



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

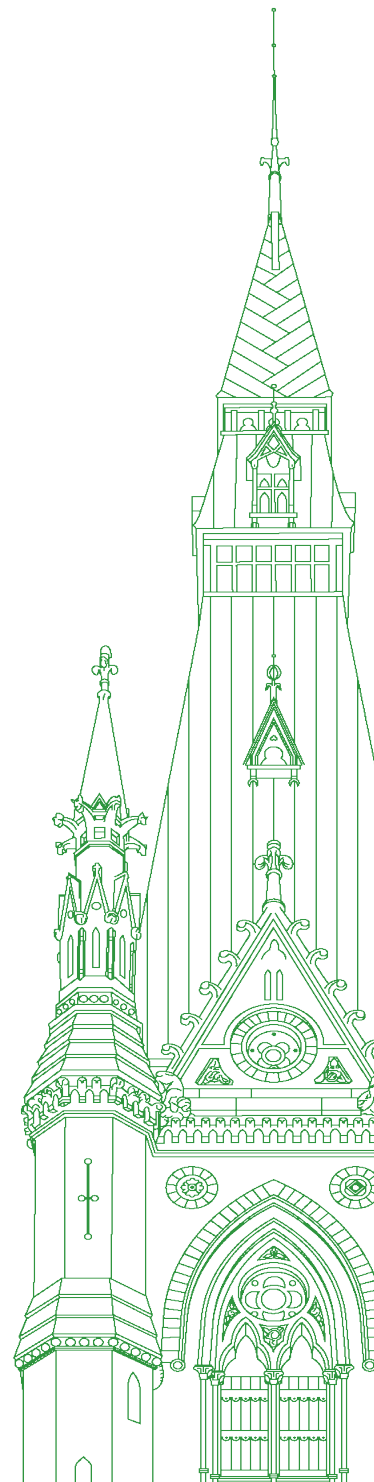
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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 9, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.) moved the second reading of, and concurrence in, amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

He said: Mr. Speaker, *kwe kwe. Ulaakut. Tansi.*

I would first like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

This has been a very important week for reconciliation in Canada. I want to begin by acknowledging and recognizing the landmark decision of the Supreme Court of Canada that came out this morning. In a unanimous judgment, the Supreme Court ruled that Bill C-92, as a whole, is constitutionally valid.

The essential matter addressed by the act involves protecting the well-being of indigenous children, youth and families by promoting the delivery of culturally appropriate child and family services and, in so doing, advancing the process of reconciliation with indigenous peoples. The Supreme Court decision represents a significant step in that direction, because it clearly affirms that principle. I want to thank many colleagues, particularly the Minister of Indigenous Services, for advancing this.

Yesterday morning, we had the opportunity to meet with indigenous business leaders, as well as the major financial institutions in Canada and other major corporations, to discuss the notion of economic reconciliation. Once again, the meeting was convened by the Minister of Indigenous Services. It was a very moving engagement that really spoke to the need to move forward in advancing economic reconciliation, and we look forward to working with those who were at the table, as well as those who continue to work to advance this issue.

Yesterday and the day before, we hosted the second indigenous federal-provincial-territorial meeting on missing and murdered in-

igenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people. This is a very important gathering of voices of families, survivors and people who are on the front lines of this crisis; they are at the centre of everything we do.

[*Translation*]

We must put the voices of families, survivors and people on the front lines of this crisis at the centre of everything we do.

[*English*]

We invited them to Ottawa, and we listened, we learned and we pledged to redouble our drive toward solutions.

What is important is that the provinces and territories were represented, and we are very pleased that they participated. The Province of British Columbia, the Province of Alberta and the Government of Yukon made presentations on what they have done to advance this work in their respective jurisdictions. We are making progress.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to be in the gallery of the Senate, as the president of the Council of the Haida Nation, for the introduction of a new bill, Bill S-16. This bill would recognize the Haida's inherent right to self-governance and self-determination. Bill S-16 is grounded on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or, as I sometimes call it, the road map to reconciliation.

The Haida people did not wait for the Government of Canada to wake up and realize that they have the right to govern themselves. They have been doing so for years, and it is time we enact legislation to recognize that inherent right.

These are a few small steps we made just this week alone, but they are indicative of a much larger charge towards redressing the past and repairing our relationship with indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have a government on this side of the chamber that is listening to them and wants to advance their priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I am having a hard time giving my speech. I would really encourage my colleagues to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Order. I know there are lots of members here this Friday morning, but I would ask them to lower their voices.

The hon. Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, we cannot go back to those days.

This brings me to the legislation at hand. Bill C-29, which we are here to discuss today, represents another crucial step in this ongoing, sustained effort. Despite this effort, the road to reconciliation is sometimes a winding road. Today's government and every single government that comes after it need to be held accountable to indigenous people along that path.

This bill would establish a national council for reconciliation to provide oversight and monitor progress on reconciliation across Canada in all sectors. As members may recall from when we previously discussed this bill in the House, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission envisioned an indigenous-led, independent and permanent national council for reconciliation to ensure long-term progress on reconciliation in Canada.

The role of the council would include overseeing progress towards implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

I thank my hon. colleagues for their past work on Bill C-29; today, I would like to invite them to pass the amendments from the other place, which I will present now. In doing so, I would like to thank the senators for their care and diligence in reviewing this legislation.

I would also like to thank members of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples for their work. They came from the position of wanting to support the establishment of the national council for reconciliation, and all members were very engaged in truly understanding and reflecting on the legislation. They introduced amendments they believed would strengthen the bill, and I thank them for their hard work.

I will start with the amendment whereby the national council for reconciliation would not impact permanent bilateral mechanisms between rights holders and the Government of Canada. In 2017, we created these mechanisms for levels of formal engagement never seen before. These bodies are vital to ensuring a productive working relationship with rights holders. They support the direct nation-to-nation, Inuit-to-Crown and government-to-government relationships that section 35 rights holders expect.

To quote the committee's report, "The Council should not interfere with these mechanisms; bilateral mechanisms, however, could be complemented by the work of the Council." This is a valuable amendment, and I would like to thank many national indigenous organizations and senators for working together and bringing forward this clarification.

Other Senate amendments include better alignment in terminology on how legislation is evolving to reflect the different government arrangements of indigenous organizations and communities and a strengthening of the Government of Canada's accountability. We welcome these amendments. In the study of the bill, senators underscored the importance of the council being able to receive information from the government in a timely way.

We agree that it is vital for the council to be able to fulfill its mandate to monitor and conduct research on the advancement of reconciliation within Canada. To impress this point upon us, the other place included an amendment whereby, should the Government of Canada not meet the obligations set out in a joint information-sharing protocol with the council, the council could have recourse to the federal court. We support this amendment.

Finally, to ensure greater clarity on when the minister would submit the required report to council, a reference to March 31 and not the end of fiscal year was introduced to prevent confusion on timing.

In closing, as amended, this bill would strengthen the accountability of governments to respond to council concerns in terms of measuring progress. This bill would ensure that indigenous peoples would lead discussions on what reconciliation should look like now and in the years ahead. The council would spark new ideas, foster meaningful conversations and encourage proactive steps forward. It would also connect the people across Canada to further reconciliation.

The calls to action fundamentally recognize that residential school survivors and their descendants are integral to the governance of the council. They have been waiting for this moment for so many years. Elders, youth and all indigenous peoples have been waiting. Let us embrace this historic moment and move forward by passing this bill with the Senate amendments. In this way, survivors, their descendants and indigenous peoples can finally see the realization of this long-awaited change without further delay.

Meegwetch. Qujannamiik. Marsi.

● (1010)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the hon. minister started his speech by saying that the Liberal government is listening to indigenous peoples and their calls to action.

Seven years ago, it promised sunny ways and an improved relationship with indigenous peoples. If it has been listening, why did it take seven years for the Liberal government to introduce this table?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, since we took office in 2015, we have been working to advance reconciliation across the board. It is the number one priority for the Prime Minister. He has reiterated that on a number of occasions.

In 2017, we established the interim council that, over the last several years, has been working towards establishing and bringing forward this bill. We have been debating this bill now for over a year.

Now is the time to move forward on this particular piece of legislation. I will admit that we do have a long way to go, and we have to accelerate the work of reconciliation. I look forward to working with my colleague and all colleagues in this effort. Although reconciliation takes time, it needs to be sped up.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech and his work. I feel he is sincere.

He said something in his speech that bothered me a bit. He mentioned the summit that took place yesterday, which he himself organized. It was about an issue of critical importance: missing and murdered women and how we approach reconciliation and grief. So many indigenous mothers and fathers are intimately familiar with that kind of grief.

However, I witnessed the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples being denied entry into the summit. At a time when we are supposed to be working toward reconciliation, it is deeply disturbing to see the government decide who is indigenous and who is not, especially since statistics show that the murder and disappearance of indigenous women occurs more often in urban areas than on reserves.

The government decided to exclude one group because it is part of a group called the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, but refusing to recognize urban indigenous people in the context of a conversation about sharing grief and suffering makes no sense to me, so I have a lot of questions about what happens next.

How are we going to achieve reconciliation if certain groups are marginalized like this, especially groups that are grieving?

[English]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that we had a very critical discussion during the two days of conversations we had at the IFPT round table. It was the second round table we had; we brought together many different national indigenous organizations, survivor groups and those who represent urban indigenous people. We also brought provincial and territorial governments to the table.

We had a number of senior ministers with different portfolios who were represented there. It was a very robust but difficult conversation, where we talked about the ongoing tragedy and crisis involving missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people.

It is an ongoing challenge for us, but we are determined to work together across jurisdictions with indigenous people at the centre of this, particularly women who have been so impacted, to ensure that we end this tragedy.

• (1015)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs and to the Minister of National Defence (Northern Defence), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. minister for tabling this important legislation and for the hard work he has done on getting to this point. I know that it has been a long, drawn-out process, but I think it is important to consult with people, to understand what their priorities and goals are, in order to really reflect what they need in this bill.

How is this new form around reconciliation going to help support communities, families and children in Canada?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Labrador for her long-standing advocacy and work on reconciliation.

What I can confirm with this bill, which has been strengthened by the other place, is that we now have an additional measure of accountability where the minister, as well as others, need to present annualized reports to the council. It will have the opportunity to assess and report back to Canadians on the work that has been completed, but also the work that lies ahead. It is an additional tool that is critical, I believe, to hold all governments to account, not just our government, but all future governments. That is why it is so important that we get this bill through today and pass it so we can start the hard work ahead to constitute the new council and get it off the ground so it can do the work that is required.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like the minister to explain how the carbon tax is tied to reconciliation when we have the Chiefs of Ontario, which represents 133 first nations, and the Assembly of First Nations taking the government to court asking for a judicial review with respect to their view that the carbon tax is discriminatory against our first nations.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Did I miss something?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I hope my silence reflected the need for me to not answer that question. It is a deeply offensive question when we are talking about the passage of Bill C-29, which is meant to establish a national centre for truth and reconciliation.

I cannot believe that we cannot have a non-partisan discussion about an important issue without the Conservative Party bringing up the carbon tax, which it seems to be so embroiled in.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really saddened by the reaction from the members of the official opposition. They should take this legislation seriously. They should take all legislation seriously in the House of Commons. I felt that question was highly inappropriate.

I want to come back to the minister, who I hope is seeking to move things forward in a much more forthright way than what we have seen over the last eight years with the government. We have many indigenous communities that do not have access to safe drinking water and experience discrimination in health care, housing, education, social services and so on. It is a crisis the government has been very slow to move on.

On the by indigenous, for indigenous housing, which the interventions by the member for Nunavut and the member for Vancouver East forced the government to finally move forward on, I am profoundly saddened by the fact the government has not, until now, taken this seriously.

I understand the minister is endeavouring to change that, but why has the government been so slow to take action in so many areas?

Government Orders

• (1020)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, at the outset I shared the frustration that the pace of reconciliation is probably not where we want it to be. We want to advance things in a very expedient and fast way.

If we look at, for example, Bill C-92, which was a piece of legislation we brought forward, it was passed in 2021, was challenged, and today we have a resolution on it from the Supreme Court. Therefore, some of these issues take a bit of time.

I appreciate the question and look forward to working with the member opposite.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sometimes I feel like we are a bit of a broken record in this House, because we constantly come back to the issues that Canadians are facing every single day. Those are, of course, the cost of living and its challenges. The ineffectiveness of the Liberal government makes life more difficult.

I have to say Bill C-29 is just another example of a government that is interested in window dressing. It is interested in the photo ops. It is interested in sounding good. However, we have already heard from some of its coalition partners about how long this is taking. This was talked about seven years ago and we are just now finally getting to it.

There are a number of first nations organizations that certainly our side has encouraged the government to include in this process that were not included. Here we are, debating yet another example of a Liberal government that has come up with half-measures, a day late and a dollar short.

When I speak to issues of the Liberal government, I think back to my own experience when I was a mayor. I, like many Canadians, did not really know a lot about the Truth and Reconciliation report at that time. It was brand new and fresh. During the process of getting ready to take over the new administration, at the inaugural one of the staff came to me said that she would like me to read something at the beginning of my speech. I read it, and I did not understand it. I asked what it was. She explained to me that it was a land acknowledgement statement. I asked her to tell me more about it. She said it was from the Truth and Reconciliation report and some of its recommendations. I said that I needed to learn more about it.

I, of course, read lots. I read about all of the recommendations. I was so moved by it, frankly, I realized that in her effort to encourage me to adopt these recommendations, I felt like we had missed an opportunity. I went back to her and said that I thought maybe, if we were going to have a land acknowledgement statement for the Corporation of the Town of Huntsville, we should try to write that collaboratively with the first peoples who live on this land.

We reached out to the Chief of Wasauksing First Nation in Parry Sound and the Chief of Shawanaga First Nation, both on Georgian Bay, and the Chief of Rama First Nation. We invited them to come and meet with us. We arranged that, and it was an amazing visit. We had lunch. I basically sat there as a new mayor and learned. It was incredible, probably one of the most incredible lessons I have ever had. Those three chiefs have become friends, and we continue to talk today. In fact Chief Tabobondung from Wasauksing First

Nation and I chat most frequently. I see him here in Ottawa regularly.

The reason I tell that story is because reconciliation is about relationships. It is about listening, hearing and understanding. My sense is that, once again, we have a government that says it is listening. It promised the moon. We see all kinds of examples where it has failed, because it just keeps adding to the bureaucracy. It keeps adding and spending more and achieving less. There are lots of examples of it.

We look back to when the government first came in and said it was going to eliminate all boil water advisories, and it has made some progress. However, we have found out that the departments are actually not very effective at it. In fact, in 2017, when the Liberal government made that promise, the Parliamentary Budget Officer actually laid out a plan to get the job done by 2020. Of course the Liberals ignored the plan and came up with their own. As we all know, it has not eliminated all boil water advisories. There are still many first nations that do not have potable drinking water.

Instead of working with indigenous leaders to tackle these systemic inequalities that hold first nations back from achieving prosperity and their own destiny, the Liberals continue down this “Ottawa knows best” approach. This is something that has gone on forever in this country, the “Ottawa knows best”, top-down approach. As a case in point, there are 6,600 employees in Indigenous Services. The government divided it up into two ministries, and now, of course, we have even more bureaucrats. That is about 10 bureaucrats for every first nation in the country, and we are still not listening.

• (1025)

Even the Auditor General has reported that these departments are ineffective and we have a Liberal government that just keeps spending money and keeps coming up with its “Ottawa knows best” approach and not listening to all first nations.

Maybe one of the reasons that the government changed the agenda today and put this up is that its members are aware of a pretty intelligent idea that first nations themselves came up with and presented to the Conservative Party and to the leader of the Conservative Party, and that is true reconciliation in action: economic reconciliation. Just yesterday, the leader of the Conservative Party announced a new program where we would take the situation of the Indian Act that handed over all reserve land and money to the federal government to be dealt with, and when first nations wanted their money they had to come to Ottawa and ask for it. This outdated system put power in the hands of bureaucrats, politicians and lobbyists here in Ottawa, not in the hands of first nations. The direct result of this “Ottawa knows best” approach, as we know, is continued poverty, substandard infrastructure, substandard housing, unsafe drinking water and continued despair in too many first nations.

Therefore, the leader announced support for a first nations resource charge. It is a great idea that first nations themselves came up with that would enable first nations to take back control of their resources and their money. Putting first nations in control of their money instead of this “Ottawa knows best” approach, this top-down approach from Ottawa, lets the first nations keep that resource money. It allows them to master their destiny and take control of their own lives. This is an example of how a Conservative government would actually achieve reconciliation, by listening and by giving control and power back to first nations as opposed to building bigger and bigger bureaucracies here in Ottawa that have this “Ottawa knows best”, paternalistic, top-down approach to how it deals with everything, including first nations and the housing crisis.

The current government has generally believed that the bigger the bureaucracy, the better the solution. What we have learned, of course, is that while the Liberals have grown the bureaucracy some 30%, they have spent \$20 billion on consultants and outside consulting firms and the results continue to be worse and worse. It is no different in first nations. It is no different in any first nations community. The Conservative Party believes that this is just more window dressing from a party that is out of ideas. Frankly, every idea the Liberals have come up with has just made the situation worse, from dealing with the true need for reconciliation with first nations to the housing crisis to the opioid epidemic. We hear it all over the country.

I know that the minister was offended to hear about the carbon tax, but there are a number of first nations that are suing the government over the carbon tax because they recognize that this “Ottawa knows best”, top-down approach of bigger government and tax-more government thinks that is going to solve the climate crisis. However, it is a tax plan; it is not an environmental plan. First nations know this. Conservatives know this. We believe in listening, working collaboratively, building relationships and getting Ottawa out of the way. We wish the Liberal government understood that too.

• (1030)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member made some recommendations on behalf of his party that seem rather good in theory.

However, the devil is in the details and it is easy, two years before an election, to say that one party would be better than another, particularly when it comes to relations with first nations.

I would like the member to talk about the notion of overlap. How will he be able to determine who is indigenous and who is not? Do the Conservatives have a position on that?

[English]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I am not entirely sure how to answer that question. I am not sure who is the arbiter of who is indigenous and who is not. I really cannot answer the member's question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr.

Government Orders

Speaker, a number of years ago, we had a number of calls for action that were being placed on the Government of Canada. Stephen Harper was the prime minister at the time. We were sitting in the position of third party. We had made a commitment to work on and fulfill those calls for action. The Conservatives had consistently been dragging their feet on it. I wonder if the member could just provide his thoughts on recognizing the importance of the calls for action and why we support this particular piece of legislation. Can he be clear in terms of how he is going to be voting with respect to the amendments?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, if this were not such a serious topic, that would literally be laughable. It is rich to hear the member talk about the urgency of these things, when it has been seven years in the making. The member has been part of a government for seven years, during which we have been talking about this, and now finally there is a race to get it done all of a sudden.

