the airports to catch their flights. We saw unprecedented delays in that winter holiday travel season. We held emergency transport committee discussions about that. We called the minister before us and found out that he had not even bothered to pick up the phone to call the airports that were in chaos. He had not called the Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal airports. He had not called Via Rail when it had a massive shutdown that stranded passengers. The minister was missing in action and was called to account for that.

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The government, having seen the disastrous summer and winter travel seasons, decided it needed to do something. That something was Bill C-52, which was introduced in the last days of the spring session of Parliament. Once again, we are supposed to take the minister's word for it that this would now solve the problems in the air passenger system. Quite frankly, we have no problem with some of this, but we do have a problem with what is in part 1 of the bill. The government indicates there would be data sharing, there would be visibility on the data, and service standards would be set. It indicates that this would somehow make things better for Canadian passengers.

What the bill does not actually set out is what entities would even be covered by the legislation. The bill would instead give power to the minister and the cabinet to determine which entities would be covered by the regulations. It would all be done by regulation, and there is very little in the bill that is actually defined. We are supposed to trust the minister and government that have presided over numerous travel disasters and numerous travel seasons that have been disrupted and have impacted thousands of Canadian passengers. We are supposed to trust them to get it right, because the bill itself provides a framework but does not provide the details.

There is not even an indication of what data would be captured, but there is also not an indication of what would happen when service standards are not met. It is fine to collect data, to share that data and to have service standards, but if there are no penalties for failing to meet those things, there are no teeth to the bill and passengers would not be better served.

• (1035)

One thing Conservatives have long called for is accountability for all federally regulated entities in the air travel system. Once again, the bill before us, while addressing some concerns, would not be strong enough to ensure that everyone who can impact a passenger's travel experience is held accountable. Airlines are held accountable through our air passenger protection regulations. However, these need to be strengthened, quite frankly, because too often there are cases where things within an airline's control are said by the airlines to be outside their control, and we agree with tightening that up. However, we believe that not only airlines should be held accountable but that entities like CATSA, the security service, also need to be held accountable. When it causes a delay because the security lineups are so long that people miss their flights, it needs to be held accountable.

Nav Canada also needs to be held accountable. When its staffing delays cause airlines to have to throttle down, delay or cancel flights, it is the passengers who are impacted and not compensated, because those issues are outside an airline's control. Another entity that should be held accountable is airports themselves. If their baggage handling systems break down or if they are unable to clear flights in a timely fashion and they cause delays and cancellations, right now they are not held accountable. That is a glaring omission in this bill. We want to see all of these entities included and passengers able to be compensated when those entities cause them cancellations and delays.

We see also that the Canada Border Services Agency, the CBSA, is not part of the legislation. We know that the CBSA's land border

service standards are made public and show what its expectations are, but when it comes to airports, that information is not available and would not be captured by this bill. We know that when there were delays at customs halls caused by a lack of CBSA officers, people sat in planes on the tarmac or at gates, unable to deplane because a federally regulated entity, in this case the CBSA, was unable to provide services. Again, that means that passengers who are impacted by that are not able to be compensated because it is not included in the air passenger protection regulations and the CBSA is not held accountable.

We believe that it needs to be explicit that all of these entities would be captured by the bill and that there would be actual repercussions if they fail to deliver for Canadians. Airlines should be held accountable and so should all the other federally regulated entities in the air passenger system.

We have not talked about the Canadian Transportation Agency and whether it should have to share data on its performance, which impacts Canadian passengers. I would argue that it absolutely should be part of this accountability package. Right now, the backlog for the CTA is approaching 60,000 passengers. There are 60,000 people who failed to resolve a complaint with an airline, have gone to the next level and are now being told they have to wait up to 18 months to even have their complaint considered by the CTA. This is unacceptable. The backlog is growing by 3,000 complaints a month, and there is no plan that we have seen to clear this backlog or to hold the CTA accountable for its 18-month processing delays. Canadians who have experienced a delay or cancellation by an airline should not have to experience another 18 months of delay from a government entity to get that matter resolved.

• (1040)

We know that an airline has 30 days to respond to the CTA, and if they do not respond, they get a fine, but the CTA can wait over a year. We have heard of cases where all of the information has been submitted, the airline has responded to the complaint and the CTA is sitting on it for over a year. That is not right for Canadian passengers. This bill should have visibility, data and service standards laid out for the CTA itself.

I did find it a little interesting to hear the parliamentary secretary talk about the climate change policies of the government. I thought perhaps after yesterday's announcement that he might have deleted that section from his speech. The Prime Minister, after having voted numerous times to impose a carbon tax on Atlantic Canadians, on those who use home heating oil, came out yesterday and suddenly reversed his position. This is after his voting record and his actions, which have shown that he has no problem imposing a punishing carbon tax on Atlantic Canadians and those who use home heating oil. Now, just conveniently, for the next three years, until after the next election, he is taking that tax off of Atlantic Canadians.

That is great for Atlantic Canadians and those who use home heating oil, but it does not do anything for those Canadians who use natural gas and are suffering under a carbon tax, which is actually a cleaner burning fuel by 30%. Interestingly enough, choosing to give relief for something he will not even admit causes pain is quite a climbdown for the Prime Minister, but it does not go far enough.

That is why Conservatives would axe the tax for all Canadians, not just those the Prime Minister is concerned with, due to their plummeting support. Again, I think it is quite rich to have a Liberal government talk about how it is going to impose climate change targets or policies on airports when it has just shown that it would flip-flop, swallow itself whole and go against its own votes in the House of Commons when it is politically expedient to do so. We should not be expected to take the government seriously on this issue any longer.

I want to talk a bit about the marine section of the bill. We are currently studying Bill C-33 at committee. We have yet to find a stakeholder who is satisfied with this bill. The witness testimony has been extremely clear that the government did not consult with them, the government did not listen to them and the proposals contained within Bill C-33 on port modernization would actually impose a made-in-Ottawa solution. There is more control from Ottawa and less local control. There was no response to the concerns of those who use and run the ports.

We now have a marine section tacked on to Bill C-52, when the ink was not even dry on Bill C-33, which actually deals with port issues. It is interesting, to say the least, that a government that has a port modernization bill before the transport committee is already amending that bill through another bill in the House of Commons, which proves that the government does not have a plan and that it is not getting this right.

Overall, we have seen that in the approach of the government, and this bill is a hollow shell. All of the major components of the bill would be decided later on in regulation by the minister and cabinet. The bill is something to talk about. It is something to point to, but it actually does not do anything. When it comes to part 1, that would all be left to regulation.

• (1045)

I have feedback from some of the people we hear from, from time to time, such as experts on air passenger rights or aviation management.

John Gradek, a lecturer at McGill University's aviation management program, said, "There's lots of stuff about data sharing but not

much about what or who would be taking action and in what conditions would action be taken".

Gábor Lukács, the president of Air Passenger Rights, said, "There may be penalties, but even those powers are left to the government to create", rather than being set out in the legislation from the start.

In its analysis of the bill, McCarthy Tétrault said that the bill contains "vague language, and, most importantly, [gives] significant latitude...to the Minister and Governor in Council to enact wide-sweeping regulations."

This is a bill that is vague and does not contain specific remedies to the problems that have been plaguing this system for months now. The bill would give way too much power to a minister and a government that have, quite frankly, failed to show leadership in this space for the last number of years. As we have seen with other bills, such as Bill C-33, for the bill we are currently dealing with, the government did not consult with the entities that would be impacted. It did not take their advice into consideration. Once again, it is an Ottawa-knows-best, Liberal-government-knows-best approach that would not serve Canadian passengers well enough.

However, there are some things in the bill that we can support. We have no problem with the accessibility and disability portions of the bill.

The marine stuff, even though it appears to be tacked on, is certainly controversial between port authorities and port users. Many port users are looking for increased accountability, and many port operators are indicating that they already have complex dispute resolution mechanisms that would be impacted by the bill. They anticipate, based on the record of the government, that it has not actually consulted with those entities directly and is just imposing its vision of what it thinks would work best.

We believe the bill is a missed opportunity. There could have been more done to spell out who would be held accountable, how they would be held accountable and that everyone in the air travel space would be held accountable. However, the bill fails to do that. Therefore, we cannot support it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it truly amazing that the member would provide comment when the Prime Minister is being sensitive in response to the needs of Atlantic Canada by giving a break on home heating oil.

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The member himself voted for a price on pollution, and told Canadians from coast to coast to coast, along with the entire Conservative caucus, that they would support a price on pollution, but they did a major flip-flop. I think he should swallow that before he tries to throw stones in glass houses.

Does the member not agree that the principle of the legislation is something that the Conservative Party might actually consider supporting and possibly even see go to committee? Does the member have any amendments in mind?

• (1050)

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, it is quite rich to hear the parliament secretary, who two days ago would have defended that in the House, and has, in fact, voted on it numerous times.

We proposed a motion to exempt home heating oil from the carbon tax, and that member, and every Atlantic Canadian member, voted against that motion because they told us that these phony rebates would more than compensate for the cost of the carbon tax. The Liberals are now admitting that their carbon tax causes affordability problems in Atlantic Canada.

I have news for that member. The carbon tax causes affordability problems from coast to coast to coast under this leadership. Under the Leader of the Opposition, we would axe the tax from coast to coast to coast, and not just for those select Canadians the Prime Minister is suddenly taking an interest in because of his plummeting poll numbers in that region.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I gather that my colleague said the Conservatives are going to vote against Bill C-52, partly because a number of entities were left out of it. He specifically mentioned the Canada Border Services Agency.

I do not think we should necessarily vote against a bill because something is missing from it. We should pass it at second reading instead to send it back to committee, where constructive proposals can be made to improve it. I get the impression that the Conservatives are the ones missing out on a great opportunity here.

I would simply like to know what my colleague wishes to see added to Bill C-52 in regard to the Canada Border Services Agency.

To criticize a bill is one thing, but to make constructive proposals is another. Unfortunately, I did not hear any such proposals in his speech.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I would simply say that experience has taught me, and has taught us as Conservatives, that supporting a bad bill at second reading is not a great strategy for improving the bill. The bill is flawed. We saw this with Bill C-33. We said the same thing. I heard the same comments from members of the Bloc and members of the government. They asked, “Why not support it to committee and then make amendments?” What we have heard confirms our position that the bill is fundamentally flawed. There are issues with that bill that cannot be resolved. The government did not consult, and the bill did not address the concerns of port users and port authorities.

We have very recent knowledge of a transport bill, which we were told to just fix in committee. Some bills are fundamentally flawed, and we believe they should be sent back to the drawing board. That said, if stakeholders come forward and propose changes, we will always try to improve bad Liberal bills. However, we believe that sometimes the best thing to do is just vote against them.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Chilliwack—Hope for having taken the opportunity to express some of the very legitimate frustration that Canadians are feeling around airlines and airline service right now. I wonder if the member would like to take a moment to express appreciation for the ways in which establishing a virtual Parliament has enabled MPs to meet their commitments in the chamber despite a period of poor air service.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, obviously I am appearing virtually. I wish that I were in the House today with my colleagues. My personal circumstances do not allow for that today.

We do have to look at keeping everyone in that air space and the air passenger space accountable. When there are failures in the system, the entity that has failed the passenger must be held accountable. What is really missing in this bill is that the focus is on airlines, and they should be accountable, but so should all of those other entities I talked about, including CATSA, airports, Nav Canada and CBSA. All of those that have an impact on passengers should be held accountable, and this bill would not allow for that. We think the government should have done better, and we will be voting against this bill.

• (1055)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do appreciate what my colleague has brought to the floor today.

I really appreciated the words “glaring omission”. That is what we are dealing with here with the bills that come forward from the government. So often, there are glaring omissions to those bills.

Explicitly, the member spoke of the accountability of all air passenger services, and then spoke of the Canadian Transportation Agency and its backlog of 60,000 complaints, taking over 18 months, with a growing number of 3,000 more complaints per month.

It sounds a lot to me like what we are facing with Veterans Affairs with the incredible backlogs, which the government seems to have in its scenario because it does not govern well. Everything seems broken. I wonder if the member could speak to the reality of that and why this bill should not be on the floor at all.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, it adds insult to injury when a passenger has experienced a significant delay or a flight cancellation and has tried to get it resolved with the airline, for the airline to say no, that it does not meet the criteria and that it does not believe the passenger is entitled to compensation. Then, when the passenger disagrees, they file a complaint with the agency of the government that is supposed to adjudicate these things independently. The passenger not only has the insult of having slept on the floor of an airport. They now have to wait 18 months to even have their complaint heard by the agency that is supposed to be there to protect them.

That system is also broken. The government has not resourced it well enough. It has not held it accountable enough.

I did not get into this in my speech, but the latest information that we have shows that the government has given bonuses to senior executives. All of them have received maximum bonuses for the last two years. We do not have the data for this year yet, but rather than holding them accountable, the government pays them bonuses for their inability to serve Canadian passengers. That is not right. This bill does not address the failures of the CTA, which is another reason we should not support it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member says the Conservative Party does not support the legislation, and within the legislation there are all sorts of things for communities, such as the noise committees that would be obligatory for airport authorities. Some of the airport authorities already have them in place. The bill would ensure that communities have a voice when it comes to airport authorities.

Does the Conservative Party oppose all aspects of the legislation, or do its members feel there are some parts they could support in some fashion? Could he maybe list one or two examples?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I have no problem with part 2 of the legislation, which would increase transparency and visibility for Canadians with disabilities and would provide a response to the Auditor General's report. I said that quite clearly.

With the noise complaints, it is interesting to see the different approaches and contradictions within the bill itself. The noise complaint portion of the bill includes what constitutes proper notice of meeting and what constitutes quorum. It is very prescriptive. The government has decided that it knows how that should be meted out, but for the parts of the bill that deal with passenger protection and that sort of thing, it is all left to regulation. The government should make up its mind. I think that part is very prescriptive. It would impose a very strong standard on airports, and unlike other portions of the bill, it would not leave it to regulation. I am unclear on why that portion was so prescriptive and other portions are left entirely to the minister and cabinet.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising to honour an outstanding individual

Statements by Members

from my riding, Dartmouth—Cole Harbour's Leo MacKenzie. Leo spent the past 40 years working with the non-profit Regional Residential Services Society in support of adults with intellectual disabilities, and he spent the last 14 years helping his friends on Hilton Drive live their best lives while supporting the amazing work of Better Together Nova Scotia.

Leo has always ensured that the people he supports are active members of our community. He has always listened to their ideas and helped make them a reality. Leo has empowered and inspired so many through his positive attitude and his eagerness to give back to his community. Leo has changed so many lives for the better and we owe him our gratitude.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating Leo MacKenzie on his retirement. I thank Leo for everything.

* * *

● (1100)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, Shilan Mirzaei is a prominent Iranian human rights activist who has been wrongfully arrested for her defence of Iranian refugees in Turkey and her strong voice for human rights. Worse still, her arrest was made at the request of the terrorist regime in Iran. Mirzaei is now being held in a deportation centre in Turkey. She faces deportation to Iran and a certain death sentence.

Turkish President Erdogan has been deporting innocent Iranians and Kurds fleeing the regime in Tehran. Erdogan has defended Hamas publicly and bombed Kurdish civilians in Rojava.

Canada must get tough with Tehran. Delegitimize the regime. List the IRGC as a terrorist group. Get justice for the victims of PS752.

The NDP-Liberal government must call on Turkish President Erdogan to do the right thing by immediately ending this unjust detention, and release Shilan Mirzaei.

Jin, jiyan, azadi. Zan, zendegi, azadi.

*Statements by Members***NATIONAL TRUST FOR CANADA**

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to offer congratulations to the National Trust for Canada on its 50th anniversary conference. Taking place in Ottawa right now at the Château Laurier, this year's conference theme is "Transforming Heritage". The conference has brought together over 700 heritage professionals, advocates and industry leaders from across the country and is being held in partnership with the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals and the Indigenous Heritage Circle.

The National Trust for Canada is the leading national charity dedicated to the conservation and use of Canada's historic places. Since its inception in 1973, the organization has powered a movement dedicated to preserving and revitalizing heritage buildings, landscapes and communities for the benefit of people and the planet.

