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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 12, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 8(2) of the Auditor General Act, a special report of the Auditor General of Canada.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

would like to commend the member for his bill and for his participation in the public debate on environmental issues.

Basically, this bill seeks to create a national registry of environmental and water initiatives in order to identify and share best practices from across Canada. It also talks about what the government and the public can do to improve the situation. That is basically what it is about.

We agree in principle with this bill. Coordinating the provinces' general actions is part of the federal government's job, along with sharing best practices and pooling information on what can be done and how to do it. However, this presents certain challenges.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON FLOOD AND DROUGHT FORECASTING ACT

The House resumed from November 24, 2023, consideration of the motion that Bill C-317, An Act to establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge you because you are my MP when we are here in Ottawa. I live in your riding of Gatineau.

Climate change is real. Humans are contributing to climate change and so humans need to help reduce the impact of it. The bill that was introduced by my colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis seeks to “establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting”.

I want to commend the member for his commitment to this issue. He is the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Right now, the committee is conducting a study on water quality and the challenges related to the impacts of climate change on water. We are having some very interesting discussions on that. Dozens of witnesses are contributing to the debate. We are tremendously pleased about that. Last Thursday, a lot of people from Quebec were there. It was highly informative. I

We know that, as it happens, the current government is a bit greedy when it comes to the watershed line, as it were, between what the provinces can do and what the feds can do. It has a penchant for interfering. Let us not forget Bill C-69. The federal government gave itself veto power over hydroelectric projects, including projects in Quebec. This has never been done before. If, heaven forbid, the federal government had had veto power over the hydroelectric projects that were developed in the 1950s and carried out in the 1960s, we might not have as many good facilities as we do now, as many good hydroelectric plants. We have to be alert when this government suggests coordinating actions, because the most important thing it must do is respect the different areas of jurisdiction. I will give a specific example.

Last spring, we all saw the fires ravaging several parts of Canada. On June 5, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Carleton, made a commitment, saying it would be great if we could share the best ways to fight forest fires, including with CL-415 water bombers. I should note that the CL-415, which fights forest fires, is a completely Canadian invention that we can all be proud of. We are proud that it is used around the world. We are recognized as being the best in the world in this area. However, we still need to look after our own country. That is why the Leader of the Opposition suggested that better coordination could help when the time comes to fight forest fires.

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We have a concern about that. As for flooding, I would like to remind the House that our party, the Conservatives, has been in favour of conservation for years. I offer our 2019 campaign platform as proof. Our platform included a very long, substantial section on issues related to flooding, water and conservation. I would like to acknowledge our former colleague from Manitoba, Robert Sopuck, who contributed a lot to this section. He is still advocating for the environment and conservation, especially water, within our party, and we are very proud of him.

We have been aware of this reality for years. The work must be done, but it must be done collaboratively. When we study the bill in committee, our questions will be focused on finding out whether it will lead to new spending. We believe the Canadian government currently has enough human resources to provide assistance and work on reducing the environmental impact. We also have to ensure these people can do their job properly in their field of expertise. Sharing knowledge and best practices does not require hiring new people.

• (1105)

Let me remind members that whenever the government spends a dollar, it is not the government's dollar it is spending. That money comes from taxpayers and businesses or from tax that was collected and is being invested elsewhere. This is why we will be very vigilant when looking into this situation, because every dollar spent is not the government's dollar, but one it has taken from the pockets of taxpayers or businesses who would want to spend it differently. Care must be taken in these situations.

I also want to say that the environment is of paramount importance to us and that we must deal with climate challenges. I would remind the House that in September, we held a national convention that was attended by more than 2,500 people. At that convention, the leader of the official opposition, who is the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and member for Carleton, gave a very important speech that we Conservatives now refer to as the "Quebec City speech". It was not our election platform, but it expressed the party's broad ambitions, the overall vision we will have if we should happen to be lucky enough to be entrusted by Canadians to form the next government. We will let Canadians decide.

A key part of that speech involved environmental issues. Our leader recognized, like everyone else, that climate change is real, that we need to adapt to it and that adapting means taking an approach that is pragmatic, not dogmatic. The goal is to reduce pollution across the country. Reducing pollution is a daily challenge that never ends.

[English]

Reducing, reducing, it is a never-ending story. We have a continuous debate, a continuous fight, against emissions and against pollution, but we have to reduce it by pragmatic actions, not dogmatic taxation.

[Translation]

That is why our leader carefully laid out the three pillars of our environmental approach, along with everything underpinning it.

The first pillar is investment in new technologies to reduce pollution through tax incentives. We are well aware that the new technologies that are currently being developed the key to reducing pollution. We need to provide tax incentives. That does not mean per-tonne subsidies, but tax credits to help people who know why they are polluting find a way to reduce that pollution. We in Ottawa are not going to tell them what to do, but we are going to encourage them to take action to reduce pollution through tax incentives.

The second pillar is green-lighting green energy. We need green energy in Canada. We need more solar and wind power. We need geothermal power. We also need to be more open to nuclear energy. We need to speed up the green energy process by green-lighting it.

The third pillar is developing Canada's full potential. Canada has all the know-how it needs to reduce pollution. We have tremendous energy capabilities. Our extraordinary natural resources are the envy of every country in the world. It is unfortunate that we are not developing our full potential. Why is that?

Here is an example. Last week, the École des hautes études commerciales published its annual report on energy use in Quebec, which told us two things. First, fossil fuel consumption in Quebec has increased by 7%. Second, 48% of the oil consumed in Quebec comes from the United States. I have nothing against Louisiana and Texas, but why are we sending billions of dollars to the United States when we produce oil in this country? We need to develop Canada's full potential when it comes to energy and natural resources.

There is a fourth element, which is the cornerstone of the three pillars, in a way: We have to work hand in hand with first nations. Last March, the man we want to be prime minister, the member for Carleton and Leader of the Opposition, made a commitment to first nations. He said the days of giving them a cheque and then asking them to get out of the way were over. He promised to work with first nations and create wealth when something happens on their traditional territory. This commitment was confirmed last Thursday in British Columbia.

The future belongs to those who capitalize on high tech, green energy, Canadian potential and working hand in hand with first nations. That is our environmental approach.

• (1110)

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise today to talk about Bill C-317, because floods have always been part of our lives, but they are happening more and more frequently as a result of climate change.

This is true in Quebec, it is true in the rest of Canada, and it is true pretty much everywhere else in the world. The floods keep coming back every spring. They can be traumatic for people whose communities are repeatedly flooded.

That is what happened to the municipality of Matapédia in my riding. An advisory committee made up of the mayor, representatives of Quebec's ministry of emergency preparedness and the Canadian Coast Guard, and residents who are very familiar with the Restigouche River and its mouth has been monitoring the water levels every year for years now. These people have significant expertise in helping prevent flooding. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to stop the waters from rising, so it is becoming an increasingly serious problem for many municipalities.

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, costs related to flooding have quadrupled in Canada in the past 40 years. That is serious. We need a climate change adaptation strategy.

Most of Quebec's population lives near the water system, and approximately 80% of shoreline municipalities are at risk of flooding. As I said earlier, this is true pretty much across the country, and it is true in my riding, which has the St. Lawrence and other rivers. Water levels have gotten very high. That contributes to the risk of flooding.

Climate upheaval is likely to make the flooding worse. We need to be prepared. This bill says that we should have a national flood and drought strategy. That is not a bad idea. There are always plenty of people stepping up and taking action, but these people do not necessarily communicate with each other.

Do we need better communication among stakeholders? I think we do. Is a strategy, which means more bureaucracy, the right solution? Perhaps not. We need to really assess the needs of the various stakeholders, including the Quebec government, which has revised its own very effective strategy in recent years.

Quebec knows a thing or two about this. It was hit by major flooding in 2017 and 2019. In 2017, flood waters affected 293 municipalities in 15 regions, forcing the evacuation of more than 4,000 people in Quebec. It was even worse in 2019, when more than 10,000 people in 240 municipalities had to evacuate their homes. There is also the issue of how to help these people and compensation for flood victims.

The Quebec government turned these traumatic events into an opportunity to improve its strategy, particularly with regard to flood zone mapping. It discovered that, in greater Montreal, 40% of the people surveyed said they did not know that their property was in a flood-prone area. We were talking about the regions and the fact that coastal and waterfront communities can be in a flood zone. This is less of an issue in larger cities, but it may be the case in a number of municipalities where there is a risk of flooding. Inform-

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ing the public and local elected officials about the risks and how to prepare for them is a first step.

As I already said, we agree with the principle of this bill. If there are any issues, let us identify them and try to find solutions. The strategy that is already in place in Quebec, its flood protection plan, focuses on four action areas to protect our communities.

The first action area is mapping. The objective is to map flood-prone areas at the watershed level in a consistent manner to enable flood risk analysis in Quebec. I recently went through the mapping analysis that the Government of Quebec will table sometime this spring. It shows that a majority of Quebecers may be in for some bad news regarding their ability to get flood insurance for their homes.

• (1115)

In the next few days, the mapping will show the degree to which several municipalities are at risk, as I was saying. Obviously, we know that the risk of flooding will increase as a result of climate change. Exhaustive analyses have been done to map flood zones, and the recent disasters were even taken into account. For example, there was the flooding in Baie-Saint-Paul in spring 2023. That just happened, and these disasters are already being used as examples to prepare for the future. This first section on mapping is rather interesting.

The second action area is called “Réagir et encadrer”, or reacting and regulating. It talks about ensuring standard and strict application of development standards in flood zones and establishing rules around flood protection work.

The third action area is called “Planifier et intervenir”, or planning and intervening. It focuses on planning, at the watershed level, flood-related land-use interventions and supporting the implementation of flooding resilience and adaptation measures.

The fourth and final action area is called “Connaître et communiquer”, or knowing and communicating. The objectives consist in improving flooding forecasting, supporting planning, acquiring knowledge on best practices, fostering the development and maintenance of flooding expertise, improving access to information for different audiences, and ensuring better distribution of information on flooding risks.

In that regard, we have implemented the Vigilance app, which helps Quebecers be better prepared for flooding by keeping them informed of rising water levels in Quebec. That is really useful. As I was saying at the beginning of my speech, it is very important to keep citizens informed of the risk of flooding. That is one of the first steps, and it is a very good one.

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As I mentioned, the fourth action area focuses on communication, and that is something that I think definitely needs to be improved. As I was saying, we are seeing this in Matapédia, in my riding. Every year, a committee meets to monitor the rising water levels and the ice melt.

What is happening with the Canadian Coast Guard's hovercraft is that they start their route elsewhere in Canada. They have a lot of rivers and waterways to deal with. Matapédia is one of their last stops. Often, it is too little, too late. I think that communication with the Coast Guard is extremely important. I think that it is fundamental that the Government of Quebec and the governments of the other provinces communicate directly with the federal government, specifically with the Coast Guard, and that local authorities are also able to communicate directly with the Coast Guard.

We also need better funding and support. In developing this national strategy, it would be important to ask experts the following question if they testify before the committee: What is needed, and what is the federal government not doing right now? I think better support for disaster victims is important. We need better funding too.

This new mapping of Quebec tells us that we will progressively know more about what is predictable and which regions are really at risk, as opposed to those at medium or low risk. We will no longer be able to say that floods were not foreseeable. Perhaps emergency funds or emergency funding plans by the federal government will not universally apply in those areas where floods were foreseeable. Perhaps recurring budgets should be set aside for areas that are at high risk. Maybe that question needs to be asked.

However, better funding of the Canadian Coast Guard can certainly be part of the solution. Only two hovercrafts can travel virtually across the country to the very end of the line in Matapédia, which is part of my riding. It is a shame, but in many cases it is too little, too late. Things went well last year. We were spared from the worst of it, as they say.

There is less snow than usual these days. I think everyone realizes that, in Quebec at least. Will this have a positive impact? Perhaps. Will there be less ice melt and therefore the water will not rise as much? Perhaps. Then again, will there be more precipitation? That is another possibility.

Having good mapping and good communication is key, I think. I thank the member who introduced this bill. I would like to discuss it further with him.

• (1120)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that the NDP supports this bill. Looking at the climate crisis and the consequences it is increasingly having on the ground, this is a no-brainer for us. It is important to have a broader scope when it comes to adapting to climate change, as well as more resources and better emergency preparedness planning for high-risk areas.

We have seen this happen in British Columbia, perhaps even more than in the other provinces. We need only look at what happened a few years ago with the heat dome that killed 600 people in the greater Vancouver area. Some 60 people in my riding died as a

result of the intense heat, which wreaked havoc in my entire region. That was something we had never seen in the entire history of our province and in the entire history of our country.

Because of the dome, which remained in place for a few days, the entire emergency preparedness team of responders was overwhelmed. Paramedics could not respond to all of the emergency calls they received. In apartments with inadequate ventilation, people, often seniors, died a few hours after their apartment turned into a sauna. Firefighters in New Westminster—Burnaby tried to help the paramedics and hospital workers. I will always remember what the paramedics, firefighters and police officers told me: If the heat dome had lasted a mere 24 hours longer, we would have lost far more than the 600 people who died. We were faced with the complete breakdown of our emergency system.

The reality is that climate change and its effects are having an increasing impact. We know that. I mentioned the heat dome but, that same year, and last year as well, we experienced atmospheric rivers that isolated British Columbia from the rest of the country. These weather events cut off all roads and railways between British Columbia and the rest of Canada for quite some time. People had to go through the United States to get to eastern Canada from Canada's west coast.

We are also increasingly seeing damage caused by strong winds, and we will have to create a new hurricane category, category 6, because the existing categories are inadequate to reflect the force of the hurricanes we are seeing now. I had the sad experience of visiting New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, in which 1,800 people died. I saw neighbourhoods that are still in tatters, even years later.

Given the situation, we will have to change things. This bill is a step in the right direction, but Canada needs to do much more. On this side of the House, in the NDP, we can see that this has to be made a priority. I want to note that the first motion moved by the NDP during this Parliament was Motion No. 1, the green new deal, which points to the importance of starting to invest in clean energy and, of course, in promoting public safety, ensuring that we are able to adapt to climate change, and, more importantly, ensuring that we are winning this battle against climate change.

• (1125)

To us in the NDP, this is absolutely a priority. We see how the Liberals have been dragging their feet for years. They should be doing much more. They keep giving money to the CEOs of oil companies instead of investing in fighting climate change.

Of course, the Conservatives deny that climate change even exists. It makes me sad to see that they are not prepared to bring in the necessary measures.

[English]

We have lived in British Columbia with the heat dome that killed 600 people across our region. Emergency services were on the verge of collapse; what we heard from firefighters and ambulance technicians, as people literally died in the saunas their apartments became, is that if that crisis had lasted another 24 or 48 hours, we would have seen a collapse of our emergency services.

This is why it is so important to reinforce public safety initiatives to ensure that we can respond to the incredible gravity of incidents of climate change and storms from climate change, all of which have such a dramatic impact. British Columbia has lived through two atmospheric rivers that have cut off British Columbia from the rest of Canada. Roads and railway beds were washed away. There was loss of life that came with that.

We have also seen that discussions of hurricanes and strong winds need to move to a whole new category. There are storms we have never seen in the history of humanity. Now, category 6 storms are increasingly occurring. According to newspaper articles, there were at least five that went beyond category 5, which used to be the most severe hurricanes, to category 6.

This is why the NDP tabled, as the first piece of legislation before this Parliament, Motion No. 1, the green new deal, where what we would do is go beyond the well-intended private member's bill before us, which we support, to a whole range of government actions, including cutting off the massive subsidies that go to oil and gas CEOs. We need to make sure we are actually putting into place measures that would help our clean energy economy, and that means hundreds of thousands of jobs. Particularly in areas like Alberta and Saskatchewan, where there are clean energy workers, clean energy investments are going to make a huge difference to the local economy, yet the government has refused to act beyond putting in place a few well-intended measures. The Conservative Party simply denies climate change.

What we need is a government that steps up, understands the important impacts of climate change and is willing to make the investments to help save this planet. We have seen first-hand in British Columbia, in my riding, 60 deaths after the heat dome in New Westminster—Burnaby and how the impacts of climate change are increasing year to year. What we need to do as parliamentarians is stand together, go beyond the bill before us and put in place measures that would fight climate change like it is a battle that we mean to win. The wonderful thing is that by making those investments in clean energy, Canada can become a clean energy powerhouse. It is vitally important that we do this.

The mitigation measures and the public safety measures are important, but what is most important is that we treat climate change with the severity that it has, as an impact right across this country. In agricultural regions, in our cities, in our towns and in northern Canada, we are seeing first-hand the impacts of climate change. We need to leave a better planet to our children and our children's children, and the only way to do that is by a more comprehensive approach on climate change. That is why the NDP tabled the green

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new deal, and that is why we will continue to push for measures that would fight climate change in a meaningful way.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise in the House to speak to a bill, this time, Bill C-317, which directly affects my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges. As everyone is well aware, historic floods affected thousands of my constituents in 2017 and 2019, forcing people out of their homes. Dozens of homes were destroyed in Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

The situation was so sad and so serious that the Quebec government was forced to declare a state of emergency in my community. The Canadian Armed Forces were called in to help us evacuate people from their homes and to fill sandbags. Together with the mayors and elected officials in my region, I helped arrange for thousands of volunteers to come to the aid of disaster victims by filling sandbags. My colleagues from Pierrefonds—Dollard and Lac-Saint-Louis came to help us fill sandbags. The member for Lac-Saint-Louis was actually the one who introduced Bill C-317 in the House. The Prime Minister of Canada even brought his kids to help us fill hundreds of sandbags.

These events clearly demonstrated that climate change is real and that it will continue to have a major impact in our communities, in my community and communities across the country. That is why I fully support the bill introduced by my hon. colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis, which would create a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting.

[English]

In 2017 and 2019, my community experienced two historic floods. They called them “once in a century” floods. However, we had two of them in three years.

The impact on my community was significant and cannot be understated. Hundreds of homes were flooded, and hundreds of my constituents, including families with children, parents and grandparents, were forced from their homes. The Canadian Armed Forces had to be called in to help evacuate people from their homes, which were literally washed away in the river. They had to come and help fill thousands of sandbags to help protect the homes from the rising water.

These were people's lives, and all of us, as elected officials, seemed helpless. What could we do against the rising waters? We did our best. We woke up every morning and had conference calls.

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● (1135)

[Translation]

The reeve of the RCM, Patrick Bousez, the mayors, councillors and myself all worked together to better address the needs of people in our communities, but it was difficult.

[English]

I remember being there with one of my constituents, Ms. Joy, who lived in Terrasse-Vaudreuil. We showed up to help place sandbags around some of the homes. Her home had already been taken care of. She and her family and friends had built a five-foot-high wall of sandbags. She had an island of dryness in a sea of rising water. As we were filling those sandbags and placing them around other homes, we heard a scream; when we turned around, we understood why. One of the retaining walls that she had built was giving way; in a 30-second period of time, we watched her house be completely destroyed by the water. We did our best; we ran over to try to put those sandbags back, but we could not do anything against the force of the rising and raging water.

Therefore, it is easy for me to support this piece of legislation, put forward by my friend and colleague for Lac-Saint-Louis, which looks to develop and put in place a national strategy to better predict and forecast droughts and floods. This is a no-brainer for my community, and when I look around this room, I hope that all colleagues will see it as a no-brainer. This is something that would truly and tangibly serve Canadians all across the country. It would help people in a community like mine, which has been impacted by record floods, or one in British Columbia that has seen wildfires develop in record numbers and destroy thousands of homes because of record drought. It would help people in Atlantic Canada, who are seeing record storms, and so forth, go through their communities, or people in the Northwest Territories, who are seeing record wildfires destroy communities in a way that has never been seen before.

[Translation]

This bill is in addition to the work that we are already doing to fight against climate change. We are investing to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We are making historic investments in making the transition toward a more sustainable transportation system and a more sustainable economy, which will help reduce our emissions and achieve net-zero by 2050.

There is, however, an additional aspect to our work to fight against climate change. We have to make sure that our cities, municipalities and communities are better equipped to know what is coming and be better informed about drought and flooding forecasts.

[English]

I remember waking up every single morning and having a conference call with all the elected officials in my region. All the decisions we made were based on the information that we were getting from Environment Canada and the forecasts from the Government of Quebec. We needed more information to make better decisions. That came to light very poignantly when the Trans-Canada Highway started to flood right before the Île-aux-Tourtes bridge in my community. This bridge sees 90,000 cars and trucks a day pass over it. That was not included in the provisions that we saw and the pre-

dictions that had been given to us by Environment Canada, the Government of Quebec and all their resources. It did not happen, thankfully. We did not have to shut down the Trans-Canada Highway, but we were within six to 10 feet of doing so.

I wholeheartedly support this piece of legislation. I hope that all members of the House will do so. I think it will do great things to help better equip members of Parliament and our elected officials at the provincial and municipal levels to better respond to the needs of our communities and make sure that we can do better at keeping them safe. That is one of our primary responsibilities here in this House.

I look forward to voting in favour of Bill C-317 when the time comes.

● (1140)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to Bill C-317, an act to establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting.

I want to thank the member for Lac-Saint-Louis for introducing this legislation and advancing the important discussions on water management in Canada. The member for Lac-Saint-Louis and I share a passion for water, and it has been a pleasure to work with him as the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, as we are currently studying water. This is important because, over the last eight years, the government has neglected the subject of water in its environmental policy. As a life-long farmer and a proud defender of the rural way of life, I can say that no environmental aspect is more important to me than water is. There is an old saying that whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting over. That statement is a testament to the importance of these discussions.