I do not think the government understands the word “urgency”, and I find it rich that its members would suggest that we do not understand it. Seven years is an awfully long time to take to put together the council.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's comments on his vision forward are very important. He talked about economic reconciliation. I think this is one of the most important things that the current government has ignored. On the carbon tax issue, Ontario first nations are having to sue the government.

The member spoke about the excellent announcement that our leader gave yesterday with respect to the importance of giving back certainty and control to first nations. I was wondering, with his experience as a mayor and with his leadership, how important it is for a government, and a government-in-waiting like the Conservative Party, to listen to first nations and come up with viable things to give economic reconciliation to first nations.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I actually think that what the leader of the Conservative Party announced yesterday is very much like how a municipality would operate. We need to listen, and we need to act and get it done. What I love is that what he has announced is a first nations model. It was presented to him by first nations, and it is an optional model that would simplify the negotiation between resource companies and first nations, and give first nations control, which makes complete sense. It is their idea, and we have committed to implementing it. That is action. That is leadership, and there is an absolute dearth of leadership on the other side.

Government Orders

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the member is genuine in wanting to work toward reconciliation. I do wonder, though, about the Leader of the Opposition. There are indigenous community members in my riding who have said that they do not think there is a possibility of reconciliation with the Leader of the Opposition, when he still has not apologized for meeting with residential school deniers. However, I was heartened to hear some of the things the member spoke about. In particular, I would love to hear a bit more about how it is important to have an arm's-length, permanent organization that could hold the government accountable to these promises.

• (1035)

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I guess it comes down to this: It is important not just to listen to first nations and pretend to hear but to actually hear and to deliver results and action. In the Conservative Party, there is a commitment to do that and a demonstration of how we would do it if we do form government. First nations across this country can be reassured that they would have real leadership and real reconciliation. A government led by the leader of the Conservative Party would actually deliver results.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I noticed in my friend from Parry Sound—Muskoka's speech that he could not resist talking about the carbon tax. He of course did not mention the rebates that go with the carbon tax, the extra two cents a litre in the last year.

What he also did not mention is the exorbitant gouging by oil and gas companies of 18¢ a litre. Is he concerned that there are no rebates whatsoever for the gouging by oil and gas companies across the country?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, it is important to point out that I truly believe there would be no need for rebate cheques if the government did not take the money in the first place. Frankly, this is classic Liberal government operation; they take more and more and then give a little back. It is the Ottawa-knows-best, top-down approach in which the government decides who wins and who loses. Conservatives believe that Canadians should keep more of their own money and that we should be incentivizing clean energy, not demonizing people for using the only energy they have available to them.

Things like carbon taxes punish people. I see the punishing effects of the carbon tax in my riding when I talk to proud people who have worked hard their whole life to buy their own home, and they own their home. When they go to fill their propane tank in November or December, they have to go to a food bank. They are now a client of the food bank they used to support. We are talking about people who cannot afford to wait four months for a rebate cheque that might cover some of their costs.

Things cost thousands more in this country, and that is a result of inflationary spending and the carbon tax. No amount of rebate, no matter how popular the government will try to make it, is going to solve that problem.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am quite concerned about some of the Conservative responses when they say they will listen to first nations. When the Conservatives were in government, they were the ones who cut funds to the Aboriginal

Healing Foundation, which was very important for healing between first nations, Métis and Inuit. Even though they were told not to cut the program, they did.

Therefore I will ask the member this: Is this how the Conservative Party describes “listening” when it comes to making cuts? How do the Conservatives actually listen when it comes first nations, Métis and Inuit and ensuring the well-being of our societies in Canada?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I genuinely appreciate the question from my colleague from Nunavut, but I think it is fair to say that this country, including every government in its history from the time it was founded, might not be judged positively on its relationship with first nations.

What we are talking about today is not the history; it is the future and what the Conservative Party and the leader of the Conservative Party are promising. I know the Leader of the Opposition; he is a man of integrity. He believes what he says and he is going to deliver. It is not going to be easy to clean up the mess of the current government, but do not judge the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative Party today on the history of this country's relationship with first nations. This is a new day; we are moving forward, and it is real reconciliation and true partnership.

[Translation]

The Speaker: We have time for a 25-second question followed by a 25-second answer.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on December 1, 2022, the Conservatives joined all members of the House in voting in favour of Bill C-29. Perhaps it is the member for Carleton's appointment as the Leader of the Opposition that has changed the dynamic in the House since then.

It is certainly not the amendment that says that we recognize “since time immemorial, First Nations and Inuit peoples — and, post-contact, the Métis Nation — have thrived on and managed and governed”. That is basically the amendment that was presented.

Now, the Conservative member—

• (1040)

The Speaker: I would ask the member to get right to his question. I will give him three seconds to ask it.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I was just getting to the end of what I was saying. I should not have been interrupted.

[English]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a question. I heard a lot of rambling, so I do not know what to say.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. This council will monitor progress being made towards reconciliation across all sectors of Canada and support the sustainable implementation of measures to foster long-term reconciliation. I believe these elements are important, particularly in the context of the ruling that has been handed down, which somewhat neglects the long-term aspect.

There is no question that the current government has adopted a reckless strategy. One could argue that it has gotten off to a rocky start. Bill C-29 still suffers from a serious flaw: The national reconciliation council is woefully lacking in representation. In its current form, three seats are reserved for national organizations, and this Liberal government collaborates with them almost exclusively on indigenous issues. That is not enough. Other voices, notably those of urban and disadvantaged populations, are being left out. Reconciliation cannot move forward if we continue to divide and exclude certain groups of people. The government should not play the role of judge and jury in deciding who is indigenous and who is not. The Supreme Court already ruled on that issue in the 2016 Daniels decision.

This government, which claims to be committed to a reconciliation process, only recognizes persons affiliated with the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami or the Métis National Council as indigenous. By placing indigenous peoples in an order of priority, the Canadian government is openly pursuing a divide and conquer strategy. It is fuelling internal discord by favouring some groups over others. This deplorable approach stands in stark contrast to the spirit of reconciliation and mutual respect that we aspire to achieve as a society. When most murdered and missing women come from urban centres, why is the government relegating crucial entities like the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples to the back burner?

As we know, members of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples were prevented from participating in the summit. They had to fight for it. I joined them in the same room yesterday so that they could attend via Zoom. Both the summit and the Zoom meeting took place in the same building, the Shaw Centre. People went there to mourn, yet had the doors to an event organized by the federal department shut on them. Where are the voices that should be representing the full scope of Métis and indigenous interests?

Of course, funding is always an important issue. However, when it comes to Bill C-29 in particular, it is clear that this is about more than just money. It is about representing all women and giving them a voice, especially those who are marginalized and experience violence in urban centres. They deserve not only to be heard, but also to have justice served. The same goes for young people, seniors and two-spirit people. It is ironic to talk about reconciliation while actively excluding certain individuals. This approach reinforces the hierarchy of groups that is not only unfair, but also profoundly destructive to our social fabric. As observers of this situation, it is our duty to denounce these practices and to promote a true spirit of justice and reconciliation. We must remain vigilant and never lose

sight of our common goal, which is to create a society in which every individual is respected and included.

As I was saying earlier, there was unanimity on Bill C-29 when it was passed. Again, there should be consensus on what the Senate brought to it. I am having a hard time figuring out the Conservatives' position. They have become very critical of the government regarding a bill that they supported roughly a year ago. The amendment, which was adopted in the Senate by a vote of 36 to 32, with six abstentions, provides that Bill C-29, as amended, be amended again in the preamble, at page 1, by replacing lines 2 and 3 with the following: "Whereas, since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples—and, post-contact, the Métis Nation—have thrived on...their Indigenous lands". The text continues unchanged from its previous version.

● (1045)

Essentially, this amendment modifies the preamble by setting out the timeline of when the Métis nation appeared, which was later than the first nations and Inuit in America. This amendment has no legislative impact in itself. However, it is interesting to see that it is important for certain first nations who seem to want to emphasize the fact that they were here first, as though the Métis are a little less legitimate. That said, it is still a form of inclusion, and the Bloc Québécois will be voting in favour of this amendment.

I want to reiterate the principles behind our support for Bill C-29. The Bloc Québécois is a strong advocate of a nation-to-nation relationship between Quebec, Ottawa and indigenous nations. Giving indigenous peoples an additional voice in the reconciliation process is entirely consistent with the Bloc's position. The Bloc Québécois works with indigenous nations on the federal level to strengthen and guarantee their inherent rights. The Bloc Québécois is committed to ensuring that the federal government fully implements the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in areas of federal responsibility.

The Bloc Québécois has also come out in support of indigenous nations receiving their due, and we will continue to put pressure on the federal government to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. On June 21, 2021, the Bloc Québécois secured the unanimous passage of a motion to ensure that indigenous communities have all the resources needed to lift the veil on the historical reality of residential schools and to force the churches to open their archives. This bill is a step forward in that regard. The Bloc Québécois also announced that we want to ensure that there will be predictable and sustainable funding for programs to help residential school survivors heal, such as the health support program that was specially designed for that purpose. This bill would establish a council to provide ongoing follow-up for this file. Since the bill proposes the creation of a council that can only make recommendations, there is nothing binding in this bill. Supporting this bill only confirms our position as an ally with the indigenous nations of Quebec and Canada.

Government Orders

As far as matters regarding truth and reconciliation are concerned, I want to note that there are different groups that are interested in those, including back home in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. A committee made up primarily of university researchers and people from civil society was formed to independently document the implementation of these calls to action. The committee specifically focused on the Viens commission, which was held in Quebec because a discussion was needed in order to understand what had happened. There have been several defining events, including what happened to Ms. Echaquan.

That committee is based at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, and I applaud the university's leadership. Not only is it our very own university, but it is one of the first in the world to adopt a decolonial vision of relations with indigenous peoples. I think this very forward-thinking approach is definitely part of the solution in the context of reconciliation.

Yes, I have only recently taken on this responsibility, but I contacted my university to make sure I understood all the nuances and subtleties well enough to play this role. I feel this is also about being a facilitator or intermediary. Our role as elected members of the House of Commons is important, especially when it comes to relations with indigenous peoples. Right now, reconciliation is an issue that should matter to us all, regardless of where we are or where we come from. I commend the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue for its leadership.

I am sure there will be recommendations we will have to take into account. For this bill, we will support the government on this amendment and its inclusion. However, I urge the government to be open about its next steps so we can all be as inclusive as possible within our own territory while respecting the jurisdiction of the governments of Quebec, the provinces and Canada, as well as the indigenous communities themselves, which aspire to greater autonomy within their territory.

• (1050)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank my colleague for all his work and congratulate him on his new role as the Bloc Québécois critic for indigenous relations and northern development.

I know that the member has indigenous communities in his riding.

Can he talk to us about the importance of consulting indigenous peoples to make progress on the path to reconciliation?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister. I am quite moved by the quality of his French. One of the challenges that comes with this new responsibility is that it seems like many things happen in English, so being able to talk about these issues in French makes me happy and is an acknowledgement that is not insignificant.

Obviously, in the context of reconciliation, the issues of the first nations back home are important. I have had many discussions with people close to the minister about this acknowledgement.

Abitibi-Témiscamingue is home to the Anishinabe nation. Some indigenous community leaders make a lot of demands and are very eloquent. They want to protect the soul of their territory. I want to talk about one of the things that the Kebaowek First Nation and its leader, Lance Haymond, have been making a strong claim for. There is something going on there. When we talk about reconciliation, the fundamental issue for me is respecting traditional lands. We can share a territory. We can work together on economic development. However, when it comes to an issue as critical as water quality and the potentially devastating effects that a nuclear waste storage facility in Chalk River could have on their land, then I completely understand why the Kebaowek First Nation and the other indigenous nations that support it are strongly opposed to this project.

It is absolutely fundamental that the government think about whether it will follow the recommendation of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, and I would invite the government not to do so.

[English]

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his new position.

How does the member square off voting in favour of applying a carbon tax on first nations when first nations in Ontario are saying it is anti-reconciliation to be charged a carbon tax?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, the way I see it is that the first nations feel as though the Conservatives are using them for political purposes on the carbon tax issue.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier I referred to the 94 recommendations, the calls to action, and Bill C-29 addresses a very important call to action. We recognize that the federal government plays a very important lead role, but there are other jurisdictions, provinces and others, that also play a role. We have seen a significant percentage, I believe it is well over 80%, that have been acted upon or are in process, from a federal government perspective.

I would ask the member to provide his thoughts on overall reconciliation and the calls to action.

• (1055)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, the bill specifically sought to address calls to action 53 to 56 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report.

With this in mind, I would like to focus more closely on call to action 54, which reads as follows:

We call upon the Government of Canada to provide multi-year funding for the National Council for Reconciliation to ensure that it has the financial, human, and technical resources required to conduct its work, including the endowment of a National Reconciliation Trust to advance the cause of reconciliation.

As I see it, predictable funding is absolutely essential. This is true not only for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, but for the various diversification funds for indigenous peoples as well. Reconciliation goes beyond the work of this committee. It has to apply coherently to all government action.

I recently met with an economic development group interested in developing indigenous entrepreneurship from the ground up, in the communities, through various models such as co-operatives and registered charities. That is fundamental. The federal government has not guaranteed the group's funding for the coming weeks. To cement good relations, predictability is essential.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the process of reconciliation must move forward in our country, and the federal government must absolutely fulfill its obligation.

In my riding, a number of first nations are talking about the need for concrete measures on the ground. For them, reconciliation means putting an end to the third-world conditions that exist in their communities. Some clear examples include the housing crisis, the lack of infrastructure, particularly in the context of the climate crisis, and the lack of clean drinking water.

Does the member agree that reconciliation with first peoples also means improving the daily living conditions in first nations communities?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I could not have described the consequences of these problems better myself.

Indigenous housing is at the heart of self-determination issues. In Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, there are sometimes two, three or four families living in the same space. I have heard horror stories about families who have to take turns sleeping during the night. They wake up every two, three or four hours to be able to get a bed, or to offer their spot to a brother, sister or neighbour. It is a major social issue. Human dignity is a fundamental aspect that has been pushed aside in the housing file, and the problem is worse among first nations than anywhere else.

It is obviously easy to turn a blind eye, but there are fundamental issues here, and, all too often, the government allocates funding in the various budgets so it can make some nice announcements. However, when it comes time to disburse that money, it comes with strings attached. First nations, however, are unable to meet the conditions because they live in rural or remote areas, and they do not have access to engineers, consulting engineering firms or others whose fees are often higher than they would be elsewhere. The government is therefore not meeting its objectives of providing decent housing for everyone.

We are going to have to think about these issues in a much more holistic and inclusive way.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the council's scope. We are talking about all sectors of Canadian society and all governments in Canada, but we are concerned about the impact that this might have on certain private companies. That is the crux of the issue. Obviously, that applies to corporations under federal jurisdiction, but during our study at the Standing Committee on the Status

of Women, we found that the problem exists in private corporations. This is where we see the disproportionate impact of resource development on indigenous women and girls.

What does my colleague think we can do to avoid that and ensure that it can also—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi-T miscamingue has time for a short, 15-second response.

The hon. member.

Mr. S bastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for being so thorough and taking an interest in intersectional issues affecting women. The example she gave is an excellent one. I think the government will be judged by its actions, and the council will be a great example of that.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

SUDAN

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the war in Sudan has killed over 13,000 people, with about 33,000 injured. About 1.5 million Sudanese have fled the country as refugees. The World Food Programme said it was receiving reports of people dying of starvation in Sudan, and almost eight million people have been forced from their homes by the conflict. Health infrastructure has been destroyed, and about 19 million children are currently out of school.

We have a moral obligation to address the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Sudan in a significant way. Canada, with its expertise, can actively participate in the forums that deal with the situation and provide support. Canada can also appoint a special envoy to closely monitor and follow up on developments.

* * *

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on January 16, a young mother dropping off two of her three children at an elementary school in my riding was fatally stabbed by her estranged husband, and it was witnessed by the children. The killer, who was found dead a few hours later, had multiple breaches of restraining orders, had been released on bail several times on charges including sexual assault, and had a warrant out for his arrest on the morning of this tragic event. These children are now without parents and are emotionally scarred for life as a result of what they have witnessed.

Statements by Members

Now, we hear time and again government members standing up in this place, decrying gender-based violence, yet Statistics Canada reports that instances of domestic violence have gone up every year since 2015, since this government took over. It is time the Liberal government stopped talking and started to act on domestic violence. Victims need protection, not more hollow statements by Liberal MPs, and abusers need jail, not bail.

* * *

OTTAWA CENTRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to represent the riding of Ottawa Centre, and downtown Ottawa is very much an important part of my community. However, it has gone through a lot of transition due to the pandemic and, most recently, the illegal occupation that my constituents suffered through.

To help reimagine our downtown, in 2022 I initiated the downtown Ottawa revitalization task force, which recently released a comprehensive report. The report, codeveloped in partnership with community groups, small business representatives, for-profit and not-for-profit housing developers, government representatives, indigenous partners and sustainability advocates, is the road map we need to rebuild our community.

The report's vision goes beyond traditional urban development, focusing on the vital areas we must invest in to revitalize our downtown. These range from repurposing vacant federal buildings to animating Wellington Street and fostering safer and more inviting streets.

I look forward to working with the City of Ottawa and the federal government to revitalize our downtown and make it a place for everyone.

* * *

UKRAINE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been two years since Putin launched his brutal and illegal war in Ukraine. In that time, Russia has committed multiple war crimes, including killing more than 10,000 Ukrainian civilians, injuring another 20,000 and abducting nearly 20,000 Ukrainian children.

Recently, fawning Putin apologist Tucker Carlson came to Alberta to spread his hatred and lies. He was heartily welcomed by Canadian Conservatives and hosted and toasted by Alberta Premier Danielle Smith before heading off to Moscow for a meeting with Putin.

At the same time, Conservatives here in the House have been undermining Canada's support for Ukraine, voting against support for Ukrainians, including the free trade agreement between our two countries, which was an agreement that President Zelenskyy specifically asked for.

I am proud of New Democrats, who continue to stand in solidarity with Ukraine. Canada's support for Ukraine must be unequivocal. I call upon every member in the House to stand with me in support of Ukraine and democracy.

[Translation]

SUZANNE-MARIE LANDRY

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I think about major artistic events in Sherbrooke, the name Suzanne-Marie Landry is one of the first that springs to mind.

For the past 10 years, Ms. Landry has been general and artistic director of Théâtre Granada, a mainstay of Sherbrooke's heritage, and has also been involved in creating Sherblues & Folk and collaborating on most of the major festivals and events in Sherbrooke. She helps attract renowned artists to Sherbrooke and promote emerging artists, in addition to ensuring the development of Théâtre Granada with great respect for its heritage character.

Despite all these accomplishments, it was during the pandemic that she impressed me the most. At a time when the entertainment industry was going through an unprecedented crisis, Ms. Landry demonstrated unbelievable resilience and incredible leadership as she helped her industry survive and reinvent itself.