I want to give a special thanks to Natalie Bull and Chris Wiebe from the National Trust. Their dedication to heritage shows through their hard work. They mobilized support for Bill C-23, which is key legislation for the protection of Canada's national heritage. From conference attendees, I call on members of this House for the swift passage of Bill C-23.

Congratulations to the National Trust on its 50th anniversary.

* * *

DISCRIMINATION IN CANADA

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Middle East is not occurring in isolation. It is significantly impacting Canadians here at home. Students, refugees, teachers, doctors and even children are witnessing a severe surge in Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian racism and anti-Semitism.

Visible Muslim women who wear the hijab, especially Black Muslim women, currently fear for their safety, particularly when speaking out against injustice. They are losing jobs and scholarships and are facing threats on campuses and in workplaces. In my riding of Edmonton Griesbach alone, we bore witness to a racially motivated attack and verbal abuse against an innocent teacher at Queen Elizabeth High School.

This dehumanization of people is unparalleled, and we cannot remain silent during these difficult times. When I was growing up, my elders instilled in me the moral obligation to speak out when witnessing such atrocities. I implore all Canadians to stand in solidarity with Muslim and Jewish voices right across our country.

* * *

LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November 1 marks the beginning of our first national Lebanese Heritage Month in Canada.

[Translation]

I am proud to mark this special occasion alongside my friends, my constituents and all Canadians.

[English]

I encourage my colleagues to take this weekend to connect with their local Lebanese community.

[Translation]

I encourage people to find events near them and carve out some time to attend.

[English]

In my corner of the country, our community is organizing so much: tonight's Keskun wine tasting, an independence day flag raising, the annual Lebanese Film Festival, the *Watani Lubnan* party and more.

Our local Lebanese organizations, the consulates and the embassy are all working hard to make this inaugural year memorable. I want to thank them, as well as my own church, where today our congregation is coming together in prayer for peace in the Middle East.

[Translation]

We Lebanese-Canadians are proud of our heritage.

● (1105)

[English]

Happy Lebanese Heritage Month.

* * *

ROYAL ASSENT OF BILL S-12

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to highlight the recent passage of Bill S-12, which amends the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act. This bill received royal assent yesterday.

I want to express my gratitude to all parties and the Senate for its support and dedicated efforts in acknowledging the significance of this legislation and in ensuring the safety of Canadians today and in the future. More importantly, I want to underscore the efforts and work of survivors of sexual assault in sharing their stories to inform this legislation. This includes representatives from My Voice, My Choice, whose tireless efforts led to these important changes to the publication ban regime.

More specifically, I give a sincere thanks to Morrell Andrews, who is a testament to what can be achieved when we stand up and advocate for what we believe is right. I thank Morrell. Congratulations.

TRAGEDY IN LEWISTON, MAINE

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay respects to the 18 people tragically killed by a gunman in Lewiston, Maine. Our deepest condolences go to those impacted by this terrible crime. I hope leaders in the state and country will do everything possible for them to finally address gun violence.

Like many Mi'kmaq people, I have family in the state of Maine. My mother grew up there, and as a teenager I spent many years working in the blueberry fields and factories in Maine. I also got to know the people of Lewiston during the four years that one of my best friends played hockey there. It is a kind and caring community that has been left stunned by this tragedy. I mourn with them the loss of lives and, as a Nova Scotian, can empathize with the disbelief that something this tragic can happen in their home.

Canadians care about the people of Maine. We are praying for them. They will get through this, and we will be thinking about them during these difficult times.

God bless them all.

* * *

WILDFIRE RESPONSE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with gratitude that I want to thank all responders and volunteers who have helped, and continue to save lives and protect, Kelowna—Lake Country and region in B.C. during wildfires.

We heard of four brave B.C. woodland firefighters who lost their lives. They served us by fighting fires in my community. My deepest condolences go to their friends and families and to those of all firefighters who have lost their lives. I thank all at the central Okanagan emergency operations centre, emergency shelter and emergency support services.

There is great loss that will affect many for a long time as most lost structures are homes. My heart goes out to all those affected. Residents were calm and overwhelmingly compassionate, opening their homes and hearts. I thank all cultural groups, worship centres, businesses, community organizations, not-for-profits and charities for doing what they could to help those in need.

It is important to continue supporting these organizations as they serve our communities and to check on the mental wellness of those around us.

* * *

CYBERSECURITY

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October is Cyber Security Awareness Month, and as the parliamentary secretary responsible for cybersecurity, I want to take this opportunity to highlight some key resources and tips for staying cyber-safe that all Canadians can learn from. The best way to protect ourselves from cyber-attacks is to be educated on phishing red flags, proactively protect our data and back up our devices, set strong passwords, be careful about what we share online and help educate the most vulnerable in our communities, especially children and seniors.

Statements by Members

When it comes to understanding antivirus software, installing new security updates and navigating conversations about cyber safety, Canadians can visit getcybersafe.gc.ca for resources and information. Cyber-attacks are preventable, and it is critical that we protect ourselves and our communities.

* * *

[Translation]

CARBON TAX

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this government, Quebec has had the highest inflation in the country for four months running. Food banks are experiencing historic increases in demand. Some 872,000 people are accessing them every month. Assistance provided by Quebec food banks has increased by 30% since 2002. In my community, organizations such as Le Grenier in Lévis, Frigos Pleins in Saint-Lazare and L'Essentiel des Etchemins in Lac-Etchemin are also experiencing considerable increases. It is hard to believe, but it is happening right here at home.

This mess sits squarely on the shoulders of the Bloc-Liberal coalition that wants to drastically increase the carbon tax, which will increase prices across the board. To be clear, every food item produced in another province, transported, then purchased in Quebec costs more because of the carbon tax.

We can never say it enough: It is costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois.

* * *

● (1110)

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if one taxes the people making the costume, taxes the truckers moving the costume and taxes the shopkeeper who sells the costume, one taxes the consumer who buys the costume.

Everyone knows that the Prime Minister is obsessed with costumes. I cannot explain why. On top of quadrupling his carbon tax, he is introducing a new costly costume tax.

My friend Ryan owns a costume shop in Calgary. It has been a beloved local business for 24 years. It is now under attack by NDP-Liberal gatekeepers, forcing Ryan to pay more than \$100,000 in import fees, all thanks to a nonsense policy classifying his costumes as “fancy dress” wear.

Statements by Members

After eight long years of NDP-Liberal corruption, small businesses are closing their doors across the country. Do not let that happen to this costume shop.

Conservatives will get government off the backs of entrepreneurs. We will remove the gatekeepers and axe the tax so that shop owners like Ryan can do what they do best.

This costumed Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL PURPOSE ORGANIZATIONS

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, we announced a total of \$100 million in funding for 1,140 social purpose organizations through the investment readiness program. These organizations will continue to provide much-needed assistance to communities.

[English]

Social purpose organizations provide much-needed help to our neighbours in need. I would especially like to thank Allan Reesor-McDowell and all of the volunteers at Matthew House Furniture Bank, as well as Nathalie Malone, Diane Vena and all of the volunteers at Helping With Furniture, which provides hundreds of newcomers and those fleeing domestic violence with donated furniture to give them a new start. I am especially inspired by how many of those who have previously been helped have come back to contribute and volunteer their time to help others.

These volunteers are the best of our community.

* * *

JOHN CARROLL

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a great Nova Scotian and true friend to me and many others, John Carroll of Chester. John owned and operated automobile dealerships in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Ontario. From the time he was a young boy, he was passionate about the automobile industry. More importantly to John, he was a proud Nova Scotian. His pride was particularly evident in his beloved home of Chester. John believed in giving back to his community in small ways and large. He quietly supported many local causes, more than we will ever know.

John loved his family deeply, starting with his wife Gail, whom he named his boat after. He beamed with pride whenever he talked about his grown children, Scott and Julia, their successes and their families.

Once one was a friend of John's, one was a friend for life. I had lunch with him only two weeks ago in Lunenburg.

John died yesterday at home. On behalf of this House, I wish to extend our condolences to Gail and their entire family. Rest in peace, John.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the world has been horrified and heartbroken by the violence in Israel and Palestine. New Democrats condemn the brutal attack on Israel by Hamas and we call for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the protection of all civilians and immediate humanitarian aid to Gaza.

We are also profoundly concerned about what is happening in Canada. We have seen a sharp increase of hate against Jewish and Muslim Canadians since the Israel-Hamas conflict broke out. Toronto police have reported an over 130% rise in hate-related calls. The National Council for Canadian Muslims has seen a 1,300% increase in Islamophobic incidents across the country.

We have seen a 400% increase in anti-Semitic incidents of hate since last year.

New Democrats condemn all forms of hate and discrimination, especially anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. All levels of government need to provide strong leadership to ensure public safety in our communities, including places of worship and schools. Together, let us take a stand against all forms of hate.

* * *

• (1115)

[Translation]

ELLA-ROSE DUVAL

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about a young athlete from my riding who recently took part in the World Rowing Sprint Finals, which were held in Barletta, Italy, earlier this month.

Ella-Rose Duval developed an interest in rowing in 2020 while watching the Tokyo Olympic Games. Just two years later, she competed in the Canada Games and then qualified for the World Games, but this time in coastal rowing. At this rate, I would be willing to bet that she will fulfill one of her dreams, which is to compete in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games, where this discipline will be included for the first time.

At just 17 years old, Ella-Rose Duval also impresses academically. At the top of not only her class but her entire school, she maintains an overall average of no less than 98%. She has also been awarded the Governor General's Academic Medal at the bronze level, and the Quebec Lieutenant Governor's Youth Medal, also at the bronze level, in recognition of her volunteer work.

I would like to sincerely congratulate Ella-Rose and wish her continued success.

*Oral Questions**[English]***ORAL QUESTIONS****HOUSING**

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the NDP-Liberal government, a generation of young Canadians are giving up on home ownership. It used to be that if someone had a full-time job and saved their money, they could buy a home, start a family and eventually pay their house off.

How can a young Canadian save for a down payment when they are paying \$2,500 a month for rent? How can they qualify for a mortgage when the payment is \$4,000 a month? It now takes a worker most of their working life just to save enough for a down payment, but then they still would not even qualify for the mortgage.

The government's inflationary deficits have triggered an inflation crisis and the highest interest rates in decades. Those who already own a home do not know what they are going to do or how they are going to make their mortgage payments after the next renewal. Those who do not own a home are forced to pay ever-increasing rent.

The Prime Minister has killed the middle-class dream of home ownership. That is his legacy after eight years. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

* * *

**PRIME MINISTER'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are coming to the end of Women's History Month. I would like to take the opportunity to highlight a woman in my riding of Hamilton Mountain who has dedicated her career to improving the lives of her tiny charges, their families and our entire community.

Ala Mohamed is the manager of child care at YWCA Hamilton. She recently received the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education for her commitment to building strong, inclusive communities. Ala's leadership creates safe spaces for all children and satisfies the unique needs of children from newcomer families.

I know Ala to be a fierce advocate for families in Hamilton. She was among the many families in Hamilton Mountain who celebrated when our government introduced an affordable plan for child care. She has witnessed the tremendous impacts this plan is having on children and their parents, who now have more options in the workforce.

Congratulations to Ala. She is a true gift to the Hamilton community.

*[English]***CARBON PRICING**

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with plummeting polls in Atlantic Canada, the Prime Minister is panicked, desperate and making it up as he goes along.

Only a year ago, Liberal MPs voted against a Conservative motion to axe the carbon tax from home heating. What a difference a year makes. I know my farmers in Alberta are sure wondering what it would take for them to get some relief from the Prime Minister's carbon tax.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister admitted that his carbon tax is unaffordable. How much worse do the polls have to get for the Prime Minister to axe his carbon tax for all Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we came into power in 2015, projected emissions growth, pollution levels, in Canada was going to increase to 80 million tonnes by 2030.

We brought this, more than 80 millions tonnes, down, and since then we have reduced it by another 50 million tonnes. That is more than 100 million tonnes of pollution that Canada will not have to endure because of us, despite the Conservative Party of Canada.

We are only getting started. We have a plan to fight climate change and help Canadians with affordability. We will keep going.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister presses pause on his carbon tax in Atlantic Canada, the Liberals are blocking a Conservative bill that would exempt the carbon tax from on-farm fuels, making food more affordable. I guess the desperate pleas of Canadian farmers do not have the same weight as the Prime Minister's plummeting polls in Atlantic Canada.

Let us be clear. Putting a pause is only a move of desperation for the Prime Minister, who would double down, as the minister just said, on his pledge to quadruple the carbon tax. Again, the Prime Minister has admitted his carbon tax is unaffordable.

When will he axe his carbon tax for all Canadians?

● (1120)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my father used to say, when someone points a finger, there are always three fingers pointing back at them.

Oral Questions

When it came time to decrease funding to farmers, the Leader of the Opposition sat on his hands at the cabinet table. When it came time to increase funding to farmers, all Conservative MPs sat on their hands. On Bill C-234, if it was so important for the Leader of the Opposition, he should not have sat on his hands but worked a little harder.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals do not care about food costs or affordability.

Canadians are struggling to put food on the table after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government. Almost two million Canadians accessed a food bank in March. That is up 79% from March 2019. A third of those people using food banks are children. Almost 20% of Canadian families are food insecure.

A Prime Minister who is in desperation mode is not worth the cost. Again, the Prime Minister has admitted his carbon tax is unaffordable. When will he axe that tax for all Canadians, so they can afford to put food on the table?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that right now many Canadian families are struggling with increased costs.

Last night I was speaking with Fay, who shared with me that he came to Canada with his family five years ago from Syria. He shared the impact that the Canada child benefit had on his family. It enabled them to ensure that they could buy food and the things that their children needed. This is one story of the 3.5 million Canadian families that receive this benefit each and every month.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell the story of 870,000 Quebecers who, each month, have to use food banks because they are hungry.

That is one in 10 Quebecers, 30% more in one year, 73% more than in 2019. Worse yet, 70% of food banks have been short on supplies.

The “Liberal Bloc” wants to radically increase the carbon taxes that, as we know, will continue to increase the cost of everything.

When will the Prime Minister cancel the second carbon tax of 20¢ a litre that he imposed on the backs of Quebecers?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question.

It is clear that we are working very hard right now to stabilize the price of groceries for Canadians across the country, the Canada child benefit continues to put money in the pockets of Canadians and Quebecers every year, and the carbon tax does not apply to Quebec, as the member knows full well.

We are here to support Quebecers and Canadians and we will continue to do this work.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are asleep at the wheel. We saw this all too clearly yesterday in an article in the *Journal de Montréal*, under the headline “872,000 Quebecers are using food banks every month: a national

embarrassment”. That is what eight years under the Liberals looks like.

The article states that “the face of poverty is changing: it includes families, workers, sometimes even unionized workers, women, newcomers, university students...”

After his dizzying free fall in yesterday's polls, did the Prime Minister panic and forget about Quebec? Will he cancel the second carbon tax that he forced on all Quebecers, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, on this side of the House we recognize that many Canadian families are facing challenges. Just last week, I had the opportunity to visit Eden Food for Change in the riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills, and that organization helps to feed individuals each and every day. Through the community services recovery fund, we have put \$400 million into community organizations to help address these problems.

* * *

• (1125)

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Radio-Canada has revealed that the Liberals are considering reviewing immigration thresholds for 2026 because of the housing crisis.

The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has even confirmed that he plans to say more on November 1. However, Ottawa is still reviewing its thresholds without talking to Quebec and the provinces, despite the fact that Quebec and the provinces are the ones responsible for health care, education, French language learning, infrastructure, and more. The provinces alone know what their capacity is to successfully welcome immigrants.

Will the government commit to consulting them and adjusting its thresholds based on their capacity to accommodate immigrants?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, Quebec sets its own immigration targets. It can select the francophone newcomers who will build the homes and infrastructure they need, and who will fill essential jobs in the health care sector.