I am a proud Manitoban, and I can confidently say that Manitoba has the most robust history of adaptation in Canada when it comes to excess water. This comes not out of choice, but out of necessity. Manitobans live on what was once Lake Agassiz. It is well known that the city of Winnipeg is located directly on a flood plain, where the Red River and Assiniboine River meet. No one expected the city of Winnipeg to relocate because of its location. Instead, adaptation and mitigation were prioritized. In the mid-1900s, the majority of Manitobans lived in the Red River Valley, with many residents residing directly on its flood plain. In 1950, the province was unprepared for a historic flood that displaced tens of thousands of Manitobans and damaged infrastructure throughout the province.

A great Conservative premier of Manitoba, Premier Duff Roblin, understood flood plains and the impacts flooding would continue to have if not addressed. Following the historic flood of 1950 and the subsequent royal commission, Premier Roblin was responsible for developing one of the most successful environmental mitigation projects in Canadian history: the Red River Floodway.

The Red River Floodway diverts water flowing from the Red River around the city of Winnipeg. Not only has it prevented more than \$40 billion in flood damage to Winnipeg, but the project was also completed on time and under budget, a rare feat for governments today. The Red River Floodway was a monumental undertaking that led to the creation of the Portage Diversion and the Shellmouth Dam and reservoir.

This big-picture thinking enabled governments to successfully plan for consequences hundreds of kilometres away from Winnipeg. This project was responsible not only for flood mitigation but also for drought adaptation, because of its water storage component. These projects are a true testament to what effective and practical environmental policy should look like.

In a nation as large and diverse as Canada, mitigation and adaptation should be a focus of environmental policy. It is important to note that Bill C-317 would not directly build water mitigation and adaptation projects such as the ones I mentioned, because Bill C-317 is only a strategy. We need to seek tangible and practical solutions. I hope that, if passed, Bill C-317 would not result in more bureaucrats and consultants and, instead, would advance solutions to the water challenges Canada faces.

In 2011, Manitoba was once again caught off guard; it experienced another historic flood. Local governments were forced to flood parts of their own communities to prevent worse damages in different water basins. I remember the 20-foot walls of sandbags in the city of Brandon. The community was anxiously monitoring the forecasts as it prayed for the dikes to hold.

Unfortunately, many of the lessons from dramatic flooding events are not learned until after the damage is done. Too often, all levels of government fail to focus on proactive and preventative flood management. Failing to plan is planning to fail. As a result, the citizens bear the economic and social costs. That is why it is important to be proactive in flood forecasting; in this way, communities can prepare for the most likely scenarios and mitigate the potential damages.

There were many lessons learned from Manitoba's 2011 flood. One of the most significant lessons highlighted was the importance of collecting standardized data for flood forecasting. Following the flood, it became very evident that there was a lot of data available regarding water and flood plains. Municipal, provincial and federal governments; water basin organizations; and farmers and landowners had their own data. However, all this data was gathered by different people, in different ways and with different formats.

• (1145)

Water knows no boundaries, so it is critically important that different water authorities are able to share standardized data so they can communicate with each other. Any national strategy must enable all jurisdictions to share data in a standardized and understandable format to prepare for and react to flooding.

Any national strategy on water must also respect jurisdiction, which has been absent under the current government. The standardization of data is common sense and has the potential to save taxpayers' money because it can reduce the administration needed to translate this information. When we have more accurate data, it al-

lows us to model the impacts of government policies more effectively.

Aquanty specializes in the predictive analytics, simulation and forecasting of water resources. It is an amazing model than can forecast if it has enough accurate data points. It can analyze the impact of precipitation, including how much can be absorbed by the soil at various distances downstream. The model needs a lot of accurate data to make these projections accurately, and this requires standardization and data sharing from local governments. Data is so important because too often bureaucrats pretend to know the lay of the land better than those who work and live on the land.

I know the sponsor of this bill understands the importance of local engagement, but too often the intent of legislation like this is ignored by bureaucrats far removed from the people. No one is better equipped to provide accurate information on water than the individuals who live and work on the landscape.

Unfortunately, there are countless examples of government officials not listening to the people on the ground. I know many farmers who have dealt with government during times of flooding on their land, and it is all too common to hear about a bureaucrat advising a farmer where they expect water will move and the farmer advising the bureaucrat where the water will actually move. When the water begins to move, it is the farmer who has been farming the land his entire life who is right, not the bureaucrat from some downtown office building.

While Bill C-317 would mandate collaboration and consultation with various levels of government, I do fear much of the consultation would neglect the people who understand the landscape the best. Hopefully we can examine how to best include the knowledge of landowners in the proposed national strategy at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

In conclusion, Bill C-317 has the potential to make a positive difference to the future of flood and drought management in Canada. Unfortunately, we will not be able to fully understand what will be in the strategy or whether the strategy will address the concerns I raised.

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If Bill C-317 becomes law, I am hopeful any national strategy on this matter can be built from the ground up and not from a top-down approach in Ottawa. Water has not been given the attention it deserves for too long, so I am thankful Bill C-317 has enabled Parliament to discuss an issue that is so important to Canadians.

As I said in my opening remarks, whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting over. I look forward to continuing to fight over water in a productive way so Canadians are better off.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak in this session of Parliament. I want to begin by saying hello to the people of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou and to my team, Line, Mélanie, Marie-Josée, Jenny, Lamine, Eric and Loukas, who are holding down the fort in my riding.

Let us now talk about Bill C-317, an act to establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting, which seeks to provide key stakeholders with the information they need to forecast floods and droughts. This bill affects me directly, since much of my riding had to deal with forest fires in 2023.

Year after year, more and more regions of Quebec and Canada are facing flooding and forest-fire-causing droughts because of climate change. Climate change is escalating around the world and causing climate events that are increasingly frequent, more intense and more variable in nature.

Quebec has experienced a lot of flooding in recent decades. The socio-economic costs associated with those floods have only continued to grow. The same is true of forest fires.

The Société de protection des forêts contre le feu describes the 2023 wildfires as the most devastating ever. The drought in May 2023 was the spark that ignited it all. Some 4.5 million hectares of forest burned in Quebec, including 1.1 million hectares in populated areas.

In summer 2023, there were 30 times more wildfires than the annual average, including 48 that burned more than 1,000 hectares, or 30 times more than the annual average in Quebec, which is 1.6 fires per season. Some 2,360 forest firefighters from the rest of Canada and around the world came to help their colleagues in Quebec.

The community of Lebel-sur-Quévillon, in Abitibi-James Bay-Nunavik-Eeyou, was the hardest hit by the wildfires in summer 2023. It had the biggest fire, made up of 19 fires that converged and burned 480,000 hectares of forest. Five years of forest harvests went up in smoke. I was there on the first day of the forest fires in Chapais and when Lebel-sur-Quévillon was evacuated, to announce the evacuation.

For those who do not believe that these fires are a result of climate change, I can enlighten them. I can tell them about the damage they caused in my riding in terms of the economic and social losses, of our people's insecurity and their fear of losing their homes and personal property, of their fear of going through more fires, of the lack of compensation to the cities and towns that were devastated. People are still stressed, and they are still awaiting financial assistance.

I worked with the mayors to help meet the complex needs of cities and towns in this difficult situation. I reported on the situation every day between May and August of last year.

Floods and droughts are natural phenomena that are amplified by climate change. Adjusting to the impacts of climate change means that public authorities need to rely on science to guide government decision-making. This means making relevant information about meteorological events, including droughts and floods, available to the public and all responders.

The Bloc Québécois agrees with the principle of Bill C-317, but someone will have to show how a bill seeking to create a national strategy to prevent floods and droughts will improve current public action, since public authorities are already doing much of the work.

In fact, we would like to take this opportunity to remind our colleagues that Canada is not a national state made up of a single people. There is no one single Canadian nation. Canada is a multinational society, which includes the Canadian majority, the Quebec nation and indigenous nations. The use of terms such as “national policy” or “national strategy” is therefore a bit misleading.

Everyone knows that a country can hold up diversity as a cardinal value while showing very little consideration for the diversity of nations that make up its population. That being said, our main concern about Bill C-317 is its relevance. We are not certain whether the bill's provisions will have a beneficial effect on public action and, especially, on the ability of public authorities to plan and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The preamble of Bill C-317 explains that the reason for this new legislation is the fact that “current flood and drought forecasting in Canada is conducted by the provinces without coordination between them and with limited federal technical support”.

● (1150)

It is therefore important to consider public actions already taken by the provinces in order to forecast and prevent floods and droughts and to evaluate to what degree federal support is or is not needed.

Quebec's plan to protect its territory from floods contains sustainable solutions to protect our living environments. As we can see on the government of Quebec's website, the plan is based on four areas for action.

Given the seriousness of the situation, the Quebec government has taken action. The ministerial action group on flood-related land-use planning was given a mandate to develop a land-use government plan to ensure the safety of the public and the protection of property in flood zones in Quebec. The action group collaborated with municipalities and the scientific community to find sustainable and creative solutions for protecting our living environments from flooding. Two advisory committees were also set up; one was composed of representatives from the municipalities and associations involved and the other was made up of experts from the various fields associated with land use and flood zone management. After several months of research and consultation, both committees tabled their report. The numerous recommendations they made were taken into consideration by the ministerial action group.

As my colleague mentioned earlier, Quebecers can also use the Vigilance app to better prepare for flooding by keeping up-to-date on rising water levels in Quebec. Government and municipal stakeholders can also use it to alert and mobilize responders in the event of an emergency.

Generally speaking, we can reasonably say that the Quebec government has the expertise needed to protect the land and the people against flooding. In addition, Quebec put a great deal of thought into the Quebec water strategy, which takes into account all past experience. Quebec's strategy works quite well without intervention by the federal government, whose involvement is not needed to protect the environment and manage natural resources.

So it must be made clear that Quebec already has comprehensive flood prevention and water strategies, and that the strategies do not require federal government intervention. Therefore, in subclause 3(3), which defines the content of the future federal strategy, paragraph (d) will have to be amended to remove an unnecessary reference to a Canadian water agency. The very existence of this agency is just as unnecessary as the reference to it in the bill. It is not needed because of the division of powers provided for in the Constitution of Canada.

In closing, the last thing I want is to relive what happened with the 2023 forest fires in Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

• (1155)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis has five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to close this debate on my bill at second reading. First of all, I would like to say how impressed I was by the quality of the speeches from both sides, by members from all parties present in the House this morning.

I would also like to circle back to the comments made by my colleague, the member for Repentigny at the end of the first hour of debate, as well as the final comments made by the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. What we are aiming for here is not a federal strategy at all. In fact, responsibility for forecasting and adapting to disasters, such as floods and droughts, lies with the provinces.

We are not aiming for a federal strategy, but a national strategy, meaning that we want to use this structural bill to encourage better

Private Members' Business

collaboration between the provinces, the federal government, indigenous communities and, as my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa also mentioned, the people on the ground, the farmers. This is already happening. Specialists meet informally. However, according to Canada's foremost expert on flood and drought forecasting, John Pomeroy, something more formal is needed.

It is important to recognize that technology has evolved. I can confirm that Quebec is one of the most advanced provinces in flood and drought forecasting. Quebecers are very technologically advanced, but that does not mean we should not encourage collaboration because, in this day and age, with advances in technology and forecasting methods, forecasters are no longer limited to a small territory. Models can now be developed that cover huge, broad territories, even entire continents. That is what is being done in Europe right now. This will require collaboration. The federal government is not interfering. That is not at all what is happening here.

• (1200)

[English]

I will give an example of the possibilities that we have with the proper degree of co-operation and the possibilities that we have of doing accurate flood forecasting. I would like to refer to something by Dr. Pomeroy. I am paraphrasing him and, in some cases, I am quoting him directly.

I notice the member for Yukon is here. In the summer of 2021, Yukon experienced historical flooding along the Yukon River in Whitehorse, a pilot case flood forecast for the territorial government. It is a flood forecast coordinated by Global Water Futures, which is out of the University of Saskatchewan. It was able to correctly predict the flood and show its cause, which was unprecedented glacier and snow melt in the high mountain headwaters of the Yukon River in British Columbia.

The problem is that Global Water Future's funding will be sunset, so we will not have the funding necessary for this kind of endeavour, but we need more of these kinds of endeavours. As Dr. Pomeroy has said, this exercise could not have been done by any level of government alone. There had to be co-operation between the federal government, the Yukon government and a university, where the expertise really resides in this area. It is not a question of public servants dictating anything to anybody. The public servants will not be doing this work; it is the experts in the universities and provinces.

I appreciate the quality of the speeches I heard this morning and I appreciate what seems to be all-party support for this bill.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The question is on the motion.

Government Orders

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

[English]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I would like a recorded vote please, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 14, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 34—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-62

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House:

(a) the Standing Committee on Health be instructed to consider the subject matter of Bill C-62, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), No. 2, upon the adoption of this order, provided that, as part of this study,

(i) a minister be ordered to appear before the committee for one hour and that additional witnesses be ordered to appear for two consecutive hours, no later than Wednesday, February 14, 2024,

(ii) the committee have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings; and

(b) Bill C-62, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), No. 2, be disposed as follows:

(i) the bill be ordered for consideration at the second reading stage immediately after the adoption of this order, provided that,

(A) when the House begins debate at the second reading stage of the bill, one member of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party may each speak at the said stage for not more than 10 minutes, followed by five minutes for questions and comments,

(B) at the conclusion of the time provided for the debate at the second reading stage or when no member wishes to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, provided that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall be deferred to the next sitting day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions, after which the House shall adjourn until the next sitting day,

(C) during consideration of the bill, the House shall not adjourn, except pursuant to a motion moved by a minister of the Crown,

(D) no motion to adjourn the debate may be moved except by a minister of the Crown,

(ii) if the bill is adopted at the second reading stage, it shall be deemed referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and the bill shall be ordered for consideration at the third reading stage on Thursday, February 15, 2024, provided that,

(A) 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders that day, or when no member wishes to speak, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, provided that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall not be deferred,

(B) during consideration of the bill, the House shall not adjourn, except pursuant to a motion moved by a minister of the Crown,

(C) no motion to adjourn the debate may be moved except by a minister of the Crown.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to a very important issue. This is a deeply personal and complex issue, one that has had a great deal of debate in the House for number of years now.

We are not directly speaking to that. Rather, we are speaking to the motion that would enable the government to get the MAID issue resolved for the next few years. The motion would ensure that the legislation actually passes. I will give a little background on that.

There is a time limit for us to ultimately get Bill C-62 passed in order to fulfill our commitment to the court. Obviously, we want to keep the law validated, appropriately. The motion we have brought forward today would allow for the House, while providing some time for the Senate, to pass and give royal assent to the bill before the House breaks in March for a couple of weeks. In essence, it allows for a little more debate this week, when it will ultimately pass.

It would then afford the Senate, in the week following the break, the ability to deal with the legislation and hopefully pass it without amendment. This is very important, as that would then enable the legislation to receive royal assent before the deadline.

I know some members may be a little uncomfortable with respect to this programming motion before us today, the limitations that it puts on members and the importance of the subject matter itself. As some members may recall, last week I stood in my place and asked for unanimous consent to sit late in the evening. That way, members would have had more opportunity to have debate on this issue. Unfortunately, we did not get unanimous consent. As a direct result, we have to work within the time frame of when the House allows us to sit. As a result, in order to meet the deadline, we have brought in a programming motion.

I made reference to the very beginning, about when we started to talk about the issue of medical assistance in dying. It came up in 2015. A Supreme Court of Canada decision, *Carter v. Canada*, made it very clear that we, as a government, and Canadians, through the Charter of Rights, needed MAID legislation. That was decided midway through 2015, but no action was taken, knowing full well that we had to bring in a law to address what the Supreme Court had put in place.

We all know that an election took place. Shortly after that election, it was made very clear that as a government we needed to bring in the legislation. An approach was made to the Supreme Court to take into consideration what had taken place over the last number of months following its decision, including an election.

● (1205)

The Supreme Court ultimately provided grace to the House of Commons so that we could, in fact, get the necessary legislation brought forward to the chamber and ultimately passed. We did have to ask for yet another extension back then. I do not think that surprised anyone.

Government Orders

From the day we can recall, in 2015, there was a great deal of discussion that had taken place. In fact, I suspect, if one were to take a look at the different pieces of legislation, today, we call it Bill C-62, and the original legislation was Bill C-14. We have had legislation in between those bills, which the government had to bring into the House.

On occasion, when the government brings in legislation for debate, there is fairly extensive debate not only in the chamber but also in committees. I can remember, quite vividly, a lot of the debate, the issue for which the special committee was put together to deal with the issue and to provide some thoughts, recommendations and ideas to the chamber and the members who were directly involved.

There is no lack of interest or input from the many different stakeholders, of all different natures, in every region of the country. Everyone had an opinion on the issue. In the end, the amount of dialogue that went into the legislation and the creation of MAID, was probably greater than 90% of all other forms of legislation that come to the House.

We saw that in the passion of the debates presented at the time by members of Parliament on all sides of the House. It was not just Liberals, New Democrats, Conservatives or the Bloc, or even the leader of the Green Party at the time, where one could see the emotional toll of the debate. That is why I talk about it being of a very deep, personal nature. There are complex choices and decisions that have to be made on this.

When I reflect on that debate, there were tears inside the chamber. There were all sorts of emotions as members tried, in the best way they could, to explain why they were taking their positions on it. Different members voted for different reasons and so forth.

In the end, Bill C-14 ultimately passed, after many hours of debate inside and outside. When I say outside, I go even further than outside of standing committees. There were emails, correspondence and discussions that I had on this issue, and it was fairly intense. People wanted to know how I felt about it. I am sure all members of Parliament were questioned about what they had to say on the legislation.

I do have differing opinions from members across the way and maybe even, quite possibly, within my own caucus. I genuinely believe that the need for MAID is there. There is no question about that.

• (1210)

However, where I fall on the side that it seems to be acceptable, at least for a good percentage of people I represent, is to have trust and confidence in our system of health care professionals, social workers and support people whom family members go to when the time comes to make difficult decisions, such as another family member, a local pastor or anyone else. Having that confidence has allowed me to feel comfortable as we have gone through this legislation, virtually from day one.

There was a need for changes. To bring in substantive legislation for the first time that so profoundly impacts the lives of Canadians and to expect that the legislation would be perfect and would not require change is somewhat naive. That is in fact what took place.

There was a need to make some changes to the legislation. That is why, ultimately, we had the second go-round of the legislation.

There was a fairly wide discussion on that second attempt and, through amendments, something that is now very challenging was brought in, which deals with mental health as a sole condition for MAID. I know that has stirred the emotions of a lot of members and, ultimately, when the legislation passed to allow it, there was a lot more resistance to it than there was to Bill C-14. It did not surprise me, because of the delicacy of the issue.

Again, I fell back to what I believe a vast majority of my constituents are comfortable with, which are the health care professionals and others, because I am not a medical doctor. I do not understand the issue to the same depth as do the different professionals. As a direct result, I feel more comfortable taking the same position as the government took on the issue.

However, we also need to recognize the reality that other jurisdictions are very concerned about the implementation and about the degree to which we are ready to implement the legislation that was passed. That is really the crux of it. Therefore, we have Bill C-62 today, which would allow for that ongoing exemption to continue. That would enable the system, which is large and complex, to ensure that everything is ready. Then, if the legislation takes effect, people would not be let down, and we would still be able to meet the constitutional requirements. Let us remember that the amendment to the original legislation, in part, came from an appeal court in the province of Quebec, which obligated members of the House to bring forward other legislation.

• (1215)

I know my friend opposite, from the Conservative Party, says that we had a choice and that we could have appealed that decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. As a number of them said, we could have attempted to kick the can down the road. Ultimately, it was a decision made and supported by a majority of members of Parliament in the House. Even though the Liberal government had a majority, when it came to Bill C-14, members know full well there were members from all sides who supported it.

Today we have a minority situation, and the only way we can pass legislation through to have the support of other political entities inside the chamber. I would like to think that what we learned through this process has enabled us to look at other things we have been able to do directly.

During many hours of the debates, people talked about palliative care, hospice care and about the lack of that type of care being provided to the people of Canada. It has been a genuine concern for many years, probably a good 20-plus years, where we needed to see more invested in hospice and in palliative care.

Far too often we see individuals who are panelled in our hospitals because there is no place for them to go outside of the hospital. If we look at what took place during the pandemic, we saw that care facilities had to close the doors to people from outside to protect those on the inside. Those on the inside were often dying prematurely, and we know that as fact. Organizations like the Canadian Forces or the Red Cross were involved.

Government Orders

If we take a look at the bigger holistic picture, are we collectively, and contrary to what some might say, it is not just Ottawa, doing enough to be able to deal with these social issues that Canadians have a high standard for? They want politicians of all political stripes and of all levels of government to invest more resources. I am talking about not only money, but also time and debate.

There are probably better ways in which we could spend some of the money that is spent in areas such as health care, social services and so forth. One could take a look at the process for someone who might, first, end up in a hospital situation, and while in the hospital, they find out that things are not good and that their life is going to come to an end in a relatively short time.

● (1220)

One of the things that happen is that hospitals can provide only so much in terms of treatment. There is no consistency within a province, let alone the nation, as to which individuals are being kept in the hospital. Because there are not enough supports in a home atmosphere and there is no other place for an individual to go, far too often they become panelled in a hospital facility in one form or another. I believe the debates we have seen on MAID amplify that.

These are the types of discussions and debates that we should be having, not only here in Ottawa but also in our communities and at the different legislatures. Quite frankly, there are some fairly significant stakeholders out there who also have to play a role, like non-profit organizations. That is what I recall about some of the discussions we have been having over the years in regard to MAID legislation. Unfortunately, as I pointed out, the original thoughts in regard to MAID and the need for us to bring in legislation and the types of debates that we saw then are in contrast to today, as it is becoming more of a politicized issue. Politics seems to be more important than the issue itself in some ways.