A few days ago, she announced that she plans to slow down. I wish her the best for the future. On behalf of the people of Sherbrooke, I want to thank her very much for her support of culture in our region.

* * *

● (1105)

[English]

HAL SVEISTRUP

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the life of Hal Sveistrup. As a lifelong educator, Hal began teaching at the age of 19, leaving a lasting mark on countless young minds over his 35-year career.

Hal's larger-than-life persona and commitment to community defined him. Throughout his life, he contributed to countless organizations, including the Rivers United Church and local hockey leagues.

Hal was an avid outdoorsman. He loved fishing, hunting and trapping. This passion of Hal's was instrumental in building the Rivers Game and Fish Association as a founding member.

However, above his love for the outdoors, family was the most important to Hal. He and his wife Barb created a beautiful family of four children, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

"Just do your best," Hal often advised, a motto he lived by wholeheartedly.

My thoughts are with his family and all those he impacted throughout his remarkable life.

May Hal rest easy. He will be missed.

WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I wish all Maronites around the world happy Saint Maroun Feast Day.

I also acknowledge World Interfaith Harmony Week, which spreads the message of unity and goodwill in the world's churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship.

I am blessed to represent a riding with incredible diversity, and I cherish the close connections I have with our many different faith communities.

I offer my best wishes for the celebrations of our patron saint that are taking place at Our Lady of Lebanon in my riding, at the cathedral in Montreal, at Saint Charbel Parish in Ottawa and all over the world.

I also offer my best to the Ummah Mosque in Halifax on its multicultural festival today.

We know that interfaith dialogue has the power to promote greater harmony in Canada. That is why our government is funding grassroots initiatives that bring ethnic, cultural and religious communities together to learn from each other and strengthen our national fabric.

Let us always embrace the richness of our differences.

YUKON ATHLETES

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just this week, Sonjaa Schmidt won gold at the world under-23 cross-country ski championships in Slovenia, the first Canadian woman to bring home the gold at this event.

Our small territory continues to punch way above its weight in cross-country ski racing. Thanks to the amazing snow and trails and the excellent coaching, Yukoners regularly reach Canada's national team, even with just 0.1% of Canada's population.

Recent champions like Derek Deuling, Sasha Masson, Emily and Graham Nishikawa, Dahria Beatty and Knute Johnsgaard add to the legacy of such stars as Lucy Steele and the Firth sisters from Old Crow.

Here is another one. At the recent 2024 Winter Youth Olympic Games in Gangwon, 15-year-old Yukoner Minty Bradford also competed for Team Canada, with impressive results.

Speaking of impressive, I hope all these athletes have a good time, and I wish good luck to all the curlers, biathletes, those in the Dene games and more who are heading to Mat-Su, Alaska in March as Yukon's team in the Arctic Winter Games. They include my son Finnian in, yes, cross-country skiing.

Go, team Yukon, go.

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, *xīn nián kuài lè*. Tomorrow marks the official start of the lunar new

Statements by Members

year, the most important festival in Chinese and other Asian cultures.

We kicked things off last weekend in Calgary's Chinatown, where I will be celebrating again tomorrow with my friends. For the next weeks, we will be entertained by the drums beating during the lion dance and swirling dragons weaving among us, which is fitting this year as we are celebrating the year of the dragon.

Dragons are much more auspicious creatures in the Chinese zodiac than they represent in western culture. The dragon symbolizes power, nobility, honour, luck and success. This year's dragon, the wood dragon, stands out as the most creative and visionary. It is a year for people to pursue their dreams and be compassionate to their friends.

To all my friends in Calgary's Chinese and East Asian communities, I say "*gung hei fat choy*" and "*gong xi fa cai*".

I offer them my best wishes for a new year filled with love, peace and prosperity.

● (1110)

YOUTH SPORT CHARITY

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, KidSport is a national charity that provides funding so that all kids in Canada can play their favourite sports.

I am so proud that KidSport received over \$4.4 million through the government's community sport for all initiative back in 2022. It has been almost two years, so I have some updates.

With that support from the government, KidSport helped over 27,000 kids across Canada participate in sports but also opened new community chapters, so that funding has created a legacy for years to come. One of those new chapters is in Halton Region, so more kids from Milton, Oakville, Burlington and Halton Hills will have access to affordable sport.

Sport, physical activity and recreation keep us physically healthy and mentally strong and bring our communities together, but sport also boosts our economy, creates jobs and decreases health care costs. Actually, physical inactivity costs Canadians almost \$7 billion every year. That is \$175 for each Canadian. Therefore, it literally pays to be active.

I want to send a huge high-five out to our partners at KidSport and thank all the coaches, volunteers, donors, fundraisers, parents and athletes who bring sport to life in our communities from coast to coast to coast.

Statements by Members

I thank KidSport.

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CARBON TAX

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, Canadians face a cost of living crisis, made worse by the April 1 carbon tax hike.

Liberal-appointed senators gutted Bill C-234, stopping carbon tax carve-outs for farmers.

Canadians face higher prices, because when one taxes the farmer who grows the food and the trucker who ships the food, Canadians pay more for the food.

The Liberal plan to quadruple the carbon tax from 14¢ to 61¢ a litre is outrageous. By increasing this tax, the Liberals are contributing to the hardship of over two million Canadians relying on food banks. By pressuring senators to oppose carbon tax carve-outs, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Conservatives demand that Bill C-234 be passed in its original form, to help farmers and families. Our common-sense plan is to axe the tax.

* * *

BILL C-372

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, the member for Timmins—James Bay revealed the depths of his diabolical penchant for thought control and his yearning for totalitarian power when he tabled his laughable yet chillingly Orwellian bill that would actually put people in jail for saying things he does not like.

Canadian fossil fuels could displace dirty coal, lift people out of poverty, defund Putin's war machine, provide good jobs and generate taxes to pay for health care, but under paragraph 8(b) of this bill, those very words would become a crime. The penalty under clause 19 would be two years in prison and a \$500,000 fine.

When socialists do not like the facts, they criminalize debate. After eight years, Canadians are tired of being told what to think and what to say. They are tired of being insulted.

I will keep telling the truth, even if the member for Timmins—James Bay and his Liberal-NDP friends think I belong in jail.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reducing and stabilizing grocery prices has been a priority for this Prime Minister and this government. The same cannot be said about the Conservative Party. Let me explain why.

A Globe and Mail report says, “Harper’s enforcer: Meet Jenni Byrne, the most powerful woman in Ottawa”. Jenni Byrne was also the campaign manager for not one but two national elections. How about the current leadership? She is one of the reasons why the current leader is the leader of the Conservative Party. She sits on the current leader's inner circle. She attends the Conservative caucus

meetings. Why is that a problem? She makes money from Loblaws. She is an advocate for Loblaws.

How is it that the Conservative Party cannot understand what a conflict is? When will it stand up with Canadians and demonstrate some genuine concern about the price of groceries?

* * *

TECK RESOURCES

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has recently announced plans for several major electric vehicle battery plants backed by billions of dollars in investments. Canada has the critical minerals, cobalt, nickel, lithium, to make these batteries, but a big link in future supply chains is missing.

That link is the battery recycling sector that can provide a steady supply of critical minerals as demand for them rises. Teck Resources has a large smelter in Trail, B.C. It is uniquely positioned to become one of the largest recyclers of EV batteries in North America. It has the industrial site, a talented workforce, a ready supply of clean hydro power, expertise in refining and access to its own existing supply chains. Trail already has a network of other battery recycling facilities.

Teck has a proposal for a bold project to build the largest EV battery recycling facility in North America and I urge the federal government to support Teck in this important initiative.

* * *

• (1115)

[Translation]

JACQUES DUVAL

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Jacques Duval, founder of *The Car Guide*, former race car driver and gifted communicator, passed away on Tuesday at the age of 89.

Throughout his long career, he staunchly defended the French language, something the auto sector badly needed. He is the reason why in today's Quebec we commonly speak of “pare-chocs” and “pare-brise” instead of bumpers and windshields. Also, he was not shy about calling out car manufacturers when they disrespected the French language.

The Car Guide, the work of a man who never gave up racing and who knew the Circuit Mont Tremblant race course like the back of his hand, was often the first must-read of many young people who read it cover-to-cover.

In a world that often resists change, Jacques Duval fully embraced the electric transition of recent years and helped write car guides focusing on these greener vehicles.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I offer his family and friends our sincere condolences.

* * *

[English]

ARRIVECAN APP INVESTIGATION

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all eyes will be on the Auditor General's ArriveCAN report on Monday, which is expected to expose the Prime Minister and the Liberals for corruption and incompetence yet again. Shamefully, the NDP and Liberals continue to shut down and cover up investigations into this \$54-million boondoggle.

Here is what we know so far: 76% of contracts on ArriveCAN did no work whatsoever; \$11 million went to a two-person IT company that did nothing; the RCMP is now investigating ArriveCAN contracts; and government officials are accused of destroying documents. Even worse is when their own officials blew the whistle about this corruption around ArriveCAN, they were suddenly suspended without pay.

As the NDP and Liberals trip over each other to try to cover up the ArriveCAN scandal, Conservatives will get to the bottom of the Auditor General's report and make sure this corruption is fully exposed to Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February is Black History Month.

[English]

All year round, but in this month in particular, we highlight the contributions of Black Canadians and Black excellence. In Pierrefonds—Dollard, we have a number of luminaries. Joan Lee is the president of the West Island Black Community Association. Through her leadership, WIBCA continues to be at the forefront of serving the needs of Black West Islanders.

[Translation]

I would also like to acknowledge the work of Asmick Jean-Jacques, the director of La Corde youth centre.

[English]

The centre helps build strong and stable young people to build Canada's tomorrow.

Errol Johnson is a long-standing member of our community.

[Translation]

He is the deputy mayor of Dollard-des-Ormeaux and has been a city councillor for over 30 years.

Oral Questions

[English]

He is the co-founder of the West Island Blues Festival and raises funds for non-profits.

There are so many others, like Malik Shaheed and Akilah Newton, who deserve to be mentioned. They have done excellent work. We salute them and we thank them for their service.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the crime, and now extortion is the latest crime wave plaguing our communities. When common-sense Conservatives were in office, we toughened penalties for dangerous and repeat offenders and, as a result, the crime rate went down. It turns out that when thugs fear getting caught, they commit fewer crimes. Extortion is up all across the country, thanks to easier penalties and easier bail. Will the government finally admit the mistake of its previous crime legislation and adopt common-sense Conservative policies to keep criminals off the street?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that the Conservatives do not want to talk about the economy this morning because we have had a blockbuster of good news. The job numbers released today by Statistics Canada show that Canada gained 37,000 new jobs in January. Unemployment is down to 5.7%. Wages have increased by 5.3% in January; among women, 6.2%. We are bringing home big paycheques for Canadians, who are all at work.

• (1120)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder the Liberals do not want to talk about crime because our communities across the country are becoming less safe. It is a direct result of Liberal legislation that reduced penalties. The Liberals' Bill C-5 actually eliminated a mandatory jail sentence for people who commit extortion. As a result, extortion is up dramatically. It is up 366% in B.C. People are now losing their property and their money because gangsters are extorting them in Canada. After eight years of this Prime Minister, when will he put an end to his soft-on-crime approach?

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is so much good news that I feel compelled to repeat it. Here is the good news for Canadians. There were 37,000 new jobs in January. This means a total of 345,000 more jobs than last year. The unemployment rate is down to 5.7%. Wages rose by 5.3% in January, and women saw a 6.2% wage increase.

We are bringing home big paycheques for more people working in Canada.

[English]

The Speaker: I would just like to remind all members that, as some previous Speakers have put it, this is question period and not necessarily answer period.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a slap in the face to every single victim of violent and dangerous crime in this country. The Liberals are running around telling Canadians that they have never had it so good; meanwhile, business owners and families are being extorted in Canada. A developed G7 country now sees extortion rates as high as 218% up nationally and a 262% increase in Ontario. All the Liberals can do is get up and tell Canadians how good they have had it. When will the Liberals put the rights of victims and honest Canadians first, and put dangerous criminals behind bars where they belong?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, far too many Canadians have been experiencing this situation. It is precisely why the RCMP is seized with this issue and working directly with local police. This is something we are seeing operating with organized crime. However, what we also know is that the Conservatives' tough talk on crime does not actually create the solutions and the results. We saw that as the Conservatives cut funding to the RCMP to do this very work to crack down on organized crime, but we are going to be there for Canadians.

* * *

*[Translation]***HOUSING**

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this government, housing prices and rent have doubled. According to Cathy Fecteau, the director of Fondation Au Bercail in Saint-Georges, the number of homeless people has also doubled.

Everything has doubled under this Prime Minister, who is not worth the cost. This housing is temporary. Normally, residents can stay there for 30 days, but because of the current difficulties, some of them have been there for 70 days.

Why does the Prime Minister not build more housing instead of building more bureaucracy?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for raising an important question. This is good for the

people of Beauce who are watching us today because, for once, they have a government that takes housing seriously.

The agreement that we are negotiating with the provinces will make it possible to build more housing. However, as my colleague said today, we have good economic news that is going to help Canadians across the country.

There is one thing that we have not yet mentioned, and that is that Canada is ranked, not second or third, but first for its battery supply chain. We are investing in Quebecers, in Canadians and in the future of the country.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer proves just how out of touch and asleep at the switch this government is.

It needs to get out of the way so municipalities can build affordable housing, just as Victoriaville, Saguenay and Trois-Rivières have done. The community organization Le Bercail has also had to close its shelter in a neighbouring riding because of the lack of housing and resources. As a result, this community is facing a surge in homelessness.

When will the government help our rural communities build affordable housing?

• (1125)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to talk about housing, but they would not even be able to build a bird house.

They come to Quebec to yell at our mayors and insult them, whether in Montreal, Quebec City or elsewhere. Meanwhile, we have signed an historic agreement with Quebec where each stakeholder is putting in \$900 million. That is \$1.8 billion to accelerate construction and eliminate red tape, and not just in Montreal, Quebec City or Trois-Rivières, but throughout Quebec.

That is collaboration.

* * *

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the media crisis has once again swept away a part of our news media and a part of our democracy.

Bell is laying off 4,800 employees. This comes on the heels of more than 500 job cuts at Quebecor and 600 at CBC/Radio-Canada. The entire industry has been imploding for years with no meaningful response by the federal government.

Bill C-11 is having no apparent impact because the CRTC is making zero progress on the regulatory framework. Bill C-18 is all well and good, and we will happily accept Google's millions, but the job cuts continue.

When is the government going to take action?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my Bloc Québécois colleague that we have been taking action since we came to power in 2015, with the full co-operation of the Bloc Québécois on a host of files.

Earlier on, she mentioned the Broadcasting Act, which we struggled to pass for three years while the Conservatives opposed it at every turn. The same can be said of the Online News Act. The Conservatives filibuster endlessly while we try to help the media.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa needs to do something while there are still jobs to be saved.

An emergency fund is needed to prevent further cuts. A payroll tax credit is needed for electronic media. A tax credit is needed for advertisers in traditional media. What is needed is an increase in federal advertising investments in traditional media along with a decrease in Liberal investments in Meta.

What we need most of all is a minister who takes action instead of just blaming the Conservatives. When will she take action?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that we have taken action.

All of our hard work paid off and led to the modernization of the Broadcasting Act. I would also remind the House that no one thought we would successfully reach an agreement with Google when we went after the web giant for \$100 million, plus interest, plus inflation every year. We introduced tax credits to support newsrooms and funding for local journalism.

There comes a point when we can no longer continue to line the pockets of Bell's billionaire companies, as the Conservatives would have us do, but we can continue to support journalism.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Liberals have let the housing crisis get so bad that the province is forced to buy up hotels to house people who live in tents. The government's inaction has made provinces resort to desperate, improvised measures. Canadians deserve to live in dignity in safe, secure, affordable homes they can call their own, not in tents in the coldest climate on Earth.

When will the government start stepping up to provide solutions to the St. John's housing crisis so people do not have to live in tents anymore?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in this country has a right to housing, and it is unacceptable that any Canadians are sleeping out in the cold.

That is why we have doubled funding to help communities tackle homelessness. We recently announced \$100 million to help protect the most vulnerable 85 communities across the country. Our investments throughout our time in government are paying off. We have

prevented over 125,000 people from becoming unhoused, and have placed over 71,000 people experiencing homelessness in permanent housing.

We are ready to work with parties that are serious about housing. There is a lot more work to do; we are up to the task.

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GROCERY INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people in Nanaimo—Ladysmith are relying on food banks now more than ever before.

What is the Liberal and Conservative corporate coalition doing? It is pointing fingers at one another over who has the most grocery lobbyists in their back pocket. To make matters worse, the Liberals voted against an NDP bill that would lower food prices and crack down on out-of-control corporate greed.

Why are the Liberals working for large grocery CEOs instead of doing what is right for people?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit confused by the question because, in fact, we are the ones pushing the grocery industry to do more for Canadians, and I welcome the help of the NDP. Not only did we do that in our last reform of the competition legislation but we also included amendments proposed by the NDP.

We want to do more. We, as well as all the experts, understand that the best way to have more options, to stabilize prices and to make sure we have a more competitive environment is to reform our competition law. That is exactly what we are doing, and we thank the NDP for its help.

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● (1130)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, farmers across the country are struggling under the punishing carbon tax.

Melissa, a farmer in my area, paid over \$6,000 in carbon taxes just to dry her grain last year, and now the Prime Minister wants to quadruple the tax in just a few years. He is not worth the cost.

When will the Liberal government get out of the way and pass Bill C-234 in its original form, get off farmers' backs and make our food affordable again?

Oral Questions

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the bill were so important, I would let my hon. colleague know that five Conservative senators were missing in action when it came down to the important vote.

On this side of the House, we believe in climate change. I have yet to hear one single platform or policy related to climate change from the member's party. In 2021, 20% of grains did not make it to market, because of climate change.

We have a plan to fight climate change and we have a plan to support farmers.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is rich coming from the government that relentlessly lobbied senators to block Bill C-234. Bill C-234 would remove the carbon taxes from the farmers who grow our food. We know inflation is hitting Canadians hard; whether it is housing, the cost of fuel or food, everything is getting more expensive under the NDP-Liberal government. After eight years, Canadians know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

The only way Canadians will get the tax relief they deserve is by electing a common-sense Conservative government.

When will the Liberals call the election so we can axe the tax?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the truth comes out: They want to go into an election. Nobody, no Canadian, wants to go into an election right now.

Again, our support for farmers has been consistent. We support our supply-managed sector. We support our farmers to help transition toward a greener economy. That is why we have invested \$1.5 billion that will help farmers directly on the land by ensuring they can have some technology for farming.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the biggest petition in Canadian history proves that person wrong. Ray Orb of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities has indicated that our farmers can expect to lose 8% of their total net income if the carbon tax is quadrupled this spring. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost to our growers, our truckers and everyone who is struggling to put healthy food on the table of their family.