We always respect Quebec's jurisdiction in immigration, but it is also important to recognize that newcomers are undeniably part of the solution.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is odd. Yesterday, when the Bloc Québécois said that we needed to review immigration levels, the Liberals accused the Bloc of being against immigration, but when the Liberals are the ones reviewing those levels, like they are currently doing, then that absolutely does not mean they are against immigration. When they do it, then it is okay, but when someone else does it, it is bad.

On Tuesday, on the Bloc Québécois's initiative, we will discuss immigration targets. I wonder if we will be able to have an intelligent debate without the Liberals suggesting that everyone except them is intolerant.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is asking us to be there for immigrants in Quebec. We are very pleased to be part of the solution. Quebec has the exclusive power to select the majority of immigrants who arrive in the province. As set out in the Canada-Quebec accord, Quebec also receives financial compensation from the federal government for its assistance.

We respect Quebec's jurisdiction on immigration. We are working very well with the Government of Quebec. The Government of Quebec is a good partner.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a housing crisis across the country, and Halifax is seeing one of the worst in Canada. People are forced to live in parks and in their cars. Women fleeing violence have nowhere to go when they stay at a shelter, and students cannot find a home they can afford. Liberals and Conservatives point fingers, but between them, those two parties have lost over a million affordable homes over the last 17 years.

When will the Liberals finally build the homes people desperately need so no one has to sleep on the streets in Halifax?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are 70,000 new units for individuals who have experienced homelessness, and 122,000 people who were close to being homeless are not homeless because of the national housing strategy. That applies to what I just said before on homelessness. The member rightly brings up the plight and position of women who experience homelessness. Over 400 units of shelter were either renovated or constructed through the government's investments. We have more to do. It is not an acceptable situation, but we will get it done.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they are not making things worse, but they are certainly not making things better. Here is the reality of yet another Canadian: Stephanie Finlayson, of Woodstock, Ontario, has been struggling to make ends meet. Big corporations that make record profits are gouging people such as Stephanie at the grocery store, at the pumps, with bank fees and with their cellphone bills.

Oral Questions

After working full time and paying her monthly bills, she only has nine dollars left for food. Under the Liberal government, people are going under, and Conservatives have no interest in cracking down on corporate greed.

When is the government going to put something in place to protect Stephanie from this ongoing corporate gouging?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is stepping up to fight inflation and alleviate the pressures in our economy to address Canadians' affordability challenges. Meanwhile, we see the Conservatives shudder at even the thought of standing up to corporations. We brought them to the table. They have produced action plans. We are updating our competition laws. I wish all members of this House would get on side and vote in support of our affordability act.

* * *

● (1130)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, the Liberal MP for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, in a show of great compassion to Atlantic Canadians, said he was "sick and tired" of hearing from people complaining about the cost of heating. Then he and his fellow Liberals voted against removing the carbon tax from home heating. After eight years, NDP-Liberals now admit the carbon tax is hurting people and it is not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister admit the pain he has caused and axe the entire carbon tax?

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that climate change is real, and Nova Scotians know that climate change is real. Over the past two years, we have had fires, floods and hurricanes.

We have also heard that Nova Scotians need help and time. That is why I am proud our government has incentivized heat pumps and created incentives for medium- and low-income families to ensure they can make the transition to clean and affordable energy. Our government is committed to addressing climate change, and we will be there to help all Canadians make that change.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the announcement he referenced is from a panicking, plummeting Prime Minister. After eight years, even the Prime Minister now admits his carbon tax is not working. However, the NDP-Liberal government continues to punish Canadians with a carbon tax on everything. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Last night in Nova Scotia, 1,000 people demanded the Liberals axe the tax.

When will the Prime Minister do his job and axe the entire carbon tax?

Oral Questions

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to save people money and fight climate change at the same time. We know that a price on pollution reduces emissions and puts more money in the pockets of middle-class families. We also know that many families who use home heating oil in Atlantic Canada are having trouble making the switch to a cleaner and cheaper source of heat, particularly in rural communities. It is a switch they want to make. That is why we are pausing the price on pollution on home heating oil for three years, doubling the rural rebate and creating a new program to deliver cleaner, more affordable heat pumps to families in the region while we save them thousands of dollars every year.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been eight long, miserable years with the NDP-Liberal government. A year ago, its members voted to keep the carbon tax on home heating, and now they are in full panic mode. With polling numbers in free fall, their new re-election slogan is “elect them and they will only quadruple the carbon tax right after the next election”. There is no relief either for the second carbon tax the Prime Minister has piled on. My constituents know the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

When will the NDP-Liberal government admit its carbon tax is punishing Albertans and axe the entire carbon tax?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we announced yesterday that we are going to double the rural top-up for Canadians, who benefit from the implementation of carbon pricing. We will also, through a pilot project, make it free for Atlantic Canadians who want to switch to heat pumps, which will enable them to save \$2,000 per year. What is it the Conservatives do not like about it? I will tell members what it is: It is making Canadians less dependent on their big-oil friends. They want Canadians to continue paying for inefficient, polluting and pricey systems. That is not what we want to do on this side of the House.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the members on that side are in panic mode because of falling numbers in the polls, so they are serving up election gimmicks.

This week's food bank report says that one in six Canadians is one of the “working hungry”. They are working and going to the food bank.

Herman, in my riding, tells me that he has been going to the food bank for almost two years, along with his brother and two friends. Another constituent told me that he is okay, as he is skipping only one meal a day and having cereal for the two other meals. Herman and my constituents know this: The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

When will the NDP-Liberal government treat Albertans fairly and axe the entire tax so they can put food on their dinner table?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to take these champagne Conservatives seriously. They continue to stand up in this House and speak to the hardships that Canadians are feeling, while every step of the way, they oppose the very mea-

sures that our government has consistently put forward to help the most vulnerable. These are such measures as the Canada child benefit, offering families hundreds of dollars per month to support their children, and child care, which is saving families hundreds of dollars per month.

Instead of weaponizing the hardships of Canadians for political gain, perhaps they could consider supporting real measures that help Canadians, such as the affordability act.

• (1135)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mark is a local grocery store owner in Dawson City. He has seen his already high shipping costs get slapped with a 94% fuel surcharge because of the current Prime Minister's carbon tax. A dozen eggs is eight dollars, a pound of butter is nine dollars and a kilogram of cheese is \$30. Yukoners know they simply cannot afford the Prime Minister any longer.

Will the NDP-Liberal government finally stop punishing Yukoners and axe its carbon tax?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Energy Regulator estimates that wind power will provide about 30% of Canada's total supply in 2050, compared with under 6% in 2021.

According to a recent study by the Public Policy Forum, “Off-shore wind could be for Atlantic Canada what oil was to Texas or hydro power to Quebec.” This is transformational for Atlantic Canada.

I think a lot of Canadians wonder why the Conservative Party is opposing the development of clean, renewable energy for Atlantic Canadians and, in fact, for all Canadians.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the Prime Minister's fancy photo ops yesterday, Yukoners are facing a cold winter. They will have to decide between keeping their kids warm and keeping them fed.

The carbon tax is causing transportation costs to double and food prices to skyrocket. Instead of making it better for struggling Yukoners, the NDP-Liberal government is making it worse. After eight years, the Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

Yukoners want to know this: Will the government end the carbon tax in its entirety and, if so, when?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect the hon. member across the way, who is speaking for the people of Yukon. We have a fantastic member of Parliament on this side who actually represents Yukon.

I can tell members that, in that territory, we are making transformational investments in our tourism industry and in making sure we have climate resiliency.

What the Conservatives have against climate change is the fact that they do not believe in it. They ran on a policy to actually fight climate change. Now that they are under new management, they do not care.

We do. We are going to fight climate change for Yukoners and all Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, this government is standing alone against everyone else, and this is threatening the survival of 250,000 businesses.

Everyone is asking the government to defer repayment of the CEBA loans for another year without losing any grants. All the premiers, the premier of Quebec and the premiers of the provinces and territories, as well as the National Assembly, which voted unanimously, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Association Restauration Québec, everyone—except the federal government—is on the same side, that of entrepreneurs.

When will the government get on the same page as everyone else and defer repayment, as everyone is calling for?

[English]

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.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her continuous advocacy for small businesses across Canada.

The CEBA program provided unprecedented support to nearly 900,000 small businesses to help them keep their doors open and keep the lights on. Last year, our government extended the forgiveness qualification deadline by one year, to the end of this year. We know times are still tough for small businesses. That is why we recently announced a full one-year extension on the term loan repayment.

We will continue to be there for small businesses throughout Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, repeating what the government has done in the past will not prevent any of the 250,000 businesses from closing in 2024. We are not talking about what the federal government has done in the past.

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Everyone wants to know what it plans to do today. Only the government can solve this. What is needed is open, direct communication with SMEs. They must be offered personalized solutions and a meaningful deferral. That is what needs to be done today to prevent a wave of bankruptcies.

What is the government going to do today?

● (1140)

[English]

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.): Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that we have been listening to business owners across the country. If someone is a small business owner and does not currently have the funds to repay their CEBA loan, they now have three years to repay it in full. The additional flexibility that we announced is significant support for small business owners who might still be struggling to make ends meet. The CEBA program delivered more than \$49 billion to nearly 900,000 small business owners.

We are going to support small business owners as we all recover from the pandemic.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a report released this week by Food Banks Canada shows that more Canadians are relying on food banks than at any time since 1989. It is no surprise. The carbon tax applies to the farmers who grow the food, the truckers who truck the food and the grocers who refrigerate the food. Clearly, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

After eight long years, will the Liberal-NDP government finally completely cancel its inflationary carbon tax?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has demonstrated through action that we really care about the struggles that Canadians are facing, but it is hard to take the Johnny-come-lately Conservatives seriously.

When the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food came to Canada in 2012, he documented that 55% of households on social assistance were food-insecure. Instead, it was the inadequacy of social protections that led to the burden on the food banks.

What did the Harper Conservatives do? The Conservatives fed Canadians a nothing burger for almost a decade. Their reckless and irresponsible—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

Oral Questions

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one year ago, the Liberal MPs voted to keep the carbon tax on home heating. Yesterday, the Prime Minister flip-flopped. Why was that? It was because of polling numbers. Yesterday's announcement of the pause on the carbon tax on home heating will not help 97% of Canadians. Canadians can see this for what it is. After eight years, the current NDP-Liberal government is just not worth the cost.

The common sense Conservative promise is simple: no gimmicks and no temporary measures.

Will the panicking, plummeting Prime Minister admit he cares more about polls than about Canadians, and will he now axe the entire carbon tax?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member ran on a plan to actually fight climate change and then threw it out the window when the Conservatives got a new chief executive officer for their party. All the Conservatives want to do is take us back to a time when polluters could actually pollute for free.

Our plan is going to allow Atlantic Canadians to shift from a high-GHG fuel to a solution that is actually going to lower GHGs in perpetuity. That means, for the Conservatives, forever. We are going to keep fighting climate change. They can keep complaining that we are actually doing the right thing on behalf of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal carbon tax is having an impact on Quebec. The second Liberal carbon tax is going to cost Quebecers up to 20¢ more per litre of gas. Those are real impacts and people will have to pay for that. There will be more money for Ottawa and less money in Quebecers' pockets. The Bloc Québécois is in favour of that. It is really costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois.

After eight years under the Liberal government, one in 10 Quebecers are being forced to use food banks. Why do the Liberals, with the support of the Bloc Québécois, want to impose a new tax when people in Quebec are suffering?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I would also like to remind him that what he is talking about is called a clean fuel standard. That is something that was in the Conservative Party of Canada's 2021 election platform. The member and his colleagues campaigned for the implementation of such a measure during the last election. Why? The reason is that it reduces the greenhouse gas emissions of the country's oil and gas distributors. The clean fuel standard is already generating \$2 billion in investments across the country, whether it be in Alberta, Saskatchewan or Quebec.

What would the Conservative Party do if it were to form government? It would cancel all those investments and all those newly created jobs.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, where was the minister last year?

Almost a year ago to the day, on October 24, 2022, we voted on a Conservative motion to abolish the carbon tax on home heating.

Yesterday, the Liberals did an about-face. Boom! Now they agree on this. Even the Bloc Québécois voted with the Liberals against this motion.

The reality is that people in Atlantic Canada got a break. Can the member, who is from the Montreal area and is therefore a Quebecer, tell Quebecers that he will also give them a break and that they will be exempt from the second Liberal carbon tax?

• (1145)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that keeping up with everything we are doing to fight climate change is difficult. I can understand that the member opposite would be a bit confused. I am going to help him out.

The clean fuel standard applies across Canada. It applies elsewhere and it still applies today in the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, Alberta and even British Columbia. It is completely different from carbon pricing and it is already generating major investments. Hundreds of jobs have been created, especially among farmers, who are going to supply the canola for creating alternative fuels.

If the Conservatives take power, all that vanishes.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday in my riding, a 13-year-old overdosed at a local business. Luckily, a nurse and local firefighters saved her life, and I am so grateful.

In B.C. alone, more than 1,800 people have died this year due to the toxic drug supply. The Liberals have delayed mental health funding while people die, and the Conservatives want to punish people who are struggling.

When will the Liberals deliver a national health-based plan to address the toxic drug crisis?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a very serious question.

Since 2016, the government has had the view that we need a comprehensive, collaborative and evidence-based substance use policy with harm reduction and treatment as the key part. This is a public health issue, not a criminal one, and it must be addressed alongside well-trained, monitored and resourced public safety components. People who are struggling need everyone at the table, everyone in this room, with the federal government working with provinces and territories on a system that includes health and mental health services.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, leaked emails from Global Affairs Canada reveal that the government has no plan for over 400 Canadians desperately trying to flee Gaza, as well as hundreds more in the West Bank.

In Gaza, they have no food, they have no water and the hospitals are crumbling. The minister and the Prime Minister have no answers for Canadians, and they refuse to call for an end to Israel's siege and for a full ceasefire.

What is the plan to evacuate Canadians out of Gaza and the West Bank? How many Canadians and Palestinians will die before the Liberals call for a ceasefire?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's top priority has always been and will always be the safety and security of Canadians. We continue to call for the immediate release of all hostages and demand that they be treated in accordance with international law. We have also sent a team of experts to the region to support the work of securing their release.

With respect to the larger number of Canadians who are trying to evacuate from Gaza, I, the foreign affairs minister and the Prime Minister have been doing everything we can to work with our partners in the region and beyond to enable them to evacuate safely and securely from Gaza.

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FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians needed support during the pandemic, community organizations and charities stepped up to provide crucial assistance. Now, many of them are having difficulty generating revenue, managing increased costs and demand for services, and attracting and retaining paid staff and volunteers.

Can the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development update Canadians on the progress that has been made to support these organizations?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through the community services recovery fund, nearly 5,500 organizations nationwide have been funded. In the member's riding of St. John's East, that means groups like the Association For New Canadians are now better able to support newcomers. The Food Producers Forum, Bell Island Community Food Bank and the Newfoundland and Labrador Food Umbrel-

Oral Questions

la can continue feeding their community. These are local groups that are making a real difference in St. John's East.

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● (1150)

FINANCE

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government's inflationary spending is making everything more expensive, proving once again that the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. Food Banks Canada reported that in March of this year, almost two million Canadians visited food banks. That is a 78.5% increase since March 2019. Rent has doubled, mortgages have doubled and the number of Canadians needing food banks is skyrocketing.

When will the coalition government end its wasteful inflationary spending so Canadians can afford to eat?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day in the House, Conservatives stand up and talk about the lineups at our food banks as if food insecurity in this country just became a thing. While the current government created the first-ever national food policy for Canada, invested in the local food infrastructure fund, invested over \$100 million into food security organizations during COVID-19 and advanced social protections that lifted 2.7 million Canadians out of poverty, what did the Stephen Harper Conservatives do? They did nothing.

If the Conservatives have finally woken up to the fact that food security is a need in this country, they can vote for the affordability act.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that food insecurity is not a new thing. It has only been getting worse under the Liberal-NDP coalition. In fact, 67% of those using food banks this year were living in market rental housing and paying so much they could not afford groceries. What is worse is that children now make up 33% of food bank clients. The NDP-Liberal talking points and photo ops are clearly not working.

When will the Liberals end their inflationary spending so we can keep roofs over our heads and kids out of food banks?