That is why at the very beginning I referred to the fact that it is not a good thing that we had to bring in a programming motion, but it is important that we do it today, because we were not successful at getting the consensus required to be able to sit longer to allow for a consensus to emerge as to how the legislation could pass through the system. However, we still have an opportunity. The motion talks about going to the Standing Committee on Health as the subject matter.

When this motion passes, it will enable the Standing Committee on Health, as its first priority in terms of the resources of the House, to meet. A minister will in fact be there for a good hour. There will be an opportunity to have a few other witnesses. It will ultimately have to go through the committee. If we can get this motion passed, after this legislation goes through committee it will come back here to the House of Commons for third reading later this week, before being dealt with in the Senate in the last week of February to March 1. That time frame will enable it to ultimately get the necessary royal assent in order for it to be enacted into law.

● (1225)

Based on what the legislation would actually do, I would think that the Conservatives, in particular, would support it. The essence of the legislation is to put in a three-year extension. It provides for

particular provinces and jurisdictions to be able to get things in a better state of readiness, so that, at the end of that period of time, we are able to provide the types of services that are necessary. This means, in good part, that there will be ample time for us to continue to have that dialogue and debate, and if there is a need to do and bring forward other things, whether it is through private members' business or government business, that there are opportunities. However, I suspect, by passing Bill C-62, that a sound majority of the House will be content with the modernization, if I can put it that way, of the legislation.

In one part, it reminds me of the issue of the suicide crisis helpline, and I say that for two reasons.

One reason is that some members often will make reference to how the legislation as a whole is enabling individuals to virtually have suicide upon request, which is just not the case. We know that is not the case, and the members who say it know that is not the case but unfortunately we still see some members give that false impression. I find that to be somewhat unfortunate, because it is definitely misleading and does a disservice in terms of the legislation and the thorough process that we have gone through. I cannot imagine the number of hours, and we are talking three digits and more of hours of different types of discussions in many different forums. To try to simplify it by calling it "suicide on demand" does a great disservice to the legislation and to the law that we currently have in place.

The reason I bring up the suicide helpline is that someone indicated to me that there are people who, at times in their lives, give it thought. When they heard about the MAID legislation, they made inquiries, and because of those inquiries they were able to get the type of assistance that made things better for them. In other words, MAID legislation, on occasion, I would ultimately argue, has actually even saved lives.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, a doctor in the House laughs at that. I do not believe it is a laughing matter. I think the member should reflect in terms of all the debates and discussions—

● (1230)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I would ask members who wish to engage to please wait for the period for questions and comments to do that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I hope the doctor asks me a question about the 13,000 people who were killed. The manner in which he made that particular heckle is very disrespectful. I wonder if that is the general attitude that the member actually takes to try to get on the record.

It was not that long ago when he was in the House that he said that the Ukraine trade agreement was "woke" legislation. He was the one who first sent up that red flag. Now, in his insensitive way, he talks about the 13,000 killed with a smile.

I can tell the member that the individuals who were involved in those difficult decisions did not think it was a laughing matter. They did not—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members who want to participate in the debate that they should wait until it is time for questions and comments. I am referring to the laughing, heckling and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is disappointing to hear someone who practises medicine talk about it in a manner that is disrespectful to the thousands of people who have very difficult decisions to make.

An hon. member: It is unbelievable.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It is unbelievable.

Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, these are not easy decisions, and the member opposite feels these 13,000 were just killed.

The government puts in a great deal of effort to get things in a state of readiness, so that we are able to provide the types of services Canadians want and need.

I make reference to the 988 suicide crisis line. Some might try to give the impression that because this is just a three-digit number, all we have to do now is say that we are going to have it and click our heels, and then it appears. The idea came up a number of years ago from, I believe, a member of the Conservative Party, who was being very genuine. That does not take away from the fact that other members, associations and stakeholders were also talking about it. As a government, the minister responsible ultimately did the sharing and the networking that were necessary in order to be able to present to the House of Commons a program that ultimately received the funding that was necessary, and worked with the different provinces, territories and stakeholders to turn it into a reality.

Today, the 988 number is live. People having suicidal thoughts can feel comfortable knowing there will be someone at the other end of the line when they call 988 who can help them in different languages and understand and appreciate different cultures. I would suggest this is an example of how things come to the government, actions are ultimately taken and then something is put in place.

The same principles have applied here. The Supreme Court makes a decision based on the Charter of Rights; the government brings in legislation, which is thoroughly debated and on which amazing consultation and input take place, with hundreds of hours of dialogue; and the legislation is passed by a majority. It is passed by members of all political parties and then ultimately put into place.

It is a policy that is then administered and, as I pointed out earlier, there is at times the need for changes. We saw that need. One of them was amplified through the Quebec court. We make the change. We listen to what the Senate said. The issue of mental health is something that was brought to our attention. This legislation, Bill C-62, like the previous one that delayed the implementa-

tion, is going to continue that delay. To that end, I believe we will in fact have sound, solid legislation, and hopefully it will not have to be revisited. Time will tell us on that.

• (1240)

With those few words, I hope members can appreciate why the need for the programming of the legislation is being put into place and why the legislation is so critically important. Indeed, I would suggest that delaying it for three years is a reflection of what a vast majority of Canadians want and what the different stakeholders are requesting.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the decision to expand MAID in the case of mental illness was not a decision of the courts. It was a political decision made by the Liberals. That is evidenced by the fact that the government's initial legislative response, Bill C-7, expressly excluded MAID for mental illness in response to the Truchon decision, which was not an appellate decision, as the member said, but a lower court decision that, yes, the government should have appealed.

We have heard from experts the fundamental clinical issues, including the difficulty, if not impossibility, of predicting irremediability as part of the reason why there was a one-year delay. It is part of the reason why now the government is kicking the can down the road with a further three-year delay. What evidence can the member cite that the issue is going to be resolved in three short years?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am sure the member is aware that the request for the extension is something that is coming from different jurisdictions. There are medical professions and provinces, for example, that have made the very clear indication that they are just not quite ready yet. They believe there should be more of an extension and a bit more time because there is training that needs to be involved and possible accreditation. I do not know all the complexities of it, but I do know that there is a genuine request for additional time, so the people who need to have the level of expertise would be properly in place so the best interests of Canadians are put first.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, when it comes to MAID, this government is not exactly a shining example of proactivity. After the Carter decision, it took a long time for the government to table a half-decent bill. Bill C-14 was pretty worthless. It was a poor imitation of the Quebec legislation and was far from addressing the crux of the Carter decision.

That being said, the issue of proactivity is still relevant. Regarding MAID for people with mental health conditions, a three-year delay was unnecessary; one year would have been enough. The government has been aware of that for a year, since it is basing its decision to kick it down the road on the consensus recommendations of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

Why has the government not done anything on advance requests for the past year? Why is it dragging its feet? Why is it not basing its decision to go ahead with this on the joint committee's key recommendation?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would disagree with the member with respect to the government dragging its feet.

We can go all the way back to the Carter decision of the Supreme Court to find that it was Stephen Harper who chose to do nothing after the decision. Shortly after forming government in late 2015, we initiated legislative draftings so the legislature would be able to deal with the legislation in 2016, where there were thorough discussions and debates, at the different levels of readings, plus standing committees. I have spent a good portion of my comments today amplifying that.

On the one hand, some members of the Conservative Party want us to get rid of the mental health component. The Bloc, on the other hand, are saying that we are not moving fast enough. I think the approach that we have taken as a government is on target.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is obviously a week when the House of Commons as a whole has to step up to the plate because we really only have two sitting weeks left on the parliamentary schedule until the March 17 deadline.

That being said, I think it is worth it for us to remember why we are here. We have to go back to Bill C-7 and the Liberal government's 11th hour, inexplicable decision to accept a very consequential Senate amendment to it, which got us into this mess in the first place. The Senate changed the law without having done the proper research and consultations. Ever since, it feels like we have been playing a game of catch-up. That is why Bill C-39 was necessary last year, and why we have found ourselves in the same situation with Bill C-62.

Is the parliamentary secretary prepared to accept some responsibility on behalf of his government and issue an apology for setting that arbitrary deadline and getting us into the mess we now find ourselves in?

• (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in the question previous to that of the member, the government was accused of being too slow. Now my New Democratic friend is saying that we were too quick when it came to Bill C-7. In saying that we did not do enough background work, he implied that we were too quick.

The Government of Canada, when we look at the broader picture of the Supreme Court decision back in 2015, brought forward very difficult legislation. As has been demonstrated, it was not perfect legislation. Given the very nature of it, one would be naive to think there was never going to be a need to make changes. That is why standing committees were mandated to meet on the legislation. It was because it was the first time we had substantive legislation of this nature.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, it is almost one year to the day that the governing party proposed Bill C-39. I am glad we are once again talking about rushing through legislation to avoid extending medical assistance in dying for mental health.

The parliamentary secretary asked a really important question. He asked in his speech if we are doing enough on these social issues. The answer is very clearly no because the government is not rushing through crucial legislation to address the housing crisis. It is not rushing through legislation to address legislated poverty for people with disabilities, and it is pretending its commitment to a \$4.5-billion Canada mental health transfer never happened. Why is this the case?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would challenge the member to show me a government in the last 50 or 60 years that has been more progressive on social development than the Prime Minister and this government, whether we are talking about taking seniors and children out of poverty by the hundreds of thousands, or dealing with a wide spectrum of social issues through the child care program and the many senior supports we have put in place, not to mention the substantial enhancements to OAS and increases to the GIS, especially back in 2016 when we first became government.

There is a long list. I could talk about the dental care program or the tax break for Canada's middle class. There is a whole list I could go through, but I do not have enough time.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary can be an animated speaker, quite like myself, but he took the time to be very selective in his words to properly represent his constituents and his view.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am already being heckled. What I found—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Hon. members know that, if they have not been recognized and do not have the floor, then they need to wait until the time for questions and comments or their turn for debate, which will come shortly.

The hon. deputy government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, what I found most shocking was that, when the parliamentary secretary was trying to deliver his remarks, the member for Cumberland—Colchester immediately started heckling and yelling at him.

It reminded me of when the member for Cumberland—Colchester, on October 25 at the health committee, said, “Don't worry, Canadians, because when you're addicted to these opioids that this Liberal-NDP coalition is giving you for free in its crazed experiment, what are they going to do? They're going to kill you.” Now Conservatives are clapping for his comments on that.

I am wondering if—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. If members want to participate in the debate, they need to wait until the appropriate time.

The hon. deputy government House leader.

• (1250)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary could provide his comments on whether he thinks that people who make comments like that should even be participating in a debate like this.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is disappointing in that this is such a serious issue. A member of the Conservative Party is being disrespectful to Canadians, as a whole, by taking the issue so lightly and making light of a decision that is so difficult.

The member feels it is okay to say that well over 10,000 people were killed. How insensitive can a person be? These are decisions of the greatest difficulty, and the way the member has behaved is disrespectful.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I know this is a piece of legislation that many are passionate about. There are differing points of view, and I would hope that each side will be able to respect each other, whether they agree with what is being said or not.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to seek the House's unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, today, it is interesting to follow the member across the aisle when we are speaking about a matter of grave importance. I find it absolutely fascinating, in a very strange sense, that the member opposite would suggest that somehow MAID has saved lives, when, indeed, 13,200 Canadians have died because of MAID. On top of that, we know that is a 30% increase year over year. We also know that in California, which has a similar population, if I have my statistics correct, about 450 people died because of MAID.

MAID for mental illness presents a serious difficulty for all Canadians, and thankfully, Conservatives on this side of the House are ready to stand up for those who have mental illness and who have suffered with it for a very long time. We know clearly, from the DSM-5, that there are many conditions that, if Canadians were aware were classified as a mental illness, they would find this legislation even more appalling than they do now. We know that over half of Canadians reject this terrible idea of MAID for mental illness. When Canadians think of mental illness, they think of things such as depression, schizophrenia and bipolar illness, all of which are chronic medical conditions with available treatment.

However, we also know the reckless government and this reckless expansion of MAID is causing some of the major difficulties. In the DSM-5, what would also be classified as a mental illness would be things such as substance use disorder and autism, both of which are chronic illnesses. I believe Canadians specifically would find it appalling for the reckless government and its reckless agenda

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to suggest that Canadians who are suffering from a substance use disorder or Canadians with autism are never going to get better, and that they should be subjected to the MAID regime.

When we begin to look at and understand the difficulties associated with the reckless, costly coalition's expansion of MAID, we also know that the 17 chairs of the departments of psychiatry from Canada's universities have spoken out specifically against this expansion of MAID.

There are two things that are very important. Let us start with, perhaps, suicidality, which the member across did mention. I guess the question then remains how an experienced, or even inexperienced, primary care physician or nurse practitioner would be able to determine the difference between suicidality and a demand for MAID. The member across is right. I did practise as a family physician for more than 25 years. Practising in an emergency-room setting on a Saturday night when somebody comes in and is suicidal is probably one of the most stressful things someone can possibly deal with. I think every one of my physician colleagues across this country would admit to that.

We are incredibly well trained, and we have incredible protocols for dealing with trauma, strokes and heart attacks, but when somebody comes in with suicidal ideation, it is incredibly personal. It is situational. It is related to medication. It is related to family. It is related to every single difficult relationship they have in their lives. If there is a physician out there who suggests that, when they go home after a shift Saturday night that ends Sunday morning where they told someone who was suicidal that they are okay to go home, and they know that person is fine, but they do not worry about that decision, I would challenge them on that.

That, for me personally as a physician, was something that created significant distress and angst, and it should. What we are talking about is somebody's life and their decision to end it or not. We have a regime put forward by the reckless and costly coalition to have people with mental illness receive medical assistance in dying, to be put to death by the state.

• (1255)

That is the suicide part of it, which, again, can be with respect to an acute or a more chronic condition. However, it is the irremediable aspect of the mental illness that creates significant difficulties for the reckless and radical expansion of the MAID regime. What does the word "irremediable" mean? It means, in basic terms, that the condition cannot be fixed, that the treatment that has been rendered is all the treatment available and that the condition is going to either continue the way it is or get worse in the future. Who is going to decide that?

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There is a Canadian Association of MAiD Assessors and Providers. The group is staffed by family physicians and nurse practitioners, despite the opposite thought of many Canadians who would think it would be psychiatrists who would be determining whether a condition is not fixable and chronic and that all of the possible treatment out there has been rendered. That is not the truth; at the current time, the decision would be rendered by two different care providers who are either primary care providers or nurse practitioners. That is incredibly important because we know that even the diagnosis of a mental illness is based on probabilities: Has someone had a particular set of symptoms for a certain amount of time over a certain amount period of time?

It is not like high blood pressure, which a doctor can check and then have a concrete, objective answer. It is not like diabetes, where a person's blood work is done and they have a concrete answer that, yes, the numbers are elevated and the person does have diabetes and can be told what will be done to help them with it. Mental illness is very, very different, and Canadians need to know that; if they do already know it, they need to remember it.

The other important thing is the terrible job that the costly NDP-Liberal coalition has done with respect to access to health care in general but more specifically to mental health care. We know that across this country, half of Canadians are extremely unhappy with their ability to access mental health care, and we also know that the waiting time for adults to access a psychiatrist in most parts of this country is about a year. This means very clearly that primary care physicians and nurse practitioners are providing the majority of mental health care for Canadians, deciding which treatments are working and which are not, when to increase medications, when to add on, etc.

Very sadly, it is clear that for Canadians under 18, the wait time for mental health care access to a psychiatrist in Canada is more than two and a half years. The system is atrocious. The Prime Minister stood up and promised 7,500 doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners to Canadians. How many have we seen? I dare say it has been almost zero. The terrible situation with respect to access to care is most acute when people are seeking mental health care.

Of course, from this side of the House, we do not want the legislation to proceed, but we see a government in panic mode that has no plan and no clear idea of what it is going to do, wants to do, or should do on behalf of Canadians. Here we are. Multiple times at the 11th hour, senior elected government officials across the aisle have said, "We have to rush this through; we have to get it done on behalf of Canadians."

What they fail to remind Canadians of is that it is the government's fault that we have arrived at this situation in the first place. The government members did not appeal the right decisions, allowed decisions to be added on in the Senate, and did not make a decision when they should have, on behalf of Canadians. Therefore, I would implore the House to understand clearly that MAiD for mental illness is not the correct path to go down.

• (1300)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite from Nova Scotia is a fellow doctor. The legislation would put a hold on implementing MAiD

for mental illness. A year before the legislation would come into effect, the committee would have to be re-formed to reconsider the matter and call the experts again. Do you think that in two years' time there is going to be any more of a consensus on the issue than there is at the moment?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is to address questions and comments through the Speaker and not directly to the member.

The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, the question from the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River is a thoughtful one. I think, as I clearly pointed out, that the assessors and providers of MAiD are not suddenly going to be psychiatrists. We do not have enough access to psychiatric care in this country, due to the terrible management of funds by the government.

Am I hopeful that, suddenly, this is going to change in the next two years? With a new government, I suspect that things will be better from a fiscal perspective, but creating more access to health care is going to take some time because of the mess the current government has left it in. Am I hopeful that it is going to be better in two years? Absolutely not.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, who sits with me at the Standing Committee on Health, I invite him to reread the expert report. Honestly, when I heard him talking in his speech about people with mental disorders being put to death by the state, I thought that was utterly outrageous.

Recommendation 10 states, "The requester should be assessed by at least one assessor with expertise in the condition(s). In cases involving [mental disorders], the assessor with expertise in the condition should be a psychiatrist independent from the treating team/provider." He talked about two doctors. There they are.

What is more, "Assessors with expertise in the person's condition(s) should review the diagnosis, and ensure the requester is aware of all reasonable options for treatment and has given them serious consideration."

How can my colleague make such claims, when medical assistance in dying for mental illness has to be requested? Just because someone requests MAiD does not mean they are eligible for it. Does he not trust the people who practice his profession?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I think it is very important that Canadians understand that the vagueness of the language does not demand that it be a psychiatrist who would be making the determination of irremediability. As I clearly pointed out in my speech, the majority of psychiatric care in this country is and has been, over the last 50 years, delivered by primary care physicians. We must understand that this is where a person will primarily receive their diagnosis, that they will receive multiple different treatments if they have an illness that is very difficult to treat, and, again, that many Canadians, especially adults, will have more than a year's wait to see a psychiatrist.

Therefore, depending on psychiatrists to provide intervention, along with diagnosis and treatment, is failing in this country. To go on and expect that they would suddenly be MAID assessors is folly.

• (1305)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Cumberland—Colchester had a couple of factual errors in his speech. The NDP voted against Bill C-7's amendment that brought this in. We supported the member for Abbotsford's bill, Bill C-314, and we support the majority report. We have never been for the expansion; let us put that on the record.

We are at a moment in time this week, with an impending deadline, when we can throw blame at the Liberals, and they are well deserving of it, or we can rise to the occasion and be the adults in the room, given that there are only two sitting weeks left before March 17. Which are the Conservatives going to choose? Are they going to be on the side of getting the bill through the House to the Senate in the correct amount of time?

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, clearly we know that the NDP, part of the costly coalition, will continue to not support the needs of Canadians and that it will continue to vote on all things with the reckless Liberal government, which has led Canadians to be, every month, \$200 away from insolvency and to have the greatest numbers of auto theft crime in the most recent history. The chance to believe that it might do something right for Canadians is almost zero.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Not only is the member misleading the House yet again, but he is also not being relevant at all to the subject matter at hand, which is something very important. All parliamentarians should be respectful in the House.

I would ask that you—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member knows full well that there is some flexibility when debating and answering questions. I find that the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is actually raising points of debate. He may not like what was said; he can address that through speeches or through questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a true honour to stand in the House of Commons and represent the beautiful riding of Peterborough—Kawartha.

I believe that what we are talking about today, which we have been talking about for almost a year to the day, is actually one of the most important pieces of legislation this Parliament will ever discuss and decide on. If people do not know about it, I can promise them with certainty that it will impact either those who are watching or someone they know.

What we are talking about is MAID, medical assistance in dying. The Liberals have put forth the notion to extend MAID to people with mental illness. Members heard me correctly. It sounds absurd because it is absurd. It is the worst message we can send to some-

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body who is in despair: that they are not worth saving. The worst message we, as legislators and policy makers, can send is that someone's life does not matter. I do not think I can name a member of the House who does not know somebody who has had, or who has not themselves had, battles with mental health.

The government is saying it would put forward legislation that would not put more resources, money or time into better understanding mental illness, which includes substance abuse, through which 22 people a day in this country are dying from overdoses, but would offer MAID. This must disturb us. This must make us get up. This must make us speak loudly. I do not care where people sit on a political spectrum; the bill before us is the legislation people should be deciding their vote on, because it is a huge statement of what we as Canadians stand up for.

I want to read this: "To be eligible for MAID under the Criminal Code, a person must have a 'grievous and irremediable medical condition,' which is defined as 'a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability' that has led to an 'advanced state of irreversible decline' and intolerable suffering." It is impossible to determine irremediability in individual cases of mental illness. Many experts have been clear that MAID for mental illness cannot be implemented safely.

Dr. John Maher, a clinical psychiatrist and medical ethicist said, "Psychiatrists don't know and can't know who will get better and live decades of good life. Brain diseases are not liver diseases." As my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester, who is a medical doctor, has attested to multiple times, we cannot say with certainty what is going to happen to someone. We do not know what tomorrow is. I am going to read the most powerful letter into the record, because I think it is critical for everyone to hear it.

I also want to say that in February 2023, just a year ago, 30 legal experts from across Canada wrote an open letter addressed to the Prime Minister and Liberal cabinet ministers to dispute the claims that the then justice minister had repeatedly made, which were that his government was bound by the courts to expand MAID and to make it available for persons whose sole underlying medical condition is mental illness.