Will the Prime Minister choose a death knell, alienating Canadians even further, or will he grab a lifeline and support Bill C-234?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absurd to be lectured by the Conservative Party on our support for farmers, when just last month we saw its members vote against the on-farm climate fund, the dairy innovation and investment fund, and funding in support of dairy, poultry and egg supply-managed producers.

The Conservatives take farmers for granted. They stand up in the House saying that climate policy is affecting food prices, when they know that is not true because their own food professor comes to committee to say that exact thing: climate policy is not a main driv-

er of food prices. What is? Climate change is, but they never talk about it. They will not provide any solutions for climate change; it is a red herring for the Conservative Party.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our farmers are tired of the government's talking out of both sides of its mouth. The Prime Minister is demanding that our farmers absorb a quadrupling of the carbon tax and GST yet grow enough grain to stay solvent, feed the world and increase green fuel alternatives. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, farmers know where they stand.

Is he even aware of how many Canadians have had enough of his attacks on farmers? He is not worth the cost.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farmers are the first to be impacted by climate change, and we need to support them and their transition to greener fuels, as the member said. However, we have already done many of those things by exempting gas and diesel for farm use from pollution pricing. We have created a rural top-up for rebates, and we have returned over \$120 million to farmers just in 2023 thanks to carbon pricing proceeds.

Today is the warmest January day on record, and last year was the warmest year on record. Wheat yields are down. Climate change is having an impact through droughts and floods. There is a variety of ways that climate change is affecting food prices, but we will never hear that from the Conservative Party of Canada.

● (1135)

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are determined to increase the price of food, with the environment minister making it his personal mission to kill Bill C-234. He admitted to lobbying six senators to gut the bill, and he promised to reveal those names. After 49 days, he gave the names of three, not six, senators. While I know the Liberals are not good at math, it is clear he provided misleading information, so this week I invited the Minister of Environment to our committee to explain himself, but the NDP-Liberal coalition shut it down because it does not want the truth.

Let me ask it here: Why is the environment minister going to such great lengths to hide the names of the senators he personally lobbied to gut Bill C-234?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a little rich hearing this from the Conservative Party members, when Conservative senators sit in their caucus and one of those senators was accused of bullying to the point where independent senators were afraid to go home at night. Shame on the Conservative Party for bullying those senators. It is absolutely shameful that any member of government should fear for their safety as a result of that party.

I will say it again: Carbon pricing is not to blame for Canada's affordability challenges. We are serious about helping Canadians afford their grocery bills. Fighting climate change policy is not the way.

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals love to try to distract their way out of this, but this is not Monopoly. There are no more “get out of jail free” cards for the environment minister. The price of food is at record levels, and the NDP government just does not care.

Just this week, Sylvain Charlebois, Canada's leading food expert, called on the Liberals to suspend the carbon tax on the entire food industry. Instead, the cover-up coalition plans to increase the carbon tax by 23% on April 1.

Bill C-234 would provide relief for farmers and Canadian consumers, yet the radical environment minister told senators to gut it.

My question is simple: Which senators did he call and how did they vote on Bill C-234?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious to us, and I hope it is obvious to Canadians, that what they are talking about is nonsense. Sylvain Charlebois is working with us in order to make sure we take the right steps to bring stability to prices of food in Canada. The first thing that was asked from us was to reform competition. That is what we have done through a landmark bill we passed in December, and we are going to do more. Now we have subpoena power for the Competition Bureau. We removed the restrictive covenant in leases.

We are going to fight for consumers every step of the way, and we have nothing to learn from these guys.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying recommended allowing advance requests. That was what the vast majority of the committee members wanted. We need to allow advance requests for people who are suffering from conditions like dementia and Alzheimer's.

Oral Questions

The federal government has been dragging its feet for a year on implementing the committee's strongest recommendation. Why?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize Quebec's leadership in the medical assistance in dying file, which is extremely important for the Government of Quebec and Quebecers, as well as for the Government of Canada and all Canadians.

What Quebec is asking for deserves consideration. The legal mechanism it is proposing seems extremely difficult, if not impossible, to implement. However, that does not prevent us from continuing to consider and discuss it with Quebec and all of the provinces and territories of Canada.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, medical assistance in dying is a matter of freedom of choice. The Liberals should understand that.

The role of the state is to guarantee the conditions for exercising a free and informed choice. Those who do not want medical assistance in dying do not need to apply for it. It is as simple as that. The National Assembly is unanimous. Quebec is ready. It has its own legislation.

Will the federal government amend the Criminal Code to allow advance requests for people who are suffering?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are obviously sensitive to all issues around medical assistance in dying.

I would reiterate to my colleague and all parliamentarians that we have a very interesting bill that is being studied in the House. There is a deadline, March 17, to suspend certain things. It reflects a broad consensus within the joint committee of this Parliament. I encourage my colleague to be sensitive to the advance directives but also to act now, in light of our deadline.

● (1140)

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, the Prime Minister and his carbon tax are not worth the cost. That is because, when we tax the farmer who grows the food, the trucker who trucks the food and the grocer who refrigerates the food, all those carbon taxes get passed on to consumers. Now the Prime Minister wants to increase the carbon tax another 23% on April 1.

When will the Prime Minister give Canadians a break and cancel his inflationary carbon tax?

Oral Questions

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised an important point. He would know very well, if he was at the agriculture committee this week, that there is no evidence to suggest that carbon pricing is increasing the price of food. The evidence shows that climate change has an impact on the price of food.

When the leader of the official opposition goes around Canada, the only thing he wants to axe is the agriculture budget on the backs of farmers.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost of groceries. A University of Saskatchewan study said that Canadian farmers have at least 60% fewer emissions than the average of the world. I attended an irrigation conference this week with hundreds of farmers, such as Rob, who told me it costs him tens of thousands of dollars in the carbon tax to operate his irrigation. There is no rebate, and they all want it gone.

When will the NDP-Liberals give farmers and families a break, pass Bill C-234 and axe the tax?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, slogans will not help farmers. On this side of the House, we have always believed that supporting farmers is important, and that is why we have invested 25% more in the agricultural budget. This is something that the leader of the official opposition cut while he was sitting at the cabinet table.

Maybe the hon. member should have a conversation with the leader of the official opposition, because I have not yet seen an agricultural policy from the Conservative Party of Canada.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, Kelowna is in housing hell. Rents have doubled and mortgage payments have tripled. Tent cities and long lineups at food banks are now commonplace. The housing minister touts investing millions in Kelowna through his housing accelerator fund, or HAF.

Can the minister please share specifically how many homes in Kelowna, funded by last October's announcement, will start construction this year, or has he been too preoccupied with polls, press releases and photo ops to the point where he is too clever by HAF?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member will come with me to 651 Cambridge Avenue in Kelowna to see a 75-unit construction. There has been \$4.6 million invested in the city of Kelowna, which he voted against.

We are getting housing built in this country. Time and time again, the Conservatives pretend, during this hour of the day in question period, to care about housing, but when it comes to voting on funding, they are absent. They vote against funding, and they have promised that, when they form government, they will cut all funds and raise taxes on builders.

We are going to get the job done. We are serious about housing.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they cannot give a number because they did not require it.

Kelowna's HAF action plan only refers to "investments in affordable housing such as land acquisition, investments in housing-related infrastructure such as sewer and water, and investments in community-related infrastructure that supports housing such as sidewalks, bridges and bike lanes".

Does the parliamentary secretary understand that this joke of a program funds sewers and bike lanes, but does not require the construction of a single home? Is he comfortable with the fact that the only housing from this \$30 million might be a bridge for someone to sleep under?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to get up to talk again about Kelowna, which is getting \$31.5 million for 20,000 homes over the next 10 years. How did the member vote? He voted against it. Time and time again, the Conservatives stand in this place and vote against getting housing built in this country. We know there is a supply crisis in this country on housing. The Conservatives do not want to build a single house. It is unfortunate how unserious they are about this crisis.

We are ready to get the job done; we are getting the job done.

* * *

● (1145)

HEALTH

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in just two days, Belleville has seen 23 drug poisonings. It has declared a state of emergency. The mayor says that emergency services and funding are stretched too thin. The toxic drug crisis keeps getting worse, while the Liberals take a patchwork approach. Then there are Conservatives, who spread harmful disinformation instead of offering real solutions. There are 42,000 people who have died since 2016. We need a coordinated, compassionate and integrated response.

When will the minister finally declare the toxic drug crisis a national public health emergency?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, our hearts go out to the people of Belleville impacted by this crisis and their loved ones. We agree with the mayor that this is horrible. The Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has spoken with Mayor Ellis to discuss how we can work together alongside the Government of Ontario, guided by our compassionate and comprehensive approach. People who use substances, their families and their communities need us to use every tool at our disposal.

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OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, a tailings pond at Imperial Oil's Kearl site in northern Alberta overflowed. It spilled 5.3 million litres of cancer-causing toxins into the environment. Even worse, it was shown that the pond had been leaking for years and is still leaking. Both Imperial Oil and the Alberta Energy Regulator knew, but they did not tell the community.

What has the government done to hold Imperial Oil or the AER accountable for this disaster? It has done nothing. When will the minister do his job and make sure the land and water that Albertans depend upon is finally protected?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the advocacy from the member on the environment and protecting the environment. She is absolutely right, and that is why the environment committee called CEO Brad Corson to committee once again. Just before the holidays, I had the opportunity to hold his feet to the fire and tell him that Canadians are not satisfied with their environmental protection strategy, if we can call it that. The Athabasca River deserves better protection. The 5.3 million litres of tailings that have leaked into that river are causing poisonings, deaths and environmental destruction, and Imperial Oil must clean up its mess.

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[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the parliamentary aerospace caucus, I was delighted to participate in this week's events organized by the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada. Canada's aerospace industry is an asset for our economy, our workforce and our overall growth.

Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry tell us about the important role this sector plays in Quebec and across the country, and explain how we will continue to support this industry's work?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Saint-Laurent, for her leadership regarding the aerospace industry. Not only is the aerospace industry

Oral Questions

one of the most innovative sectors in our country, it is also one of the most important. It employs nearly 210,000 Canadians across the country. Members will recall that, last year, our government announced an historic investment of \$350 million for the country's aerospace industry.

Not only will we have a thriving industry, we will have one of the greenest industries. We have already made it clear that we believe that having a national aerospace strategy will serve the nation's interests well.

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[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP coalition, Cornwall is no exception to the housing hell Canadians are facing. Rents and housing costs have doubled, and there is a desperate need for new homes and rentals to be built. Here is the worst part: Cornwall is finalizing plans for a 500-unit residential project, but it is being blocked by a gatekeeper, the Liberal government. Transport Canada has dithered for eight years on plans to transfer an intersection that would allow the entrance for this new project to be built.

Will the housing minister tell the transport minister to stop blocking this important residential project for Cornwall?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with municipalities across the country to get housing built, with 30 deals under the housing accelerator fund to build 500,000 additional units of housing. Where have the Conservatives been found on this? They are absent. They voted against it.

They are going to cut our GST cut on purpose-built rentals. They are going to increase taxes on home builders. They are going to cut the funding and deals we have with municipalities. They do not understand the complexity of the housing crisis. They are going to take us backward. We need to build more supply, not Conservative cuts, which is what they are promising.

• (1150)

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a sad state of affairs with the Liberals. After eight years of dithering, delaying and working with local partners to actually get something done, they do not even know what they are talking about. They could not even acknowledge the local issue after eight years of trying to actually get this done. It is one parcel of land, at the intersection of Brookdale Avenue and Water Street in Cornwall, that everyone is in agreement on. The grand chief of Akwesasne and the mayor of Cornwall are both on board; they want to get this transferred so shovels can get into the ground right away.

Oral Questions

It is not that hard. Will the Liberals finally get out of the way and transfer the intersection so 500 units of housing can finally get built this year in Cornwall?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition is going across the country picking fights with local mayors, we are working with municipalities to get the job done. We are happy to work with Cornwall and municipalities across the country.

However, what does the Conservative Party have to offer in its housing policy? It is offering cuts. It is offering to increase taxes on builders who are building purpose-built rentals. Conservatives do not understand the seriousness of the housing crisis; they do not have a plan and they will take us backwards.

We are going to get the job done. We understand that this is an issue of supply. We are going to get the houses built.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this government is not worth the cost. The cost of housing and houses has more than doubled in the past eight years. After all these years and all the money that it announced in that time, housing starts dropped again last year, especially in December, when housing construction fell by 28%.

Will this government take our common-sense ideas on the housing issue and implement them as quickly as possible, just as it did with the auto theft issue?

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we see the Conservatives pretending to care about housing during the hour of question period. They bang their fists on the table to demand more work on the file, but when it comes to actually voting on housing funding, they stand up and vote against it, time and time again.

The Government of Canada has invested \$900 million in the province of Quebec. How did that member vote? He voted against it.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, instead of holding consultations and making announcements, here are some good, common-sense ideas for tackling the problem. We could sell off federal buildings and land, get housing built on that land and provide bonuses to cities that speed up the permit process by reducing red tape. According to a CIBC report released the day before yesterday, more than five million housing units need to be built within the next six years to lower housing costs. That is no small task.

Will the government take our good, common-sense ideas and fix the problem once and for all?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if he is looking for good ideas, then he should stop insulting the mayors of Quebec. He should stop coming to Quebec and

telling them that they are lousy at their jobs. That does not work. Instead, he should support our measures and applaud the Government of Canada's efforts and its ability and willingness to collaborate with the Government of Quebec. Quebec is putting in \$900 million, and we are putting in \$900 million. That is \$1.8 billion for projects. Some of those will be in his neck of the woods, and there will be more throughout Quebec. If all he wants to do is complain, he should get out of the way, because we will continue building housing in Quebec and throughout Canada.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not backing down over the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan. This week, Radio-Canada reported that the Department of Veterans Affairs had warned the government that it was tarnishing its reputation by turning its back on Daoust, the team that won the competition. Of course it is tarnishing its reputation. It is tarnishing its reputation with all the design firms around the world, which have found out that Canada fudges the competitions. It is tarnishing its reputation with veterans by claiming to speak on their behalf based on a biased, fake poll.

Will the government backtrack and give the winning contract to the winning team, Daoust?

[English]

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan reflects the sacrifices of 40,000 Canadian people: military, police and civilians.

We listened to over 12,000 veterans and their families in a survey. Overwhelmingly, the majority of those who responded were veterans, and they wanted the Team Stimson design; they say it best reflects their input.

When it comes to honouring the sacrifices of our veterans, we must listen to them. We did, and we will continue to do so.

• (1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the jury for the competition did get the results of the government's bogus survey, and it still chose the Daoust team. It did the right thing because Leger tore that survey apart. It said that the consultation "does not in any way represent the opinions of Canadian Armed Forces members, the families of Canadian Armed Forces members or the Canadian public". I would also like to add that francophones were under-represented in the survey, as is unfortunately the custom in Canada.

Will the government finally grant the contract to the Daoust team and put an end to this sham?

[English]

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate and respect the work of the jury members who evaluated the finalists' design concepts. However, the Team Stimson design was the one that veterans of the mission, and their families, felt best represented those who served there and their bravery, sacrifices and losses. The results of the consultation, which are public, were clear. It is important that we listen to our veterans.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, towns that used to be peaceful are being terrorized by foreign gangs that threaten our neighbourhoods with violence and arson. The rate of extortion across Canada is up a whopping 218%.

Canadians are living in fear for their lives because of NDP-Liberal bills like Bill C-5, which eliminated mandatory jail time for extortion with a firearm. This means dangerous criminals stay on the street.

It is time to stop the crime. Will the Liberals reverse this dangerous bill that keeps dangerous criminals on the street?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the members opposite bring up issues around firearms and safety in our communities, when they actually, just over 60 days ago, voted against \$80 million for the RCMP that would specifically go to supporting the work of the RCMP on guns and gangs, and organized crime.

We are taking the issue of extortion very seriously. This is why the RCMP are working with local police. The Conservative cuts would not solve this issue.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, eight years ago, under the last Conservative government, extortion was down. It was five times lower, and the budget was balanced.

The mayor of Surrey has taken note. In a letter pleading with the Liberals to do something about the explosion of life-threatening extortion in her community, she said that she has "terrified" people in her community.

Conservatives would restore mandatory minimum sentences for convicted extortionists, and stop the crime explosion rate that is terrorizing Canadians across the country. Will the Liberals?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives tough-on-crime talk does not result in action.

What we are doing is taking concrete steps to deal with extortion and organized crime in this country. I said earlier that just 60 days ago, those very members voted against \$80 million to support the

Oral Questions

work of the RCMP. Cuts have consequences. The Conservatives have not learned their lesson that, when it comes to dealing with safety in this country, we need to invest in the expertise of our police forces.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, 17 Belleville, Ontario residents died from overdose in a span of 24 hours. Fourteen of those deaths were in a two-hour span.

Since 2016, 42,000 Canadians have died from opioid-related overdose. The Prime Minister has spent \$1 billion making it easier for Canadians to get drugs but harder for them to get into recovery. After eight long years, the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

When will he wake up and realize that his drug policies are killing Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us roll the tape back to when Conservatives were in power, where they changed the Canada drug strategy, stripped out harm reduction and refused to meet with community organizers, like me, about saving the lives of people who were struggling with substance use.

They refused to support communities in the way that communities knew they could work together to save lives and to help people recover from substance use. We will take no lessons from the Conservatives.

* * *

● (1200)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reconciliation with indigenous peoples is a top priority for our government.

Yesterday, the Conservative leader claimed he was on the side of indigenous peoples. However, repeated comments from his caucus members, including the very first time they spoke on the first nations clean water bill, leaves their commitment to advancing reconciliation in serious doubt.

I am proud to be part of a government that is working to create growth and opportunity, so that everyone has a fair chance to succeed.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services tell us how our government is already working on economic reconciliation?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Ottawa—Vanier for her allyship to indigenous reconciliation and peoples.

It is a well-known saying that when people show who they are, believe them. A few lines at a press conference does not change the Conservative track record on reconciliation, including just a few days ago, when we look at the stereotypes the member of Parliament for Saskatoon—Grasswood was actually expressing here in the House of Commons.

Yesterday, we brought together indigenous leaders and some of the biggest players in the financial sector to speed up opportunities for economic growth. As Jon Davey, VP at Scotiabank put it, it is about putting power in the hands of indigenous business. I hope the Conservatives will get on board.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost of the \$54-million arrive scam debacle. There was \$11 million that went to a company that did no work, 76% of contractors did no work and the app itself did not work. Now we learn that the Liberals awarded nearly \$350,000 in bonuses to senior executives who presided over this corrupt mess.

What the hell is going on?

The Speaker: I would like to remind members to please be concerned about the language they use. I know the hon. member normally does not use such language.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we have concerns about some of the initial reporting, but we designed the ArriveCAN app to help Canadians during the global pandemic. That being said, we will never risk the integrity of our procurement process. We expect any contracts that the government issues to be issued properly. The president of the CBSA has already put in some interim changes on the procurement process, and we look forward to the results of the full investigation.