Oral Questions

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food reported as many as 4.3 million Canadians were food insecure in 2011, and he said, “a growing number of people across Canada are unable to meet their basic food needs.” That was in the dark era of the Conservatives for almost a decade, when food insecurity continued to get worse and worse. I do not know when the Conservatives finally woke up and realized that this was a major issue in this country, but they did nothing for over a decade. Here we are, addressing the issue by lifting 2.7 million Canadians out of poverty. I wish they would get on board and do something for once to actually support Canadians.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the disastrous Trudeau economic legacy, 14 deficits in 15 years in the 1970s and 1980s, led to untold devastation for Canadian families and massive cuts to Canadian health care spending and critical federal programs for seniors and families. After eight more long years, the family legacy has now resulted in 20 consecutive deficit budgets under former prime minister Pierre Trudeau and his son. The family legacy is definitely not worth the cost.

Some are now saying that we will spend more on interest payments this year than we do on the Canada health transfer. Is that true?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member from the south of Edmonton forgot or had amnesia about the 10 dark years under the Harper government. Quite frankly, he is one of the silent Conservative voices. There are 30 silent Conservative voices, MPs who are all from Alberta, saying nothing about Danielle Smith's reckless and irresponsible attempt to take Albertans out of the CPP. Is he happy to scare seniors in his riding? Is he happy to destabilize the CPP for the country? Shame on him and his whole party for being silent and scaring Albertan and Canadian seniors.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when each faced a global crisis, each government definitely took a distinctly different route. The Conservative government ran targeted, time-limited deficits and laid out a timeline to get back to balance by 2015, which it did. The Liberal Prime Minister, on the other hand, announced that the crisis was an opportunity to reimagine our economy and embarked on a wild-eyed experiment that has our country teetering on the edge of financial devastation.

Will the government spend more this year on interest than it does on the Canada health transfer, yes or no?

• (1155)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the aisle is really good at cherry-picking facts. I can tell members about conversations I had with Conservative members of Parliament during the middle of the pandemic. What did they say? They said to forget the loan programs and the ability to help people pay their rent. They said to let the market decide. What did they want? They wanted breadlines, poverty and decimation in our streets. Shame on them for scaring people about CPP and shame on them for revisionist history. The government

supports Canadians and has lifted over a million people out of poverty. Shame on the Conservatives.

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[Translation]

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 872,000 Quebecers had to use food banks this year. That is a staggering figure.

It is imperative that the government help these people who can no longer afford to feed their families. During the election, the Liberals promised to invest \$1 billion over five years for a school food program. I wrote to the Minister of Finance to remind her of that promise, but I still have not received an answer.

Given that one in 10 Quebecers are using food banks, will the minister keep her promise and allocate funding to feed children?

[English]

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that, right now, many Canadians are having a hard time putting food on the table.

We are working with provinces, territories, municipalities, indigenous partners and others to develop a national school food policy and support the creation of a national school food program. We are planning this policy to reflect regional and local needs, because we know that existing meal programs do not serve the majority of Canadians.

I am happy to share with this House that the “as we heard it” report will be coming out next week. I look forward to working together on it.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is no miracle solution to the increased cost of living.

However, we are not asking the government for a miracle today. We are still waiting and hoping for one next week. We are asking the government to keep its promise. It promised \$1 billion for a school food program. That is nothing miraculous, but it would be a complete game-changer for those of the 872,000 Quebecers using food banks who have families.

When will the government keep its promise and transfer that money to Quebec with no strings attached?

[English]

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that kids learn better on a full stomach, and this remains our goal.

The work under way on a national school food policy is critical to achieving that. We continue to work with our partners, the provinces, territories, indigenous partners, stakeholders and children to inform the path forward on this.

As mentioned, I look forward to the release of the “as we heard it” report, the results of our consultation. I look forward to working with all members in this House to move it forward.

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HOUSING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, Canadians are increasingly convinced that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

The government's insatiable appetite for spending has triggered an inflation crisis and interest rate hikes. Millions of Canadians with mortgages are left wondering what they are going to do when their payments go up by over \$1,000 a month on their next renewal.

When will the NDP-Liberal government get its inflationary deficits under control so people can afford to stay in their homes?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sat with the member on the federal finance committee for two years. At no point did he ever stand up and go against the austerity agenda of that party's leader. It is an unacceptable approach.

We, on this side, do have an approach that matters. In his community in Calgary, we are working with that city council on a number of things, including the housing accelerator fund that would see more homes built, which brings down the cost of rent and brings down the cost of purchasing a home.

We will continue to work together.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$54 million in waste, extortion, corruption and an RCMP investigation; that is ArriveCAN. We heard shocking testimony about a group of government insiders who are running a real racket in tech sector procurement.

After eight years of the Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government, that is how they run things, and now there is an RCMP investigation. The Prime Minister is clearly not worth the cost. Will he fully co-operate with the RCMP in this investigation?

• (1200)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have

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said time and time again, we expect all contracts to be issued following the law and regulations set out in this place.

CBSA has launched an internal audit. It has increased oversight over contract granting and is mandating new procurement certification courses. We welcome any investigation into these allegations. Any misconduct will come with consequences.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has blocked so many RCMP investigations that he has lost track of them this week. The insiders involved in this are the same ones behind the \$54-million arrive scam. The whistle-blowers who brought this waste and corruption to Canadians' attention were threatened and had their contracts cancelled by the NDP-Liberal government. After eight years of the Prime Minister, he is not worth the cost.

When will the Prime Minister stop lining the pockets of well-connected insiders and fully co-operate with the RCMP?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we see the Conservatives taking cheap political shots at the Prime Minister instead of sticking to the facts, which is allowing any allegations of misconduct to be properly investigated. There is nothing being blocked by the Prime Minister or the government.

We welcome an investigation to look into these allegations of misconduct, and we expect contracts to be issued following the law.

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[Translation]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians across the country are worried about their future. Groceries are more expensive, so are housing and basic amenities.

Many students and recent graduates are among those who are worried. They are just starting out in life, facing these uncertain and inflationary times without much in terms of savings to fall back on.

Can the minister tell us what meaningful steps our government is taking to help students and recent graduates put some money aside and help them get off to a good start?

Oral Questions

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Halifax West for all her hard work.

Our government understands very well that students and recent graduates need financial support. That is exactly what we have done. We recently announced that interest on federal student loans would be forgiven. This saves young people nearly \$410 a year. Our government has always been there for Canadians.

I would like to point out that the Conservatives voted against these measures. Shame on them.

* * *

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, new information has just revealed that the Prime Minister's Office refused to release documents to the RCMP during its SNC-Lavalin investigation. At the ethics committee, MPs were in the room and the RCMP commissioner was in the room ready to testify on the RCMP's obstruction of justice investigation into the Prime Minister's SNC-Lavalin scandal. Then the NDP-Liberal government abruptly shut down the ethics committee before the RCMP commissioner could testify. After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

What is the cover-up coalition hiding?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that after yesterday's performance, I am surprised the Conservatives would dare go down this road, given the fact that they had 26 opportunities to move a motion to bring forward the RCMP to committee. Instead, they choose to use that as a political ploy to block the study of a lobbyist-paid trip by five Conservatives, including \$1,800 worth of champagne and a \$1,200 oyster bar bill. Talk about cover-up.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am certain we all want to give our attention to the member of Parliament who has the floor next to ask a question.

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

• (1205)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only person in this place who has broken ethics laws twice is the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister said when he took office that the government and its information must be open by default, but after eight years, the Prime Minister only wants to cover up the truth. The RCMP commissioner made himself available to answer questions, but the NDP-Liberal government does not want him to speak. We have learned it was the Prime Minister's Office that blocked the RCMP from getting key documents during the SNC-Lavalin investigation. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

What is the cover-up coalition hiding?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to me that the Conservatives would once again talk about a cover-up when it is they who are using political tactics to block the study of a lobbyist-paid trip for five Conservative members. They yelled out to correct me; it was two lobbyist-paid trips. They think that makes it better.

I am curious. Was the chateaubriand that they consumed a steak or a 600-euro bottle of wine? Perhaps they could come to committee and answer those questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the alliance between the Bloc Québécois and the Liberal Party continues.

The RCMP commissioner appeared before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics last Monday and was prepared to give evidence on the Prime Minister's interference in the SNC-Lavalin affair.

The Liberals ended up adjourning the meeting. Who supported them? It was the Bloc Québécois. The member for Trois-Rivières voted with the Liberals to protect the Prime Minister. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly.

After eight years of this government and out of fear of the truth coming out, did the Prime Minister promise the Bloc Québécois something to get its support?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of costs, I am just curious what a thousand-dollar meal at the Savoy restaurant for three courses of a lunch looks like. Maybe the Conservatives who went on a lobbyist-paid trip could come to committee and explain that. Instead, they are bringing up a case that the RCMP has considered closed for years as a way to block the committee from studying the exorbitant champagne tastes that Conservatives seem to have.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is and always has been a trading nation. Our government's trade commissioner service is an unmatched network of over 1,000 business-savvy experts in 160 cities that helps businesses in my riding and across the country reach new markets.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development update Canadians on how we are helping businesses get started, scale up and go global?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Lac-Saint-Louis for his strong advocacy on behalf of businesses. I visited two innovative companies in Montreal and heard about how they were growing, thanks to our government supports. OPAL-RT Technologies has been unlocking its global potential and now has a presence in over 50 countries. The EDC has helped Equisoft expand to new markets like the U.S., Australia, the U.K., Chile and South Africa.

We will continue to be there for businesses to help unlock new markets as they create good-paying jobs right here in Canada.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians struggle, a tax evasion report confirms we need what the NDP has long called for: a global wealth tax to ensure the rich pay their fair share. Still, thanks to Liberal and Conservative governments, billionaires now pay next to nothing in taxes, but rampant tax evasion did not just happen; it is a political choice.

When will the government stand up for working people and those on fixed incomes who are hurting right now, listen to experts and implement a wealth tax so that billionaires finally pay their fair share?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been, and will continue to be, committed to ensuring everyone in Canada is paying their fair share. That is why we have permanently raised the corporate income tax by 1.5% on the largest banks and insurance companies in Canada; implemented a recovery dividend of 15% on the financial sector to pay for the cost of COVID-19; implemented a luxury tax on private jets, luxury cars and yachts; and we will implement a 2% tax on share buybacks.

We are committed to ending the corporate tax race to the bottom and ensuring that multinational corporations pay their fair share of tax wherever they do business.

• (1210)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, with the Liberal climate policies increasingly looking like Swiss cheese, the Greens have practical solutions, and one of them is motion M-92, from the member for Kitchener Centre, to have an excess profit tax on big oil. This was just costed out by the Parliamentary Budget Office, confirming there would be \$4.2 billion available, if the Liberals move to tax the big polluters.

When will the government move to create an excess profit tax, as it has done for banking and insurance, on the fossil fuels sector, in which the five biggest companies raked in \$38 billion last year? When will we tax them?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has done more than any other to ensure that large oil companies do their fair share when it comes to paying taxes and fighting climate change.

Routine Proceedings

We already have regulations in place to ensure that they reduce methane emissions, a very powerful greenhouse gas, by at least 40% by 2025 and at least 75% by 2030. We are imposing a cap on the emissions of the oil and gas sector. As my hon. colleague just reminded the House, we have also imposed a surtax on share buybacks.

We are doing more than any government has done to ensure that oil companies do their fair share.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and consistent with the current policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Framework Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil Concerning Defence Cooperation”, done at Brasilia on June 27, 2023.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. It is in relation to the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, October 16, 2023, regarding the housing crisis in Canada.

[English]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after discussions between the parties, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: Mr. Green (Hamilton Centre) for Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).

[Translation]

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

Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1215)

PETITIONS**MIGRATORY BIRDS**

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand today to table a petition.

[*English*]

The constituents in my area continue to be very concerned about the logging of old-growth forests. The petition demands that the government pay attention to its obligations to protect migratory birds at risk by moving to curtail logging in critical habitat areas for endangered migratory birds, particularly the marbled murrelet.

CHILD SUPPORT

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding. They are drawing the attention of the House to the fact that Canada has now the highest rate of common-law relationships among G7 countries, with a share of co-residing common-law couples increasing from 6% in 1981 to 23% in 2021.

The petitioners also draw the attention of the House to the fact that nearly four in 10 children live with a lone parent, a step-parent, parents in a common-law relationship or those in other non-traditional unions.

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Justice to initiate a statutory review of the Divorce Act, specifically concerning the federal child support guidelines, which would take into account the evolving reality of blended families' variance of income over time and better reflect the needs of children in shared custody situations.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to present a petition started by Tammy Lachapelle-Ward, from Katrine, in my riding. The petitioners are calling on the Minister of Transport to request an amendment to current regulations that water aerodromes must follow the same requirements as land aerodromes on water. It is a loophole, and they often go around the local zoning and protections that exist on the shorelines of lakes all across this country. The petitioners think it is time that the loophole be closed. This is a petition that I am proud to present to the House today and affix my name to.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first of the petitions I am presenting to the House seeks to support the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners.

The petitioners recognize the importance of owning firearms, but they are also concerned about the impacts of hearing loss caused by damaging noise levels from firearms and the need for noise reduction. They acknowledge that moderators are the only universally recognized health and safety device that are criminally prohibited in Canada.

The petitioners are calling on the government to allow legal firearm owners the option to purchase and use sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting activities.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, petitioners call upon the House of Commons to legislate the abuse of a pregnant woman and/or the infliction of harm on a preborn child as aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes in the Criminal Code.

The petitioners know that the risk of violence against women increases when they are pregnant, that injury or death of preborn children are not considered at this time, and that Canada has no abortion laws, so that void is so extreme that we do not even recognize preborn children when they are victims of violent crimes.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, finally, petitioners are calling on Parliament to guarantee the right of every Canadian to health freedom by enacting the charter of health freedom drafted for the Natural Health Products Protection Association on September 4, 2008.

Freedom of choice in health care is becoming increasingly curtailed and further threatened by legislation and the statutory regulations of the Government of Canada. The petitioners believe that Canadians are competent and able to make their own health decisions without state interference.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present this petition on behalf of my constituents in the Bow River riding.

The petitioners are calling on the government to repeal medical assistance in dying for those for whom mental illness is the sole condition and protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment and recovery, not death.

Conservatives agree that Canadians with mental illness should be treated with dignity and facilitated with the treatment options they need. Recovering from mental illness is possible, and we should never give up on Canadians.

• (1220)

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have received a large number of correspondence on this petition from my constituents regarding Health Canada measures for natural health products, or NHP, that will force many small and medium-sized businesses to shut down Canadian operations and provide fewer NHP options for Canadians.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Minister of Health to work with the industry in modernizing labelling and adjusting Health Canada's proposed cost recovery rates to accurately reflect the size and scope of the industry. They indicate that new regulatory changes should only be considered once the self-care framework is adjusted and backlogs are cleared, operations are running efficiently, and there are policies and procedures in place to ensure stable operations and that selection of natural health product choices continue for Canadians.

CANADA POST

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here today from residents from my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country and the surrounding region.

The petitioners state that the Big White Ski Resort is an important economic driver and employer for the region. Being on Big White Mountain, and being British Columbia's second most visited winter destination, the resort hosts over 650,000 skier visits and over one million resort guests annually.

The petitioners are calling for the government to implement a postal code in Big White Mountain, and there are a number of reasons why this is important. It is beneficial for the processing, accurate filing and collecting of property taxes, and for accurate navigation via mapping software. It would benefit tourism organizations by allowing user-generated content to be accurately labelled and geotagged, as well as essential services such as insurance.

The petitioners are calling upon the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to work with Canada Post to ensure that the creation of a postal code for Big White Ski Resort is prioritized and handled in an expeditious manner.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Canadians who are calling to the government's attention the impacts today in Canada from climate change, specifically flooding, wildfires and extreme temperatures.

The petitioners highlight the fact that addressing climate change requires a dramatic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming. They indicate the government's commitment to cap and trade to cut emissions from the oil and gas sector to achieve net zero by 2050.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to move forward immediately with bold emission caps for the oil and gas sector that are comprehensive in scope and realistic in achieving the necessary targets that Canada has set to reduce emissions by 2030.