This is hard to comprehend, and I spent hours trying to decide why they would want to do this. My 14-year-old said to me on the weekend that if someone is in a state of mental illness, like bipolar disorder, and is in an extreme low, they cannot make a decision that is right for them. That is the whole thing; they need help. With the legislation before us, someone could, in that state, ask for MAID. On what planet does that make any sense? It does not.

I am going to read a letter into the record. It is extremely powerful. Kayla has been writing to me since the issue first came aboard, and she has been very vocal in letting me share her story. I shared her original letter, and now that she knows the government wants to extend MAID yet again instead of throwing it out, she wanted me to read this letter to every member of the House of Commons:

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• (1310)

"Hello, Michelle.

"I am thrilled to hear that MAID for people with mental health disorders as their only condition will not be put into place next month. However, it is deeply disturbing to me that the Liberals think time to get this right makes it better. What will be the difference in 2027? They will still be offering death to people who may very well live long lives with improved quality of life.

"In my own darkest moments I also thought things would never get better. I thought I would be sad and scared and hallucinating for the rest of my life, but they did get better, and offering MAID to people like me when in their worst moments is robbing them of the opportunity for things to get better. It is robbing people of the opportunity to receive help. It is robbing them of the opportunity to heal.

"It is also disgusting to me that death would be offered as a solution to people with mental health disorders when the resources for people with mental health disorders, at least where I live in Ontario, are in shambles. People are living on the streets with addictions. People are coming to myself to help them get help knowing that I have been through my own dark mental health struggles, and I am at a loss for where to send them. Wait lists are long, and while I know of some early psychosis intervention programs, people who have been struggling past early adulthood have nowhere to go but the hospital where they can't stay forever.

"I want to tell you about my dear uncle. He lives with paranoid schizophrenia. He recently hit rock bottom. He lived on the streets for over a year, and not for a lack of my family trying to help him. He almost died of pneumonia. Every time my family would take him to the hospital and try to get him help for his mental health, he would be released. Then he would get arrested and return to the hospital only to get released again. This went on for years. I understand a normal hospital doesn't have resources for him, but the point is no one knew what to do.

"But back to MAID. This idea needs to be scrapped. Offering death as hope to people in mental health crises is despicable. Just because it is a needle does not give people more dignity. It denies the dignity that already exists in every single human life. Just because the government hands you the knife while smiling doesn't change the fact that they are handing you the knife to kill yourself.

"Our lives are not useless or lesser just because we struggle with mental health disorders and it is time the current Canadian government started to believe that.

"Thank you, Michelle.

"Kayla."

Can we please give Kayla a round of applause for her bravery? She has spoken up so many times about this, and in genuine distress.

I heard my colleague across the way, the Liberal member for Winnipeg North, say that he struggled with this because it is so personal. He said that this was what his constituents wanted. My response to him would be: I would like to see the data. I would like to

see a referendum that this is what his constituents want, that they would rather MAID be offered than support to resources in understanding how the brain works, why the brain does what it does and what is mental illness. I challenge him right here, right now, to give me that data, because I can say with certainty that the families I know, the children I know who are on wait lists over two years long, do not want to be offered death. They want hope, they want treatment and they want solutions.

It is insane that we are even having this discussion, "Well, we'll just extend it." Do members know what the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions said in the House? She said that it is not a matter of if any longer; it is when. This is such a deep ideology that the Liberals cannot even say, "Okay, all right, we get it. We heard from the 30 experts. We have heard from the people. This does not make any sense and there is no science here. We will pull it back. This was a mistake."

There is no shame in admitting there was a mistake. We are here to make people's lives better, not worse, absolutely, without a doubt, not this message of, "You know what? Yeah, it is not going to get better. So, here, sign this paper. We are going to give you MAID."

For those who are watching and have voted Liberal and are loyal, I plead with them to look at this. This is the most disgusting piece of legislation that has ever been put on the floor of the House of Commons, and we must invest in mental health and treatment.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, no government has invested more in mental health than under this Prime Minister and this Liberal government. What a joke coming across from the other way. They are trying to give the impression that someone who is having suicidal thoughts could just go to a place and get it rubber-stamped, giving them a pill or an injection. That is just stupid.

If the member is so brave, why will she not go to any high school in Winnipeg North and have a debate on the issue with me? Will she accept that challenge? Let us have a debate, let us invite a few people over in a high school. That way we cannot be accused of trying to make it lopsided, one way or another. Will she come to Winnipeg North?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, a thousand per cent. I hope that he will pay for the plane ticket himself to send me there. I will be there with bells on.

I think what that member said is so disturbing. He said that their government has invested more in mental health than any other government. What a fallacy and an insult. I do not know who he is talking to, but I have seniors, family members and other people calling me who are living on the street and using food banks. What does he think that does to mental health? We are 35 out of 38 in the OECD with regard to teen suicides in this country, yet the government has invested the most. There is a wait-list of almost two years for a teenager who needs access to mental health, but the government has done its best job. What about that \$4.5-billion mental health transfer that was supposed to happen? Where is that?

I am sorry, but the stats speak for themselves. We have never been in a worse mental health crisis than under that Prime Minister and that Liberal government that divides people and makes them not want to live.

• (1320)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, it would have been good if my colleague could have sat with us on the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying. I think she is confusing two things. Just because a person requests MAID does not mean that they will be eligible to receive it, and all of the experts, whether they are in favour of MAID or not, have said that a suicidal state is reversible.

I am not sure what she was talking about, but it is important not to engage in fearmongering. No one who has just been taken into care will be given that option because, first of all, it is not an option that is offered to people. People have to make a request.

I would invite my colleague to read the panel's recommendations on that.

[English]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I guess my response to that member is to ask why medical assistance in dying should be offered to somebody who has a mental illness, when what they need is help. It does not make any sense. As I said, I cannot reconcile those two things. If we do not know with certainty whether somebody is going to get better, why would we put that into legislation to even make it an option?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, there was a letter that was signed by seven out of 10 provinces and all three territories asking the federal government for a delay. The case is bolstered by those health ministers and ministers responsible for mental health and addictions.

We have a very tight timeline. We have two sitting weeks left until the law changes. There is plenty of blame to be assigned but this week we have to step up to the plate as parliamentarians.

My question to my hon. colleague is this. Are the Conservatives going to support this programming motion on government business No. 34, to get this bill to the Senate so that we have the time? Otherwise, the law is going to change. That is the fact we are dealing with.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, what a backward place we work in. Why are we even having this legislation? It should not

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have even been here in the first place. Why are we expanding it when it should not even exist? It does not make any sense. Now they say, "Well, you know what? We only have so much time. We've got to expand it because we shouldn't have put it in there in the first place. Are you going to support it or what?"

This is so backwards. If it had not been put in place from the first, we would not even be here having this discussion. This legislation should not be offered, period.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, let us try to calm down a bit.

In this debate, the government is basing itself on the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying for its amendment to Bill C-62.

The Bloc Québécois would have liked to lend its support. The problem is that we believe that we should not indefinitely delay the possibility of medical assistance in dying for people with an irreparable mental disorder, when no psychiatrist worth their salt has been able to treat them or relieve their suffering. After 10, 20 or 30 years of suffering, the decision whether or not to request MAID should not lie with this person, who is supposed to determine whether the patient is eligible.

We asked for an amendment to the bill. Why take three years when, last year, we were told that it would take a year to make sure that MAID for people with mental disorders could be set up in a safe and appropriate manner? The main issue we have is that, in 2015, there was an election, but there was also the Carter decision. The government and this Parliament passed terrible legislation, similar to the one Quebec adopted a year earlier.

Quebec passed a law that only covers end-of-life cases, people who are terminally ill. I want to reiterate that, in the terminal phase of life, the process of dying has begun and is irreversible. People can be well taken care of in palliative care. Good palliative care, as described by Cicely Saunders at the time, is full, comprehensive, holistic support for people as they are dying. It involves adequately managing the person's pain and suffering, both physical and emotional, and supporting their family. All of this should be done in an environment that resembles a normal environment as much as possible. However, it is possible that, all of a sudden, in the midst of this process, the patient, who is slowly dying, will request MAID because, one day, they are feeling at peace and ready to let go. That is not a failure, in my opinion. It can be seen as successful palliative care. When my colleagues are about to depart this life, I hope that they will be calm and at peace. That is what I would wish for everyone.

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So Quebec had taken those steps. Then in Parliament came the Carter decision, which stated that Ms. Carter was not at the end of her life, but she was suffering a great deal. It was therefore decided that depriving her of medical assistance in dying impinged on her right to life. Why? She was being forced to end her life prematurely, when the fact is that letting her decide what happened next would empower her. It was up to her to define when her suffering became intolerable.

It was a bad law. Bill C-7 had to be introduced. When we began studying Bill C-7, there was another factor that had to be considered; that was in 2021.

• (1325)

The Carter decision states that there cannot be an absolute prohibition on MAID simply because people belong to a particular group, one that is vulnerable. It must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The reality is that people can and do struggle with irremediable mental disorders. Irremediability is established through a rigorous process. During that process, practitioners must be certain that the person has never refused treatment that we know would have absolutely improved their situation.

There are indeed people whose mental disorders cause intolerable suffering, and psychiatry does not help them. If anyone here wants to claim otherwise, I would say that they lack intellectual integrity. Psychiatrists cannot cure everyone; it is impossible. That said, psychiatry is rife with medical paternalism.

That being said, what we wanted was for the government, whose Bill C-62 is based on the work of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, to plan ahead for when it might have to introduce Bill C-62 and include another key recommendation of the special joint committee in the bill. That recommendation was presented a year ago and was the subject of a consensus. One Conservative member even joined the majority. There is a consensus in favour of advance requests.

Why was that not included in the bill? It should have been anticipated. The government knew that the date would have to be pushed back. It had a year to introduce a measure in the House that would have also covered people suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's. Why did the government not do that? We asked the government why it was not doing so when it had the chance. Quebec drafted its own legislation. It is structured, rigorous and unanimously supported in Quebec.

An Ipsos poll shows that 85% of the Canadian population supports advance requests. In British Columbia, 84% supports advance requests. In Alberta, it is 84%; in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, it is 81%; in Ontario, it is 84%, in Quebec, it is 87%; in Atlantic Canada, it is 81%. I could go on. There are other figures. They vary. The results are based on a sample of 3,500 people. That is not nothing. When will the government take action? Why has it not heard this request? Why has it not spoken with Quebec, who has worked on this issue? Why did it not hear the unanimous will of the National Assembly, just last week? Why is it afraid of its own shadow? Why do the Liberals lack courage so?

The last time they lacked courage, we ended up with Bill C-14. What is the problem with Bill C-14? The real problem with Bill C-14 is not a legal problem. The problem is for a patient who is suffering, who, to satisfy the reasonably foreseeable natural death criterion, has to go on a hunger strike. We have seen that. The problem is for people who, like Ms. Gladu and Mr. Truchon, have to fight for their constitutional rights in court. When I say there is a lack of courage, that is what I mean.

My only viewpoint is the viewpoint of patients who are suffering. The only thing I am standing for here is the suffering patients' right to self-determination. Patients had to fight an uphill battle against medical paternalism when it comes to MAID.

• (1330)

As I mentioned last week, there was a time when the palliative care that is so dear to the heart of my Conservative friends and that I personally consider to be very important was called passive euthanasia. Doctors obstinately used aggressive life-support measures because their duty was to save their patients. As we know, every doctor thought that they could save every patient back then. It was actually doctors suffering from cancer who started to assert their right to refuse treatment. Today, cessation and refusal of treatment are part of what are considered to be good medical practices.

Why are we not studying the bill today? The government is imposing a gag order. We will not be overly critical of this decision. I understand that this has to be done before March 17. We are not getting too worked up about this, but still, we have not consented and will not consent to this. Why not? It is because we wanted a bill that was based on the recommendations from the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying. I want answers from the government in that regard.

Why the delay in expanding medical assistance in dying to people with mental health issues? We did what the committee asked. Bill C-62 even provides for the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying to reconvene in order to determine whether the groundwork has been laid. That is what we are doing. We basically took the recommendation and inserted it into the bill. Then, there is the issue of advance requests. There is a consensus on that across the country, but the government lacks the courage of its convictions.

The Liberals are afraid of demagoguery because there has been a lot of it on this issue. They are lumping everything together. However, at some point, they need to be consistent in their approach. The Liberals are well aware that the state's role is not to decide for the patient what is best for them when it comes to a decision as personal as one's own death. The state or the patient's neighbour is not the one who is going to die. The state's role is to determine the proper conditions and ensure that they are put in place so that patients can make a free and informed choice. If people are worried about abuse or the slippery slope when it comes to advance requests, then they should look at Quebec's law, which is a model to follow.

The government could have easily inserted elements of the Quebec law into its regulations. It is all well and good to say that the law is a little vague, but the amendment we are making to the medical assistance in dying legislation, expanding section 241 of the Criminal Code, is followed by a procedure, regulations on enforcing regulations. That is where the various safeguards are put in place.

There are standards of practice when it comes to mental disorders. A year ago, a committee began looking at standards of practice, and they will be sent to the regulatory bodies in each province, namely the colleges of physicians. Once we have clear guidelines and standards of practice and the criteria I was talking about earlier are met, someone in a suicidal crisis will not have access to medical assistance in dying.

It bears repeating, because I am hearing a lot of confusion over this. A suicidal person is not eligible for medical assistance in dying, even if they suffer from a mental disorder and are in suicidal crisis, and even if they have recently been admitted to care and diagnosed. I have often asked psychiatrists if they thought that giving access to medical assistance in dying to people with mental disorders could also provide an opportunity for prevention. Some people commit suicide and no one sees it coming. No one knows those individuals today, no physician took them on.

● (1335)

For example, knowing that MAID is an option, a person might come forward because they are suffering and want to exercise that option. Well, that person would not qualify. However, they would then be taken care of and get the treatment they need, since suicidal ideation is reversible. There is no question about that. However, it is not about those patients. When we asked the chair of the expert panel, psychiatrist Mona Gupta, how many patients in her practice would have been eligible, she told us of two or three patients over her entire practice. Still, these are people who are suffering.

When people talk about the fact that the resources are not there—the resources in terms of someone to assess capacity, for an independent psychiatrist to look at a case—I would point out that right now, the decision-making capacity of a person struggling with a mental disorder, but who has cancer, for example, is verified. Psychiatrists are currently assessing the decision-making capacity of people with a mental disorder and a comorbidity. Depending on their condition, practitioners are able to determine the decision-making capacity of these people who have a mental disorder.

The Supreme Court was clear: Not allowing these people to access MAID creates stigma. Not only does it stigmatize them, it discriminates against them. Why infantilize and weaponize people who have a mental disorder and who, in their entire existence, have not found treatment that can alleviate their suffering?

I rather like having discussions and debating with my Conservative colleagues. They have a sense of conviction, but there are some Conservatives who use scare tactics and conflate everything. It is not enough to repeat some 20 times that someone came to say that irremediability is hard to address. Everyone agrees. Even the expert panel starts with that. They did not hide that fact. In fact, they say that because irremediability is hard to establish there must be safeguards and precautionary principles put in place.

Government Orders

I therefore move the following amendment:

That the motion be amended in subparagraph (b)(ii):

(a) by adding after the words “be deemed referred to a committee of the whole,” the words “that an instruction be deemed to have been given to the committee granting it the power to expand the scope of the bill so as to take into account provincial medical assistance in dying frameworks for advance requests from persons who have an illness that could deprive them of the capacity to consent to care,”;

(b) by replacing the words “deemed reported without amendment” with the following: “deemed reported with the following amendments:

That the bill be amended by adding the following new section 241.21 to the Criminal Code:

New section 241.21

Medical assistance in dying eligibility criteria for advance requests

“241.21 The government of a province may establish a medical assistance in dying framework for advance requests from persons who have an illness that could deprive them of the capacity to consent to care, in accordance with the laws of that province.”; and

(c) by replacing the words “deemed concurred in at report stage” with the following: “deemed concurred in at report stage, as amended”.

● (1340)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting. The member talked a bit about intellectual rigour in some of his comments. He really conflated the *demande anticipée* with this bill on mental illness.

He also went on to say something about suicide, that it is sudden, that these people have never had any health care. Clearly, studies say that 30% of individuals who have died by suicide sought health care in seven days, 16% within 30 days and greater than 90% within 365 days.

When the member has no intellectual rigour with respect to his comments related to medicine and how it is practised, and the difficulties with irremediability in suicidality, why should we take his idea and say that anybody with mental illness should be eligible for MAID?

● (1345)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, perhaps the interpretation was not accurate, because what I said is that the suicidal state is reversible and that all experts agree on this, whether they are for or against expanding medical assistance in dying to cover mental disorders. It is reversible. People need to stop fearmongering.

I was also saying that if we expand MAID to cover things like mental disorders, it could have a preventive effect. Some people who have suicidal ideation today are going to commit suicide, and they will never have received treatment in the system. Sometimes no one sees it coming.

Government Orders

I am not saying that my colleague's quote does not exist. I am saying that some people suffering today will commit suicide and no one will see it coming. I am more thorough than that. He knows that very well. He does not have to insult me to ask me questions.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member asks a question about why the legislation is there. I want to amplify the fact that many regions of the country, I believe it is seven provinces and others, are looking to get themselves into a better position to provide the level of expertise and other issues related to it, to have it in place. Stakeholders and provinces are asking for the delay. That is the reason for it.

The question I have for the member is specific. What does he think about the Conservatives intentionally misleading Canadians, giving a false impression that if people are going to commit suicide, they can apply and the government will assist them in committing suicide? It is ridiculous, yet the Conservatives seem to think they can get away with saying those outrageous things.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, that is precisely why I am saying that the government lacks courage. Faced with the political rhetoric machine, the government thinks it is better to backtrack, knowing full well that, by postponing this until 2027, it is quite possible that the same government will not be deciding what to do about mental disorders. What it could do is extend it for a year, and if we are still not ready in a year, nothing would stop us from taking another year. Putting this off until 2027 right now essentially leaves the ball in the Conservative demagogues' court.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is well aware of all our work on the special joint committee. We sat together on that committee from the beginning.

In our recommendation of our most recent report, we put in that recommendation "qualitative benchmarks", not any kind of a reference to a time frame but more based on whether we had appropriate recommendations from departments and on consultation with provincial and territorial governments, and also the indigenous peoples of Canada.

Similarly, in the letter that was received by the federal government from seven out of 10 provinces and all three territories, there were more qualitative benchmarks, in that the ministers were asking for an indefinite pause based on further collaboration and consultation.

I know Bloc members have asked for a one-year delay, but how do they reconcile that with the fact that so many are calling for these qualitative benchmarks to be established rather than an arbitrary timeline?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I have already answered my colleague's question.

What I told him and I will say it again is that the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying sat for too little time. I would have liked to be able to question the people who wrote that letter to get them to support my position, which is that decisions cannot be forever.

He is telling me that the NDP, which is a progressive party, believes that mental disorders are totally related to our ability to meet demand, when no matter how good the treatment a person receives is, they may still experience a mental disorder that will be irremediable.

Instead of putting it off indefinitely, why not work on it over the next year? That is the Bloc Québécois's position. It is a matter of hearing from those people to see what their arguments are based on, knowing that this cannot be postponed indefinitely.

• (1350)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, medical assistance in dying is a very thorny issue. Each of us in the House has our own opinion on it.

Yesterday, in the *Les coulisses du pouvoir* interview on Radio-Canada, he said that the nasty Conservatives on the religious right were against advance requests and were keeping the House from moving forward.

I checked this morning with our House leader; that is not true at all. We have never objected to anything in that respect.

Can the member apologize for his misleading statements to Radio-Canada?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, since 2015, every time we have addressed medical assistance in dying in the House, it has been blocked by the Conservatives.

I understand that my colleague is not happy about it. He tells me that everyone has a right to their own opinion. The Conservatives' opinion is very much based on the views of religious right-wing voters.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague has previously worked on this file; he has also served in the National Assembly, but if I am not mistaken, it was not at the time of the debate on medical assistance in dying. He will correct me if I am wrong.

Could he explain any significant differences that may exist in terms of the sensitivity with which the two parliaments, the two states, have dealt with this issue?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about how the work is organized.

In Quebec City, parliamentary committees are rigorously organized. Witnesses are not invited for just five minutes of speeches with three or four other panellists at a meeting where sometimes there are not even any questions because the witnesses are of no interest to the party in question. Expert witnesses appear at these hearings, and each witness gets 50 minutes. It is altogether different.

Here in Ottawa, the methodology is inadequate and we are not doing a good job. This needs to be fixed.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know this is a very important discussion on MAID being available to people with mental illness.

If people are in a certain mental state, obviously they are not considered to be of sound mind when they try to make that decision. Who would make that decision in their place? Who decides who avails of MAID and who does not? I have a problem with this part of it, having somebody else make that decision. It almost like someone is trying to cleanse society.

Would he agree that people should be of sound mind to make the decision themselves when it comes to MAID?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I am not so sure about the wording of that question.

It is up to the patient to make the request, but it is not the patient who ultimately decides. The decision is made by the assessors, the treatment team as well as a psychiatrist who is independent of the treatment team and independent of the person who will carry out the procedure. There will also be prospective oversight, not retrospective oversight.

There are enough guidelines for us to make an informed decision in this matter.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the hon. member, I want to remind members, as they are starting to come in for question period, that if they want to have conversations to please take them out to the lobby.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

• (1355)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the you that I will be splitting my time.

Today, we are not debating Bill C-62; we are actually debating Motion No. 34, which is a programming motion to get the bill through the House of Commons. We are having to resort to a tactic that I do not often like to use, but time is forcing us to do this.