* * *

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week at committee, we learned that the Liberal government knew about conflicts of interest at its billion-dollar green slush fund, with \$150 million that has been embezzled. After eight years, we know the Prime Minister certainly is not worth that cost.

Members at the ethics committee will have the opportunity to call witnesses, including ministers and officials, who now have demonstrated a changing story between what we have heard, in terms of facts, and what they have spun in terms of narrative.

How will the cover-up coalition vote on exposing these truths?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually, I am very happy the member asked that question because it helps me remind Canadians that the Conservatives are not only against climate change, but now they are against the institution of Parliament, and they are against helping our small and medium-sized businesses.

On this side of the House, Canadians should know we believe that we need to fight climate change, we believe in our small and medium-sized businesses, and we believe in clean technology. Our children and our grandchildren deserve that. This is exactly what we are going to be doing and we will restore governance to make sure this happens.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Conservatives believe is that when Liberals know about embezzlement by their insiders to the tune of \$150 million with their billion-dollar green slush fund, there must be accountability.

The minister and his predecessor were aware of the allegations and knew of the facts of the conflicts of interest because they were told, but they did nothing about it until they were caught. The Liberal members, NDP members and Bloc members are going to have the opportunity to vote on a motion to open this study at the ethics committee.

Will they continue the cover-up or will they stand for accountability with Conservatives?

● (1205)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians who are watching this morning, and I am sure there are many, should be really worried about the Conservatives; they are attacking anyone who is going to fight against climate change. Even more, what we are seeing in this place, and Canadians watching at home will see it, is that they are going to attack the institution of Parliament. The entity they are talking about was created by Parliament.

On this side of the House, we believe we need to fight climate, we believe in small and medium-sized businesses, and we believe we need to invest in clean technology to ensure a better future for our children.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill S-5, strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada act, received royal assent on June 13, 2023. This bill modernizes the Canadian Environmental Protection Act by recognizing the right to a healthy environment is provided under the act, strengthening Canada's chemicals management regime and increasing transparency in the way it is administered. Our government is working to implement the modernized act through several initiatives. There will be opportunities for public input and participation in these different initiatives.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change update this House on the implementation?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Cloverdale—Langley City for all the work that he did to advance the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. That is an implementation framework that will be developed within two years of the royal assent of Bill S-5.

Through robust engagement, with opportunities to continuously improve that framework, we are engaging with Canadians. Yesterday, a discussion document was published for public comment and feedback. Now Canadians from coast to coast to coast can provide feedback on the document during our 60-day public comment period between now and April 8.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everybody knows that my riding makes the best wine in Canada but January's extreme cold snap caused widespread damage to grape and fruit crops for the second year in a row. Some grape growers have experienced 100% loss of their vines.

On top of that, smoke taint from the now-annual forest fires continues to affect many vineyards. Without government help to replant their vines, many wineries could be forced to close.

Will the minister provide assistance to help B.C. grape growers and wineries survive climate change?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to grape growers in B.C. and across Canada. I know that in Nova Scotia, they have gone through climate change events. Obviously, this is a serious issue. We have been there to support the wine sector previously and we will continue to be there to support the wine sector in the future.

* * *

SPORT

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, with five former world junior players now formally charged with sexual assault, a dark cloud hangs over the sports so many of us love. One solution is anti-sexual violence training like that which the Sexual

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Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region has delivered to athletes since 2015.

Last year I, and others, advocated to reallocate the millions to Hockey Canada to fund this training, without success. This year, this government has another chance to step up and help root out the toxicity in hockey by funding this critical training and pushing Hockey Canada to do the same.

Will it do it?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to acknowledge the incredible strength, resilience and courage of athlete survivors across this country, who have come forward to tell their stories for a better sport system. How hockey has been governed in this country and the culture of sport and hockey are of great concern to all of us.

Our government takes allegations of abuse, maltreatment and sexual violence very seriously. That is why our government has launched the future of sport commission.

Sport is a power for good in this country and we will continue to make sure that sport does all the great work across the country that it can, while building a stronger, more resilient sport system.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1210)

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ) moved:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Science and Research, presented on Thursday, June 15, 2023, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak with my esteemed colleagues about a subject that is near and dear to my heart, namely science in French in Quebec and Canada, on the occasion of the publication of the report of the Standing Committee on Science and Research entitled “Revitalizing Research and Scientific Publication in French in Canada”. Part of that report reads as follows:

Considerable evidence shows that English is increasingly dominating research and scientific publication, both internationally and domestically. In recent decades...the vast majority of new scientific journals have been launched in English, and the proportion of scientific articles published in English has been increasing steadily in most scientific disciplines.

...

According to Acfas, from a global perspective:

[M]ore than half of all new journals created since the 1960s have been in English, and this percentage has risen to nearly 70% in recent years. French has been slowly declining, accounting for about 3% of new journals published in the last decade.

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...

As a result, French is losing ground in the sciences.

That is not the only problem that francophone researchers and academics are facing. When it comes to getting funding for research programs, the report states the following:

...the proportion of funding requests submitted to the three granting agencies—the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research—in French is significantly lower than the proportion of francophone researchers.

...

While Acfas estimated in 2021 that 21% of university professors and teaching assistants at the post-secondary level across Canada are francophones, in 2019 less than 15% of funding applications were submitted in French to SSHRC, with this number dropping to less than 10% for NSERC and less than 5% for CIHR. SSHRC receives more applications in French than the other two granting agencies, but the proportion of applications in French has been declining steadily since the late 1990s, dropping from roughly 25% in 1997 to under 15% in 2019.

According to 2016 census data, of the 21% of university professors and teaching assistants at the post-secondary level across Canada who are francophone, 5.8% of them work outside Quebec, and the vast majority, 72.5%, work in Quebec.

These researchers and professors work in anglophone, bilingual and francophone universities and post-secondary institutions across Canada. Institutions with post-secondary programs in French are not exclusively in Quebec.

In its 2021 report, Acfas identified 14 francophone or bilingual post-secondary institutions outside Quebec:

...

According to a report prepared for Canadian Heritage in 2021...21,825 people were studying in French in universities outside Quebec in 2018–19, and 10,518 people were studying in French in colleges outside Quebec.

Among them, scientists, researchers and academics “face a series of obstacles when they decide to conduct research and publish their findings in French.”

Francophone researchers, particularly those working in post-secondary institutions outside Quebec, also experience practical difficulties when working in French, because their institutions are often unable to provide the necessary...support.

...

Valérie Lapointe-Gagnon, a history professor...described the experience of francophone scholars working in minority communities as follows: “lacking recognition, financial support, administrative support and access to research assistants, we francophone researchers are all too often invisible and forced to reject our language and identity and dissolve into the anglophone mass.”

This lack of support is felt in various ways.

First...francophone researchers often have a heavier workload than their anglophone colleagues, as they must take on additional tasks, such as translating documents and engaging in interpretation, representation or communication activities.

According to a scientific study entitled “The manifold costs of being a non-native English speaker in science”, published in July 2023, researchers whose mother tongue is not English take, on average, 91% more time to read an article and 51% more time to write a paper. Their work is 2.6 times more likely to be rejected. Their studies take 12.5% more time to review, and they require 94% more time to prepare.

This drives home the many inequities and barriers that French-speaking researchers face when they work in a language other than their mother tongue.

• (1215)

In addition, 30% of non-English-speaking researchers decide not to attend conferences, and 50% decide not to give oral presentations on their work. These disadvantages inevitably lead to a tremendous inequality in the development of scientific careers between native and non-native English speakers and the severe underrepresentation of research from countries where English is not a primary language in publications. It should also be noted that researchers in minority communities lack the resources needed to carry out these tasks as well as their teaching and research work:

[They] must do more with less when considering the need to communicate and publish in French to fulfill their francophone vocation and in English to remain relevant to their colleagues and the broader scientific community.

According to Martin Normand, director of strategic research and international relations at the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne, francophone scientists “work on the periphery of the major research networks” and are often isolated: “colleagues who work in French on similar topics are [far away] and English-speaking colleagues do not always understand the research subject”.

The report of the Standing Committee on Science and Research states the following:

...francophone researchers in minority communities lack support to publish their research in French or to submit funding applications in French. In many cases, no one at their institution can help them prepare or reread their application. Even at major universities, research assistance services rarely have the resources to provide services to researchers in French. In addition, various stakeholders said there was a shortage of francophone graduate students at minority institutions because they do not have master’s and doctoral programs in French. Furthermore, ethics committees at institutions outside Quebec are not always able to assess research projects prepared in French.

Given these circumstances, many francophone researchers are left with no choice but to prepare their research projects and funding applications in English, even if the granting agencies give them the option of submitting them in French.

That is an unfair situation because, as Janice Bailey, scientific director of the Fonds de recherche du Québec, nature et technologies, mentioned, “writing scientifically in a language that is not your mother tongue...it’s a lot harder.” The dominant position of English in the existing scientific literature also explains why francophones submit applications in English: “[I]f the literature in a field is largely in English, it will be easier to write the funding application in that language.”

The report of the Standing Committee on Science and Research states the following:

Work published in French is not as well indexed in the international databases used to measure the number of times an article is cited in scientific literature. French-language publications are seen as less prestigious than English-language publications, which can affect a scientist’s career progression.

The success rate for applications submitted in French is lower than for those submitted in English. The whole situation has created mistrust on the part of French-speaking researchers. Evaluators assess their own level of bilingualism, and some do not even fully understand the French application they are reading. For example, the acceptance rate for funding applications to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research is 29% for those submitted in French, compared to 39% for those submitted in English. Those data were collected over a 15-year period, from 2001 to 2015. This translates into an inordinate level of funding for English-language research, relative to French-language research, that is not proportional to the population of English-speaking researchers.

There is also a concentration of funding for research projects in English. From 2019 to 2022, over 95% of research funding in Canada went to projects written in English. That is significant. Some \$8 billion has been allocated to research in English. For the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the proportion is 98%. For the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, it is 95%. For the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, it is 81%.

Jean-Pierre Perreault, president of Acfas, conducted a survey of 515 French-speaking researchers in Canada. Survey responses indicated that researchers “publish in English to reach a broader audience, to be cited more often, to have better chances of getting grants, and to advance their career”.

● (1220)

Many stakeholders highlighted the fact that choosing to work in English or French affects the career progression of researchers, particularly early in their careers.

For decades, the international community [and Canada have] used statistical indicators such as the impact factor to assess the quality of a scholarly journal. The impact factor is an index that estimates the visibility of a scholarly journal based on the number of times that articles it publishes are cited.

The Université du Québec à Rimouski explained that the higher the impact factor of a journal or article, the more the journal or article is considered to be of high quality and influential.

A journal's impact factor is often also used to indirectly assess the quality of a researcher's work. An article published in a journal with a higher impact factor is often assumed to be better than an article published in a journal with a smaller audience, even though this practice has long been discouraged.

Canada's three granting agencies are signatories to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, which sought to limit the use of impact factors in the scholarly research evaluation process. It is a shame that so much weight is still being given to this factor of prestige or this parameter and that this has so much influence on research funding in Canada.

Other indicators, such as the h-index, seek to measure the productivity and citation impact of a researcher's work based on how many times an article they publish is cited. These bibliometric indicators play a role in a researcher's career progression. Universities take them into account when they are recruiting or promoting professors or allocating funding.

In fact, “[t]he language in which a scientific article is published...has a significant influence on its impact factor, as it determines the number of readers reached and, as a result, the visibility and recognition of the scientific work.” Work published in French is generally cited less than work published in English....

This inadequate indexing puts journals that publish articles in French at a disadvantage compared with journals that publish articles in English. It also penalizes researchers who publish in French. As Marc Fortin [from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada] said, “When we focus on impact factors,

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there is a bias—I don't know if it's an unconscious bias—towards English-language journals.”

Yves Gingras, Professor of History and Sociology of Science [at the Université du Québec à Montréal], called this “linguistic rent.” As he explained, francophones have inherently less visibility than anglophones, which gives anglophones an advantage. It is a type of “Matthew effect,” wherein researchers who have already been recognized will subsequently receive more recognition than their due.

Richard Marcoux, Professor and Director of the Observatoire démographique et statistique de l'espace francophone at Université Laval, told the Committee that a number of studies show that, in the social sciences, researchers in anglophone institutions in Canada rarely cite research published in French by their colleagues:

The examples...show that two separate processes are developing within the linguistic spaces of journals and researchers, whether young or older, in Canada and Quebec. On the one hand, there are the researchers affiliated with francophone institutions who draw extensively from scientific publications in English. On the other hand, there are the researchers at anglophone institutions who ignore scientific publications in French.

Assessing research quality using quantitative indicators associated with the number of citations tends to penalize researchers who conduct their research and publish in French. Some francophone researchers choose to publish in English rather than French to avoid this type of bias.

Another reason some researchers choose to publish in English rather than French is to reach a wider international audience. Martine Lagacé, Associate Vice-President, Research Promotion and Development at the University of Ottawa, summarized the situation as follows:

...as a researcher, [she has] often decided to switch from French to English in [her] scientific production, although [she is] a francophile. [She] can see quite clearly that when [she publishes] in English, [she has] an impact that is not at all comparable to what [she] can have when [she publishes] in French, since there is a bigger pool of readers.

According to Benoit Sévigny, Director of Communications at the Fonds de recherche du Québec, the internationalization of research also plays a role in the drop in the number of articles published in French: “The percentage of Quebec publications jointly written by at least one scientist from another country went from 35% in 2000 to 60% in 2019.”

● (1225)

These points explain why many francophone researchers choose to publish their research in English for strategic reasons.

The marginalisation of French has a number of repercussions. Firstly, the dominance of English threatens the dissemination of scientific knowledge in French. Secondly, the domination of English could mean that local research topics are overlooked, particularly those relating to Canadian francophone communities themselves.

According to “Vincent Larivière and Jean-François Gaudreault-DesBiens, professors at the Université de Montréal, the proportion of academic journals published in English at the global level rose from 64% in 1995 to over 90% in 2019. During the same period, the proportion of articles published in French fell from just under 10% to 1%”.

While the increasing domination of English in science is a global phenomenon, Canada is in a unique position: in Canada, unlike in other officially multilingual countries such as Belgium or Switzerland, [people are drawn towards] English...one of the [two] official languages.

There is a difference here, however. In Quebec and Canada, given the dominance of English, this trend pushes us towards anglicization. English does not have the same weight here compared to other multilingual countries, so the effects are different.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2021 63.8% of the population in Canada spoke predominantly English at home, and 20% spoke predominantly French at home. The gradual marginalization of French in science could therefore upset the linguistic balance in Canada.

Privilege

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research...decided to undertake a study on research and scientific publication in French, both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada.

As part of this study, the Committee heard evidence [some of which I quoted today] on the status of French in science and the challenges facing francophone scientists in Canada. Witnesses also identified courses of action that would revitalize research and scientific publication in French.

Based on the evidence heard, the Committee made 17 recommendations to the government.

I will not have time to talk about all 17 of the recommendations, but I will talk about those that I think are the most important.

Here is one of the recommendations: “That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, develop and fund a Canada-wide strategy for supporting research and publication in French, in partnership with federal institutions, [Quebec,] the provinces and territories, universities and colleges, and other stakeholders.”

In another recommendation, the committee recommends that Canada's granting agencies discontinue the use of assessment criteria like “bibliometrics such as the impact factor” and that they introduce “weighting mechanisms to more accurately recognize research conducted or published in French.”

The committee also recommends that “the granting agencies, namely the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research” evaluate the language proficiency of the peers who assess these funding requests.

I would remind members that, currently, the people who sit on these committees self-report their proficiency. Someone who took 12 hours of French in college may think they are able to understand the language well enough and recognize scientific terms, but that is not always the case.

Here is another recommendation: “That the Government of Canada, through the granting agencies, invest in translation support services in both official languages for use by researchers.”

Another key recommendation involves open access. There are platforms for disseminating knowledge in French. One such platform, which is wonderful, is called Érudit. To ensure that we encourage the transmission of knowledge in French, we must provide financial support for platforms like Érudit.

To wrap up, I would like to say that a lot of work has gone into the publication of this report. I would also point out that it has taken 60 years, but Bill C-13, which was passed and seeks to modernize the Official Languages Act, finally recognizes the value of scientific publication in French. There is still a lot of work to be done. I invite my colleagues to read the report of the advisory panel on the federal research support system, which was commissioned by the government and seeks to increase the presence and influence of French in scientific research and publication in Canada.

● (1230)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED INSUFFICIENCY AND INACCURACY OF RESPONSES TO ORDER PAPER QUESTIONS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to my colleague for interrupting his questions. I hope it gives members of the government and the opposition an opportunity to come up with better questions to ask him when I am done.

However, I rise on a question of privilege related to written Question Nos. 2068, 2069 and 2070, which I submitted on December 7, 2023.

I ask that you look at the following three pieces of evidence when you review my request. First, I ask that you look at the questions I submitted to the government. Second, I ask that you look at the answers the government provided to my questions. Third, I ask that you also look at the procedural aspects of this question, what procedural experts have said about the matter and the troubling precedent being set with regard to written questions. I hope you will find that the government's treatment of written questions calls into question its respect for the rights of parliamentarians to seek information on behalf of their constituents and on behalf of all Canadians.

You will note that my three questions deal with Canadian foreign policy, specifically with regard to the long-standing conflict in Israel and Palestine. While this is, of course, an issue of serious debate in Canada, my question of privilege is not meant to debate the crisis and the potential genocide in Gaza but to raise serious concerns about the government's refusal to provide answers to clear questions raised by my constituents and Canadians across the country. I believe that the government is not meeting its responsibilities towards parliamentarians in its handling of written questions.

I first turn to the response I received to written Question No. 2068. I asked a question on the export of military goods and technology to Israel. My question included 22 very specific sub-questions, as is the norm for written questions. I will not read the entire question to the House since you can find it in previous Order Papers; however, I will give some examples of the level of specificity of the sub-questions.

For example, I asked:

“has [Global Affairs Canada] reviewed its assessment on export permits to Israel in light of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the situation in the West Bank; has [Global Affairs Canada] identified any serious violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law since October 7, 2023; in [Global Affairs Canada]'s analysis, do the deaths of [at the time] over 6,500 children and 4,000 women amount to serious violence against women and children?”

Of course the number has now doubled to over 12,000 children.

Instead of a response to my specific question, I received a boilerplate, cut-and-paste response. Furthermore, and I raise this with great concern, the answer contradicts information in the 2022 report on the export of military goods, tabled in the House, which clearly states that there were 199 export permits for military goods and technology to Israel that year and 315 export permits used that year. More than \$21 million in military goods and technology were exported to Israel from Canada in the year preceding the 2022 report, yet the response to my Question No. 2068 did not mention any of these.

The answer, further, contradicts information Global Affairs Canada has provided to *The Globe and Mail*, in which it admitted that Canada has sent non-lethal military goods, which appears to be a euphemism for military-grade parts and components that comprised very lethal systems and that may require export permits.