Government Orders

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-52, An Act to enact the Air Transportation Accountability Act and to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great enthusiasm that I rise today to speak to Bill C-52.

From the outset I want to say that the Bloc Québécois will support this bill to have the chance to study it closer in committee and improve it.

We know that the bill is trying to resolve various problems that have arisen at our airports since air traffic has resumed. Obviously that is a good thing, because there has been no shortage of problems at our airports since the end of COVID-19.

This leads me to the first point of my speech, about airport and airline service standards. I believe that the intention here is good. We all remember, for those who managed to get a federal passport to travel, what a mess there was at Canada's airports in the summer of 2022.

As members will recall, the government refused to propose a plan to lift the health measures. Why? Rather than provide predictability to our citizens, our industries and our businesses, the government chose to contribute to polarizing this issue, like the Conservative Party. Each side did that in its own way.

Consequently, when the government lifted the public health restrictions for travelling abroad, people rushed to our airports. That resulted in all the chaos we witnessed, when hundreds of flights were delayed or cancelled and passengers were stuck sleeping on the floor at airports. There were also extremely long wait times at customs, which, incidentally, is a federal responsibility. That is also not to mention the horrendous lineups for boarding.

Government Orders

The Bloc Québécois's intuition before those problems occurred was right. We warned the government that its passenger bill of rights was by no means a panacea, and sadly, the unfortunate things that happened proved that to be true.

It became very clear that certain airlines preferred to make more money by overbooking their flights. They knew that they would be unable to keep their commitments. However, they also knew that it would not be too much of a problem because the complaints would not go anywhere, given the interminable delays at the Canadian Transportation Agency. Because there is no serious punitive mechanism for these airlines, some of them chose to act unscrupulously, and that is shameful.

The second key moment in this saga happened last winter. Members may recall that a snowstorm left many flights grounded. We agree that no one can be blamed for a snowstorm, not even the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. We are not holding the government responsible for rain or good weather—especially not good weather, of course. The fact remains, however, that although events beyond our control can affect air transportation services, airlines have a responsibility to their customers that they cannot shirk. They have to provide food to people left waiting for hours, or even hotel rooms and return flights if their customers are stuck in Mexico, for example. Unfortunately, some airlines failed to live up to their responsibilities that time, too.

Further to that point, I want to talk about Cirium and FlightAware, the firms that compiled data for *La Presse*. They determined that there were more than 2,400 delays and cancellations during the holiday season last year, that is, between December 19, 2022, and January 4, 2023. Their figures show that over 55% of Air Canada's 1,000 flights were delayed. For Sunwing, the figure was two-thirds. Every airline had issues. It was during this period that Sunwing suspended several return flights from Mexico, stranding travellers there for days. People criticized the company's incompetence, and Sunwing was forced to apologize to its customers.

We talk a lot about airlines, but we cannot forget about Via Rail. This rail company was also singled out for blame. Passengers were trapped on board a train for hours. In one case, it was an entire day. That is unacceptable.

Following this second unacceptable event, the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities took up the issue. My esteemed colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, whom I commend, proposed several improvements to the passenger bill of rights.

• (1225)

These improvements include the following: shifting the burden of proof to the airlines; changing the grounds on which a carrier is not required to provide compensation; improving the complaints process to reduce delays, finally; making the Canadian Transportation Agency's decisions public to establish a type of jurisprudence, so that anyone forced to go to court several years after the incident will know exactly what the agency is basing its arguments on; and increasing fines for airlines.

These proposals were included in the government's Bill C-32. Just one thing was left out, namely the need to ensure that airlines

treat people with respect and dignity. I believe that is the objective of the service standards, that is, to ensure that airlines treat people like people, for example, and as I said earlier, by providing them with food when the plane is grounded for several hours, as well as a hotel room instead of the floor to sleep. This is a step in the right direction, and we welcome it.

The only concern that I have about this measure is that it does not force the government to set standards for the services it offers itself. We know that some airport delays are caused by the federal government. I spoke about it a few moments ago. The endless wait times at customs and security because Ottawa is not providing sufficient funding are not the responsibility of airlines or airport authorities. The federal government needs to lead by example and set service standards for itself. That is what we are asking it to do today. Once again, what we are seeing in this bill is that the government is setting standards for airports and airlines. That is good, but the government, the royalty that does not negotiate with its subjects, remains above all that, and the problem remains unsolved. The government should have implemented such measures here at the same time in order to set the example.

My second point about this bill has to do with something entirely different and that is the management of airport noise out of respect for the neighbouring community. The bill forces airport operators to establish a noise management committee, which will be responsible for dealing with complaints from the public and giving notice to the public with respect to noise alterations. The committee is made up of one representative from the airport operator, one representative from Nav Canada, one representative from the municipal or local government and one air carrier representative. Under the bill, the committee will meet at least four times a year and allow public participation.

In practical terms, it is hard to say whether the committee will really improve neighbourliness between airports and residents, but it is safe to say that having this committee will facilitate both the process and communication on this issue. As we know, there are numerous problems that arise between airports and neighbouring residents, and they are often brought to the attention of the MPs who represent these citizens. As I was saying, the committee will not solve everything, but it can facilitate communication. That is why we welcome this party's intention. However, we are aware that this remains a serious and deep-rooted problem. Citizens are reaching out to us, especially to our colleagues who represent ridings with airports near densely populated areas. People are saying they cannot stand hearing airplane noise all day long. We need to continue to do more, but this is a good first step.

Another aspect that we welcome is the establishment of greenhouse gas reduction targets for airports and ports. They will not be exempt.

As members know, the bill requires municipalities to develop and adopt a five-year plan on climate change adaptation measures. We are talking about the current and anticipated impacts of climate change on airport operations for airport authorities and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Specifically, this is about targets and adaptation in relation to the previous plan. Governments will also have to publish their plans.

This part of the bill aims to force port and airport authorities to come up with a plan to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. Given the importance of this infrastructure, we welcome the proposal in this area, as well.

However, we did find some problems in several areas of this bill and in many other bills introduced by the government. What is the problem?

• (1230)

Airport obligations are determined by regulations. In other words, they will be determined by the government, who will not have to be accountable to the House, to us legislators. Today, as we debate Bill C-52, it is impossible for us to determine the effort that will be required from airport authorities. In other words, Bill C-52 gives the government the power to say that it will impose rules later, that it will determine them alone and it will not be accountable to anyone.

This can likely be explained by haste. They probably want to go too fast and for us not to take the time to do things properly. I will come back to that a bit later in my speech.

This looks good on paper, but since the devil is in the details and those will not be decided until later by regulation, we will remain skeptical about the scope of this measure. As I was saying, this is not the first time the government announces good intentions on the environment, when we know its true nature, namely to continue giving subsidies to the oil companies, authorize Bay du Nord, fund at great cost the expansion of Trans Mountain, and so on. We are not fools.

Let us come back to Bill C-52. Another part of the bill deals with the collection of information and the handling of complaints regarding airport accessibility for people with disabilities. That is obviously very important. Here again, the intention is highly commendable and it is consistent with the objective of the Accessible Canada Act, which is to eliminate barriers for people with disabilities by 2040. We all saw stories in the news about people with disabilities who were unable to receive the services and support they needed. What is more, quite often, they were not treated with the respect that every person deserves. Every incident like that is one too many and unacceptable. It is imperative that things change, that action is taken. Let us hope that Bill C-52 helps to improve the situation and that such incidents never happen again.

As I was saying, the problem is that the bill does not indicate what the government intends to do to improve the situation. However, it does indicate that the government will be able to create regulations in that regard. The bill targets a problem that must be resolved to comply with other laws, but it gives the government power to adopt regulations and does not make the government accountable to the House, which is unacceptable.

Government Orders

Again, I will offer some criticism about this approach. Passing legislation that only allows the minister to make the rules bypasses the spirit of the legislative role of Parliament. It does not allow us, the elected members, to properly defend the interests of the constituents we represent.

At some point I would like to officially make this request to the Chair, who is the defender of our rights and privileges in the House. I would like to know whether it is acceptable for the government to operate in this way this often, having everything go through regulations instead of through laws that can be studied thoroughly by us, the legislators. In my opinion, the government is assuming rights that are also those of the House by proceeding in this way. Obviously, when there is a majority vote then it is the House that it is giving these rights to the government. This raises a rather fundamental question. The government is proceeding in this way to go quickly and to hide what will be unpopular. That is an issue that deserves a lot of reflection.

In its current form, Bill C-52 creates a great deal of uncertainty for the industry, which is being told that the government has plans without being informed of how it intends to go about implementing them. Will the industry receive clear information on what will be implemented in the regulations? Will it be able to have a constructive and positive dialogue within the acceptable time frame allowed by the government? The industry has to rely on the government's good faith. This leads to a concentration of powers, which is worrisome, because when power is concentrated in the hands of the minister, this runs contrary to the spirit of the separation of powers necessary for a healthy democracy.

I really wanted to take a moment to point this out. I think it is necessary because we would prefer that the government do its job and legislate through laws rather than regulations. We believe it is necessary, even when one has very noble intentions such as making our airports more accessible and inclusive.

On this point, there is another part of this bill that I want to commend. The bill provides that airport authorities will henceforth be required to produce a report on diversity among their directors and members of senior management.

• (1235)

Once again, the details will be defined by regulation. Based on what Statistics Canada wrote in its report on diversity among directors and senior management, inequities persist among men, women and visible minorities. As we know, the last two groups are under-represented and there are still wage gaps, even when the main reasons for gaps, such as occupation, education, and the number of weeks or number of hours worked, are accounted for in the Statistics Canada study.

We have a duty to address these inequities and we will continue to do so. We applaud the fact that Bill C-52 includes a part on this subject. However, it does not say what is actually going to be done. It announces an intention in that the matter will be defined by regulation, once again.

Government Orders

In conclusion, there are many, many elements of the bill that I would have liked to discuss, including criticisms about part 3 of the bill and the changes to port fees. Part 3 of the bill amends the Canada Marine Act and provisions regarding the fixing of port fees. A bunch of different taxes are mentioned, like tolls, dues and rates for things like harbour access, berthage and wharfage, not including payments made under a lease or licence agreement. There is a list of principles that port administrations have to observe when fixing fees. Part 3 of the bill also established a framework for complaints regarding these fees.

We have some concerns about these principles, which could benefit from discussions in committee, improvements or clarifications. Proposed paragraph (a), for instance, states that “the fees must be fixed in accordance with an explicit methodology—that includes any conditions affecting the fees—that the authority has established and published”. We wonder if this principle is really necessary and what the reasoning is. There is also paragraph (c), which states that “the fees must not be fixed at levels that, based on reasonable and prudent projections, would generate revenues exceeding the authority’s existing and future financial requirements”. Our concern with this principle is that the wording could hinder development and investments in port infrastructure.

The bill also enables the Canadian Transportation Agency to make regulations to establish fees to administer the provisions of the bill on fees. The bill does not specify who will be charged these fees because, once again, it will all be determined by regulation. That is how this party governs. It drafts a bill and asks us to vote in favour of it, but everything is determined by regulation so that the government is not accountable to the House. Is it because the members of this party are ill-intentioned and trying to pass things that we do not know about or is it because they are just incompetent? One has to wonder, but this way of doing things is shameful either way.

Obviously, in committee, we will ensure that the principles outlined in the bill do not undermine the competitiveness of Quebec and Canadian ports. We will also take the time to study these principles and their effects. For example, again in relation to this same part, we are not convinced that the complaints process is the best, and we are wondering about the reasoning behind the principles that will determine port fees. I am sure my colleagues will address those aspects in more detail in the speeches that follow.

I want to close by emphasizing that, as usual, the Bloc Québécois will take the time to study the bill in committee to improve it, with our main focus being that this future law must improve the day-to-day lives of Quebecers. That is what we are always working to accomplish.

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned several times that the bill would give power to the minister to regulate. Is it not a fact that this is generally how the Constitution and our governance structure are designed? The act would provide guiding principles while the operation and implementation of procedures would be done through regulation. If we give powers to the minister to regulate, it would allow the minister

to make additions or changes depending on the circumstances of the day. That is what I want to check.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and for his thoughtful consideration.

The parliamentary system works thanks to the trust that legislators place in the government. The question is whether the government has the confidence of the House. More and more, the current government is increasing its power to determine the details of a bill by regulation, and that is what I am criticizing.

There have always been a certain number of details that are set out through regulations later. However, this is a rising trend. Let me give an example of an ill-intentioned regulation that may actually go against the spirit of the law. Take, for example, the agreement between Canada and Barbados. There is a section in the law that says Barbados cannot be used as a tax haven, but there is an obscure regulation that circumvents the spirit of the act.

That is why I prefer to see accountability in the House. When things are done through regulations, there is no accountability.

• (1245)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear my colleague say that the government passes legislation and then enforces it by regulation. We have absolutely stunning evidence of this before us.

I would like my colleague to answer this: Why does the Bloc Québécois support the government so often and, more specifically, why did it support the second carbon tax, called the clean fuel regulations?

How come the Bloc Québécois is helping the government enforce something by regulation that is hurting Quebecers right now? People are struggling to make ends meet. During oral question period this morning, members of the Bloc Québécois said that 872,000 Quebecers are using food banks every month.

Does my colleague agree with me that the clean fuel regulations, which the Bloc Québécois supported, are an example that is causing unfortunate consequences?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased with the question. It will allow me to clarify some facts. For example, the Conservatives are running ads on television that say that this regulation is a Liberal-Bloc tax. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is a lie that borders on defamation.

The Bloc Québécois has never voted and will never vote for a regulation. As I was saying in my speech, it is the government that makes the regulations. What we have done is vote against two terrible motions moved by the Conservative Party. The Conservatives always word their motions in such a way to get every party to vote against them. That is precisely what happened.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, the member is heckling and preventing me from answering the question properly.

The clean fuel regulations are not a tax because they call on the fuel industry to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, not to collect money for the government.

My time is nearly up. In closing, as far as the increase of 17¢ and 20¢ per litre of gas is concerned, that is absolutely false as well. I will have time to respond to that another time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind members that once they have asked a question, they have to wait their turn to make comments. They are not to speak while a member has the floor.

The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising his party's concerns about this bill.

I want to focus on the airline industry and an issue that affects many Canadians and Quebecers. They are frustrated that the federal government is adopting such a weak air passenger bill of rights and that it is not doing more to stand up to airlines, which are exploiting passengers and putting them in very difficult positions without compensating them or treating them fairly.

Could my colleague comment on that?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his important question and his deep outrage. We are all outraged that big companies can behave like this.

Our system is one where, when there is a payment transaction for airline service, the customer is entitled to receive good service. Our current federal legislation is inadequate when that is not the case. Again, I want to mention the work of my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, who sits on the Standing Committee on Transport, among others, and his colleagues, who are working to change this.

Under the current legislation, large airlines have a financial incentive to take more risks to maximize their profits. When their service falls short—if there are not enough seats on a flight because they have oversold tickets, for example—the result is that the consumer has to file a complaint with the Canadian Transportation Agency and wait several years to perhaps receive a positive outcome. The cost of those complaints, given the flawed legislation, means that airlines feel it is worth taking so many risks. This has to change. We need to work on it.

• (1250)

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for the clarity of his remarks.

Earlier, in a response he gave to our colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup he did not have time to finish, but I thought his response was interesting. This would help our Conservative colleagues gain a better understanding of the actual facts on the carbon issue. He was explaining how it was false, absolutely false, that these regulations would increase the

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cost at the pump by 17¢ or 20¢ a litre. The number changes like the wind with the Conservatives.

I would like him to complete his response. I invite my colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup to listen carefully.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, according to the government regulation that the Bloc Québécois never voted for and will never get to vote for because it is a regulation, the industry must to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Government officials calculated that this will cost the industry up to 17¢. If this regulation were not in place, the situation would still apply in Quebec since Quebec has a similar, if not slightly stricter, regulation. To justify this requirement, the government gave the oil industry tens of millions of dollars in subsidies, saying that it was to help the industry reduce its emissions. That means that most of the cost will be covered by subsidies.