If the House of Commons, the Senate and Governor General do not act and we do not have this bill into royal assent by March 17, the law is going to change. Essentially, many experts have expressed an extreme amount of discomfort with that. There is a lot of professional discomfort. We have seen also from our provinces and territories that they are very uncomfortable with the pace of change that is going on.

What Bill C-62 would do is delay the implementation of MAID for persons who are suffering from a mental disorder as a sole underlying condition. The bill would further kick that can down the road until 2027. It also has a legislative requirement that the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying be reconvened in

advance of that date. Hopefully, that committee would have the time necessary.

As parliamentarians, we have to step up to the moment. I am particularly saying this for my hon. colleagues in the House of Commons. There is plenty of blame to be assigned to the Liberals, and, trust me, I have given my fair share. We are in this situation because of an ill-advised 11th hour amendment to Bill C-7 in the previous Parliament, a bill that the government's original charter statement had presented as a reasonable argument against the expansion of MAID to people who had mental disorders. Then that bill went to the Senate and it inexplicably accepted a consequential amendment that brought us to where we are today.

Last year, we had to quickly pass Bill C-39, because, again, we were not ready for the deadline then. That kicked the can further down the road by one year. Now we find ourselves in the exact same position. I am suffering déjà vu, like a lot of my hon. colleagues are, where we now have to force this legislation to kick the can down the road another three years. I feel like I am caught between two forces right now: the ineptitude of the governing Liberals for putting us in this position and a Conservative Party that seems to just want to cause chaos in this final week.

This is a moment when the adults in the room need to step up to the plate. There is plenty of blame to be assigned, but we cannot work around the deadline and the fact that we have only two sitting weeks left to us. We are still at the second reading stage of this bill, and that is why this programming motion is necessary. That is why we need to step up to the plate and ensure that Bill C-62 is through the House of Commons by the end of this week. It still has to run the gauntlet in the Senate, and who knows what is going to happen in the red chamber. That is something for the government members to figure out.

One thing that is really good about this motion is that there is a requirement that the Standing Committee on Health be convened on Wednesday. That will allow members of that committee to question either the Minister of Health or the Minister of Justice and also have two hours to speak to witnesses. Honestly, we need to come together as a Parliament and ensure that we get this through.

It is further bolstered by the fact that seven out of 10 provinces and all three territories sent a letter to the federal government asking for an indefinite delay. These are signatures of ministers of health and ministers responsible for mental health and addiction, which are essentially the departments that are responsible for oversight of the whole medical assistance in dying regime. We have to listen to those incredibly important voices. We have to listen to their expertise. We have to honour what they are requesting in this letter.

I ask my hon. colleagues to step up to the plate and be the adults in the room. Let us get Bill C-62 passed through the House of Commons this week.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

● (1400)

*[English]***LUNAR NEW YEAR**

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the spring festival, I wish all Chinese Canadians a very happy, healthy and prosperous year of the dragon. As one of the luckiest animals in the Chinese zodiac, the dragon offers hope for good luck and health over the next 12 months.

I take this opportunity to recognize the important contributions that Chinese Canadians have made, and continue to make, for the socio-economic development of Canada. Arriving about 160 years back, Chinese Canadians worked hard in the mines and built railroads. Today, with their knowledge and expertise, Chinese Canadians immensely contribute to our technology sector to keep Canada at the forefront of the knowledge-based economy.

I also recognize that Chinese heritage has enhanced the rich multicultural fabric of our wonderful country.

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OPIOIDS

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I shared a heartbreaking Facebook post. I reached out to Dave and Susan Girard and asked them if I could share it here in the House of Commons, and they replied, “Yes, please.”

Here is some of the post, as I do not have time to read it all. It states, “After a long battle with addiction, our 28-year-old son, Ryan David Girard, died of a drug overdose on February 8, 2024. Beloved son of David and Susan. Dear brother of Mitchell. Cherished grandson of Ted and Betty Maker, and David (deceased) and Delores Girard.

“Our family would like to speak the truth about his death. Silence would mean Ryan's death was in vain, but if one person's life is saved by his story, I would tell it over and over. Fentanyl and opioids are terribly addictive substances, and unfortunately, addiction is a disease that has no cure. Ryan loved animals, water sports, hockey and soccer and when he was young, he was above average academically and athletically, but drugs stole his soul.”

We must fight against these drugs that are killing 22 Canadians a day. It is our job to do better.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February is Black History Month, and I would like to thank all members of Black communities who are making a difference every day in my home of Scarborough Centre.

Over the past several years, I have had the opportunity to visit and work with the CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals. It is doing such important and impactful work focused on youth workforce development, education and advocacy. Another group making

a difference is Ògo Tàwa, which helps gifted, under-represented, underserved and underemployed artists of African descent make a living from their art. I would also like to recognize the Heritage Skills Development Centre and its executive director, Charity Lebeanya, who do a lot of important work to recognize and celebrate the many cultures and communities that call Scarborough home.

Let us celebrate Black excellence this month and every day of the year.

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*[Translation]***ROBERT VERMETTE**

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a veritable institution of Saint-Jérôme has passed away. Robert “Bob” Vermette left his mark on generations of athletes back home.

He was a scorekeeper, a timekeeper and unconditional fan of all those who played and learned with him. He did not have any favourites. To him, they were all champions. For more than half a century, whether in hockey or baseball, Bob Vermette was a model of dedication who always went above and beyond. His involvement spanned generations and it was not unusual to see him keep score for players whose parents and grandparents he had previously done the same for.

He received many honours, including the Henri-Decarnelle award from the Fonds de l'athlète des Laurentides for his remarkable involvement within various sports associations.

Bob was loved by everyone, including his good friend Marc Bourcier, the mayor of Saint-Jérôme. He will be greatly missed.

We will never forget Mr. Vermette.

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*[English]***BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS**

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, as I rise in this chamber, I am filled with profound gratitude and joy as I pay tribute to my beloved spouse, Gerry, on his 70th birthday, seventy years of life, love and resilience.

Behind every committed elected official stands a pillar of unwavering support and, for me, that pillar has been Gerry. Through the highs and lows of public life, his steadfast love and encouragement have been my guiding light. As we celebrate this milestone, I am reminded of the sacrifices our families make, the late nights endured and the moments missed. On this special day, I extend my deepest gratitude for his unwavering support, love and sacrifice. May this milestone birthday be a celebration of a life well lived, filled with joy, love and countless cherished memories.

I wish a happy 70th birthday to Gerry. He is the rock of our family, and we are so lucky to have him.

● (1405)

DESNETHÉ—MISSINIPPI—CHURCHILL RIVER

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I want to recognize and thank those who support me in the work I do representing the good people of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

First, there are the many volunteers who consistently give generously of their time. Although, there are too many to name; they know who they are.

Second, there are my team members, both at home and here in Ottawa, who do the hard work behind the scenes every day. For me, they are Dion, Hunter, Linnae, Emalie and Cindy.

Most importantly, there is my family, both immediate and extended, who are always there for me.

It is always great to have the opportunity to show visitors around this place and to see the awe on their faces as they walk around.

These last few days, my wife, Lori, and I have enjoyed having our family here, most of them for the very first time. It has been great to have Kent and Rebekah; Alex and Sam; Nicole, Washington and their boys Nathaniel and Eli here with us. Unfortunately, my son and his wife, Mac and Hannah, were not able to come.

I ask all members to join me today in thanking those who support us in the important work we do in this place.

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HOUSING INITIATIVE IN CHARLOTTETOWN

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with federal funding and federal leadership, we are changing how cities approve housing projects. With a greater focus on higher density housing, student housing, homes near transit and affordable housing, we are going to get more homes built for Canadians at prices they can afford.

Last week, I was proud to represent the Government of Canada at an important announcement in the great city of Charlottetown. Through the housing accelerator fund, the Government of Canada and the city announced they have reached an agreement to fast-track 300 housing units over the next three years. This work will help spur the construction of more than 1,000 homes over the next decade. I have every confidence that these numbers will be surpassed based on the uptake of developers to the suite of federal programs available, including the GST rebate on rental properties.

My community is ready, willing and able to do its part to address the housing crisis. With this agreement, our government is unlocking new opportunities for growth in Charlottetown.

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HAMILTON BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in June 2020, a movement was born in Hamilton, Ontario.

In response to the murder of George Floyd, sisters Ashleigh, Abygail and Alexandria Montague, born and raised in my riding of Hamilton Mountain, felt compelled to take tangible action to sup-

Statements by Members

port and to uplift their community. They leveraged their considerable talents to unite and to promote Black businesses in Hamilton through a platform they call BLK Owned. What started as a seed of an idea on Instagram has blossomed into a full-fledged organization to support Black-owned businesses now across Ontario, with training, networking and partnerships with organizations and schools.

Our government is also supporting BLK Owned through targeted programs for Black youth, helping the Montague sisters expand and connect even more Black-owned businesses. They are the embodiment of the excellence we celebrate during Black History Month.

I encourage everyone to visit blkowned.ca, another Hamilton success story.

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FINANCE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's arrive scam app is not worth the cost and is absolutely not worth the corruption. The arrive scam app was supposed to cost \$80,000, but it ended up costing at least \$60 million. We say "at least" as no one knows for sure because of the complex web of corruption that was engaged in.

Wait, it gets worse. There was \$12 million that went to well-connected Liberal insiders who did no work. Speaking of no work, it actually did not work. In one month alone, 10,000 people were sent to quarantine who did not have to be quarantined. Today, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that there was a glaring disregard of basic management. The Liberals cannot even manage their corruption properly.

What we know for sure is this. The arrive scam app is not worth the cost and not worth the Prime Minister's corruption.

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● (1410)

NOVA SCOTIA HERITAGE DAY

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February 19 is Heritage Day in Nova Scotia, a day I am proud to have played a role in, creating in law, in 2013.

Statements by Members

This year, we honour Petty Officer William Hall, the first Black person, first Nova Scotian and third Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross for valour and bravery. His heroic actions as a crew member of the HMS *Shannon* are well documented. I am looking forward to attending the commissioning ceremony for the new HMCS *William Hall*, named in his honour, this spring.

To mark Heritage Day, I am distributing family activity packs, joining Friends of Clayton Park's event at the Canada Games Centre and supporting two free community skates at the St. Margaret's Centre in Upper Tantallon and at the BMO Centre on Gary Martin Drive.

[Translation]

May they enjoy this time with their loved ones. I wish them a happy Nova Scotia Heritage Day.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the arrive scam has officially arrived as the next big Liberal scandal. In a damning report, the Auditor General stated that this Prime Minister's ArriveCAN app wasted millions of dollars because of corruption and incompetency. Here are a few highlights from the report.

The government had a massive multi-million dollar contract based on a missing and potentially fictional proposal. The app cost at least \$60 million or, at least, we think so. It could be way more. It does not know. What we do know is that it lost track of \$12 million. If that does not paint the picture for us, imagine a contract being signed while shady contractors and lobbyists are lobbying government officials.

It is incredible. The Liberals have a complete disrespect for our taxpayers and taxpayer dollars. This app should have cost 80 grand; instead, it cost \$60 million. These Liberals are not worth the cost, and they are definitely not worth the corruption.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost or corruption of his arrive scam app, which we did not need and which did not work. The Auditor General found that this app was the worst NDP-Liberal mismanagement she has ever seen. The \$80,000 app turned into a \$60 million scandal, at least. It is impossible to determine the actual cost, thanks to this Prime Minister's complex corruption. At least \$12 million went to Liberal insiders who did no work.

This Prime Minister continues to demonstrate that he and his arrive scam app are not worth the cost or the corruption. The SNC-Lavalin scandal saw strong women getting kicked out of the caucus for standing up to his corruption. The WE scandal saw another minister take the fall for the Prime Minister's family getting paid off.

As the RCMP continues its criminal investigation, another cabinet minister could get thrown under the bus to cover up the Prime Minister's crime, chaos and corruption. After eight years, Canadians cannot afford any more of this costly, corrupt Prime Minister.

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OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to outline my support for Bill C-49, amendments to the Atlantic accord, which has many opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and Nova Scotians. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has led offshore oil and gas in this country for decades. It is now looking to lead offshore wind energy in North America.

We might be a small province, but we are an innovative province, one that is ready to move forward with good, environmentally sustainable energy projects. This is the opportunity of a generation to lead in offshore energy in Canada, creating nearly 30,000 skilled trade jobs and a stable economy at home.

I am disappointed that the Conservatives are against this bill. The last time Conservatives tried to axe the Atlantic accord, royalties, benefits and jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians was under Stephen Harper in 2006. It is quite obvious that the Conservatives do not support Atlantic Canada.

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VICTOR M. POWER

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the city of Timmins has lost a political icon. Mayor Victor M. Power has gone to the angels. Nobody loved Timmins more than Vic. He started out as a high school guidance counsellor. Vic brought those skills and concern for people in public life.

The thing about Vic was that he knew everybody. He knew one's family history and the name of every cousin and nephew. Of course, Vic could not have done it without his loving wife, Clarice. They were the ultimate power couple. She knocked on every door during the election. She was the hostess who made one feel welcome. Clarice brought class, culture and pride to our northern city.

Vic first ran for council in 1966. He gave the city four decades of public service and oversaw the transition from a roughneck mining town to a regional centre of business, health and education. He set a standard that politicians at every level should want to emulate.

On behalf of Canada's Parliament, we mourn the loss of Vic and thank him and Clarice for their dedication to the north and to the people of Timmins.

• (1415)

[Translation]

953 SAINT-HYACINTHE SQUADRON

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to welcome to the Hill guests who are particularly important to my riding. I am talking about young members of 953 Saint-Hyacinthe Squadron. Their involvement and constant presence in the Saint-Hyacinthe community is unmatched.

The squadron was founded in 1995 by Robert Ledoux, and 70 cadets answered the call from day one. Although its then president, Serge Roy, left us far too soon, he did take part in the squadron's first flight. His legacy will remain eternally engraved in the collective memory of its members.

The members of 953 Squadron stand out in many ways. From sports and sharpshooting to summer camps, excellence is not optional, it is always guaranteed. Its members are also extremely proactive in the community.

I am honoured to be able to count on such a dynamic squadron in my region. I wish its members a very enriching visit on Parliament Hill.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, death, taxes and Liberal corruption are three things that are certain in Canada after eight years under the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister wasted \$60 million on an app that was supposed to cost \$80,000. It did not work, did not keep anyone safe and erroneously forced 10,000 people into quarantine. It cost 750 times more than they said it would.

The corruption runs deep beyond just the wasteful, self-righteous Big Brother policies of the Prime Minister. Here is what the auditors had to say: “a glaring disregard for basic management”, “Insiders setting the terms” and “\$12 million on well connected consultants who did no work on this app.”

At a time when Canadians are struggling because of the Prime Minister's costly incompetence, arrive scam should have been dead on arrival. With the Prime Minister's app, there is no one left to blame. He should look in the mirror or face Canadians, who know he is not worth the cost or the corruption.

* * *

STORM IN CAPE BRETON

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today as my riding of Cape Breton—Canso recovers from one of the heaviest snowfalls in recorded history. I remain very concerned for those in my riding who still require assistance, in particular, our seniors and other populations in need.

I want to be clear on this: The snowfall is an ongoing challenge for Cape Breton and northeastern Nova Scotia, and our government

Oral Questions

is acting on it. We provided boots on the ground to dig out homes, helicopters to transport evacuees and supplies, and heavy equipment to clear the snow from our communities. Now, we continue to support the province and municipalities as they lead recovery operations.

I also wish to thank the many people who volunteered their time toward helping their communities, from sports teams to heavy equipment operators, Team Rubicon and our own Canadian Coast Guard cadets. We thank them for everything they have done. In times of crisis, our people are truly stronger together.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister could have followed our common-sense plan to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

Instead, while Canadians are struggling to put food on the table and a roof over their heads, he decided to waste \$60 million on arrive scam, an app that we did not need, that erroneously sent 10,000 people into quarantine and that lined the pockets of Liberal cronies.

Is it not true that, just like him, this app is not worth the cost or the corruption?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we obviously read the Auditor General's report. We accept her recommendations.

Perhaps the only part of the question on which I agree with my colleague opposite is that all those who are responsible for managing taxpayers' money must follow strict rules.

In this case, the rules were not followed. We accept the recommendations so that we can ensure that this never happens again. We will always be responsible with taxpayers' money.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is going to punish those responsible for the scandal. He should start with the Prime Minister himself. He should have had the courage to stand up and defend himself instead of hiding under a rock.

The ArriveCAN app, which was not needed, erroneously forced 10,000 people into quarantine, and 75% of the contractors selected did no work but bought whiskey for members of the Liberal government. Just like him, it is not worth the cost.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we thank the Auditor General of Canada and welcome her recommendations as part of the audit of the ArriveCAN app.

Some of the report's recommendations have already been implemented. Others will be implemented soon, including the introduction of new measures to ensure that tasks and deliverables are clearly defined in future professional services contracts.

We are committed to continuing to ensure that our government awards contracts openly, transparently and responsibly.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to deal with the crisis of doubling housing costs and two million people forced to go to food banks, the Prime Minister could have followed our common-sense plan to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Instead, he blew over \$60 million on an arrive scam app that we did not need, that did not work and that erroneously sent 10,000 people into quarantine, so that they lost income. All the while, the thing cost 750 times more than the Prime Minister promised.

Will he not stand up today and admit that the app is just like him? It is not worth the cost. It is not worth the corruption.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows very well that the moment there were allegations around cost overruns or inappropriate contracting practices, the Canada Border Services Agency immediately began an internal audit and made the appropriate referrals to the appropriate authorities. We take the obligation of managing taxpayers' money very seriously. Under no circumstances would we condone what the Auditor General determined to be contracting practices that did not follow the rules, and anybody who did not follow them will be held to account.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the minister wants to hold someone to account for the arrive scam, why not the one person who had the authority to create and stop the arrive scam? That is the Prime Minister of Canada. He is the government.

This was a government program we warned was not needed and would not work, and now we know it went 750 times over budget. Of the contractors, 75% did no work at all, but they did buy whiskey and other treats for the top Liberal government officials.

Again, will the Prime Minister not admit the app is just like him, not worth the cost and not worth the corruption?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from public safety said earlier, we would like to thank the Auditor General and welcome her recommendations on the ArriveCAN application. Some of the report's recommendations have already been implemented. Some will be implemented soon, including the introduction of new measures to ensure that tasks and deliverables are clearly defined in future professional services contracts. We are committed to contin-

uing to ensure that contracts are delivered in a fair, efficient and transparent manner.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the Prime Minister is hiding under a rock, refusing to stand up and explain himself after he blew \$60 million on this arrive scam, while Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves. This scam involved taking money that could have been used for border security, such as for scanning the 99% of shipping containers that go without any inspection and go out of our ports with stolen cars, not to mention other things that Canadians could have done with that money. Instead, it stuffed the pockets of 75% of the contractors who did no work.

Again, will the Prime Minister admit that the arrive scam is not worth the cost and not worth the corruption?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition would mention investing in border security, when his government cut 1,000 officers who did the exact kind of work that he is now pretending he wants to invest in. It eliminated 50% of the intelligence capacity in the Border Services Agency to work with local provincial police and the RCMP. We have no lessons to take in investing in border security from somebody who gutted the Border Services Agency.

* * *

● (1425)

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not everything was perfect when Quebec introduced MAID. However, because people were suffering, we focused on the elements on which there was consensus. We wanted to move forward. That was the compassionate approach, and that is the approach that is missing today in Ottawa.

There is consensus in both Quebec and Canada. People suffering from diseases like Alzheimer's should be able to make advance requests. Why not move forward on that front, where there is consensus, instead of punting the issue of medical assistance in dying down the road until at least 2027?

Do patients deserve to be abandoned until 2027?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, medical assistance in dying is a deeply personal and complex choice.

I have great respect for the crucial work Quebec has done on advance requests. Canada has only one Criminal Code, and for good reason. Canadians deserve consistent standards and clarity on what is criminal. There is no quick fix to safely allow an exception for Quebec on this issue. The conversation does not end here.

We are committed to working with Quebec to consider next steps.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by agreeing to this closure motion to push back medical assistance in dying until 2027, those three parties are abandoning those who are suffering. They refuse to listen to the consensus in Canada. They should listen to the consensus in Quebec. They can do that by creating an exemption for Quebec.

Quebec is ready. Quebeckers are ready. The National Assembly is unanimous: Quebeckers want advanced requests to be authorized. Even the Conservative members from Quebec agree. However, they are unable to convince Conservative Canadians. To the Conservatives, Quebec is not worth it.

Will they do it or not?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from day one, we have been treating medical assistance in dying with care. We are trying to balance the autonomy and dignity of the individual with protecting vulnerable populations. We have adopted a prudent approach from day one.

We owe it to Canadians and Quebeckers to address these issues in a thoughtful way and to proceed with caution. We will do that.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about garbage decisions. The Auditor General found that the Liberal government wasted almost \$60 million on the ArriveCAN app, which no one uses and which does not even work. This is all at a time when Canadians are struggling to put food on the table and pay their rent or mortgage.

Why are the Liberals—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, I am going to ask you to please keep your comments to when you are asking questions, so I can hear the hon. members' questions and answers.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I think the Conservatives were upset that I forgot to mention their scandals with the Phoenix pay system and Deloitte. They also have their own scandals to worry about; I should have mentioned those as well.

However, let us talk about the garbage decisions of the Liberal government. The Auditor General found that the Liberals wasted \$60 million on an app, the ArriveCAN app, that no one uses and that does not work. This is all at a time when Canadians are struggling with their groceries and their rent.