I wonder why the information provided by the government to my written question contradicted information it has provided in a report to the House and to the media. The government has the responsibility to provide the House with accurate information. What explains these discrepancies in the response to my question?

As you will see, I asked specific questions to which there are specific answers. These questions are of the highest importance to Canadians at a time when tens of thousands of people are calling for an arms export ban against Israel. I remind you and the House that, for years, New Democrats have sought details on Canadian arms exports, whether it be to Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia or, recently, to Kyrgyzstan and onwards to Russia. We have very little information available to us as parliamentarians to investigate the many loopholes in the arms export system.

In its response to my Question No. 2068, the government states that Canada has one of the most rigorous export control systems in the world, which is a talking point we have heard for many years but which does not match the reality. This is why I asked these specific questions.

• (1235)

The government has claimed for years that it has a rigorous export control system, but we see at every occasion that it does not. There are loopholes everywhere. There are political choices being made, such as what we saw with the recent Turkey decision last week, and what we are now seeing with Israel, where the Arms Trade Treaty and the substantial risk of human rights violations is only applied in some cases and not in all cases. We have no way to evaluate this without a fulsome response to our written questions.

Unlike what happens in the United States, Canadian parliamentarians do not have oversight of export goods and technology. Despite our election to the House, we do not have more information than the average person on the street. The government clearly does not want us to know what is being exported, to whom and for what purpose, and that is evident in the response provided to me for Question No. 2068.

If we are to fix this broken system, then we need the proper information to do so, which is why my question is so important to have been answered and why the government's response is clearly a breach of my privilege as a parliamentarian. These are the most

Privilege

crucial conversations that we need to have as a country, and the government is deliberately avoiding those hard conversations by refusing to answer my question.

I will turn to Question No. 2069, which asked a series of specific questions about the government's policy toward the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, and I will remind members that my question was submitted to the government prior to South Africa's submission to the ICJ alleging possible genocide in Gaza by the Government of Israel and prior to the ICJ finding a genocide case against Israel as "plausible" and ordering six provisional measures, including for Israel to refrain from acts under the genocide convention, prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to genocide and take immediate and effective measures to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza.

My written question was divided into 10 sub-questions, which is the norm for written questions. Again, I will not read the entire question, but will give some examples. I asked:

how many states does the government accept are parties to the ICC;

...what motivated Canada to submit its views opposing the ICJ's advisory proceedings on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in East Jerusalem; and

...prior to submitting its opposition to the ICJ's advisory opinion, did government officials hold meetings with other states to coordinate efforts to oppose the case at the ICJ?

Again the government has not answered several of these sub-questions. Instead, it provided the same language it has used in its public statements. I am not looking for the same language as its public statements. I am looking for specific answers to specific questions that many Canadians have.

Turning to my third question, this question dealt with the very complex issue of international law with regard to Israel and Palestine and the government's interpretation of that law in determining its foreign policy toward the region. This question included 18 sub-questions. Again, this is the norm.

Once again, I will not read the question. However, can the Speaker believe that, instead of engaging seriously with these 18 sub-questions, the government instead provided the exact same response to Question No. 2070 as it did to Question No. 2069? There is no difference. The questions are completely different, with completely different sub-questions, and the government chose to copy and paste the same answer to both questions.

Privilege

Again, my questions were submitted before South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. One would think that, since the horrendous attack on October 7, the war on Gaza and the resulting South Africa case against Israel on the question of genocide, Canada would be engaging thoughtfully with questions of international law, yet these answers do not engage with the difficult questions I raised. Rather, it seems the government is trying to avoid engaging its international legal responsibilities entirely and is instead hiding behind vague public statements that have no real substance.

As the Speaker can see, I asked specific questions, and there are specific answers that need to be provided. Someone in Global Affairs Canada knows the answers to these questions. Certainly, the minister and her staff must have the answers to these questions. The government has made absolutely no effort to answer my questions in good faith, but these questions are not just questions on paper. They go to the heart of the government and the responsibility the government holds.

• (1240)

What I mean by this is that the government must recognize its responsibilities under international law, including conventions and treaties it is signed on to. The government has a responsibility to explain how it interprets international law in complex cases, such as Israel and Palestine. It is my responsibility as a parliamentarian to hold the government to account and to ensure that Canadians are getting the information that they are entitled to, using the tools that I have available to me.

Canadians are asking me every day for information on how the government is interpreting international law with regard to the war and the potential genocide in Gaza. I have received more than a quarter of a million emails from Canadians expressing their outrage at the government's position. First, the reluctance to call for a ceasefire; next, its refusal to support South Africa's case; then cuts to life-saving humanitarian assistance through UNRWA; and now its reluctance to call on the United States and Israel to end this war.

In the absence of clear answers from the government, as my letters go unanswered, my questions in the House go unanswered, my calls on social media go unanswered and my questions in committee go unanswered, written questions are one of the few tools I have to understand the government's position and to engage with that position on behalf of Canadians. The government will surely claim that it answered some of my sub-questions and that my dissatisfaction is merely a matter of opinion.

I am not asking you to judge the quality or lack thereof of this. What I am asking you to do today, Mr. Speaker, is rule that the government's refusal to answer most of the sub-questions in my written question constitutes a violation of my rights as a member of Parliament.

According to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, page 517, the purpose of written questions is, "written questions are placed after notice on the Order Paper with the intent of seeking from the Ministry detailed, lengthy or technical information relating to "public affairs".

In chapter 7 of the November 2004 report entitled "Process for Responding to Parliamentary Order Paper Questions" the Auditor General wrote, "The right to seek information from the Ministry of the day and the right to hold that Ministry accountable are recognized as two of the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy."

Written questions are one of the tools that Canadians, via their elected representatives, can use to force the government to be accountable. Mr. Speaker, I hope you will consider this matter seriously and recognize that it involves a *prima facie* breach of my privileges as a member of Parliament.

The government has the answers to my questions. It could have responded to my questions as I asked them and with the transparency that Canadians deserve, but it has not. I believe this constitutes a breach. I would like to refer to the Speaker's ruling from December 16, 1980, found on page 5797 of the House of Commons Debates where the Speaker states, "It would be bold to suggest that no circumstances could ever exist for a *prima facie* question of privilege to be made where there was a deliberate attempt to deny answers to an hon. member."

I would also refer to the 21st edition of Erskine May, which describes contempt as:

any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of their duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results, may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

I would like to emphasize the word "omission" and I would like to finish. Again, these questions are important to Canadians. In order to do my job as a parliamentarian and to hold the government to account, I need the proper information that I am entitled to.

Mr. Speaker, I am simply asking that you examine my three questions, look at the responses provided by the minister and reach a decision. If you find a *prima facie* case that my parliamentary privileges have been breached, I will move the appropriate motion in due course.

• (1245)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for raising this question of privilege. The points that she raised are important points.

The more I am in this chair, the more I am seeing some similarities to other points raised by members of Parliament. Currently, there is a point of order that is similar to this that was just raised last week. I will get back to the House with a determination on the matters that were raised.

[Translation]

Questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his speech and for his commitment to defending French, science and technology. We sat together on the same committee and found that virtually nothing prevents researchers from publishing in their mother tongue or in French.

I would like my colleague to explain why some researchers, whether French-speaking or bilingual, may choose to publish their work in English internationally. I would also like him to talk about access to the international market, where researchers may find greater openness if they publish in English, even for francophones from Quebec.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge my colleague from Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation's work in committee. We studied this issue thoroughly. Some people, especially my anglophone colleagues, were not aware of the problem.

My colleague makes an interesting point. We understand that the federal government can hardly reverse global dynamics. It is true that researchers in certain fields are increasingly likely to publish their scientific papers in English. However, where the federal government is failing is when it continues to force Canadian francophones to submit funding applications in English. Why is that? It is because of the evaluation structure. Because of the so-called impact factors, scientific research papers or publications in French have no value whatsoever. That creates a form of discrimination against francophones from the get-go.

What is more, the approval rates for funding applications submitted in English are higher than for those submitted in French. If the federal government does not want to address the entire issue, it should at least stop interfering and getting involved in education, which is an exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and Quebec.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have attended several Acfas conferences, where francophone researchers from across Canada and Quebec share information vital to the future of applied sciences and several other sectors. It is extremely important that the federal government understand the importance of funding research in French in equal measure to research in English.

In British Columbia, the province I represent, we have a growing number of francophones. The percentage of francophones continues to increase. There are more and more people doing research there.

Does my colleague agree that it is important to provide funding for research in French and that it is just as important for that funding to be available across Canada?

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I worked closely with Acfas, and I salute them for everything they do.

What this committee report tells us is that there is currently an inequity between francophones and anglophones when it comes to

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the granting of research funding in Canada and the obligation to submit funding applications in English.

One of the reasons why doing research in French is important is the need for local relevance. As researcher Frédéric Bouchard mentioned, in physics, a neutrino is a neutrino, whether one speaks English or Portuguese. However, let us take as an example the school drop-out rates in Rouyn-Noranda or Rimouski. If we want research to be effectively implemented, it needs to be accessible to the predominantly French-speaking local community. Doing research in French is important because it is directly linked to the potential positive impacts of that research. It can address issues that certain communities face depending on what language they speak.

Again, I think the picture is pretty clear. As I mentioned, French-speaking researchers doing research in English have additional steps to go through. It is more difficult and it takes longer. They are also penalized when it comes to the granting of funding.

● (1250)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to congratulate my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his excellent speech and his dedication to the French language. He mentioned a lot of figures, including the percentage of funding allocated to French-language research funds compared to English-language research funds. I think it was something like 95% for English. It reminds me of official language funding in Quebec, where 94% goes to support English.

Can the member tell us what he thinks is the cause of this imbalance, this inequity?

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, it is quite simple.

The federal government currently has a structure in place that gives preference to English-language research both in terms of funding and in terms of the evaluation criteria, which assign more weight to research and scientific papers published in English. It starts from there, and the funding follows the same pattern.

Another issue is that the federal government undermines francophones who do research in French. It has to be said. Canada, from what I understand, is supposed to be a bilingual country. However, in science, French and English are not on an equal footing.

When people ask me whether doing science in French is important, I reply that the biggest language crisis in Canada is in science. It is not only at the Tim Hortons on Sainte-Catherine Street in Montreal.

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[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment my hon. colleague on his work in our science and research committee. He is a very strong advocate for research. He and I have been pressing the Liberal government to provide more sufficient support, especially for graduate students. That is not what I am going to ask him about today. We are talking about a different subject, but I wanted to thank him for that work.

He claimed, in his speech, that the funding rates for francophones were lower than for anglophones, but in the report, there is conflicting data that shows that the percentage of francophone applicants asking for money from the tri-council is actually higher, in all cases, than for English applicants.

I am wondering if he could comment on the source of that conflicting information. It looks like, to me, francophones do very well in funding applications.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, I salute my fellow member of the Standing Committee on Science and Research.

I think we can agree on a few things. I know exactly what he is talking about. I would suggest that he look at the proportion of francophones who apply for funding in French compared to English.

It is fine to say that 75% of francophone researchers in Canada qualify for Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council funding, but let us take a look at the facts. I have the numbers here: Only 5% to 12% of funding applications are written in French, even though 21% of researchers in Canada are francophone. That means that 50% of francophone researchers in Canada apply for funding in English. They do it because it is easier to get approved.

What the report says is true. For the three granting agencies, funding rates are higher for requests in French, but that is not representative of the proportion of francophone researchers. Francophones in Canada are forced to apply for funding in English in the hope of obtaining funding.

• (1255)

[English]

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I quite enjoyed my colleague's speech and learning a little more about this study. I know that it was mentioned that there are probably a lot of anglophones in the chamber who do not understand the unique problem that francophone researchers face across Canada and, of course, in the province of Quebec.

I have to say that, upon reviewing the committee's report and the government's response, the issue is becoming very interesting indeed. Our government has responded with the actions it will take. I will get into that a little later. I also want to thank the committee for diving into the subject matter. I think it has done good work, shining a light on the matter. I would like to thank the chair, the member for Guelph, who did exceptional work with all the other members to produce this report. In doing so, they made 17 different recommendations in the report.

The report does find that evidence shows English has increasingly dominant usage in scientific publications, both internationally and domestically, here in Canada. In recent decades, in Canada, the vast majority of new scientific journals have been launched in English, and the proportion of scientific articles published in English has been increasing steadily in most scientific disciplines.

As a result, French is losing ground in the sciences, so I can see why this is of great concern, and should be, to all Canadians who value our bilingual country and the position that French holds. For example, the proportion of funding requests submitted to the three granting agencies—

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques on a point of order.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, it is very obvious that this government does not give a flying fig about French. We have the proof right here: We are debating the issue of research and scientific publication in French, and the government sends a unilingual anglophone member who cannot even say a single word in French. I think that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): The member knows that this is debate. That is not a point of order.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, members should be reminded that we are all entitled to speak the official language of our choice in the House. That applies to every member of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): Again, that is not a point of order.

The hon. member for Brampton North.

[English]

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member raises this as he is fighting for French researchers to be recognized in this country, which is bilingual. It was also mentioned that anglophones in the House should take interest in the subject matter, and I am stating that I am very interested in protecting French in this country and in making sure that our French researchers and scientists get the funding and the credit they do deserve. I hope they do not feel this pressure, which I know is growing globally and internationally, to submit their funding requests in English, or even then after to publish their work in English, which we are seeing increasingly done.

I have a great respect for the French language, and I am working on my French, but that still does not stop me or hold me back from taking an interest in this matter.

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What the committee found and saw was that, according to census data in 2016, 21% of university professors and teaching assistants at the post-secondary level across Canada are francophones, and I think that is good. However, these scientists face a series of obstacles when they decide to conduct research and to publish their findings in French, which is not so good.

Work published in French is not as well indexed in the international databases used to measure the number of times an article is cited in scientific literature. French language publications are seen as less prestigious than English language publications, which can affect a scientist's career and progression. In addition, there is a perception that funding applications are less likely to be approved if they are submitted to the granting agencies in French.

Of course, this is quite concerning, and as some members have pointed out, there was different evidence brought forward to the committee, which was not made quite clear at times, as to whether researchers are finding that funding requests cannot be made in English. However, the committee took the study very seriously, and based on all the evidence it heard, it came to 17 different recommendations.

Those 17 different recommendations have been looked at by our Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, and he has also written a public response to the committee and to the House as to what the government's commitments are in order to enhance the vitality of the French language in Canada's francophone communities, both in Quebec and in French-speaking official language minority communities across Canada.

The minister has pointed out that the government is committed to supporting science and research that creates new knowledge and that generates impact for Canadians and the world, and it recognizes the important roles French-speaking researchers and institutions play in science and research in the ecosystem in Canada. It is important for the government to continue to work hard in this area so that we can foster potential and global collaborations to address common challenges, including many researchers who are doing excellent work in the area of climate change.

Research needs are increasingly complex: collaborative, multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and international. The government knows that Canada's federal research supports must continue to evolve in order to maintain Canada's research strength. That is why the government has launched the advisory panel on the federal research support system to provide independent expert advice on enhancing the federal systems supporting research and talent.

As reaffirmed in budget 2023, the government remains committed to carefully considering the panel's recommendations, including its calls to improve support for francophone research and to ensure the equitable treatment of research funding applications submitted in French within the federal research support system. The government is acknowledging this. The panel has also advised this, and the committee has made recommendations.

• (1300)

The minister has read through all of those recommendations and is working on implementing all of the 17 recommendations that have been mentioned.

The government extends its gratitude to the members of the committee, as do I, for the work they have put into improving our assistance.

The response to the committee's report and recommendations is the product of a collaboration between Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and of course Canadian Heritage Canada, Health Canada, Global Affairs Canada, the Office of the Chief Science Advisor of Canada, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The committee's report affects all those different departments and agencies in collaborating and doing the work that is needed to make sure that francophone researchers can flourish within Canada and make a name for themselves on the global stage.

One of the areas that has been highlighted is the contributions to research. I think the contributions are great, especially in the area of climate change, where a lot of innovative work has been done. We value, as a government, the role that francophone researchers play, that institutions and communities play, and their important contributions to Canada's research and science ecosystem. Canada is a world leader in science and research and it is critical that the federal programs acknowledge the contributions of francophone researchers and institutions in knowledge creation.

The government acknowledges the committee's recommendations to review the criteria and procedures used by Canada's federal granting agencies to assess research excellence in the context of allocating funding, including by discontinuing the use of bibliometrics, such as the impact factor, and introducing weighing mechanisms to better recognize research conducted and published in French. The procedures and criteria used to assess research contributions are critical to the success of the federal research support system. That is why, aligned with global best practices, Canada's federal research granting agencies, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, are working to assess the use of bibliometrics, such as the impact factor and research funding assessment criteria. They are each introducing new approaches to better reflect and recognize the diverse contributions of Canada's research community to knowledge creation and mobilization, including by researchers in Quebec and French-speaking official language minority communities across Canada.

This is really important, as making sure that we recognize the work that is done by all language communities, both French- and English-language communities in our country, only helps to continue to keep Canada as a leader on the world stage when it comes to science and research. I know that it is so important in order to be able to drive innovation and creation, and create jobs here, and globally, in so many areas.

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I learned the other day that, in brain research, Canada is third in the world globally. These things matter. I know they often matter to Canadians when they are helping a sick loved one find a cure for so many ailments that have become more rare these days. It is this funding in research that is going to get us to a point where we can have success and live longer and healthier lives.

The government also recognizes, and what has been brought up here today, the concerns that have been mentioned when it comes to the grant funding applications, that Canadians have a right to access federal programs and services in their first official language, including when researchers engage with the federal research support system. The government acknowledges the committee's recommendation that Canada's granting agencies should work to encourage researchers to submit funding applications in French.

• (1305)

Researchers can access programs and services of the federal research support system in the official language of their choice, and the granting agencies offer all submission, evaluation and administrative service to applicants in both French and English. The granting agencies encourage applicants to submit their applications in their preferred official language. Researchers are free to choose their preferred official language for communication and accessing granting agency programs, including funding applications.

In keeping with its commitment to DORA, some NSERC programs will begin using narrative format applications, allowing researchers to describe their contribution to research, training and mentoring in writing. NSERC expects that this change will benefit French language researchers whose research contributions may not be well captured by bibliometrics alone, encouraging the greater use of French in funding applications.

That is one of the ways that has been outlined by the government in acknowledging the recommendations that have been made and making a commitment to address the concerns that have been raised by members in the House.

I would also like to point out that the government acknowledges the committee's recommendations that the granting agencies publicly report on the proportion of funding applications submitted in French and ensure that the success rate of these applications is fair. The granting agencies are working to understand how best to collect and share information about applications and funding awards. For example, SSHRC publishes data on application and award rates for French and English applications in its annual report on competitions. This data allows for monitoring of trends, which may indicate the challenges in the wider research ecosystem, and analysis of this data are regularly examined by SSHRC's governing council. This is a good step in the right direction.