Take, for example, oil extraction in western Canada. I would like to remind the House that the price is negotiated on the New York Stock Exchange. What portion of the price at the pump covers oil extraction? The New York Stock Exchange is the one that decides. Is the government's regulation sufficient to drive up the price of oil in New York? I do not think so.

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the requirement to disclose the diversity of boards of airport authorities and senior management. A few years back, we passed Bill C-25, which said that public corporations should disclose their diversity policies in their annual communications to stakeholders. In that bill, we delegated the responsibility to the minister to form regulations that defined diversity, which included indigenous people, women, visible minorities and people with disabilities. Does the member not think this could also apply here?

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I think that is very interesting.

The end result is the goal. In the end, people in positions of power must reflect representation in the population as a whole. What I am proposing is that this should be defined in committee so that, in the end, we determine the required means. Once again, when this is done through regulation, it takes control away from the committee and the legislators, putting it fully in the hands of government. I like to try and minimize that kind of intervention.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, this bill is timely as I stand today to speak on behalf of my community of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra, as well as Port Coquitlam, which recently petitioned the government with the following ask as it relates to the Vancouver airspace modernization project.

They call upon the Minister of Transport to do the following:

...prepare an independent environmental assessment of the noise and emissions impacts of the proposed flight paths, including recommendations for minimizing such impacts, prior to the proposed changes taking place. This environmental assessment should be based on the latest global research and recommendations for noise and emissions limits, should be independent of Nav Canada, and should be made public when completed.

The minister responded to my constituents by stating:

Aircraft noise is a complicated and often difficult issue faced by airport authorities and communities around the world and it is essential that the public has the opportunity to provide their feedback on potential changes.

I agree with that.

He went on to state:

That is why the Government of Canada put forward Bill C-52, which if passed, would create a process for airports to notify and consult the public on changes to airport design that could affect aircraft noise.

The minister went on to state:

Transport Canada previously worked with Canadian airports and NAV CANADA to develop a voluntary protocol for the aviation industry entitled Airspace Change Communications and Consultation Protocol that was published in 2015. This protocol amplified the aviation industry's commitment to include environmental considerations to communicate and consult with communities.

I am here to tell the government that the voluntary protocol did not meet the standards of consultation in my community. I was at Nav Canada's onsite community consultation in Coquitlam earlier this year with respect to the Vancouver airspace modernization project. I can tell members that the room was not set up to be disability or age friendly, it was difficult to navigate the information boards and there was not enough staff to answer important questions from residents.

In addition, even the City of Coquitlam did not know about the consultation event, the two mayors whose jurisdictions border the City of Coquitlam knew nothing about it and wrote letters to Nav Canada asking for more detail about the flight plans and more time for their residents to provide feedback.

I too wrote a letter to Nav Canada letting it know that the consultation process was inadequate and asking it to agree to an additional extended consultation process. It did not agree to this. This is an example of how the voluntary protocol is not working for people.

This bill focuses on improving accountability and transparency. That is certainly needed, based on the experience of the people in my community. That is why the NDP supports this bill moving on to committee stage. While better data collection, reporting and the committee process are a step forward in the bill, Bill C-52 does little to establish standards or enforce accountability to protect people or the environment. This can be seen in how the bill plans to address airplane noise. Canada's air traffic has increased significantly over the past decade and industry observers forecast this will only

increase as passengers and cargo numbers at Canadian airports continue to increase.

The current approach of a performance-based navigation will not be sufficient and has had the effect of exposing previously unaffected residential areas to new air traffic. This led to complaints from some neighbourhoods that had not previously been under flight paths and were unaccustomed to dealing with the noise or public health impacts.

More direct-flight routes and official arrival and departure procedures are here with us now. With a goal to improving airspace efficiency and safety and reducing greenhouse gas emissions where possible, we must also reduce exposure to aircraft noise in residential areas. The government needs to get serious about regulating and enforcing these impacts based on science. That is why the government needs to expand the representation on its noise management committee to include a local public health official as noise pollution can affect and impact population health.

● (1255)

Canadians who live near high-traffic airports face disturbances at all hours due to flight noise. According to research compiled by the World Health Organization, excessive noise can have harmful health effects, including increased risk for IHD and hypertension, sleep disturbance, hearing impairment, tinnitus and cognitive impairment. There is also increasing evidence for other health impacts, such as adverse birth outcomes and mental health problems.

As a result, Canadians impacted by airport noise deserve to see the science of any changes made to airplane noise around them. The NDP would go further than this bill does, to initially propose and implement the World Health Organization standard on noise around large Canadian airports, make Transport Canada's existing data on airport noise public and improve data collection on ground-level airport noise. These recommendations were all made in the 2019 report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, entitled "Assessing the Impact of Aircraft Noise in the Vicinity of Major Canadian Airports".

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Noise pollution must be addressed by international standards, but so too must accessibility for persons with disabilities, who continue to be impacted by barriers in transportation. There is no example of this with a higher profile than what happened last week, when the wheelchair of the chief accessibility officer did not accompany her on her flight home from Ottawa. She was left without her essential mobility device. There are so many stories of persons with disabilities being disrespected, disregarded, degraded and put in dangerous situations because there is no accountability for the failures of industry.

Too many persons have had similar experiences across Canada, showing how ill-equipped air transportation is in dealing with accessibility concerns. I hope that this high-profile incident will finally make change and that persons with disabilities who want to travel will get the respect and accommodation they deserve.

The Auditor General of Canada published a report in March 2023 entitled “Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities”. It examined the accessibility of federally regulated transportation services, such as planes and trains, for people with disabilities. There were a few key findings from the report that we need to look at. Of the 2.2 million persons with disabilities who used federally regulated transportation in 2019 and 2020, 63% faced a barrier. When these barriers are not tracked, there is no accountability and no action to correct it. That is what we are seeing.

It was also found that the Canadian Transportation Agency had insufficient tools and enforcement staff to address barriers. This is seen from the statistic that 31% of CATSA managers and executives did not take the time to complete mandatory disability training. This training is essential and must be taken seriously by industry leaders. They will need legislation to do it, because they have shown that they will not do it on their own.

Right now, the Canadian Transportation Agency does not have the authority to require transportation service providers to provide complaint data on accessibility regularly. It can do so only in limited and specific circumstances. The AG report found that this limits the ability to fully understand the total number and nature of complaints and, thus, identify and address potential barriers to accessible transportation.

For example, when a wheelchair is damaged, a complaint can be lodged with the transportation service provider and, if necessary, with the agency. However, when complaints are submitted only to the transportation service provider, the agency is not made aware. There is no regulation enforcing that. Therefore, it does not know the full extent of the issues faced by persons with disabilities. In contrast, the same Canadian airlines travelling to U.S. destinations must report accessibility performance indicators, such as damages to mobility aids, to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

• (1300)

Complaint data is one of the key sources of information that flags discrimination and problem experiences by travellers with disabilities. Not having the authority to regularly access this information limits the agency's ability to more strategically select the provisions of the Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations to inspect. This creates an additional risk that the agen-

cy is not focusing its limited resources on the areas of the highest risk and those discriminatory barriers.

Recently, the Canadian Transportation Agency ruled that the country's largest airlines need to do more to accommodate passengers with mobility devices. A consultation process with the disability community regarding the proposed accessibility regulation in this act must be the standard we have for all transportation systems. This should also include a new accountability process for accessibility complaints, including current outstanding complaints, to be heard, addressed and monitored for changes to be implemented. They must meet international standards.

The last point I want to touch on today is postpandemic air travel. The pandemic has exposed deep underlying issues in Canada's air transportation sector, which resulted in chaos during the summer 2022 and holiday 2022-23 travel seasons. Airlines have come under fire for poor planning and trying to rebound too quickly in order to maximize profits. This has resulted in Canadians sleeping on airport floors and being stranded abroad, as well as Toronto Pearson airport being ranked as one of the worst airports in the world for delays. This legislation would provide regulation-making authority requiring improved service standards.

In the briefing on this bill to the stakeholders, the government said, “Regulations developed would establish the services that require a service standard, but the intent is not for the regulations to establish specific target metrics.” Why is this not the intent? The NDP supports stronger collaboration and service standards for all aspects of air travel. However, those service standards should be developed and implemented by the government to ensure consistency across the sector and to ensure that airlines and airports are not left to regulate themselves.

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We have seen that, when left in their own hands, companies will take shortcuts, do minimal work to make a change and put profits before people. New Democrats would add this: If the government truly wants to address delays and inconsistencies in the air travel sector, it should take steps to improve working conditions for airport screening officers by ending contract flipping and by supporting training programs. The NDP agrees that establishing service standards for air sector providers is important. However, the government should ensure that those standards are consistent across the sector and serve the best interests of workers and travellers.

In summary, New Democrats want changes to this bill that will positively impact those affected by airplane noise and pollution and those who use air travel, including passengers with disabilities. We also want established guidelines for how the new data-sharing provisions will be used to effect positive changes in the sector. Government must strengthen the contents of airport climate plans to ensure that emissions targets are consistent with international commitments to the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act.

I will close by saying that the proposed act requires airport authorities to prepare climate change plans using international standards, but it has no similar requirement for noise or accessibility. This feels discriminatory, so I ask why. This needs to be corrected. Additional accountability is needed in this bill by adding that airport noise committees must evaluate noise complaints in a manner consistent with recognized international standards. Complaints relating to accessibility must also be evaluated in such a manner. We cannot leave this to be fixed in a private cabinet meeting.

• (1305)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned airport noise and the noise complaint process. My riding of Nepean has a problem with small, low-flying aircraft from a flying club. This act does not deal with the noise generated by these aircraft. The data are controlled by Nav Canada, which the residents in my riding do not have access to.

Does the member agree that, if possible, an amendment must be made at committee to include noise pollution caused by small aircraft at flying clubs and that the complaint resolution process should be made much easier for residents of affected localities?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, the Liberal government needs to take into consideration the science. We do need to make sure that those whose health is potentially affected by noise pollution and any other kind of pollution are taken seriously. The government has a lot of work to do to protect the health of Canadians. This would be just one of the ways.

• (1310)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadian travellers are very frustrated with wait times, lost luggage, cancellations and vacations ruined, and the Liberals' solution here seems to be more regulation and more red tape. We have, for example, the international airport in Toronto, Toronto Pearson, which is Canada's busiest airport. It ranks second-worst in all of North America as far as efficiencies and delays go.

I am wondering whether the member could answer to this: After eight years of the Prime Minister, everything is broken.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, what we know for sure is that greedy corporations are putting profits before people. This is driving a number of these problems. When I think about persons with disabilities, this is an area we know about and that corporations know about, but they have done nothing to correct it. I say that until we start regulating, because corporations are not going to regulate themselves, we are not going to get change. The regulation needs to be done thoughtfully and in consultation with our communities. That is why the NDP would like to see the bill go to committee, so we can hear from people.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on her speech.

I would like to start with a comment before I ask my question. My fear about the possibility of fully improving the bill in committee is that legislative clerks have a very narrow view of the changes that can be made to the bill in committee. That makes it very difficult to broaden the scope of the bill. That is what I wanted to say.

Here is my question. This bill relies heavily on the government to determine everything by regulation at a later date. My colleague referred to that in her speech. I would like to ask her again whether it is acceptable for the government to work that way. Is it acceptable for the government to say that we have to trust it, that it will take care of everything but that it will not be held accountable?

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, when we are talking about human rights, let us talk about the human rights of persons with disabilities. We cannot leave that outside regulation or outside legislation. We know there are international standards of how persons with disabilities should be respected and treated, and how they should have their human rights upheld in the transportation industry, so I think it is fairly obvious, and I am surprised the Liberals did not see it, that the bill cannot be discriminatory.

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Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for all her advocacy in this place for people living with disabilities. I know that was an important theme of her speech, and sometimes we do not get enough time in this place to make all the points we would like to make, so I wonder whether there is a bit more she would like to be able to say about people living with disabilities and access to transportation that she did not have an opportunity to say in her original speech.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I would like to just say a bit about ground transportation because that would not be covered by the bill. When persons with disabilities travel, it is not just the airline or the train that they need to spend excessive amounts of time planning for; they also need ground transportation. In Canada, this is not always available to them. They cannot always actually get accessible transportation when they land at their destination, whether it is in an airport or in a train station, so more work needs to be done on accommodation and equity in travel, not just in airplanes, on boats and on rail.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to particularly thank my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam for bringing the focus back to treatment of travellers dealing with disabilities. It is an important point. To the member for Nepean's point, I think we may have the beginning of an aircraft noise caucus to take amendments forward on Bill C-52. We need to do much more.

There are serious health impacts from aircraft noise, so I will add Saanich—Gulf Islands in, and I think almost every member of Parliament would have constituents who basically have their quality of life reduced to almost nothing from repeated low flights over their homes. Certainly in my constituency, I have tried with Nav Canada, I have tried with Transport Canada and I have tried with various airport authorities to get some relief for constituents. I look forward to bringing forward amendments, and I thank the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam for bringing that focus to her speech.

• (1315)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, certainly, a noise pollution caucus is a good idea. As it relates to airlines, I think we would get a lot of community input from that.

I just want to highlight simply the amount of and increase in cargo traffic. We now live in a society where people want things delivered to them from across the world in a day. This means that more air traffic needs to be flying around. In B.C. alone, we are shipping crab and cherries overseas more and more because we can get such a great price for them. They go by air. We are just in for more and more noise pollution as it relates to air traffic.

I think we need, as the member said, to get a caucus together to advance some of these new regulations.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the diversity clause in the bill. Is she happy with the way the clause has been worded? Does she think any changes are required in that?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I do not necessarily want to pre-empt what witnesses say when they come to committee. This is an area where I always like to hear from witnesses and the community first, so I will leave that open. However, I will reiterate my

ask that there be a public health official, at least, on the advisory committee. I would also add that since our local municipalities did not know about the consultation for the Vancouver project, we could maybe have some representation from either municipal politicians or even staff within a municipality.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, we all remember the sad incidents at airports in the summer of 2022. People were sleeping on the floor. They were not given food or a place to sleep. They were not getting any answers. We also remember the big snowstorm during last year's holiday season, and especially everything that followed.

Does my colleague think that the contents of Bill C-32 and the other bills passed so far are enough to ensure that these kinds of situations do not happen again?

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley has been doing a lot of work around this exact topic and has been advocating better rules and responsibilities for corporations and airports around passenger safety and passenger customer service. I think there is a lot of work to do here. I would leave it with my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who has been doing incredible work in this space.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging that I am speaking today from the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I am happy to speak today to Bill C-52, which aims to enhance transparency and accountability in Canada's transportation system. One essential element of this proposed legislation is the air transportation accountability act.

Since the pandemic, air transportation in Canada and around the world has faced many challenges on its path to recovery. It has become quite clear that new measures are needed to support the sector in meeting the needs of all Canadians. I have heard from so many constituents and from stakeholders on all sides of this, hearing their feedback and learning about the challenges they have been struggling with as they try to get around across Canada and around the world.

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While Canada is not alone in this, the increased number of flight delays and cancellations over the past two years have impacted way too many Canadians. That, combined with other congestion challenges such as long lineups and lost luggage, has made it clear that there is a need for increased oversight of our transportation system. By improving accountability and transparency in the air sector, we could really build a stronger and more resilient system with improved services to Canadians when they travel by air. The bill before us includes many provisions for improving our transportation system, but today I want to focus on the five types of new requirements it would establish related to transparency and accountability in Canada's air sector.

Under the proposed legislation, the Minister of Transport would gain the ability to make regulations requiring airports and air service providers to establish and report on service standards in relation to flights and flight-related services at airports. Airport operators would be required to comply with a formalized consultation and notice process around aircraft noise. Air operators and others would be required to provide information to the Minister of Transport on request, and airport operators would be required to develop climate change mitigation and adaptation plans and to report on diversity among their senior management. Each of these new requirements, in its own way, would help us increase accountability and transparency in Canada's air transportation system, with the ultimate objective being to make sure that Canadians are able to travel safely and efficiently across our country and across the world.