Oral Questions

Why are the Liberals so obsessed with making rich consultants richer, and why are they so out of touch with where Canadians are at?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we said earlier, we are grateful to the Auditor General for her report, which was important and timely. We have accepted all her recommendations. Some of them have already been implemented over the last few weeks. Some are being implemented.

We look forward to more opportunities to work with her, so that we can make our procurement system as transparent, equitable and fair as Canadians expect it to be.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General found that the Liberals wasted at least \$60 million on a contract that our public service should have done. Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, and the out-of-touch Liberals are throwing taxpayers' money out the window.

Why are the Liberals so obsessed with making rich consultants richer?

● (1430)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we thank the NDP leader for his question. We share his concerns about the need to manage taxpayers' money wisely.

The Auditor General identified circumstances that were entirely inappropriate. That is why the Canada Border Services Agency and the Department of Public Services and Procurement have taken the necessary steps to ensure that this type of situation never happens again.

We will always remain focused on managing Canadians' money properly.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's arrive scam app was supposed to cost taxpayers \$80,000, but it was confirmed by the Auditor General that it in fact cost more than \$60 million. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, we know that he is not worth the cost. He is definitely not worth the corruption.

This process was so corrupt that his favourite company of two guys in a basement, GC Strategies, got to write the contract for themselves, to the exclusion of everybody else. We know they did no IT work, and that has been confirmed, but they got \$20 million for their trouble.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister just admit that he is lining the pockets of insiders at the expense of Canadians?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just because our colleague repeats a series of allegations that are not borne out by the facts does not make them true. The facts are that the very moment that there were allegations of inappropriate contracting practices, an internal audit was begun by the president of the Canada Border Services Agency, and referrals were made to the appropriate authorities, including the RCMP.

Anybody who did not follow the contracting rules will be held to account. My friend knows that, and he should not ascribe a serious responsibility where it does not exist.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want and expect us to ascribe responsibility to the individual responsible, and that is the Prime Minister. This app was supposed to cost \$80,000. It cost more than \$60 million. It has been under RCMP investigation and investigation by the procurement ombud and the Auditor General, and the results so far are damning for the government. It has lined the pockets of insiders while Canadians are lined up at food banks. It is absolutely unacceptable that the cost overruns have seen \$20 million go to a company that did absolutely no work on the app.

Why is the government putting its friends ahead while Canadians suffer?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as our public safety colleague said a few moments ago, it is completely unacceptable to spread misinformation and disinformation. What we do know is that during COVID-19, our borders, including the Canada-U.S. border, had to be shut down. A billion dollars in international trade was at stake. Nevertheless, what we heard from the Auditor General this morning was unacceptable. The task of collecting and managing information must be done properly within the Canadian public service.

[English]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's arrive scam app is not worth the cost or the corruption to Canadians. Today, the Auditor General informed us that the arrive scam app, which was supposed to cost \$80,000, will now cost Canadians a minimum of \$60 million. It gets worse. Due to documentation that the AG says was deleted or destroyed, it could be more than \$60 million. She does not know who worked on the arrive scam app, if the work was fulfilled to requirements, or if it was even completed at all.

Why did the Prime Minister rig the process so that insiders get rich and taxpayers foot the bill?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, repeating the last part of my hon. friend's question does not make it true. What is true is that at the moment contracting practice irregularities were identified, the Border Services Agency took all of the steps appropriate to determine exactly what the facts

were and to hold those responsible to account in case that is necessary.

The Auditor General identified a series of contracting practices that were not followed. The government does not condone that behaviour and has taken all the steps to make sure those circumstances do not repeat themselves.

• (1435)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every word I say is true, and the member knows it.

The Prime Minister's arrive scam app is not worth the cost or the corruption. Contractors were paid over \$1,000 a day, even though 18% of the invoices for these contracts had no supporting documentation, so we do not even know if the contractors completed the work.

GC Strategies pocketed almost \$20 million and yet completed no work itself, and it gets worse: It wrote the requirements for the \$25-million contract it won.

I have a simple question for the Prime Minister: How is he going to get our money back?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Auditor General identified some contracting practices that were clearly not followed. Under no circumstance is that acceptable. Governments have the responsibility to manage taxpayers' funds in the most effective way possible. That is why we have accepted all of the Auditor General's recommendations.

The good news is that the Border Services Agency and the procurement department had already begun to act to put in place a number of oversight measures before the Auditor General's report, and we look forward to fully implementing everything she suggested.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's ArriveCAN app is not worth the unwarranted costs. The Prime Minister's ArriveCAN app is not worth the lack of accountability for the money spent. The Prime Minister's ArriveCAN app is not worth the Liberal incompetence on basic accounting practices. The Prime Minister's ArriveCAN app is not worth the 10,000 people who were put in quarantine without justification.

The Auditor General said that the government paid too much for the Prime Minister's app. It is not worth the at least \$60 million paid by Canadians. It is not worth the corruption. Does the Prime Minister realize that?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in times of crisis, the Canadian government has two responsibilities. The first is to keep people healthy and safe. The second is to ensure that its internal processes are effective and efficient.

What we know is that, during COVID-19, nearly 70,000 Canadians died, 60 million people needed to cross the border, and we needed to ensure the movement of \$1 billion in international trade.

Despite all that, the Auditor General's report that was published this morning shows that the CBSA mismanaged information, which is unacceptable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we understand now why Liberals voted unanimously against this investigation by the Auditor General on November 2, 2022.

The Prime Minister's ArriveCAN app was supposed to cost \$80,000, but it ended up costing at least \$60 million. The Prime Minister's ArriveCAN app, with its 750% cost overruns, is not worth the cost for Canadians. GC Strategies, a two-person company that did no actual IT work, was awarded close to \$20 million in contracts, and the CBSA could not tell the auditor General who decided to hire GC Strategies and give them millions of dollars.

Does the Prime Minister realize that he is not worth the cost or the corruption?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the start of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, Canada's economy was faced with \$1 billion in costs. Hundreds of people were dying every week in hospitals and long-term care facilities. We had to act quickly.

That being said, the lack of cohesion, quality and data collection and sharing by the CBSA was unacceptable, as the Auditor General demonstrated this morning.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report on the ArriveCAN app is damning. The app cost \$60 million, with nearly \$20 million of that, or one-third, being pocketed by GC Strategies, which did no work at all. The government turned a blind eye, and contractors clearly profited, with support from civil servants. Do not forget that the value of the original contract was \$80,000. This scandal has cost \$60 million.

How is it possible that costs ballooned by 750% and yet no ministers caught on?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there were 150,000 travellers a day who needed to cross the border into the United States and back into Canada, bringing in medicines, food and essential protective equipment, among other things. We had to quickly find an app to enable all these people to do their job. That said, it was unacceptable that the CBSA did not implement appropriate mechanisms to support the rules already in place for managing the collection and sharing of information.

• (1440)

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General found that the bidding process for ArriveCAN

was not competitive. However, she could not say who at the Canada Border Services Agency decided to award the contract to GC Strategies. There is no way of knowing who is responsible for awarding this two-person company a contract worth nearly \$20 million to not provide a service.

Who made that decision? Why has the government not reprimanded that individual? Where is the accountability for ArriveCAN?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, accountability is extremely important to us as a government. That is precisely why we took all the necessary steps as soon as we became aware of allegations of inappropriate contracting practices. We conducted an internal audit, which is still in progress. We referred matters to the appropriate authorities when necessary.

We have obviously read the report released by the Auditor General today, and we will be implementing all the measures she suggests.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, ArriveCAN cost \$60 million, but even that is not all that clear.

This is what the Auditor General said: "The Canada Border Services Agency's documentation, financial records, and controls were so poor that we were unable to determine the precise cost". She does know that 18% of invoices submitted by contractors did not provide any details. In short, we do not know who did what. She also knows that four of the five resources tasked with security assessments were unable to prove that some actual work was done.

How is it possible that no one in the government sounded the alarm before this became public?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank our colleague for pointing out how important it is for the public service to manage its information gathering work properly, including during times of crisis, much like the COVID-19 pandemic we went through. Yes, it is true that billions of dollars in economic activity were lost every week and that hundreds of people lost their lives because of COVID-19, but that is no excuse for the information the Auditor General reported this morning.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the two insiders at GC Strategies worked with the NDP-Liberal government to set the requirements of the arrive scam contracts, which GC Strategies then got.

Oral Questions

In other words, the process was rigged. The government massively overpaid for the \$60-million glitchy app, because the process was rigged. It was rigged so that GC Strategies got \$20 million from taxpayers and did no actual work.

After eight years, it is clear the Prime Minister's arrive scam app is not worth the cost or the corruption. Why did the Prime Minister rig the process to pay insiders and punish taxpayers?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, my colleague can repeat a series of things that the facts do not bear out, but what we can say is that the government takes extremely seriously the obligation of public servants to follow the contracting rules. That is exactly what the president of the Canada Border Services Agency has assured me she is doing. She has also assured me that she had taken a series of corrective measures before today's Auditor General report and will continue to do whatever is required to ensure that taxpayers' money is always handled in the appropriate way.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything I said is directly in the Auditor General's report, so the minister cannot claim he is listening to that report yet deny what I said.

Well-connected insiders averaged \$1,100 per day for working on this contract. After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption. The Prime Minister's arrive scam process was clearly rigged, and now Canadians are out tens of millions of dollars when they can least afford it.

Why did the Prime Minister rig the process to pay insiders and punish taxpayers?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, when the Border Services Agency was made aware of allegations around inappropriate contracting practices, the appropriate authorities were called in and an internal audit was ordered, an audit that, by the way, is still in progress.

If people did something that was not appropriate or that met a criminal standard, they will obviously be held to account. The government has been very clear: All of the processes to respect taxpayer money are essential, and that is exactly what we are going to put into place.

• (1445)

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the current NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost or the corruption. The Prime Minister's arrive scam app is not worth the cost or the corruption. Today the Auditor General revealed that well-connected insiders and consultants were making \$1,100 per day, almost twice the inflated government rate. The Auditor General also found it disturbing that an app that should have cost \$80,000 cost \$60 million that we know of.

Why did the Prime Minister rig the process to pay insiders and punish taxpayers?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we thank the Auditor General for her important report, which we are grateful to have seen this

morning. However, we have followed many of the recommendations that we find in that report, including improving evaluation requirements and work experience data, increasing record keeping on subcontracting work, and suspending authorities temporarily for task authorization until we are confident that better procedures are not only put into place but also better monitored.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unbelievably the Liberal government has authorized \$28.5 million of new military exports to Israel since October 2023. Today, a Dutch court ruled that the Netherlands must stop sending F-35s to Israel. Spain and Belgium have suspended arms sales, but Canada continues to send arms, doing nothing to ensure that they are not being used against civilians. So many children are being killed as Netanyahu bombs Rafah, the place where Palestinians were told they would be safe.

How can the minister continue to sell arms to Israel?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to make sure we understand what we are talking about here. There is a wide range of items that require an export permit. When we look at the permits to Israel in particular, let me be clear: I have not received and therefore have not approved any export permits for weapons to Israel since October 7, 2023, and any permits issued since October 7 were essentially non-lethal equipment permits.

Canada has a very robust export control system. We abide by the UN Arms Trade Treaty and we take this responsibility very seriously.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, online bullying and harmful content are costing children their lives. In December, a 12-year-old boy in B.C. died by suicide after experiencing online sextortion. Sadly, this is becoming more and more common, and the current government has done nothing. Liberals promised to protect our kids from online harm within 100 days of the last election. While the Liberals do nothing, kids' lives are at risk.

When will the Liberals start protecting children by acting on on-line harms?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the targeting of children in this country is extremely troubling. It is depraved, and, frankly, as a parent I find it disgusting.

What the member opposite is highlighting is a problem that absolutely requires a remedy. What we are proposing is comprehensive legislation that will do everything necessary to keep Canadian children safe from those people who would prey upon them in online spaces and from those who would keep them away from their parents and the protection they need. That is the type of protection we will legislate, and we will do it forthwith.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the war in Gaza has been devastating for so many innocent Palestinians. Gaza is one of the worst places in the world to be. While we were the first western government to actively provide life-saving aid, the silence from the party opposite has been deafening.

Can the Minister of International Development please tell us how important it is that we all come together and support efforts to get aid to the desperate civilians who have been devastated by the war?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the war in Gaza has been devastating to so many innocent civilians. That is why the Canadian government has provided more than \$100 million in humanitarian aid, making us one of the top donors in the world.

I was recently disappointed to hear comments made by the Conservative candidate for York Centre saying that any and all aid to Palestinian civilians will somehow fund terrorism, even through the Red Cross. While the Conservatives are indifferent to Palestinian civilian suffering, we will remain steadfast in supporting humanitarian support to Palestinian civilians.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

● (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is an experienced member and understands that only the person who has the floor should be talking.

The hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have one word for the government: jaw-dropping.

Today the Auditor General revealed that the Prime Minister paid almost \$20 million to GC Strategies for his arrive scam. The two-person consulting company working out of a basement performed no actual IT work on the app. The amount is double what the government previously reported.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister admit that he rigged the system to pay well-connected Liberal insiders while fleecing taxpayers?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a time of crisis, a responsible government has two responsibilities; the first is to protect the health and safety of its citizens, and the second is to ensure the efficiency of its internal systems.

What we know from COVID-19 is that \$1 billion in economic costs to Canadians was incurred every day. What we also know is that hundreds of people were dying every week. However, at the same time, this is no excuse for the type of recommendation and finding that the Auditor General deposited today, and that is why we are going to continue to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is outlined by the Auditor General that pandemic urgency can never justify the corruption and oversight failures outlined in the report. The awarding of contracts favoured GC Strategies' securing almost \$20 million without competition. The CBSA's disregard for basic management practices compromised accountability, competition and value for money. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost, crime or corruption.

Will fleeced Canadian taxpayers get their money back?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that a global pandemic and the rush to put in place a series of measures to protect the health and safety of Canadians does not exclude public servants from following the appropriate contracting rules that are in place.

We agree with the Auditor General when she says that the rules were not followed in a way that was acceptable. As we have said, we are putting in place and already have put in place a series of measures to ensure that the circumstance is never repeated.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we have seen the Auditor General's disastrous report on the ArriveCAN app, which confirmed an outrageous lack of oversight and transparency.

According to his mandate letter, the former president of the Treasury Board was supposed to "raise the bar on openness, effectiveness and transparency in government." The member for Québec's primary responsibility was to review expenditures related to contracts worth more than \$60 million.

Will the minister apologize to Canadians for having failed in his duties?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for this reminder of what the obligations of a responsible government are. A responsible government makes sure to protect the health and safety of its citizens, including in times of crisis like COVID-19, the worst health crisis since the last century and the worst economic crisis since the 1930s.

We had to act quickly to save hundreds and even thousands of lives and billions of dollars in economic costs. That being said, in spite of all of that, the Auditor General of Canada, in her report and recommendations, describes an unacceptable situation. We need to do better next time.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that he was the president of the Treasury Board of Canada. It was his responsibility to ensure that taxpayers' money was properly managed.

I would also like to remind him that, during the pandemic, 23 businesses with no name received hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts. On the Government of Canada website, they were designated by the letters A, B, C, D and so on. I raised that problem in committee in 2021.

Today, we have received confirmation of the “glaring disregard for basic management practices” with the ArriveCAN app.

Will the former president of the Treasury Board admit that he failed in his duty to protect Canadian taxpayers' money?

• (1455)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the Canadian government's duties at the time was to ensure that our border with the United States remained open to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who were travelling every week and to the billions of dollars in essential medicines, food and critical equipment needed to protect people's health.

That is why we implemented the ArriveCAN app, to prevent the border with the United States, under President Trump, from being completely closed to the transportation of all medicine, food and equipment that Canadians, in my riding and in that of my Conservative colleague, desperately needed to protect themselves.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone can see that the Liberals have been irresponsible on the immigration file, but they can change. They can start cleaning up the mess today. They can support the Bloc Québécois's motion to consult Quebec in order to review immigration targets based on integration capacity.

They can also send out a clear message right now. They need only write a cheque for \$470 million to Quebecers to reimburse them for taking in asylum seekers since 2021. Will the government finally pay Quebecers back?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member opposite

would agree that immigration is a vital resource for Canada, Quebec and our economy. What the member is proposing is a motion on which Quebec has not even been consulted. Now, out of the blue, he has made himself the spokesperson for the other provinces so that we can consult them again, when this is something we have already done and do every year.

We made responsible decisions. That is what we are going to do with the responsible provincial governments.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada's immigration minister is not open to hearing from Quebec's immigration minister. The Liberals do not want to face reality when it comes to immigration. Quebec has exceeded its integration capacity, and that is entirely because of the federal government's inaction on asylum seekers.

Since 2021, our public services and community organizations have been shouldering a completely disproportionate share of the burden when it comes to welcoming asylum seekers. They are doing too much, while the provinces, with the exception of Ontario, are doing too little.

Is the federal government finally going to force provinces to contribute their fair share?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are definitely two provinces that are doing more than their fair share: Ontario and Quebec. Quebec has made superhuman efforts with respect to asylum seekers, whether it is those who have crossed at Roxham Road or those who arrive at Trudeau Airport.

We have transferred \$5.2 billion to Quebec since 2015. Half of that federal money is going to Quebec for temporary housing. We are going to do more with Quebec. We can do it together, as a beautiful country.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today we learned that the Prime Minister's arrive scam app was not worth the cost or the corruption. The Auditor General found a glaring disregard for management practices. The process was rigged from the beginning, which appears to be business as usual. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxpayers are paying a high price for Liberal insiders, and Canadians want answers.

Will the NDP-Liberal coalition come clean with Canadians or continue the cover-up?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, far from covering up, the government has co-operated with parliamentary inquiries that are looking into the matter. The government proactively sent internal audit reviews to a parliamentary committee, and the Conservative chair decided not to share them with the members.

We have no lessons to take on acting in a transparent manner. We have said from the beginning that any allegations of inappropriate contracting practices need to face the most severe consequences. That is exactly what the government will ensure.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this comes from the minister responsible for clam scam.

After eight years, it has never been clearer that the Prime Minister's arrive scam app is not worth the cost or the corruption. Rules were ignored, and the government overpaid. Canadians are kept in the dark. The system is so corrupt that only the Prime Minister could have thought it up. The rot starts at the top, and the NDP-Liberal government is trying to cover it up.

Will the coalition allow the study of arrive scam to continue or will it shut it down to keep its buddies safe?

• (1500)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague refers to the work of a parliamentary committee. As I said in the previous answer, our government has collaborated at all times with the parliamentary committee.

The president of the Canada Border Services Agency, at my suggestion, sent a copy of the preliminary internal audit to the committee. The Conservative chair decided not to share it with the members, because it might somehow prevent them from asking a series of partisan questions to bureaucrats who were there to appear before the committee.

We have been transparent and will continue to be at all times.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of government incompetence, this is further proof that it is not worth the cost and not worth the corruption.

Inconceivably, the ArriveCAN app was initially supposed to cost \$80,000 and the final bill was over \$60 million. This means that the cost was 750 times higher than expected.

What happened between \$80,000 and \$60 million? Bogus invoices were paid using taxpayers' money. Can anyone tell us who paid out all that money?

What we have here is the greatest scandal of them all.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would have been a scandal if the Canadian government had not assumed its responsibility to protect the health and safety of people, including in the riding of Lévis—Lotbinière, where the jobs of hundreds of people depended on efficient and fast transportation at the U.S. border, where \$1 billion in trade takes place every day.

Nevertheless, the Auditor General's recommendations from this morning are troubling. We will continue to move forward to implement them in the coming weeks.

Oral Questions

THE ECONOMY

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic indicators seem to be saying that we are in a very enviable position compared to the rest of the world. Nevertheless, some Canadians remain worried about the cost of living and affordability in general.

Can the Minister of Industry tell this House about Canada's economic situation and the impact of our position on the country's growth in general?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

Yes, there are concerns, but there are also great economic developments that are very encouraging for Canadians.

Last month, the Canadian economy added 37,000 jobs. Unemployment is going down. Women's participation in the workforce is at an all-time high.

What is more, we are attracting generational investments in the automotive, biomanufacturing and natural resources sectors.

Canada is positioning itself as an economic leader in the 21st century.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, it is clear that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. What else is not worth the cost? The Prime Minister's \$60-million arrive scam app.

What started out as an \$80,000 app is now at \$60 million, and the Auditor General cannot confirm that it will not go higher. Taxpayers did not get value for the Prime Minister's \$60-million arrive scam app, as the Auditor General has stated.

Will the Prime Minister come clean and tell us how much taxpayers are going to be truly fleeced for his arrive scam app?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, our government has, at the very first opportunity when these allegations were made, taken all of the appropriate steps to ensure that taxpayer money is respected. The Canada Border Services Agency president ordered an internal investigation. Those preliminary findings were shared with the committee, with which my hon. colleague is very familiar. It is too bad that the chair of that committee chose not to share, for example, that report with the members of the committee.

Our government is being transparent, and will always be, to ensure that taxpayer money is well spent.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was that minister's department that hid the RCMP investigation from the Auditor General. It was also his party that had those documents on Wednesday. What did those members do? They filibustered and then voted to excuse the witness.

It is very clear that the government at every chance it gets will cover up the ArriveCAN scandal.

I have a quick question. What is the government trying to hide? When will it truly come clean on arrive scam?

• (1505)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the government is interested in the utmost transparency in this matter. That is why the president of the Canada Border Services Agency and her officials appeared before the committee. That is why an internal investigation was ordered.

My colleague referred to a referral to the RCMP. It may surprise him, but it is not politicians who direct the operational work of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Therefore, we cannot speak to exactly what investigations are being done. We have full confidence that they will hold those to account in the case that this is merited.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for two years, parliamentary committees have been investigating the cozy relationship between government officials and highly paid insiders.