Official languages is also considered in the context of program evaluations, including a research umbrella evaluation of granting agency talent programs, which examined official languages as a variable within the population of graduate students accessing funding. Data from SSHRC shows that across its programs, the share of funding awards given to applications submitted in French is comparable with the share of all applications submitted in French, indicating that the agency is working towards a fairer, more equitable mer-

it review process. That is another way that we are trying to address this concern.

One of the other key areas that is important is support for French-language researchers, institutions and communities themselves. The government recognizes the importance of programs that support French language researchers, their institutions and their communities, and we are investing to advance linguistic equity and duality in research and science.

The government is committed to taking action to improve access to resources that help make research and scientific knowledge in French more accessible, including examining the committee's recommendation that it continue funding for SARF. Established by Acfas in 2022 to establish a national service providing post-secondary researchers with assistance in French to support the development and vitality of research in French in Canada.

Another area is scientific publications in French. The communication and mobilization of knowledge are a critical part of the work of researchers and research institutions. The government acknowledges the committee's recommendations calling for financial support for scientific publication in French and for French-language and bilingual scholarly journals, and for the development of measures to encourage the bilingual scholarly journals that they fund to increase the percentage of articles they publish in French. This is a good step toward having access to more French scientific articles in Canada, and the access would go around the world as well.

• (1310)

The granting agencies support scholarly publications and journals in both French and English. For example, SSHRC funds scholarly publications through the aid to scholarly journals grant, which supports Canadian scholarly communication by helping journals to offset the costs associated with publishing scholarly articles, digital publishing and journal distribution on Canadian not-for-profit platforms. These grants will help increase the dissemination, discoverability and readership of original research results in the social sciences and humanities through Canadian scholarly journals, encouraging the transition of journals to open access models for publishing. This is also a good step in the right direction.

In conclusion, there has been a willingness, and much has already been done in the area, to make sure that we can continue to support our academic institutions, our researchers and our professors. This support includes access to official-language data, enhancing access to scientific information in French and support for research and publication in French. These steps are going to continue to improve the situation for French researchers in Canada.

Some work has also been done in the international student exchange, which will be of benefit. I hear the concern, and I am starting to understand it more and more. I know that the government is well aware of the concern and doing its utmost to make sure that science and research get the funding they deserve and that French-language researchers, in particular, are not penalized through the systems that we have created here in Canada.

● (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Brampton North on her speech.

I want to come back to my point of order. This is something that I care deeply about. I want to tell her that I did not mean to offend her, but I was rather surprised that, when the subject was about a specific language, the speaker did not speak that language. I like that she is open-minded and interested in French in science and scientific publications in Canada.

If we are having this debate today, it is because there is a problem. I repeat that 95% of the funding for research in Canada goes to English research, and 50% of French researchers apply for funding in English when they make up just over 20% of researchers.

As my colleague mentioned, there is a lot of goodwill, but why is no action being taken? I have participated in many conferences and activities, and I was the only federal MP there. There were no government representatives in attendance.

Bill C-13, which has passed and modernizes the Official Languages Act, recognizes the value of scientific research in French. After 60 years, this had to be included in the legislation when it was modernized. The goal is to support the creation and dissemination of scientific information in French.

The member also mentioned the report of the advisory panel on the federal research support system, commonly known as the Bouchard report, which aims to support the dissemination of knowledge in French.

Since that report was released in June 2023, and since the modernization of the Official Languages Act, which recognizes the presence of French in science, can my colleague tell me what concrete action the federal government has taken to restore true equality between French and English in science?

[English]

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, the number of steps taken is really unprecedented by any government. I continue to say I understand the concern, but the government also has to understand the concern, and the Official Languages Act has been modernized by the government after a very long time.

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Funding has also been put in place. I would like to specifically mention, in budget 2023, the government provided new funding of up to \$128 million for minority-language post-secondary education over four years. The investment is a part of an action plan for official languages. The government's approach to modernizing the Official Languages Act has included a commitment to strengthening opportunities for members of the OLMC to engage in quality learning. There have been so many areas, formal and informal settings, in their own language throughout their lives, from early childhood to post-secondary education.

Budget 2021 also made a big commitment to increasing funding available for official languages, including for post-secondary education in minority languages by \$121 million over three years, and the list goes on.

We are really putting our money where our mouth is, and taking the actions and steps necessary to make sure that official languages are respected in this country.

● (1320)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague across the way mentioned, this is a global situation where the vast majority of scientific research is now published in English. It has become the *lingua franca* of science in the world. There is very little we can do about that trend in Canada. However, what we can do is support francophone researchers in their work, so that Canadians who want to work in French can do their research in French and can apply for federal funding in French and get the support they need.

One of the recommendations was to have an office within the scientific advisory for the government. Dr. Mona Nemer could have a francophone office under her that could really keep an eye on this situation, find ways to monitor the situation and find ways to make sure francophone researchers get their support.

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I hear that she will be coming before committee to make a presentation as to her thoughts on this. I think it is a good suggestion. I agree with the member that there is a global trend that is difficult for Canada to stop. However, it is about being able to provide equitable choice here in Canada. I do feel strongly about making sure that the choice is not a fake choice, but that the choice is real, and those researchers and scientists who wish to publish their material in French get every opportunity to do so.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always good to see you in the chair. Thank you for that.

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I also want to thank the hon. chief government whip for her speech and her open-mindedness on this issue.

Earlier, the member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation mentioned the importance of having the choice to publish papers in either language, French or English.

The problem is that there are very few scientific publications in French, and the few that exist disappear one after the other.

I would like to ask the hon. whip if the continuously decreasing number of French-language scientific publications is cause for concern in her view. Should the government try to address this?

[English]

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I do realize that the decline is real. Of course, I do not have the exact number in front of me right now, but even in my speech, I did acknowledge that. The funding has been put toward post-secondary education in the French language, and also toward journals and being able to digitize those journals, and have support and funding for translation so this material can be made available for those who wish to have it in French.

I think the concern is real and the government is trying its hardest to address it. Of course, it is a challenge that I know francophones face, not just in Canada, but around the world.

[Translation]

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate my colleague for her very nice speech, even if it was in English.

I will mention that I have sat on the Standing Committee on Science and Research since its inception.

● (1325)

[English]

We have studied this tremendously.

However, she said something that really struck a chord with me. She said that the more non-French-speaking people can recognize that this is an issue for publications in French, the better we will be, as Canadians, at promoting more bilingualism and more publications in both English and French. I very much appreciate her perspective on that. Could she comment a little bit more on it?

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I think it is extremely important to make sure that all Canadians can understand why we value French in Canada. It is important for all issues. It is why, on committees that are studying these types of issues, we want to have a cross-section and diversity around the table. In this way, we can come up with good solutions and create awareness for members of Parliament from coast to coast to coast. Then we will not just let our francophone members fight this battle, but we can all fight this battle together and make sure there is no deterioration of the French language in Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate on the concurrence motion regarding the report from the Standing Committee on Science and Research, “Revitalizing Research and Scientific Publication in French in Canada”.

A fun fact about me is that my maiden name is Godin. My father and our family anglicized us. As an anglicized child, I feel very strongly about the importance of accessing French language training and the preservation of the French language in Canada.

I just want to draw from the supplementary opinion to this report, written by the Bloc Québécois, and read two lines into the record:

However, the Bloc Québécois feels that the report does not go far enough and does not fully respond to Quebec's demands in terms of research and education.... The Bloc Québécois believes that the most obvious remedy to this problem is for the federal government to withdraw completely from this field of activity, while granting Quebec the means to assume these responsibilities.

The problem is the funding of research in French and access to French language research projects, etc.

With regard to the line that says the report “does not fully respond to Quebec's demands in terms of research and education”, I note one of the Quebec government's most recent demands. I will read from an article from True North news by an author named Elie Cantin-Nantel. The title of the article is “Quebec higher education minister denounces EDI practices in letter to universities”.

This whole situation started to arise in March 2022. This is an article from the Canadian Press: “Quebec university criticized for job posting that excludes white men”. That is a headline from a CTV article.

It says, “Ministers in Francois Legault's government took exception on Wednesday to a call for candidates from Laval University that they consider exaggerated and even discriminatory.” This relates to a funded research position from the Canada research chair program.

In response to this issue, the Quebec government went so far as to pass a motion in the National Assembly on December 7, 2022. A National Post article said that the motion “expresse[d] a commitment to merit-based hiring on university campuses and reject[ed] the imposition of racial or gender quotas by the federal government.”

I guess I am just wondering if, in the supplemental report, where the Bloc says that the report “does not fully respond to Quebec's demands in terms of research and education”, that line is, in fact, referring to this recent motion that was put forward in the National Assembly regarding calls for merit-based hiring, particularly when it comes to Canada research chairs.

The Bloc has called for, essentially, a devolution of research funding—

● (1330)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-320, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (disclosure of information to victims), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): There being no amendment motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC) moved that Bill C-320, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (disclosure of information to victims), be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Colin Carrie moved that Bill C-320, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (disclosure of information to victims) be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleagues from all parties for speaking in support of this bill at first and second readings, voting unanimously in support of Bill C-320 at second reading and voting unanimously in support at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, without amendments.

I would also like to thank more than 5,000 of my Oshawa constituents for having made the time to support this important home-grown local effort. The response to this bill in my constituency and across Durham Region is impressive and has surprised me. Even more impressive is the support for the bill from across Canada. We have received positive comments and support from places far away from Oshawa, places including Abbotsford, Wainwright, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Churchill, Thunder Bay, Cornwall, Essex County, Chicoutimi, Montreal, Shediac, Summerside, Antigonish and Labrador.

It is clear that there is a huge appetite across the land for change and reform of our justice system. This bill is a small but significant step in achieving our shared goal.

I am also grateful to my Senate colleague, the hon. Pierre Boisvenu, a survivor himself, for his continued support and counsel and, most of all to my constituent and survivor, Lisa Freeman. Lisa's very personal and decades-long story is the inspiration for this bill. Lisa Freeman is the author of the 2016 book *She Won't Be Silenced*, "The story of my father's murder and my struggle to find justice within the Parole Board of Canada".

After years of fighting to have her family's voice heard as decisions were made about parole and the passage of information concerning the killer's movements inside Canada's correctional system, Lisa petitioned the federal government to amend the charter of rights for victims of crime and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. For more than two decades, she has urged Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board of Canada to provide victims

Private Members' Business

of violent crime with a more timely disclosure on the movement of incarcerated individuals within the federal prison system. She has also urged the Parole Board to provide victims' families with open access to the parole process, which has shut out Ms. Freeman and her family's participation on several occasions in recent years.

As I have stated before, this bill is intended to help families who are plunged into unfathomable situations, demoralized and retraumatized by the actions of the Parole Board of Canada and Correctional Service Canada. All too often we hear senior officials at these institutions say they are supportive of victims of crime, a view that often does not hold up in practice. As parliamentarians, this bill allows the opportunity to help them in that support.

As an example of how victims are retraumatized due to the lack of information, allow me to remind you a bit about Lisa Freeman's story. Ms. Freeman's late father, Roland Slingerland, an Oshawa resident and veteran of the Royal Canadian Navy, was bludgeoned to death by an axe murderer in 1991 at the downtown Oshawa rooming house in which he worked as a custodian. He left behind his wife and three daughters. Upon conviction in 1992, Mr. Slingerland's killer was sentenced to life in prison, with no possibility of parole for 25 years. However, to the shock of Lisa and her family, the killer was granted escorted absences from prison and became eligible for day parole in February 2012, many years ahead of the end of his court-ordered sentence. Worse still, it was only after the killer moved to another correctional facility outside Ontario, just 10 kilometres from her sister's home, that Freeman and her family were notified. "In the prison, security in no way matches the severity of the crimes committed by these wicked individuals", Lisa told the media at the time. "When my father's axe murderer was sentenced in 1992, he received a life sentence." Contrast that with the 1992's Toronto Sun headline that read, "Hatchet killer jailed for life". We now know that that headline and the killer's sentence were a cruel joke on Lisa and her family.

● (1335)

Would members believe that her father's killer would enjoy the luxuries he has today at a halfway house? He is able to get a job; he is able to own a car; he has a roof over his head and has meals catered by an in-house chef. Most Canadians do not live as well as Roland Slingerland's axe murderer. While it is supposed to be the job of the correctional services parole board to ensure that dangerous offenders are kept locked up, it is clear that families are not receiving full disclosure from our federal agencies, but our systems are failing victims.

Private Members' Business

The aim of Bill C-320 is twofold. First, it would amend current federal laws to better meet the needs of victims of crime by providing timely and accurate information to victims upon the sentencing of an officer or an offender while also avoiding the false comfort of misleading parole eligibility dates. Second, it would ensure that victims of crime are provided with improved transparency and passage of information from Correctional Service Canada concerning the movements of an individual within the prison system and would also ensure that the Parole Board of Canada cannot arbitrarily deny victims' participation at parole hearings.

For too long, this country's justice system has put the rights of violent offenders ahead of their victims and survivors. That is altogether backward. Bill C-320 would aim to turn the tide. It would give victims and survivors greater transparency of information concerning an incarcerated individual's movement within our federal correction system and during the parole process. We must level the playing field for victims of violent crime.

Lisa believes, and I agree, that a lack of transparency regarding how parole dates and eligibility are determined cause the victims of crime to experience confusion, frustration, trauma and resentment, sadly, for the justice system. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that victims of crime are treated with the utmost respect and dignity. This legislation would make a simple amendment to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act that would provide just a little more respect and dignity for these families and survivors.

Bill C-320 would require that information regarding the review and eligibility for all forms of parole be communicated in writing to the offender's victims, including an explanation of how the dates were determined for parole with an explanation of this process to be as transparent as possible.

None of us can argue against the logic of this bill, and I have been thankful all along the way that I have received unanimous support from members of each party of the House. We need to give less government support to criminals and much more to victims and survivors.

A murderer's rights should never trump a victim's rights, yet they seem to every single time. A sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for 25 years is meant to imply severity and punishment. This is simply not true and is misleading to families, and it is also misleading to the public. Offenders serving a life sentence without parole for 25 years can be released on other forms of parole well before for personal development, temporary absences and community service work.

What we are trying to correct with Bill C-320 is simply victims' access to this information, as well as an explanation in advance. A recent update from Lisa exemplifies this.

She said, "I was notified in July that: My father's killer's day parole was extended for 6 months and when it goes up again for renewal in January of 2024 and even if he doesn't request full parole, he can be automatically granted it at the same time." There is "No hearing I can attend, and no opportunity for me to object...just an in-office, paper decision. Also, at the same time I was notified that the 'conditions on parole' that I have in place—no transfers to the

province of Ontario, and parts of BC—can be lifted at any time his Case Management Team feels that he 'would benefit from attending courses in these areas'. What an outrage that the only comfort for me and my family from [an] axe murderer can be lifted at whim of his team."

I can now inform the House that after Lisa was left to advocate for her own rights, which I may remind members heaps more trauma upon the victims, Lisa was finally granted the opportunity to attend and to provide a victim impact statement. On January 31, Lisa travelled thousands of miles from Oshawa to British Columbia at her own expense to make her statement at the killer's parole hearing.

Thankfully, her father's killer was once again denied full parole. However, what about everybody else?

• (1340)

Lisa is a shining example of a victim who has had the strength and fortitude to advocate for herself and her family, but at what cost? It is not her job to protect her rights as a victim; it is ours. Setting aside the mental trauma Lisa and her family have suffered, what about the personal costs she has had to bear, as well as the mental cost? This was just one example of the many times she has had to fight this fight for herself over the last 23 years.

Here we have it. A killer can be released into a community where his victims live at the whim of his case management team. There is no need to explain to the victims how the decision was made and when the release will take place until after the fact. I note all members agree that this is unconscionable, and it should not have to be a fight that victims have to fight year after year just to keep the most callous of murderers where they belong. Families members who have suffered because of an offender's actions do not deserve to be revictimized by the parole system.

Under the guise of rehabilitation, victims of crime often must stand back and watch while violent offenders exercise their rights, which, as most victims of crime find, are nothing more than a mockery of justice and basic common sense. The rights of victims should be made equal to or, rather, better than the rights of offenders.

We are not going to fix all these serious matters with just one bill, but I think we can all agree our systems need to be recalibrated. I also think we can all agree that we must pass this bill and take an important step in easing the burden on victims of crime and survivors.

Private Members' Business

I say victims deserve better. At the very least, they deserve accurate, timely explanations and information. Lisa and I are grateful to the committee and all members of this House. Let us get this bill to the Senate and get it passed into law. Let us do one good thing for victims of crime and survivors.

I would like to read a statement from Lisa into the record. She says, "My name is Lisa Freeman, and I am the inspiration for Bill C-320. I was 21 years old when my father, Roland Slingerland, was axed to death in Oshawa, Ontario. His murder brought the usual feelings that no one would expect: deep grief, trauma and an overwhelming feeling of loss.

"As the years move along, the weight of the crime is so heavy to carry, but you do your very best to recover from the very worst thing that ever happened to you. If you're strong enough, you will participate in the process, something that is truly only for the brave because everything you thought you knew or what you thought would happen doesn't. No one is locked away forever. No keys are thrown away, and there's truly no life sentence for anyone other than the victims. I often say that, if you are standing after the initial crime, navigating the parole system will bring you to your knees.

"Transparency is a word we often use, and Bill C-320 is based on that principle. Victims of crime should be given crucial information about the offender who harmed them or their loved ones in a timely manner. By backing this bill, the weight of what victims of crime carry will be lessened considerably. I urge everyone here today to take my words into consideration and ask for your support in moving this bill to the next stage."

• (1345)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. colleague and thank him for his perseverance in putting forth Bill C-320. This is, after all, if my math is correct, the third iteration of it. He has worked for over a decade on this type of legislation. Much the same as soon-retiring Senator Boisvenu, the member has been a tireless advocate for victims' rights, and I want to congratulate him and thank him for that.

I wonder if the member has any further comments he would like to add.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I just want to humbly thank my colleague and also all members of the House. Members of all parties have come to talk to me about the bill and about the compassion of the House for victims; it is something we all realize.

I feel such sincere respect for victims of crime, such as Lisa, who bravely, over a decade ago, walked into the office of a member of Parliament and wanted to do something not just for herself and her family but also for victims in the future.

Anybody who reads the bill will see that it is 10 words that would be added in the English version. It is a small change, but it would make a big difference. As we move these changes forward, we have to remember that this is for the victim.

My colleagues mentioned the hon. Senator Pierre Boisvenu. His life's work, as a survivor himself, was to make an attitude change here in government so we actually put victims first. I applaud the

colleagues who have supported me, and I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart. I know Lisa does as well.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for bringing this matter forward. At committee we also heard that some victims and family members are not always ready, or do not always want, to hear about those who have impacted their family. Therefore I appreciate that the member has worked across the aisle on this to ensure that those who want the information are given it, but there is also a recognition that it is up to the victim and the victim's family to decide what information they receive. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Pickering—Uxbridge brings out a very important point. Every victim and every victim's family is different, and what they want to hear during the grieving process is different. One of the things that is really important about the bill is that it would allow choice; it would allow victims and their families to choose whether or not they want to receive that different information. Over a time period, because they would be getting transparent, clear information as they heal, if that is at all possible, and they want to get more information about the process and what is going on, they would be able to.