This bill would also enable the creation of regulations requiring air operators to create, implement and report on service standards. This would offer many improvements to transparency and accountability in Canada's air sector. The proposed regulations would specify which services require standards. Air sector entities would be expected to develop targets for those standards so they could be tailored to their individual circumstances. The regulations would also set criteria to establish which airports would be subject to these requirements. As we have seen, we need to have a cut-to-the-challenge approach and make sure that all of our services and all of the regulations are targeted toward addressing the challenges of each unique issue, as it is faced, across the country.

Reporting on these service standards would show Canadians what level of service they can expect from the different service providers in the air transportation system. This would provide Canadians with more certainty about what to expect when they fly. This should incentivize operators to improve service and tailor their operations and their communications to better meet travellers' needs. It would help operators understand where there are challenges in the system and work together to fix them.

• (1320)

Noise management, as we heard from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, has always been a challenge for airports and the communities around them. That is why we are proposing to introduce a standardized process for noise management at busy airports, meaning airports that have at least 60,000 annual aircraft movements. Currently, this would include Toronto Pearson, Vancouver, Montréal-Trudeau, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg. Sometimes when I am flying from Ottawa to Pearson and I look down, I can see my own house as we fly into Pearson airport.

The proposed legislation would require airport operators to establish a noise management committee with representation from the airport, air navigation, aircraft operators and local municipalities. This would provide members of the public with a clear point of contact through which they can express any concerns regarding aircraft noise.

When changes are proposed to temporarily alter flight paths or airspace design, the party proposing them would be required to formally notify the local community. For permanent changes, there would also be a requirement to consult local residents, giving them the opportunity to make their voices heard. I know my constituents would greatly appreciate that.

By providing Canadians with additional clarity around noise procedures, this change would also improve communication and enhance transparency at major airports to ensure that local communities are appropriately informed about proposed changes. Information is key to a well-functioning and efficient transportation system.

Bill C-52 would enable the Minister of Transport to require air industry operators to provide information that is not already included in regular data recording requirements on an as-needed basis. This would enable Transport Canada to make more informed decisions to support improvements in air travel. For example, during crises, this new power would help the federal government to better manage disruptions. This would complement measures recently introduced under the Budget Implementation Act, 2023, No. 1, regarding sharing data.

To strengthen and standardize our airports' climate action, Bill C-52 would support Canada's environmental agenda by requiring certain airports to develop and publish five-year climate change mitigation and adaptation plans. This would include a greenhouse gas emission reduction target.

These plans would describe the current and anticipated impacts of climate change on the airports, and set out an action plan for their intended response. This requirement would apply to airports that have had more than four million annual passengers over the last three years, which currently includes Toronto Pearson, Vancouver, Montréal-Trudeau and Calgary. We expect more airports to reach this threshold within the next few years as traffic returns to prepandemic levels.

Under Canada's aviation climate action plan, Transport Canada and other departments will work with Canadian airport authorities to support and advance their decarbonization efforts. The impacts of climate change are more apparent than ever, and more needs to be done. We know that climate change mitigation is important to Canadians. These requirements would ensure that Canada's largest airport authorities are transparent about their environmental impact and also accountable for their emissions.

Another issue that we know is important to Canadians is equity, diversity and inclusion. Ensuring greater transparency in the air sector would help us address long-standing equity, diversity and inclusion challenges.

Under the proposed provisions, federally incorporated airport authorities would be required to annually report on diversity among their directors and senior management. This would help encourage these entities to ensure that their directors and senior management are reflective of Canadian society and that their reporting is consistent with that of other corporations.

• (1325)

I am proud to support this bill in its efforts to encourage our air sector to be more reflective of the diversity of Canadian society. Not only do we need to reflect the diversity of Canadian society, but we also need to incorporate the lived experiences of diverse communities and use those experiences to ensure that we are providing service delivery in our air sector in an efficient, accessible and accurate manner for all Canadians.

By encouraging the players within the sector to be more transparent and accountable, Bill C-52 would ensure that Canadians can continue to rely on our system now and into the future, regardless of what disruptions may come. That is why I am asking my hon. colleagues to support Bill C-52 and the measures it includes to improve accountability and transparency in Canada's transportation system. These changes would encourage the further development of an air transportation system that is socially and environmentally responsible, strong and—

• (1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I thought the hon. member was finished her sentence, but I have to interrupt. The hon. member will have eight minutes and 45 seconds the next time this matter is before the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from September 21 consideration of the motion that Bill S-205, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to another Act (interim release and domestic violence recognizance orders), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, as my friend and colleague from Rivière-du-Nord mentioned on September 21 and as my friend and colleague from Saint-Jean will reiterate

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in a few minutes, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill S-205 in principle and recommends that it be sent to committee for study.

Our position is consistent with initiatives that reinforce mechanisms aimed at making the justice system better aligned with public safety, especially to better protect victims of domestic violence.

Broadly speaking, Bill S-205 seeks to amend the Criminal Code to require the judge who has to make a decision regarding the interim release of an accused person to make sure that the prosecutor has consulted the victim about their safety and security needs.

To that end, the judge can order the accused to wear an electronic monitoring device—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There seem to be discussions going on in the House. I would ask hon. members to leave if they want to have discussions. They can use the lobby. That way, they will not disrupt our proceedings.

The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, Bill S-205 essentially seeks to amend the Criminal Code in order to enable judges to order an accused to wear an electronic monitoring device at the request of the prosecutor; make it easier for the victim to obtain a copy of the order against the accused and require the judge to check with the prosecutor to ensure that the victim has indeed been informed; and enable the victim to report their assailant if they have reasonable grounds to fear for their physical safety or that of their child or children. If the fear is justified, the judge can then order that the accused enter into a recognizance. Refusal to do so will result in imprisonment.

The bill also seeks to give judges the power to set conditions in the recognizance to ensure good conduct. For example, the judge can require the accused to attend a psychosocial treatment program; move to a region other than the area where the informant lives; refrain from going to a specified place; and abstain from communicating directly or indirectly with a child, the informant or the child of the informant, or any relative or close friend of the informant. The bill also seeks to enable the judge to prohibit the accused from using social media and from using drugs, alcohol or other intoxicating substances. The judge can also require the accused to provide a sample to ensure that they are meeting that condition. Finally, the bill seeks to enable the informant to provide submissions in writing to help the judge determine the conditions in the recognizance.

Bill S-205 has three main components: the obligation to consult the victim before making a conditional release order; the addition of the concept of domestic violence, allowing a victim to apply to have the accused enter into a recognizance to keep the peace, under sections 810 and following of the Criminal Code; and the preponderance of the victim's submissions, which can influence the choice of the conditions included in the recognizance issued to the accused.

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Bill S-205 therefore expands the scope of section 810 of the Criminal Code to allow the court to impose a good behaviour recognizance if the victim fears that the accused might cause personal injury or property damage to them, their child or their intimate partner. Relatives and close friends have been added to the list of potential targets.

Let us not forget that release, with or without conditions, allows an accused person to be released into the community while awaiting trial. In Quebec and Canada, criminal law and penal law have a duty to punish crimes and protect the public. With femicide and domestic violence on the rise, it is important to strengthen mechanisms to protect victims, their children and their loved ones. Modernizing the Criminal Code is an essential part of that, and that is exactly what Bill S-205 does.

More specifically, the Criminal Code sets out the conditions under which it would be justified to detain an accused person pending trial. The decision to detain a person awaiting trial depends on a number of factors specific to each situation. When it is in the public interest to detain an accused person, it is important to remember that the accused is deprived of the exercise of fundamental rights. These include the presumption of innocence and the right to life, liberty and security of the person.

Allowing the victim to be more involved in the court case is a welcome improvement that the Bloc Québécois can support unreservedly. Victims should not have to fight for justice to be served. The bill will help reduce the obstacles that victims might encounter and that might dissuade them from taking the brave step of filing a complaint against their attacker.

The Bloc Québécois will always stand up for women and victims of domestic violence. One victim is one too many. Quebec is one of the most progressive nations when it comes to protecting victims of intimate partner and domestic violence. In fact, Quebec's department of public safety launched a Quebec-wide electronic monitoring device pilot project. In December 2022, more than 650 offenders on parole were fitted with such a device. Let us not forget that these are people being prosecuted for offences for which they could be sentenced to incarceration in a Quebec prison.

• (1335)

Those who end up in federally run prisons, and therefore who have longer and harsher sentences, are not subject to the same conditions. It is time to settle this discrepancy and make offenders subject to the same restrictions.

If the bill passes, these legislative changes will represent an added value for the victims, including female victims of domestic or sexual violence. The justice system has to be more effective and transparent, not just to facilitate the legal process and ease the long-term effects on victims or their family, especially when a decision is made about releasing the assailant, but also to strengthen public trust in the justice system so that no other victim of a crime will hesitate to report it to the police.

Statistics show that there has been a spike in femicide and domestic violence. Between 2009 and 2019, there was an increase of 7.5%. The idea is to bring these numbers down. They are currently on the rise. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to help

reverse this troubling trend. The reality on the ground highlights the gaps, including the status quo in the justice system: Many victims continue to fear their assailant, even while that person is being detained.

We can only welcome an initiative that aims to improve the victim's experience of the justice system throughout the entire process, from the moment he or she decides to file a complaint.

Bill S-205 may contain loopholes that could jeopardize certain fundamental rights, such as the obligation to provide biological samples to prove compliance with a recognizance to be of good behaviour. This all must be studied in committee.

However, as I have said and will say again, as my colleague will say later, and as my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord put it so well—better than I can—the Bloc Québécois unequivocally supports the principle of the bill. This is a laudable principle that aims to make our communities safer, which is a win-win situation for all Quebecers. A sense of security within a community strengthens a nation's well-being. Finally, in committee, as I said and as we will say again, the Bloc Québécois will work constructively to improve this bill.

• (1340)

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):

Madam Speaker, I am here today to speak on Bill S-205. The bill would amend the Criminal Code with respect to interim release and other orders related to intimate partner violence and offences. It is a critical step towards addressing the pressing issues around intimate partner and gender-based violence in Canada.

In this country, intimate partner violence has a long history; one that so many in our communities have fought hard to stop. There are a lot of processes in place, but a lot of those non-profits that do tremendous work in keeping women, gender-diverse people and children safe struggle to make ends meet just to get those services done. It tells us, as a country, that we have to continue to reflect on the impact that these communities are facing as we see so many women and gender-diverse people come forward to talk about the offences that are happening to them from their partners and they have so little voice to be able to fight back.

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I have talked to a lot of women across my riding and a lot of people from gender-diverse communities who talk about doing what they can and, again, with their own will, having to fight and fight. We saw, especially during the pandemic, more and more women and gender-diverse people locked into situations that were incredibly violent. When they were in that isolated status and not able to come forward, they were feeling very unsafe. Also, as we hit this significant housing crisis across the country, we know it is having a big impact on intimate partner violence. So, Bill S-205, although there are some concerns that will be dealt with when it gets to committee, takes a step in the right direction to start to move us forward.

So that constituents back home in North Island—Powell River understand, the bill would allow judges to consider whether an accused should wear an electronic monitoring device as a condition of their interim release, and this is important. We know that in the U.S.A., 23 states have started to use this format and have seen a decrease in violence. One of the things that is a challenge is that women and gender-diverse people are always trying to explain to the police or the RCMP what is happening, and proving it is really a struggle. So, having this in place would make a huge difference in allowing those voices to be heard and understood without having to feel like they are fighting against a system that is not interested in protecting them when they are a survivor of intimate partner violence.

The bill would also require a judge to ask the prosecutor whether the victim of an accused intimate partner has been consulted about their safety and security needs. Now, this may seem very basic to so many across this country, but we know that it is not happening. We know that, again and again, the people who survive intimate partner violence are often put in a situation where they are having to interact with the person who abused them repeatedly. They have very little support from the system at this point, which leads to a lot of violence and sometimes death, and that is why this is so important.

We have to make sure, when situations arise in this country and somebody is victimized, that when they move forward to challenge it there are actually processes in place that put into consideration their safety and security. However, we know that is not the case. So many have come forward bravely sharing their story, and we know that it often results in a fundamental loss of rights. Sometimes people who are victimized, who are survivors, have no choice but to go back to the person who hurt them. We need to stop that, and the bill is an important step in doing that.

The bill would also re-establish a new type of recognizance order for survivors, which, if granted, would allow the judge to impose conditions, including electronic monitoring, treatment, or a domestic violence counselling program. Again, we have to find systems in our country where we do not put the onus on the person who is suffering the consequences of somebody else's violence. We have to say that there is a system in place and we will not allow them to carry this on their own. This is a step in the right direction.

Across this country, every six days a woman is killed by her intimate partner. This is a crisis, and one that we have not taken seriously enough. The bill is a small step, but hopefully we will get there soon.

• (1345)

Across my riding, there are a lot of organizations that do very diligent and hard work to support people who experience intimate partner violence. It is incredibly important. I want to thank the Powell River and Region Transition House Society, the Comox Valley Transition Society, the North Island Crisis and Counselling Centre and the Campbell River and North Island Transition Society. These organizations do tremendous work in the regions they serve, and they do a lot to build awareness. They have, in some cases, available housing and secondary housing.

One thing, of course, that is very concerning is that we see people fleeing violence and getting the help they need but there is no second-stage housing for them. In rural and remote communities, this can become a bigger challenge. We need to make sure that those resources are put in place and that these organizations are given the resources they need so that they do not always have to do so much fundraising on top of the amazing work they do.

That is why I think it is important to mention that \$150 million has been cut by the Liberal government from 600 women's shelters across this country. If we are serious about protecting women, gender-diverse people and the children of our country, we have to put these dollars in the system so that people can be cared for. Hopefully we will see that change really quickly.

I cannot talk about violence against women and gender-diverse people in this country without talking about murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and gender-diverse people. We know that at this point, only two of the recommendations of the 231 calls for justice from the national inquiry regarding missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and gender-diverse people have been implemented. I think we need to do a lot better.

This leads me to a quote. Sarah Niman, legal counsel and assistant manager of legal services at the Native Women's Association of Canada, said this about the bill:

Bill S-205 seeks to provide violence victims something of a voice. This bill places the onus on the criminal justice system to check in with victims, consider their safety through the proceedings, and produce outcomes that consider their safety. Bill S-205 does not create a response specifically tailored to Indigenous women, but it does create a framework for them to be seen and heard in a system that otherwise does not.

Private Members' Business

It is very clear that incredible work still needs to be done, particularly for indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. Again, if this country is fundamentally committed to things like feminist principles, non-violence and reconciliation, making sure that these populations are honoured and respected in these processes has to happen.

Of course, one of the key things that have been asked for again and again is the red dress alert. We need indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people to be found when they go missing. They need to be treated like every other Canadian, and that means they need a red dress alert, because we know that this population in particular goes missing without any accountability.

I want to thank, in my riding, the Indigenous Women's Sharing Society and the Lil' Red Dress campaign. Both of these organizations work diligently on bringing forward these voices, telling the stories and letting our region know about missing indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. They work diligently every day, and I am so grateful for that commitment. If it were not for the folks who come up every day and continue to fight, the voices would not be heard. I am really glad to be here in Parliament reminding everyone that if we are serious about reconciliation, the red dress alert must be implemented.

I look forward to seeing this bill move to committee. Hopefully, we will have some positive changes that reflect the needs of this country.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to add what I hope are meaningful words on today's bill. How we in this place can act to prevent intimate partner violence is an issue that has impacted my personal work here over these eight years. I know it concerns all members in this place.

Statistics Canada reports that, in 2021, there were 537 women per 100,000 people who were victims of domestic violence. Intimate partner violence accounts for almost one-third of the crimes committed in Canada and has increased 6% in the last year alone. Violent crime as a whole has increased 39%. Sexual assaults have gone up 71%. This is part of a larger pattern of increased levels of crime after eight years of the Prime Minister's catch-and-release bail policies.

These statistics have an even greater impact when we consider that 80% of criminal activity involving an intimate partner goes unreported. We must ask ourselves why this is the case. Why is there such a lack of faith in our justice system? Why do victims feel there is greater benefit in not initiating criminal proceedings? Why do they not feel protected throughout a traumatizing period in their lives?