Documents tabled at committee showed that the two-person-in-a-basement firm GC Strategies was hosting dinners and whiskey tastings for the same government officials who were giving multi-million-dollar contracts, all while government officials were getting mighty high bonuses.

Could the chair of the mighty government operations committee inform the House of when the committee will next meet and when we will get answers for all Canadians?

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Wednesday, at the government operations and estimates committee, the Auditor General will be appearing on her ArriveCAN audit. Given today's report, we will be ordering past and present ministers of public safety, procurement, health and treasury board

to answer for ArriveCAN mismanagement and waste. GC Strategies, which we have now learned was paid \$20 million, will be issued a summons, ordering its appearance.

The committee will call every witness and compel every document to hold the government to account on ArriveCAN.

* * *

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like many people across the country, I have been deeply disturbed by attacks—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask members to please allow the Chair to hear the questions and the answers from all members.

The hon. member for St. John's East, from the top, please.

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Mr. Speaker, like many people across the country, I have been deeply disturbed by attacks from the Premiers of New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and now Alberta on vulnerable 2SLGBTQ+ students who are looking for privacy, dignity and a safe place to be who they are. Far too often, for this group, home is not a safe place.

What can our government and people who believe in inclusion do to fight this discrimination?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the weeks since Danielle Smith took to social media to threaten the privacy, the safety and the dignity of queer and trans students, I have spoken to countless individuals who have told me how terrified they are about the discriminatory actions taken by the provincial government.

I have one message for every person in Alberta who believes in the inclusive and equitable province that we know it to be. What those people need to do is to call the silent Conservative MPs in this room and call the MLAs in Alberta, so we can kill this bill before it gets to the floor of the legislature.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those out-of-touch Liberals show time and again that they do not have the backs of brewery workers. The Liberals are set to drastically increase the tax on beer in April. This will hurt breweries, small businesses and restaurants, and their unionized workers risk losing their jobs. Workers deserve better.

Will the minister listen and reverse her decision to increase costs on those who are already struggling to keep their doors open?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really glad to have a question about Canadian workers and Canadian jobs because it gives me a chance to share some good news that we got on Friday. The Canadian economy, in January, added 37,000 new jobs. That means we have 1.1 million more jobs than we had before COVID hit. Unemployment fell to 5.7%. That is lower than it was at any time when Stephen Harper was prime minister.

* * *

• (1510)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, Hazim is a member of my community with family members trapped in Gaza, including his brothers, sister and mother. Like so many, he worries he will not be able to get them to safety. Unlike Ukraine, the government has imposed an arbitrary cap of 1,000 people who can qualify for special immigration measures. Worse still, other countries, like Iceland, have been successful in getting family members out in 2024, while Canada has not.

What is the minister doing to compel Israel to allow Canadian visa holders to leave Gaza?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is inaccurate that we have been able to extract people from Gaza in 2024. We have a unique program, unique in the world, to get family members of Canadians out from Gaza. It has of yet been unsuccessful because of unco-operative local authorities at the Rafah gates. We urge them to help us in getting those people across the border.

That said, I have asked my department to review the humanitarian terms of the program to make sure they are complying with our obligations, without compromising the security of Canadians. We will get people out.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I seek unanimous consent for the following motion, that the House condemn the Prime Minister's past comments—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The Minister for Women and Gender Equality is rising on a point of order.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: Order. I am going to remind members that, when there is an opportunity for the House to consider points of order on unanimous consent motions, it is very helpful for members to ensure that they have asked and sought unanimous consent, at least from the House officers, so we could negotiate. That is not a rule, as an hon. member pointed out, but it is a very good practice so that members' time, which is very valuable, is being best used.

We have had two members rise, one a minister, and there was no unanimous consent. I see other people rising on points of order. We have seen on two occasions members rise who have been immediately shouted down with noes. That is an indication to the Chair

that there is no unanimous consent. It is also an indication to the Chair that there have been no negotiations and discussions beforehand to try to have these unanimous consent motions adopted.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is rising on a point of order. I am certain that, as a House officer, he has sought unanimous consent.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding any standing order or—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: Colleagues, we have a couple of votes afterward. I know you all have business to do but, if this is the way members would like to continue going, we will run through this.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

• (1515)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: Colleagues, I am going to continue recognizing members who are rising, but I would suggest to members who have not negotiated or sought some arrangement that it would be in their interest to do so rather than waste time.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seebach: Mr. Speaker, these—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House call—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the Canada—

Some hon. members: No.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, gather yourselves, please. We are not being inspirational to the people who might be watching us from home.

Business of Supply

The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

During question period, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh shouted that the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was lying. That is unparliamentary language, and I believe that, if you verify with the proceedings and verification officers, they will be able to confirm the member did conduct himself in an unparliamentary way. He should withdraw the statement and apologize to the House.

The Speaker: I do not know if the member for Windsor—Tecumseh would like to take to his feet. If that language is unparliamentary, I will certainly take a look at it, but if the member wants to get up and pre-empt the work of the Speaker, it would certainly be appreciated.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Speaker, if that in fact was the case, I of course retract that statement.

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

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, you reminded all members that, as a sign of respect to Parliament, one needs to circulate motions for unanimous consent to all members in advance. Not a single Conservative did that for the UCs they are presenting today.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. It is good practice to do so.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I am responding to that point of order. I would remind the House that the Chair has ruled in the past that, on unanimous consent motions, if a member is seeking unanimous consent and there is no consent at that time, there is no obligation for the House to listen to the entirety of the matter at hand.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for that supportive statement.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I move that December be Christian heritage month.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House call on the government to axe the quadruple carbon tax—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: I would like to remind the hon. member for Lakeland to please not only listen to the good advice from the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill but also, please, respect the advice of the Chair.

The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

● (1520)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House, noting its resolution of June 12—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon—University.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, there was another attempted arson at a church on the weekend, and if you seek unanimous consent, you will find—

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL IMMIGRATION TARGETS

The House resumed from February 8 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:20 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion of the member for Beloeil—Chambly relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is as follows. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of amendment to House]

● (1535)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 635)

YEAS

Members

Aboultair
Albas
Angus
Ashton
Baldinelli
Barrett
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blaikie
Blanchette-Joncas
Block
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Collins (Victoria)

Aitchison
Allison
Arnold
Bachrach
Barlow
Barron
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchet
Blaney
Boulerice
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Cooper

Business of Supply

NAYS

Members

Dalton	Dancho		
Davidson	Davies		
DeBellefeuille	Deltell		
d'Entremont	Desbiens	Aldag	Alghabra
Desilets	Desjarlais	Ali	Anand
Doherty	Dowdall	Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Arya	Atwin
Ellis	Epp	Badawey	Bains
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Baker	Battiste
Fast	Ferreri	Beech	Bibeau
Fortin	Gallant	Bittle	Blair
Garon	Garrison	Blois	Boissonnault
Gaudreau	Gazan	Bradford	Brière
Généreux	Genuis	Carr	Casey
Gill	Gladu	Chagger	Chahal
Godin	Goodridge	Champagne	Chatel
Gourde	Gray	Chen	Chiang
Green	Hallan	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Hoback	Idlout	Coteau	Dabrusin
Jeneroux	Johns	Damoff	Dhaliwal
Julian	Kelly	Dhillon	Diab
Khanna	Kitchen	Dong	Drouin
Kmicc	Kram	Dubourg	Duclos
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Duguid	Dzerowicz
Kusie	Kwan	Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Lake	Lantsman	Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Larouche	Lawrence	Fisher	Fonseca
Lehoux	Lemire	Fortier	Fragiskatos
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)	Fraser	Freeland
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert	Fry	Gaheer
Lloyd	Lobb	Gainey	Gerretsen
MacGregor	Maguire	Gould	Guilbeault
Majumdar	Martel	Hanley	Hardie
Masse	Mathysen	Hepfner	Holland
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier	Housefather	Hussen
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean	Hutchings	Iacono
McPherson	Melillo	Ien	Jaczek
Michaud	Moore	Joly	Jones
Morantz	Morrice	Jowhari	Kayabaga
Morrison	Motz	Kelloway	Khalid
Muys	Nater	Khera	Koutrakis
Normandin	Patzer	Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Paul-Hus	Paupé	Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Perkins	Perron	Lapointe	Lattanzio
Plamondon	Poillievre	Lauzon	LeBlanc
Rayes	Redekopp	Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Reid	Rempel Garner	Long	Longfield
Richards	Roberts	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Rood	Ruff	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer	Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Schmale	Seeback	May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
Shields	Shipley	McGuinty	McKay
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
Singh	Small	Mendès	Mendicino
Soroka	Steinley	Miao	Miller
Ste-Marie	Stewart	Morrissey	Murray
Strahl	Stubbs	Naqvi	Ng
Thériault	Therrien	Noormohamed	O'Connell
Thomas	Tochor	Oliphant	O'Regan
Tolmie	Trudel	Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Uppal	Van Popta	Qualtrough	Robillard
Vecchio	Vidal	Rodriguez	Rogers
Vien	Vignola	Romanado	Rota
Villemure	Vis	Sahota	Sajjan
Vuong	Wagantall	Saks	Samson
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		Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sorbara
		Sousa	St-Onge
		Sudds	Tassi
		Taylor Roy	Thompson

Business of Supply

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Lewis (Essex)
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Lobb
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Martel
Mathysen
Mazier
McLean
Melillo
Moore
Morrice
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seebach
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Small
Steinley
Stewart
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Majumdar
Masse
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McPherson
Michaud
Morantz
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Singh
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zarrillo

PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the amendment carried.

The next question is on the main motion, as amended.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 636*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Angus
Ashton
Baldinelli
Barrett
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blaikie
Blaney
Boulerice
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Cooper
Dancho
Davies
Deltell
Desbiens
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fortin
Garon
Gaudreau
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Idlout

Aitchison
Allison
Arnold
Bachrach
Barlow
Barron
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Block
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Collins (Victoria)
Dalton
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Desilets
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferrerri
Gallant
Garrison
Gazan
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Jeneroux

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Baker
Beech
Bittle
Blois
Bradford
Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Coteau
Damoff
Dhillon
Dong

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Arseneault
Atwin
Bains
Battiste
Bibeau
Blair
Boissonnault
Brière
Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Cormier
Dabrusin
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dubourg

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

● (1550)

*[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports from the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights: the 20th report, in relation to the motion adopted on Thursday, February 8 regarding the hate and violence directed toward the 2SLGBTQI+ community, and the 21st report, regarding the proposals for the 2023 corrective act.

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 58th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 58th report later this day.

* * *

IMPACT ASSESSMENT ACT

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-375, An Act to amend the Impact Assessment Act (federal-provincial agreements).

He said: Madam Speaker, it is with much emotion and pride that I introduce my first bill. It is never too late to do good.

This bill amends the Impact Assessment Act to provide that the federal government and the provinces may, if certain conditions are met, enter into agreements to exempt certain projects from the application of that act.

Simply put, this means that for each project, only one assessment will be done to give the green light as quickly as possible to the green projects that are so badly needed in Canada.

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

* * *

*[English]***CRIMINAL CODE**

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-376, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (orders prohibiting the possession of weapons).

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my honour to introduce my private member's bill today, which simply would amend the Criminal Code to institute a mandatory weapons prohibition for all individuals convicted of a violent indictable offence. This is a common-sense approach to target violent offenders, given the alarming increase in violent crime we have seen across the country.

Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gerretsen
Gould	Guilbeault
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Miller
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sorbara
Sousa	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Weiler	Yip
Zahid	Zuberi— 150

PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 27 minutes.

Routine Proceedings

I look forward to debating this in greater detail when the time comes and having the support, hopefully, of colleagues on all sides of the House.

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

* * *

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-377, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (need to know).

He said: Madam Speaker, my bill would basically introduce and formalize a process to enable parliamentarians to request a secret security clearance from the Government of Canada by deeming that they need access to the information for the purposes of processing that request.

Currently, individual parliamentarians have limited probability of obtaining a security clearance unless they possess one from a previous career or have the privilege of sitting on one of the special committees.

Ultimately, this bill would increase Parliament's ability to take national security and intelligence issues seriously while facilitating Parliament's ability not only to hold the government to account, but also to increase Canadians' trust in our federal democratic processes and institutions.

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

* * *

● (1555)

[Translation]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-378, An Act amending the Canada Labour Code (complaints by former employees).

She said: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Beauce for seconding my bill. I really appreciate it.

I am very proud to introduce this bill, which will make life easier for former employees of organizations subject to the Canada Labour Code. With this bill, I hope that we will all agree to give former workers a little more time to file harassment complaints.

The code currently provides for three months, which, in my opinion, is too short a time frame, whereas there is no limitation period for current employees. The bill, therefore, seeks to increase the time limit for former employees from three months to two years. Some will see that I am consistent in my approach, even though I changed this time frame when I was labour minister in the National Assembly.

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

[English]

COMBATING MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT ACT

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-379, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (motor vehicle theft).

He said: Madam Speaker, I think that people in my constituency and right across Canada are going to be very happy with this motion. This is something the Conservatives are going to take action on.

Today, I introduce my bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code for motor vehicle theft. My bill would toughen the penalties for repeat car thieves who are acting on behalf of organized crime. While Liberals attend photo ops and meetings, Conservatives are going to take action on this issue and show results for our constituents. I look forward to support on this bill.

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

* * *

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-380, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (plastic manufactured items).

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise and introduce this common-sense bill that I think will get support across all party lines. It would clean up the mess that the courts have found that the Liberals made when they tried to ban the plastic straw.

It is a common-sense approach that removes plastic as a listed substance that is toxic. It is very timely, because we know that the cost of living is through the roof right now, especially with food and everything else costing so much more money. If the Liberals were to be successful in banning single-use plastics in food preparation and distribution industries, it would only cause the price of food to increase to even higher rates.

It is an honour to introduce my bill, which would bring back the plastic straw but more importantly drive down food costs across the country. I know there will be wide support for this bill from all parties when we get into the debate.

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

* * *

● (1600)

PROTECTION AGAINST EXTORTION ACT

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-381, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (extortion).

He said: Madam Speaker, with the Liberals' soft-on-crime policies, violent crime has risen to an unprecedented level across the country, including extortion. Businesses are being extorted at the highest levels we have ever seen. Extortion offences have increased by over 218% since the government came into office.

The protection against extortion bill reintroduces mandatory minimum penalties that were scrapped by the Liberal government in their legislation, Bill C-5. It is my honour to bring forward this common-sense bill that would help to protect Canadians.

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

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSE COMMITTEES

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 58th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

PRISON NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, at the direction of the Liberal government, the Correctional Service of Canada is operating the prison needle exchange program, or PNEP, in federal correctional institutions, effectively encouraging the use of illicit drugs in prisons.

Illicit drugs in federal institutions are contraband, as are any items used for injecting drugs. The presence of needles for illicit drug use in correctional institutions presents a severe safety risk to both inmates and correctional officers. The already hazardous workplace of the correctional officer is made more dangerous by the presence of the PNEP.

The Canadian drugs and substances strategy should focus on helping Canadians recover from addiction and receive treatment, not on supporting these addictions.

The people of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon call upon the Government of Canada to cancel the PNEP's operations, stop permitting the use of illicit drugs in Canadian prisons, and focus the efforts on helping inmates recover from their addictions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to congratulate the member for presenting his entire petition in French.

Routine Proceedings

The hon. member for Dauphin-Swan River-Neepawa.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to present a petition on behalf of constituents.

I rise for the 30th time, on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The NDP-Liberal government has ignored the people of Swan River—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member that he is just to say what is in the petition, and not what is not in the petition. When he mentions the type of government, that is not in the petition. He should not be talking about that.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, the people of Swan River are calling for jail, not bail, for violent repeat offenders.

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

I support the good people of Swan River.

● (1605)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, in this petition, the petitioners note that the climate crisis will require massive efforts to reduce energy consumption. They point out that 17% of all energy consumed in Canada is used in heating, cooling and other activities in our homes. COP28 calls on governments to double energy efficiency by 2030.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada, in the ongoing provincial, territorial and federal work, to develop a new national building code that will reduce overall energy demand by at least 15% compared with what current structures are consuming.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to present a number of petitions to the House on behalf of my constituents.

The first petition I will present today deals with the issue of parental rights. The petitioners note that the Liberal government has sought to involve itself in decisions that should be made by parents and provinces.

They further note that the Conservative leader has criticized the government's attempt at interference in this area and called on the Prime Minister to butt out of provincial decisions. In particular, they reference the New Brunswick policy in this respect.

Routine Proceedings

They say that, in the vast majority of cases, parents care about the well-being of their children and love them much more than any state-run institutions do. The role of the government is to support families and respect parents, not to dictate to them how they should make decisions for their children. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to butt out and let parents raise their own children.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am presenting highlights concerns about the ongoing persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. The petitioners describe the history of that persecution, including the work done by the late David Kilgour and David Matas on uncovering the horrors of forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

The petitioners call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. They ask the Government of Canada to do more to combat this persecution.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am presenting highlights concerns about how the government is attacking freedom of choice in health care as it relates to access to natural health products.

The petitioners note that it is a fundamental right of individuals to choose how to prevent or address illness or injury in their own bodies. They say that Canadians are competent to make their own health care decisions without state interference.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to respect the health freedom of Canadians and reverse the changes the government made with respect to natural health products in the last budget implementation act.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am presenting shares the concerns of petitioners with respect to the government's radical agenda on euthanasia. In particular, the petitioners are raising concern about proposals to expand euthanasia to children.

They note that Dr. Louis Roy of the Quebec college of physicians recommended expanding euthanasia even to “babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world with severe deformities and very serious syndromes”. The petitioners find that proposal repugnant and believe that infanticide is always wrong. Therefore, they call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to legalize the killing of children.

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, next I am pleased to present a petition in support of a Conservative private member's bill, Bill C-257, which would add political belief or activity to the Canadian Human Rights Act as a prohibited grounds of discrimination.

The petitioners identify that all Canadians have a right to be protected against freedom from discrimination, that many Canadians face political discrimination or discrimination on the basis of politi-

cal belief or activity, and that it is a fundamental right to be politically active and vote without fear of reprisal. They say that it is in the best interest of Canadian democracy to protect public debate and the exchange of different ideas.

As Bill C-257 would add this additional language to the Canadian Human Rights Act, it would protect people from political discrimination and create an environment where people can feel free to express themselves on important issues of the day without fear of reprisal.

Therefore, the petitioners ask the House to support Bill C-257 and defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

● (1610)

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition that I am presenting raises a concern about a proposal from the government and the Liberal Party in its last election platform to effectively politicize charitable status determinations. The Liberals proposed to deny charitable status to organizations with convictions regarding abortion that the Liberal Party does not like. This, petitioners say, would jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do not agree with the Liberal Party on matters of conscience.

The government has previously used a values test to discriminate against worthy applicants to the Canada summer jobs program, denying funding to any organization for which the applicants are not willing to check a box endorsing political positions of the governing party. This proposal would amount to a second values test.

The petitioners say that charities and other non-profit organizations should not be discriminated against on the basis of political views or religious values and should not be subject to a politicized values test. Therefore, the petitioners call on the House and the government to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values or the imposition of another values test, and to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition that I am presenting raises a concern about cuts that the government has made to women's shelters, in a context in which we see ballooning spending in other areas. The petitioners point out that women's shelters are, sadly, seeing increased demand and that the high cost of living and the housing crisis have made it harder for women and children fleeing a violent home to find a safe place to live. At a time when the Liberal government is dramatically increasing spending on bureaucracy and consultants, it is cutting \$145 million in funding to women's shelters. Therefore, petitioners call on the Government of Canada to restore funding for women's shelters that has been cut.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I rise today on a point of order just to offer a small apology. On Thursday, February 8, the member for Nunavut and I were having a back-and-forth during debate around housing. I raised the prospect that she had voted against the fall economic statement. That was factually untrue; the member had abstained. I know that she rose on a point of order later in the day, when I was no longer in the chamber, to ask for an apology. I can say with great confidence that it was not intentional and that I misconstrued her vote. I apologize for that.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if a revised response to Question No. 2070, originally tabled on January 29, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled in an electronic format.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2070—**Ms. Heather McPherson:**

With regard to the government's policy towards international law and the situation in Israel and Palestine: (a) what is the government's position on the role that international criminal law plays in addressing alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide committed in the context of the war between Israel and Hamas; (b) with respect to the November 2023 United Nations General Assembly vote which reaffirmed the illegality of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, what political and legal motivations led Canada to vote against the resolution; (c) does the government accept that Israeli settlements in Occupied Territories are illegal under international law; (d) does the government believe that, under international law, Gaza is a territory under occupation by Israel; (e) what is the government's position on and response to the proposal by Israeli government ministers and Knesset members to "voluntarily move" Gazans to other countries and that Israel can no longer put up with the "existence of an independent entity in Gaza"; (f) what is the Canadian government's position on the principle of proportionality, as it relates to attacks in Gaza by the Israeli Defence Forces, (i) does the government believe that all of the attacks on Gaza since October 7, 2023, have been proportional, (ii) if not, which attacks have not been proportional or which attacks require further investigation; (g) does the government accept that the lawful right of states to self-defence must be proportional, and what is the government's position on the proportionality of self-defence under International Humanitarian Law; (h) what is the government's legal position with respect to both the blockade and siege of Gaza, and does it accept that the blockade is illegal; (i) does the government accept that it is obligated to prevent the commission of genocide under international law, and what obligations does the government accept in this regard; (j) does the government accept that it is under obligation to punish any persons responsible for the commission of genocide under inter-

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national law; (k) does the government believe that the Responsibility to Protect doctrine is of relevance to the situation in Palestine, and does the government accept that it has a responsibility to protect civilians in Gaza, (i) if so, then how so, (ii) if not, why not; (l) what specific obligations does the government believe follow from Common Article 1 of the Genocide Convention which requires all High Contracting Parties, including Canada, "to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances"; (m) should the opportunity arise, would the government be willing to exercise its universal jurisdiction powers, under the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act, to prosecute, rather than deport, a person involved in the commission of genocide or war crimes in Israel or Palestine; and (n) does the government make any distinction between lawful and legitimate "unilateral actions" that are peaceful, non-violent and within the framework of international politics and diplomacy and "unilateral actions" that are illegal and war crimes (per the Rome Statute) under international law?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I would like to offer some input for the benefit of the Chair and for all hon. members. The revised answer that was just tabled is in response to a question of privilege raised by the member for Edmonton Strathcona last week respecting the answers provided to Order Paper Question No. 2070. The response contained inaccurate information because of an error in introducing the answer. I understand that, last Friday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs reached out to the member for Edmonton Strathcona to apologize on this issue.