We have listened to victims, including Lisa as a victims' advocate. I applaud her courage for bringing this forward; it is not an easy thing to do. She is so darned determined. It has been over two decades that she has worked at this. We have the opportunity to give her success and to give victims of crimes and their families success. Hopefully colleagues today will understand that and take it into account as we move forward with the debate and move it to the Senate.

• (1350)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague, the member for Oshawa, for championing the bill. In his tenure as a member of Parliament, he has consistently been a champion for the rights of victims. The bill is common sense.

One of the recurring themes I have heard from the families of victims is that they feel that they do not have support and they do not have information, long after the trial and conviction of the perpetrator who took the life of their loved one. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. We do need to do more. This is a small change, but it would make a big difference. I thank the member for his kind words and support.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the discussion on Bill C-320. As we reach report stage of this bill, I would like to express gratitude to the hon. member for Oshawa for bringing this important bill to the House.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-320 is an important piece of legislation aimed at increasing victims' understanding of corrections and conditional release. According to existing federal law, victims who share their contact details with the Correctional Service of Canada or the Parole Board of Canada and who meet the legal definition of victim are entitled to specific information about those responsible for harming them. This information includes key dates indicating when offenders may be eligible for review and release.

Should Bill C-320 be accepted, it would amend the law to ensure that victims not only know when offenders could be released but also, importantly, understand how officials determined those eligibility dates.

The government supports this legislation, and I encourage hon. members to lend it their full support. The purpose of this bill aligns with the government's commitment to upholding victims' rights to information while taking into consideration offenders' privacy rights.

Victims of crime and their families seek clarity, transparency and opportunities to have their voices heard within the justice system. Bill C-320 aims to provide the clarity and transparency they seek, offering victims of offenders more information about crucial eligibility and review dates in advance.

This legislation lets victims know that we hear them. It clearly aligns with our commitments to support victims' rights, including their need for information. This bill builds upon the progress made in recognizing and upholding the rights of crime victims in our country.

Over the years, governments of various affiliations and members from both sides of the chamber have taken actions to advance victims' rights. This evolution began back in 1988. At that point, the House endorsed a statement of basic principles of justice for victims of crime. Subsequently, federal laws provided victims with a voice at sentencing hearings, emphasizing their rights based on an increasing understanding of their needs.

The enactment of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act in 1992 first entitled victims to receive information about the offender who harmed them. In 2003, the government updated and re-endorsed the statement of basic principles, and in 2015, the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights became law, solidifying victims' rights in various ways.

Under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, victims of crime are legally entitled to receive information on inmates' progress towards meeting the objectives set out in their correctional plan, to name a representative to receive information on their behalf, to access a photo of the person who harmed them prior to release and to receive reasons if the Parole Board of Canada does not impose any release conditions requested by victims. Moreover, victims can actively participate in Parole Board hearings, virtually or in person, presenting victim statements and requesting special conditions for an offender's release.

Recent legislative measures, such as Bill C-83, further strengthened victims' rights by making audio recordings of parole hearings available to all registered victims of crime. As well, the National Office for Victims, in collaboration with federal partners, continues

to produce informative materials on sentence calculation rules that are available online.

The progress made is a testament to ongoing conversations among victims of crime, elected representatives and government officials. These conversations, embodied not only in Bill C-320 but also in recent legislative initiatives, such as Bill S-12, affirm our commitment to victims' rights. Bill S-12, which received royal assent on October 26 of this past year, seeks to connect victims of offenders with ongoing information and to enhance publication ban laws. In addition, the Correctional Service of Canada and Parole Board of Canada work tirelessly to raise awareness of victims' rights.

In the government's view, Bill C-320 aligns with these sensible, non-partisan and multi-generational advancements. Victims of crime and their families want clarity and transparency. They want a voice, and they want that voice to be heard. This is why I look forward to passing Bill C-320 in the House today, and I encourage other members here to join me.

• (1355)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is moving to hear and observe how far we have come. The Bloc Québécois is eager to proceed with third reading.

I would like to add some more information and take the discussion a step further based on the situation before us. Members will recall that there was a surge in femicides in Quebec and in a number of locations in the west during the critical period of COVID-19. This already alarming situation evolved into a true scourge. Every week, and almost every day, we woke up to media reports of a new femicide. The situation was alarming. Between 2009 and 2019, violence perpetrated against women, simply for being women, increased by almost 7.5%.

I am a woman. I am the mother of two young women and, on top of that, I am a member of Parliament. I have a responsibility, but at the same time I am still a person, and this news deeply upsets me. A mixture of disbelief, at times rage, and powerlessness often comes over me. I do not understand how this can still be happening in 2024. Women have the right to live in safety. It is not a luxury. It is not a privilege. It is a fundamental right. It seems to me that violence against women is condemned at every turn and has never been more socially unacceptable.

That said, women are unfortunately still the victims of men who are suffering or violent, who think that the life of their spouse, ex-spouse or the mother of their child is worth less than their own. There is still far too much misogynistic violence. Too many women still live in fear. From now on, fear must change sides. That is what the bill will do: turn the tables on fear.

Women living with a physically or psychologically abusive man must no longer be submissive. They must be supported. We need to work together to successfully turn the tables on shame and fear.

As legislators, it is up to us to bring about change. Obviously, we have come a long way, as my colleagues mentioned a few moments ago.

We in the Bloc Québécois are all allies. We will always be there to ensure that women's fundamental rights are all respected. We will not just use our defence of women's rights as a calling card. We truly believe in them. We in the Bloc Québécois will not pick and choose the issues on which we will defend women's rights. We will always defend women, their rights, their freedom and their safety. This is not just posturing for the Bloc Québécois. It is part of our DNA. We are a feminist party.

Quebec is once again setting an example for many jurisdictions around the world. In 2021, following tireless work by citizens' groups, women and MNAs from the Quebec National Assembly, including Véronique Hivon, who is someone you know well, Mr. Speaker, and someone I hold in the highest regard, Quebec created specialized courts for victims of sexual violence and domestic violence. I will take 30 seconds to quote what the Government of Quebec said about it:

The creation of this court specialized in sexual violence and domestic violence within a new division of the criminal and penal division of the Court of Québec is intended to ensure that victims receive better support and guidance before, during and after the legal proceedings. While respecting the principles of criminal law, each step of the judicial process will be reviewed to improve the experience for victims by being more responsive to their needs.

• (1400)

To turn the tables on shame, it is essential that we establish legal structures that treat women who are victims with respect and, most importantly, that make them feel that they are being heard.

Quebec became the first jurisdiction in Canada and the seventh in the world to implement electronic devices to give a sense of autonomy and safety back to women who are victims of domestic and sexual violence. It is a major step for the safety of women, but it is also a paradigm shift. Now, it is the abusers who will have to live in fear—fear of their tracking device and fear of getting too close to their victims and violating their release conditions. Women will be able to slowly but surely return to living a healthy life, knowing that they will not come face to face with their abuser.

Bill C-320 has the exact same objective, which is to put information mechanisms in place to make sure that the victim can get an explanation on how correctional decisions were made regarding their abuser. That is worth mentioning. This mechanism will allow victims to access additional information on their abuser's status. It will only make the justice system stronger, which will improve confidence in the system.

Private Members' Business

I would like to conclude with a quote from Simone de Beauvoir, who said, “What's scandalous about scandal is that we get used to it”. We must never get used to violence against women or femicide. Our actions must reflect our humanity.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Oshawa for bringing this bill forward.

He spoke very eloquently about the Freeman family. I certainly hope that the debate today, the fact that this bill is moving forward and that there seems to be consensus within the chamber provides some small measure of peace to that family.

New Democrats are supporting Bill C-320. We believe that providing information to victims to help them understand the parole process is a vital part of transparency and justice for victims and victims' families. That is why we are supportive of this legislation.

We also believe that we need to be doing a lot more for victims. Of course, we are aware of the fact that often victims are left aside following some of the most horrendous crimes. It is the victims that are not provided with the appropriate transparency from our justice system and with the appropriate supports. This is something that needs to be reinforced, that victims need to be provided all the supports that they should be getting from the system.

This bill is one example of how having that transparency around parole is vitally important. I will come back in just a moment to the vital function of parole, of that transition to avoid reoffending. Where societies have been most successful in lowering the reoffending rate is where there is a properly supervised and monitored transition in place, including parole systems. These are absolutely fundamental. I will come back to that in a moment.

With the Paul Bernardo case, we saw another example of victims not receiving information that was critical. We had a transfer within the system, but the reality is that that information flow, that transparency, that providing of information to victims, was not present. The public safety committee held a number of hearings with the victims and victims' families. In a trauma-informed way, I think all members of the committee really tried to ensure that this was removed from the standard type of political comments that sometimes occur at committee.

All members of the committee received that trauma-informed information so that, when the victims' families and representatives of the victims came forward, I think all parties were able to provide an appropriate level of questioning and really got the information that was so important about what happens when there are transfers within the correctional system.

Private Members' Business

With parole, which is targeted by this bill, it is absolutely essential that that transparency be there as well. I said earlier that I would talk a bit about the importance of parole. When we see, within correctional services around the world, where there is a properly monitored, properly supervised parole system, the level of reoffending goes remarkably down. Norway is often pointed to. The Norwegian correctional services, at one point, did not have that type of transition or parole. Offenders served their full sentences. The reality was the reoffending rate was very high. Norway tried a new approach, where there was parole put into place, a properly supervised, properly monitored system. As a result of that, the reoffending rate for offenders who were leaving the correctional services went down remarkably.

When we look at correctional services around the world, the reoffending rates are much lower. Where there are properly supervised, properly monitored parole systems, offenders do not reoffend. There is a consistent field of study that shows the difference.

● (1405)

Certainly, in a number of American states, where they have continued to ensure that offenders serve their full sentence without that transition, the reoffending rate is much higher. We can take lessons from that. Canada has a parole system that is often not properly supervised and monitored because of a lack of resources; this is unacceptable. We have the essential need of ensuring that offenders have every tool to not reoffend, and that victims' families are fully advised and apprised of situations.

Bills like Bill C-320 are an important component of that, but resources are absolutely essential. That is where we are coming from. In this corner of the House, we believe that there need to be more supports for victims. The transparency is essential, but we are also looking for transparency within transfers and correctional services, and ensuring that victims are provided with the supports that are so essential.

When victims' families are apprised of this information, often they are not provided with psychological and mental health supports. This is something that needs to change if we are really going to ensure that we have a correctional service that serves justice and provides for the lowest possible reoffending rate, but also does justice for victims and victims' families. We need to ensure that those supports are in place.

I would like to talk about other resources that we believe need to be brought in. Crime prevention programs were ended under the former government 10 years ago, like the B.C. crime prevention centre and others. They were closed across the country as crime prevention funding was cut back; it was simply wrong-headed. The reality is crime prevention funding is an essential tool to ensure that there are no further victims. We know that one dollar invested in crime prevention saves about six dollars in policing costs, court costs and prison costs. It is a no-brainer.

In this corner of the House, we believe in substantially funding crime prevention right across the country to ensure that there are fewer victims and that we are bringing the crime rate down. We believe this is an absolutely essential tool. Yes, providing supports to victims is a critical step, but actually ensuring that there are fewer victims is a much smarter approach. We believe in being smart on

crime and smart on the causes of crime. This is how we can reduce the crime rate.

I note, sadly, when talking about resources, that last December, the official opposition proposed significant cuts with votes 23, 24 and 25. It was a sum of over \$300 million in cuts to correctional services and the court administration services. It seems to me that it is wrong-headed to cut \$300 million, when what we actually need to do is ensure that there is further funding to support victims, further funding to support the transparency that is a necessary aspect of correctional services, and further funding to actually ensure, for example, that the important recommendations of Bill C-320 are actually kept. The funding is a critical part of ensuring that we are responding, in a complete way, to ensure that the needs of victims are kept in place.

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

Once again, I would like to thank the member for Oshawa for introducing Bill C-320. The NDP will support this bill. We feel it is an important step in ensuring that victims and victims' families have access to absolutely critical and important information. We look forward to its passage through the House and the other place in the days ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand and speak to my friend from Oshawa's bill, Bill C-320. Nowhere could 10 words and an explanation of how the date has been determined make such a difference, such a profound impact on so many Canadians.

I have stood in the House so many times over the last eight years to talk about victims' rights. We talked about the Paul Bernardo case. We talked about the Tori Stafford case, in which Terri-Lynne McClintic, the murderer of eight-year-old Tori Stafford, was moved to a healing lodge.

We talked about Catherine Campbell, the Halifax police officer who was heinously murdered by a murderer who then claimed he had developed PTSD from the actual murder. He was put to the front of the line, ahead of victims of violence, ahead of veterans and ahead of first responders, to receive treatment for his post-traumatic stress disorder. It is absolutely shameful.

There is the case that I have stood in the House to talk about so many times: the case of Canada's youngest serial killer, Cody Legebokoff, who was found in 2010, just 20 years of age, in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George. He had murdered Natasha Montgomery, Jill Stuchenko and Cynthia Maas. He had murdered a friend of mine's daughter, Loren Leslie, who was 15 years old at the time.

I have stood in the House time and time again and asked, “Who speaks for the victims?”

Cody Legebokoff was convicted of four counts of first-degree murder in December 2014. That should have been the end of it. We found out, not through Corrections Canada's releasing information to the families but through the press, that Cody had been moved from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security prison just five years later, transferred mere kilometres down the road from Loren's sister.

Who speaks for families? When I questioned Corrections Canada and the public safety minister at the time on how this could happen, the answer I got was that it is not an exact science.

In Canada, “life” does not mean “life” for those who commit heinous crimes. It means “life” for the families' victims. They have a life sentence, and oftentimes they cannot get the information they require and deserve on why these transfers are happening.

Bill C-320 would simply promote transparency and victims' rights, equally important principles for democracy and criminal justice. It would simply give victims of violent crime and their families rights.

● (1415)

Finally, we are seeing some movement. This bill came to fruition thanks to the advocacy of Lisa Freeman, a constituent of our colleague from Oshawa. Her father was murdered in 1991. We heard the story. She was caught off guard when her father's killer was eligible for early parole 20 years into a 25-year life sentence. Often, the victims of violent crime and their families, the survivors, find these things out through the media. They are not told in advance. We heard earlier that they are the ones who have to keep pressing for more information. They have to be on it all the time.

Common decency would say that, if a loved one is murdered, whether a child, father, uncle, brother or mother, we owe the victims of violence just a modicum of decency. Thus, we should inform them when these killers are being moved, transferred to a different level of security or released into the community.

Our Bloc friend said that the aggressors need to fear. We see this now and again in the statistics on repeat and prolific offenders, on how crime has gone up, on how there are more victims of violence and on how that is impacting not only female Canadians at an alarming rate but also our families.

I applaud my colleague from Oshawa for his tenacity and undying pursuit of justice for victims and their families. By all accounts, from what we have heard here in the House today, Bill C-320 should pass here. It should go to the Senate, where we hope it will be unamended and swiftly receive royal assent; then, once and for all, we can all stand in this House and say that we fought for the rights of victims.

In preparing for this speech today, I looked over messages to me from Mr. Doug Leslie, a friend of mine, whose daughter Loren was murdered by Legebokoff. His messages are always the same: “Who speaks for me? Who speaks for the victims? Who stands up for them?” Today, we can say that we do, by passing Bill C-320, an act with, really, 10 little words that mean so much.

Private Members' Business

I opened my speech today by saying that nowhere in any of the legislation that we have done to date are there 10 little words that can provide such profound help to so many Canadians as those in Bill C-320. I will mention them again: “and an explanation of how that date has been determined”.

I applaud my colleague from Oshawa and those in this House who have offered a reasonable debate. I am thankful for this time.

● (1420)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to discuss Bill C-320, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Victims who share their contact information with the Correctional Service of Canada and/or the Parole Board of Canada and who meet the definition of “victim” outlined in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, CCRA, are entitled to receive certain information about the person who harmed them.

This information includes review and release eligibility dates, which are provided to victims in an initial contact letter. Bill C-320 would require that victims be provided with an explanation of how those dates are determined. Across the country, victims of serious crimes may deserve to know how sentences are administered, including eligibility for temporary absences and parole.

Together, the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board of Canada have over 8,000 registered victims. We have heard from them, and they and their families want clarity and transparency. I look forward to supporting Bill C-320 to provide that increased clarity and transparency that victims of crime are asking for.

Additionally, I want to thank the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, for its expeditious study. The committee has returned to this place an unamended bill, which received unanimous support. I look forward to that unanimity continuing in our debate today.

Private Members' Business

Ensuring that the rights of victims are upheld is important. Our government has passed new legislation to continue to support victims' rights in the form of Bill S-12. That legislation ensures that victims receive ongoing information about the offender after sentencing and would improve the law on publication bans by giving a greater voice and clarity to victims in regard to imposing and lifting a publication ban. Bill C-320 shares similar aims to Bill S-12.

As members know, the CCRA governs both the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board of Canada. It is the foundation on which people serving federal sentences are supervised and conditional release decisions are made. It also recognizes that victims of crime have an important role to play in the criminal justice system. It provides victims with an opportunity to access certain information and participate in the federal corrections and conditional release process. With the CCRA and the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights as a foundation, a variety of government departments, including the Parole Board of Canada and the Correctional Service of Canada, work together to provide information services to victims.

The Canadian Victims Bill of Rights expanded the information available to victims as it relates to hearings by allowing victims who were unable to attend a hearing to request to listen to an audio recording of the parole hearing. At any time, victims may also submit information that details the physical, emotional or financial impact the offence has had on them to the Parole Board for consideration in its decision-making. They may also raise any safety concerns they may have related to the offender's risk of reoffending.

As part of the victim statement, victims can also request that the board consider imposing special conditions on an offender's release. All this information assists board members in assessing risk and determining if additional conditions may be necessary to impose if release to the community is granted. They may also raise

any safety concerns they may have in relation to the offender's risk of reoffending. As part of the victim statement, victims can also request that the board consider imposing special conditions on the offender's release.

● (1425)

All this information assists board members in assessing risk and in determining if imposing additional conditions may be necessary if release to the community is in fact granted. The protection of society is the paramount consideration in all parole board decisions. I will also note that Public Safety Canada plays a role in improving victims' experiences with the federal corrections and conditional release systems.

The National Office for Victims engages with victims, their advocates and service providers. It hosts annual round tables, develops information products about victims' rights and services and applies a victim's lens on corrections and conditional release policy development. Victims can also receive information in the format of their choosing, including through the Victims Portal. They can submit information electronically, including victim statements.

These services respect a victim's right to information, and this information serves to engage and to empower victims to make informed decisions in relation to their rights to participation and protection.

The Speaker: The time provided for consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

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

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

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