We can point to larger trends. Between 2004 and 2014, cases where failure to comply with a court order, when they were among the charges, grew by 25%, and cases involving charges related to a breach of probation increased by 21%. When intimate partner violence is reported, insufficient steps are taken by the justice system to deter further violence. This is despite the fact that in 60% of homicides involving an intimate partner, there was a history of violence. Half of these homicides involve an offender who has already been convicted on similar offences.

The Senate sponsor of this bill referred to one particularly egregious case, which I will now put on the record in this House. In Quebec, an individual accused of femicide had committed 50 criminal offences in his lifetime, including three sexual assaults and 11 instances of domestic violence. After violating his bail conditions a third time, he was arrested, but subsequently released. Just over one week later, he murdered his former partner. No wonder trust in our system has been shattered.

For the sake of victims, we need to do a better job of listening to and acting on their concerns. Bill S-205 is about providing our justice system with every tool we can to empower victims of intimate partner violence to come forward when crimes do occur and ensure that their rights are placed above those of their offender from the start of the legal process. It would ensure victims are consulted about their safety and security needs before conditions of release are imposed on an accused person. These conditions must take the victim's opinion into account. If the victim is an intimate partner of the accused, they have the right to be made aware of the bail conditions.

A judge may choose to require the accused to wear an electronic bracelet upon their release, effectively creating a barrier between the victim and her attacker and ensuring law enforcement is alerted if the safety perimeter is broken. The bill would also extend the length of peace bonds and increase penalties for violating them. Again, this is proposed with the victim top of mind, allowing them a larger window of time after the attack takes place.

There is always more that can be done to bolster trust in criminal justice and to encourage victims to report their attackers without fear of retribution, but as it currently stands, an individual's conditions of release are not subject to any monitoring mechanisms. This is not fair to victims, the public at large or our current understanding of intimate partner violence. What we know is not being reflected in the laws we have.

That is why this bill is one of many initiatives we should be adopting. I was pleased to speak in support of Bill C-320, or the truth in sentencing bill. It was just recently passed in the House with all-party support. The bill is another common-sense tool that would ensure we are prioritizing victims' rights over those of the offender. At the core of Bill C-320 is transparency, which would ensure that victims are informed of why specific decisions are being made concerning an inmate's parole date, temporary absence or work release. The victims should know all of those circumstances in advance of them happening and have the opportunity to contribute.

• (1350)

I am also proud of the work I did earlier this year on protecting pregnant women from violent men through Bill C-311. We know that, when women are pregnant, they are more susceptible to violence. We know that this is something that takes place in our country more than we realize when these situations are not top of mind. They are not handled within our court system in ways that draw more attention to the fact that these things are taking place.

It was affirming to me to know that the majority of Canadians who read the bill for what it was knew full well that it would have provided judges with new aggravating factors that are not consistently enforced at this time. In other words, these were Canadians who understood exactly what the purpose and intent was and that it was a very straightforward bill. At this time, a judge can choose to consider the fact that a woman was pregnant and that a child was injured, but they are not required to. This is just another scenario where, as with this bill, we need to do everything we can to protect women in situations of intimate partner violence.

There is a common theme among these bills. Victims believe that the justice system is not there for them when they choose to report their abusers. It is very clear, with the number of catch-and-release bail circumstances we find in this country, that violent crimes are continuing to take place. We need more deterrence and more reasons for individuals to reconsider, or not commit the crime in the first place, as well as to ensure that they are not carrying on with crimes when they are released prior to facing their court cases or on bail.

Individuals who are victims of violence believe that the subsequent steps that are being taken by courts after they have come forward and taken the risk of being attacked or abused for presenting their case, leave them at risk. This bill, Bill S-205, would make a significant difference in that situation. It takes a proactive approach. In other words, we are not waiting for other horrific situations to take place; we are curtailing them. That is just common sense.

This is a common-sense bill. It is about putting the victim at the centre of the judicial process and giving them more power to participate right from the start. Therefore, when the individual is facing charges and is being released, even in that circumstance, the preference is being given to protecting the victim.

I believe that we need to do everything we can in the House to pass any bill that would protect women from violence. That is certainly the case with Bill S-205. I encourage the House to move quickly and efficiently on it. It enables us to reflect even more on the opportunities that we have in this place, which we sometimes

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do not take for political reasons. Members can believe me that those who face violent crime cannot understand why we do not take every opportunity we have to do more to protect victims and to ensure that they are cared for.

• (1355)

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the second reading debate of Bill S-205, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to another act. I am pleased to reiterate the government's support for Bill S-205. This legislation has the important goal of better protecting victims of intimate partner violence.

In light of last week's tragic instance of intimate partner violence in Sault Ste. Marie, we are reminded of the devastating impact these crimes have on individuals and communities. My heart breaks for the senseless loss of life in Sault Ste. Marie, and I am thinking of the victims' loved ones. Intimate partner violence and gender-based violence in general have no place in Canada. I know my colleagues from all parties share this sentiment.

Bill S-205 would make changes to the Criminal Code's bail and peace bond regimes in order to address intimate partner violence. The bill would also make consequential amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. These are important objectives. Today, I will elaborate on some concerns that we have with this bill and how we think it can be improved. I will also discuss our government's most recent complementary efforts to support victims of intimate partner violence and victims of crime in general.

As my colleagues have mentioned, Bill S-205 would require prosecutors to ask courts whether the victim has been consulted about their safety and security needs prior to making a bail order for an individual who is charged with an intimate partner violence offence. In addition, Bill S-205 would require courts to ask prosecutors whether victims have been informed of their right to request a copy of the bail order made by the court.

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The next element of Bill S-205 that I would like to highlight is the expansion of a reverse onus for bail on intimate partner violence crimes. The reverse onus would be expanded so that it applies not only to accused persons who were previously convicted but also to those previously discharged, conditional or absolute, for an intimate partner violence offence. This particular measure is also contained in our government's bill, Bill C-48, which already passed this House and is awaiting third reading in the Senate. We were certainly concerned to see that the senators voted to remove this measure from the bill, and I hope that my colleagues agree that we should reinstate it in Bill C-48. This provision builds upon previous government legislation that enhances our federal response to intimate partner violence, including former Bill C-75. I hope this House rejects the amendments to Bill C-48.

Next, Bill S-205 would require a justice to consider, on request of the Crown, whether the accused should wear an electronic monitoring device as a condition of release. I want to point out that this provision would also undo an important change made by Bill C-233, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Judges Act, violence against an intimate partner, which received royal assent on April 27. If Bill S-205 is passed, electronic monitoring would be identified as an explicit condition of bail that could be imposed in all cases, and not just in cases involving violence against an intimate partner as is now the case because of the changes enacted in Bill C-233.

Last, this bill would create a new peace bond specific to cases involving intimate partner violence with a duration of up to two years, or three years if the defendant was previously convicted of an intimate partner violence offence.

I want to reiterate that I support the objectives of this bill, but I believe that changes should be considered to better align the proposed amendments with its objective. These changes could also minimize the potential for unintended negative impacts on groups who are already overrepresented in the criminal justice system, and ensure coherence with existing criminal law.

Next, I want to discuss how Bill S-205 fits into a broader framework of our government's support for victims of crime. I have already mentioned Bill C-48, which passed here on unanimous consent of all members. I want to thank colleagues across the aisle for their support and for recognizing the importance and urgency of Bill C-48. It is a direct response to requests made by the provinces and territories, as well as law enforcement agencies from across our country. This piece of legislation would strengthen Canada's bail laws to address the public's concerns relating to repeat violent offenders in offences involving firearms and other weapons.

• (1400)

Bill C-48 would introduce a reverse onus at bail on the use of dangerous weapons such as firearms, knives and bear spray. Bill C-48 would also create a reverse onus for additional indictable firearms offences, including unlawful possession of a loaded or easily loaded prohibited or restricted firearm, breaking and entering to steal a firearm, robbery to steal a firearm and making an automatic firearm.

Through this bill, we are sending a strong message that crimes committed involving a firearm are unacceptable and represent a

dire threat to public safety. We have seen too many lives lost to gun crime.

As I have mentioned previously, Bill C-48 would also strengthen the existing reverse onus that applies to accused persons charged with an offence involving intimate partner violence when they have a previous conviction for this type of an offence. Bill S-205 has this same objective, and I am glad to see members from all parties take intimate partner violence seriously.

Another proposal in Bill C-48 relates to what considerations the court must make when deciding whether to release someone on bail. A former bill, Bill C-75, passed in 2019, amended the Criminal Code to provide that before making a bail order, courts must consider any relevant factor, including the criminal record of the accused or if the charges involve intimate partner violence.

Bill C-48 would expand this provision to require courts to consider if the accused's criminal record includes a history of convictions involving violence. Bail courts would be specifically directed to consider whether the accused has any previous violent convictions and whether they represent an increased risk of reoffending, even when the proposed reverse onus does not apply. This change would enhance public safety, and I am again pleased that my colleagues support the passage of Bill C-48.

A second bill I wanted to highlight is Bill S-12. Just this week, we debated this legislation. Bill S-12 would improve our national response to sexual offences by strengthening the national sex offender registry regime. We have responded to concerns raised by the Supreme Court and law enforcement agencies in this legislation. The list of designated offences that qualify an offender to be registered on the national sex offender registry would be expanded by Bill S-12, and this list would include non-consensual sharing of intimate images and sextortion, two crimes that have had terrible impacts on the lives of Canadians, especially women and children. This would be a very positive step forward.

Bill S-12 is a direct product of conversations with survivors and victims of sexual crime. Bill S-12 would reform the publication regime to recognize the diversity of victim experiences and ensure that survivors have agency to tell their own stories if they so choose. Bill S-12 would also change the process for providing victims with information on their cases to better reflect the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. Both of these changes are about one key element: choice. There is no one right way to be a victim. Bill S-12 reflects this reality.

I am happy to support Bill S-205, and I hope that the elements I have raised as potential concerns with the bill can be further studied at committee.

● (1405)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, just like my colleague from Joliette, who eloquently covered many points just before I rose, and my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, who also spoke during the study of this bill, I too reiterate the Bloc Québécois's support for Bill S-205.

The goal of this bill, offering better protection to victims of domestic violence, is definitely commendable. As we know, statistics show the sad reality of a dramatic rise in femicides and domestic violence. Just between 2009 and 2019, domestic violence offences spiked by 7.5%. Given this situation, we, as parliamentarians, have an obligation to act. Bill S-205 is a step in the right direction, even if I can already foresee a few issues about what is covered in the bill.

I will only address some parts of Bill S-205 because it covers a lot of ground in many different areas. I will not go over the entire bill; I will just focus on certain parts.

Bill S-205 would add to subsection 515(3) of the Criminal Code the new subsection (3.1), which reads as follows:

Before making an order under subsection (2) in respect of an accused who is charged with an offence in the commission of which violence was used, threatened or attempted against the accused's intimate partner, the justice must ask the prosecutor whether the intimate partner of the accused has been consulted about their safety and security needs.

This ensures better safety for the victim because the prosecutor will have to consult the victim about her needs, which will likely allow them to make better recommendations thereafter, even better requests of the judge with respect to the various parole conditions that the accused might have.

This could also improve the victim's sense of security. We know that victims are not party to criminal hearings, they are witnesses. Unfortunately, often victims end up withdrawing out of fear. They no longer want to testify and, since they are the only witness or at least the key witness in these cases, then these cases could get thrown out. This bill also ensures better administration of justice, in a way, by having a double effect, by also protecting the victim.

Bill S-205 also adds an item to subsection 515(14) of the Criminal Code. Subsection (14.1) is added, which reads as follows:

Upon making an order under subsection (2), the justice must ask the prosecutor whether victims of the offence have been informed of their right to request a copy of the order.

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The fact that the victim is fully aware of the conditions imposed on the accused for his release may not only reassure the victim, but also ensure that these conditions are respected. In order for the conditions to be respected, someone must monitor the accused. It would be impossible to keep a constant eye on the accused, but the victim, for example, would know if the accused approached her, thereby failing to comply with this or that condition. The victim can then report that the conditions have been violated. In a way, the victim is included in the enforcement of the conditions imposed on the accused.

There is also an additional condition that I think is the crux of the bill. When Senator Boisvenu speaks so passionately about his bill, he presents it as the electronic monitoring device bill. That is the key measure in the bill, at least in his view.

We know that releases can come with certain conditions, including reporting at specified times to the peace officer or other specified person; remaining within a specified territorial jurisdiction; notifying the peace officer or other specified person of any change in address, employment or occupation; abstaining from communicating, directly or indirectly, with any victim; and depositing all passports. The bill adds a new condition, that of wearing an electronic monitoring device, if the Attorney General makes the request.

There is a lot to say on that last point. When the bill gets to committee, it would be a good idea to analyze how things were done in Quebec, since Quebec already has a similar system in place for offences falling under its jurisdiction, where the accused would be sent to a Quebec prison if convicted.

● (1410)

Since the system is already up and running, it would be good to take stock of this option's implementation. Ultimately, if the bill moves forward, that would allow for alignment between the relevant federal and provincial measures. However, it would be nice to learn from past mistakes or missteps based on what was done in Quebec.

What is more, I am concerned that having the accused wear an electronic monitoring device that makes it possible to geolocate them provides a false sense of security. I will give what is, unfortunately, a very real example. Members will perhaps remember the police officer who was killed in December 2022 by an individual who was released on bail after committing gun offences. The individual was in a car with a partner, and a police officer was killed.

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One might wonder how that person was able to leave their home, despite the fact that they were wearing a GPS monitor. Why did the monitor not alert the authorities? Why were no precautionary measures taken and why did the police officers who stopped him not know that they were in the presence of a person who was wearing a GPS monitor? One has to wonder about the company that makes those monitors. Is the warning system adequate? Once an alert is triggered, are there sufficient resources to ensure the safety of the victim? We must not be lulled into a false sense of security because the accused is wearing an electronic monitoring device. There is a whole series of other measures that need to be implemented. I would just like to warn the House about that.

Some of the other release conditions listed in the bill deserve further study to see if they can actually be implemented. It is one thing to have a bill filled with good intentions, but if it is impossible to implement on the ground, it is nothing but an empty shell.

I am thinking of the obligation to abstain from consuming drugs, for example. This condition already exists. To prove this, the person will have to provide, for the purpose of analysis, a sample of a bodily substance prescribed by regulation. That is an additional condition. It can be done at the request of a peace officer, if he or she has suspicions, or at regular intervals.

We have to wonder if this condition passes the charter test, specifically when it comes to the invasive nature of certain screening tests. It is one thing for alcohol, but for certain drugs, it can involve a blood sample, a urine test, a saliva test or a hair sample, which can be fairly invasive. We need to weigh the desired result against a minimal infringement on human rights. It would be interesting to hear constitutional experts on this.

Another condition is being created in relation to the section 810 order, and that is to refrain from using social media. I understand the intention behind that, but I still wonder about the balance between the end goal and protecting privacy rights. This condition could be included in the order without any actual follow-up to determine whether it is being respected. In that case, however, it would become a bit of a bogus order.

How would we ensure compliance with that order? Do we monitor the accused's phone and computer use? Is that not too invasive and excessive? Is that not an invasion of privacy? Does the end justify the means? Should we rely on victim reporting instead? If the victim sees a social media post and knows that there is an order prohibiting the accused from using social media, she could notify

the police, for example. I am curious to see how this could be implemented.

Finally, there is another aspect that I would like hear from constitutional experts about in committee. I am talking about the reverse onus for release. Under Bill C-75, which was adopted four years ago, if a person has already been charged with and found guilty of a violent crime against a domestic partner, then that person has to prove that detention is not justified. Under the new bill, we would add the case where a person has already been absolved of a crime against an intimate partner. We might wonder whether that passes the charter test when the onus is reversed not following a conviction, but following an absolution.

There are some elements that might be interesting to analyze. In any event, the bill generally has an absolutely noble objective. I look forward to seeing how the work in committee will unfold when it comes to the different aspects I have raised.

• (1415)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, we respectfully ask for a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*English*]

It being 2:17 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:17 p.m.)

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