I would like to thank my hon. colleagues for their understanding and to assure all hon. members that the government acknowledges and accepts that it is the right of members to have the best information available to do their important work.

Further, Madam Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1615)

[English]

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

The House resumed from February 9 consideration of the motion.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, before I begin, I would like to thank the member for Kings—Hants for his apology; I accept it, as he is correct that I abstained. Just to clarify, I abstained, along with my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, with the full support of the whole NDP caucus, because we felt quite strongly that the Liberal government had been failing on indigenous peoples' issues and that we need to keep fighting hard for indigenous peoples.

Representing Nunavut in the House has been a huge honour. I have learned so much more about first nations and Métis in Canada.

Government Orders

I acknowledge that we are on unceded Anishinabe Algonquin territory, and I thank my NDP colleague, the member for Edmonton Griesbach, for doing more land acknowledgements, because what they mean are that, before Ottawa, first nations thrived on these lands for thousands of years before these Parliament buildings were ever built. Acknowledging that we are on unceded territories also means that first nations still exist, despite government and religious efforts to erase them. I am thankful for the strength of first nations that continue to host and welcome us.

I thank the former minister of Crown-indigenous relations, who is now the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, for tabling Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of the national council for reconciliation, in June 2022. The introduction of the bill had been anticipated by indigenous peoples for years.

Before speaking to the bill, I am compelled to retell some of the experiences of indigenous peoples, in order to form the context of what would become the national council for reconciliation. Once I complete some of the context, I will speak to Bill C-29 and the amendments from the other place and conclude with remarks about the greater sense of hope I have for Inuit, first nations and Métis.

I recognize the strength and courage of first nations, Métis and Inuit, who have been waiting far too long for the bill's passage. I am guided by indigenous voices in my support for Bill C-29. I honour the survivors of residential schools. I honour their parents, who were robbed of raising their children. I honour the students who died in residential schools.

First nations, Métis and Inuit children who suffered from genocidal policies continue to ensure that Canada reconciles with indigenous peoples. Canada must do its part. Inuit, first nations and Métis experienced child sexual abuse and physical, emotional and spiritual abuses. These traumas continue to show in the form of intergenerational traumas suffered by children and youth today.

Just last week, I had conversations regarding education. Despite having explained what education was used for, genocide, I was expected to be okay with how it was described. I repeat: Western education was used as a genocidal tool against indigenous peoples. It is still used to keep indigenous peoples at the fringes of Canadian society. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls gathered important evidence. I implore all Canadians to read these reports, to incorporate them into school curricula and to ensure that all work in all of Canada is trauma-informed. These are important ways that Canadians can reconcile with indigenous peoples.

The national council for reconciliation was part of the 94 calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Calls to action 53, 54 and 55, specifically, call on the Parliament of Canada, in consultation and collaboration with aboriginal peoples, to establish the national council for reconciliation.

• (1620)

The Liberal government not only took seven years to table the legislation but also failed to collaborate with indigenous peoples. I recall specifically the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami dropped support for Bill C-29 based on the concerns not addressed by Parliament.

Call to action 53 will have been implemented when there is monitoring, evaluating and reporting on Parliament's responses. Call to action 54 will have been implemented when multi-year funding is sustained for the national council for reconciliation so it has the financial, human and technical resources to function appropriately, and when an endowment of a national reconciliation trust is created. Call to action 55 will have been implemented when progress on closing the gaps in indigenous peoples' health indicators, on eliminating overrepresentation in the justice system, and on other areas is reported.

The important work of the national council for reconciliation would ensure a non-partisan approach to hearing what the issues are and the changes that need to be made. It would fulfill an important role in monitoring government programs and policies. I think all members of the House can agree on the merits of this work and the pressing need for the establishment of the national council.

Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse people continue to go missing. Families on and off reserve live in overcrowded, mouldy homes that make us sick. Communities lack access to fresh water and affordable, healthy food. Suicide rates, especially among youth in Nunavut, remain among the highest in the world. The scars of residential schools and other sinister tools of assimilation persist through intergenerational trauma. Too often the government stands by. I have hope that the national council would help pressure the government to end these injustices and many others.

Reconciliation is an important process that demands the highest standards of implementation. When the Liberals tabled the original Bill C-29, it required some work. This is evidenced by the many amendments that were passed at committee stage and now by the Senate.

I am proud of the NPD's amendments that were passed at committee. We ensured the inclusion of important advice to be drawn from survivors, elders and indigenous legal professionals. We fought for language that would ensure that the national council would use a rights-based approach to its work on advancing reconciliation. These amendments would make the national council stronger.

I thank the committee in the other place, which took great care in its deliberations on Bill C-29, some of which I will outline. The inclusion of the word “post-contact” in the preamble differentiates Métis from first nations and Inuit. This acknowledges the fact that first nations and Inuit existed before the arrival of settlers. It is an important and welcome change. Next, adding a definition for “indigenous governing body” keeps Bill C-29 more consistent with other legislation. It is more accurate language than the previous use of “government”, as not all indigenous groups are considered governments.

Senate amendment 3 expands on whom reconciliation may be with. It would not be just between government and indigenous peoples but would also be expanded to between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples. Senate amendment 4 provides greater clarity on what the national council for reconciliation would monitor and report, including education.

Amendment 5 clarifies the importance of the federal government's obligations with respect to the duty to consult. It clearly outlines that the duty to consult, which is owed to first nations, Inuit and Métis, would remain, and that consulting with the national council for reconciliation would not mean that indigenous peoples were consulted. This is an important distinction that would ensure that the national council for reconciliation would remain arm's-length and non-partisan. It reaffirms the section 35 rights of indigenous peoples. New Democrats agree, looking to amplifying the rights of indigenous peoples at every possible opportunity.

Amendment 6 is particularly important as it would enable the national council for reconciliation to seek clarification if the minister fails to comply with obligations set out in the act. Senate amendment 7 changes what the minister would be required to do, from a one-time activity six months after the national council is established to annually. This would be important for keeping the minister accountable always. One of the main flaws of the original bill was that it was overly vague. I am glad that the other place agreed and has added more prescriptive language around the national action plan that helps clarify the national council's research scope and follow-up actions. I am hopeful this would ensure more robust work and reporting.

Senate amendment 8 makes a small but meaningful change. The government's progress towards reconciliation would be reported, and progress by all levels of government and society would be reported separately. This would give the national council more flexibility in its reporting by not lumping the two together.

Overall, as I said, the amendments are welcome additions that would help strengthen Bill C-29. I remind parliamentarians that much work is still required in order for indigenous peoples to acknowledge government efforts in reconciliation. Reconciliation must remain at the core of our work. The passage of Bill C-29 would be another step. So long as indigenous peoples are deprived of their right to self-determination, their right to housing and so much more, reconciliation must continue. I am encouraged by the amendments that were made by the other place and I am encouraged to see the strength they would add to the national council for reconciliation.

S. O. 57

• (1625)

To the future board members of the national council for reconciliation, expectations will be high. Inuit, first nations and Métis all across Canada will look to them to keep the governments accountable. It is not easy to challenge the established colonial structures and to hold the government to account on injustices. If anyone will be able to do it, it can be the national council for reconciliation. I urge all parties to support the Senate amendments so the national council for reconciliation can be established.

Finally, as I said in the beginning, I will conclude by sharing the hope I have for the future. I express my gratitude to the Supreme Court of Canada, which has upheld indigenous peoples' right to self-govern over children, youth and families. Indeed, prior to the damages caused by Canada's genocidal policies, Inuit and first nations, and later the Métis, exercised their own laws in areas that include well-being for children, youth and families.

The Supreme Court's decision to uphold the constitutionality of Bill C-92 is an important milestone in Canada. It has acknowledged that indigenous peoples can make our own laws. It has affirmed the importance of implementing UNDRIP. I thank the 42nd Parliament for having tabled Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.

* * *

• (1630)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 34—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-62

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I give notice that, with respect to consideration of Government Business No. 34, at the next sitting of the House, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate not be further adjourned.

*Government Orders**[English]***NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much enjoyed sitting on committee with the member for Nunavut thus far. It has been a collaborative and rewarding experience. I am wondering if she can speak a bit further to the importance of this being indigenous-led and to the importance of this being an opportunity for indigenous peoples who have, for so long in our country, through a variety of different mechanisms, been left out of the conversation.

Why is it critical that this important piece of legislation be indigenous led? How does she see that being of benefit to the process?

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I also enjoy sitting in committee with that member. It is critically important for the national council on reconciliation to be indigenous-led because it will need the experience of first nations, Métis and Inuit to guide its work in the accountability that is demanded of the government. If there is anyone who can express the failures of federal governments and provinces in the best way, it is indigenous peoples, because we are the ones who are subject to these policies. We are the ones who are subject to this legislation, and we feel, every day, all the injustices we are experiencing. Because of what we have experienced to date, we are in the best position and have been already saying for years that we are the ones with solutions. Our solutions have been ignored for far too long, and the national council for reconciliation will be an opportunity to ensure that those solutions are being heard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, this is an extremely important and delicate subject that needs to be handled with great intelligence and diplomacy.

I do not know whether my colleague will be able to answer my question. In 2002, an agreement known as the peace of the braves was reached between the Quebec government and the Cree nation in northern Quebec. That agreement resulted in a better partnership. This is not entirely the same thing, but that was constructive change. The standard of living for those in the Cree nation has risen considerably since then. Of course, it is not perfect, and we are still a long way from perfection. However, it fills me with pride to see that we have managed to accomplish something.

The council will generally monitor progress across Canada. Does she think this kind of initiative is a positive thing? I would like to hear her perspective on this.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I am not too familiar about the work that was done before. I am aware that it was led by my colleague, the former NDP MP, Romeo Saganash. I very much always appreciated his leadership because he is also a former residential school student and one of the people that I very much look up to, being able to be a leader despite all the atrocities he experienced.

I learned from him that partnerships are so important between indigenous peoples and settler governments. We need to make sure that focusing on those partnerships are for the overall well-being of all. If that is the focus, then that is why there is always going to be better success.

I think the national council for reconciliation is not supervising what Canada is doing; it is making sure that Canada will be accountable. It will be reporting on what Canada is not doing. I think there is a huge difference between those, so I do look forward to Canada's accountability toward indigenous peoples improving. That is why I support Bill C-29 so wholeheartedly.

● (1635)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Nunavut blows me away every day in this place.

She mentioned the SCC ruling on Bill C-92. In terms of self-determination, there are concerns I have had lately about child welfare matters impacting our kids. At committee, I pushed an amendment forward to an adoptive care bill, an EI bill, to include kinship and customary care to ensure that the bill was consistent with Bill C-15, meaning that all future legislation has to be compatible with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Winnipeg North member said the other day that they are in the process of trying to throw out those amendments, which, once again, with the SCC ruling, affirm the need for amendments to the current EI bill.

I was wondering what my colleague's thoughts were about the government's continual fight to not allow us to bring our kids home.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I always appreciate my colleague's fierceness in the House. I always learn from her.

It has definitely been very disappointing to sit here since 2021 and to see the Liberal government not respect UNDRIP after passing Bill C-15. A very important aspect of UNDRIP, as she mentioned, is the importance of free, prior and informed consent. If the Liberal government, for example, had used free, prior and informed consent, or FPIC, in developing the Métis bill, I think first nations in Ontario would have been a lot more supportive in helping to ensure that the bill is supported by all.

I think that ensuring free, prior and informed consent is something that helps to unite all indigenous peoples. It has been quite unfortunate to see the Liberal government dividing first nations, Métis and Inuit against each other. We need to see the examples set by the Supreme Court of upholding the constitutionality of Bill C-92.

In order for us to do better for first nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth and families, free, prior and informed consent must be at the core of our work. That is how we will make sure that our relationships are respectful, that we are working toward an overall sense of well-being for now and for the future of all of Canada. With Canada being founded on indigenous peoples' lands, if we work together, we can make sure that legislation is meeting the needs of first nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth and families.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for Nunavut for providing me with a chance to speak to Bill C-29.

This is a bit of an explanation and background, and a bit of *mea culpa*, because when Bill C-29 came forward, I recognized it of course as being in response to one of the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, specifically found in paragraphs 53, 54 and 55. I compared Bill C-29 at first reading to the language in the TRC report and found it quite lacking. It was quite thin, so I made amendments.

As members know, when one goes into committee and one is not a member of the committee, but one tries to make amendments, it is very difficult. However, I took the language from the TRC call to action that was missing and brought forward an amendment, which got widespread support, to add in all the words that were in paragraphs 53, 54 and 55 of the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Green Party amendments were accepted. However, I then came to find out, from indigenous peoples in my community of Saanich—Gulf Islands, from first nations, that it seemed to them I had participated in approving a bill that had not been properly consulted with indigenous peoples before first reading. Therefore, I am grateful to the Senate for the additional amendments as outlined by my friend, the hon. member for Nunavut. It is very important—

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow the hon. member to answer.

The hon. member has just taken a minute and a half to ask her question. I will allow her to wrap up very quickly.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, please forgive me. I thank the hon. member for Nunavut.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I do remember when you came to our committee, and I thank you for coming to our committee at that time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Members should address all questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to members.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I do recall the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands coming to the indigenous and northern affairs committee to help make those amendments.

As well, I have learned in this whole process that the colonial process of first reading, second reading, third reading and sending bills to committee, even though it is 150 years old, is still a very foreign process for indigenous peoples. When we call on witnesses to speak to us to share their testimony, doing it for five minutes as a first point and then for another two and a half minutes later is not a

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form of consultation for indigenous peoples. Therefore, even those processes are flawed, and I think that is why free, prior and informed consent is so important.

The duty to consult, as a standard, is too late. We need to make sure that we hold governments to account and ask them to please exercise free, prior and informed consent for indigenous peoples so that they do feel engaged, and to ensure that legislation that does come to them is something they recognize and is not a foreign instrument that is yet another legislation they have no idea about.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Housing; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Carbon Pricing.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and talk about such an important piece of legislation. It is not the first time I have had the opportunity to debate the legislation. We have seen a great deal of effort by the current ministers and parliamentary secretaries, and those who held these positions previously. I believe they have followed the lead of the Prime Minister of Canada.

Even before he was Prime Minister and we sat on the opposition benches, when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report was presented with all 94 calls to action, he made it very clear, before any other political party or leader, that we recognized the injustices that have been done and that it was important that we get behind and support all 94 calls to action. From day one, that has been the approach by the leader of the Liberal Party. Back then, we felt it was very important. I stood in my place while I was in the third party to talk about murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and said that we needed a public inquiry.

In late 2015, we saw a change in government and there was an affirmation of a commitment that the Prime Minister talked about while he was the leader of the Liberal Party, as the third party. The Prime Minister and the government, with its different ministries, have worked diligently and followed indigenous leadership on a wide spectrum of issues. As a direct result of that, we have seen many calls to action implemented. This is not the first time I have stood in my place to talk about legislation that is rooted in the calls to action that the government has brought forward.

The member for Winnipeg Centre referred to children. I take a lot of pride, in the area I represent, in being a strong advocate. I work with people like Cindy Woodhouse and Sharon Redsky, and many others to deal with an issue that is so very important. I can understand and appreciate its importance to indigenous leaders, and that is one of the reasons we brought in the legislation regarding children.

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The member for Winnipeg Centre has to be careful when she makes accusations about me carrying out my responsibilities as a parliamentary secretary with regard to legislative suggestions that are outside of the scope. That is what the member was referring to when she referred to my comments to another member. It is somewhat unfortunate because I have been very diligent on this issue as it is an important issue to my constituents also.

When I think of reconciliation, this is a significant step forward, but it is not the first step, nor will it be the last. When we look at the holistic approach of the calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, many of us follow, in a very real and tangible way, what indigenous leaders are telling us, and we are acting where we can. We have seen things, such as the statutory holiday, brought in under this government.

• (1645)

We have seen the opportunity enhanced significantly due to the leadership of indigenous people in regard to children, in the form of legislation. We have seen the reinforcement of things such as language, as part of heritage, brought in.

In fact, if we look at the 94 calls to action, when we look at the total number, we are probably talking somewhere in the neighbourhood of just above 80%, where the federal government has the entire scope or shares responsibility. On a vast majority of those, either significant progress has been made or they are done.

Some might try to paint a dark cloud over the calls to action. I would suggest that those members who paint that dark cloud need to take a look at what other previous governments have done, to show some contrast—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that there will be an opportunity for questions and comments. I know this is a very important issue, as well as a very passionate issue. I would just ask members to please wait for the appropriate time to make comments or to ask questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am pointing out the fact that all of the calls to action are important. Not only it is important that we work on the ones that we are solely or jointly responsible for, but that we also do what we can for those that we are not responsible for.

It was not that long ago, for example, when call to action number 58, in regard to the Pope's apology, where the Prime Minister and others—

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, it is offensive that a parliamentary secretary refers to other members having to reflect on themselves, especially when he can park that himself—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is raising points of debate, not points of order.

I do want to remind members to please be cordial in the House. As I indicated a while ago, this is a very sensitive matter, and I

would hope that there would be respect within the House, whether individuals are supportive or not supportive of what is being said.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member for Winnipeg North is referring to me, and I will take the time to respond during questions. I would just like to remind the member of his colonial behaviour. He is telling an indigenous woman that I should be thankful for his government's continued violation of our rights, including not respecting and fighting against EI amendments that would make this legislation align with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I want to remind the hon. members that these are not points of order. They are points of debate.

It is a very sensitive matter, but it is also a very important piece of legislation. I know the changes and impacts it would have are great. I just want to remind members that they will have an opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I would also ask, in terms of decorum in the House, that as a white male, maybe he needs to check his privilege at the door. He is lecturing an indigenous woman about how we should feel about bringing our kids home, but maybe because he represents a riding with the highest number of kids in care, and he drops names of women in our community that I also work with, he should not objectify indigenous women in the House of Commons.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I just want to remind members that there are opportunities for questions and comments. These are points of debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the matter we are debating today is a good, positive story. There are indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast that have worked alongside and in many ways led the initiative with the Government of Canada in bringing forward the national council for reconciliation.

I emphasize the importance of the recommendations in all the calls to action because that is one of the issues the council will continue to monitor. Everything I have talked about, the council itself will be looking at. Ultimately, it will hold governments of whatever political stripe to some sense of accountability with respect to indigenous-led reconciliation and issues. I believe that is a positive thing.

I believe this government has been very progressive in moving forward with good intent, often following the leadership of indigenous people, in dealing with the calls to action.

Today, we are looking at call to action number 53, which states:

We call upon the Parliament of Canada, in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to enact legislation to establish a National Council for Reconciliation. The legislation would establish the council as an independent, national, oversight body with membership jointly appointed by the Government of Canada and national Aboriginal organizations, and consisting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members. Its mandate would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- i. Monitor, evaluate, and report annually to Parliament and the people of Canada on the Government of Canada's post-apology progress on reconciliation to ensure that government accountability for reconciling the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown is maintained in the coming years;
- ii. Monitor, evaluate, and report to Parliament and the people of Canada on reconciliation progress across all levels and sectors of Canadian society, including the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.
- iii. Develop and implement a multi-year National Action Plan for Reconciliation, which includes research and policy development, public education programs, and resources;
- iv. Promote public dialogue, public/private partnerships, and public initiatives for reconciliation.

Although that is call to action number 53, it also deals with calls to action 54, 55 and 56, if not in entirety in good part. I believe that that has been driven through indigenous leadership, which is why we are at the point we are today.

There were amendments brought forward by the Senate to further enhance Bill C-29. I will quickly highlight them. They are as follows: the use of the term "indigenous governing body"; the purpose of the council; narrowing and defining the scope of the council's functions; clarifying English and French; indigenous governing bodies and duty to consult; bilateral mechanisms; tabling of the annual report; functions of the council; disclosure of information by the Government of Canada; and the preamble to use first nations, Inuit and Métis. There has been a great deal of effort that has gone far beyond any one individual or political party.

● (1655)

As I have said in my comments thus far, this has been led and driven by indigenous community leaders. What we are debating today are the results of that. Not only did the House hear the legislation, review it, debate it, have it go to committee and then ultimately pass it, but also the Senate of Canada has recognized, through its process, how this legislation could be further enhanced. I believe that the Senate has done a wonderful service in working with indigenous people and making sure that the legislation is healthier as a direct result.

There are many members in the chamber, including myself, who would like to see this legislation pass sooner as opposed to later. We recognize that the legislative agenda is fairly packed. There are a lot of things on the government agenda. We have called this legislation and, even though we have had debates on it, hopefully we will get some sense from all members of its general support.

Once all is said and done, there is a lot more we can do. I believe the location of the office has yet to be determined. I would like to see it in the city of Winnipeg. I suggest that because, as a government, we have committed just under \$60 million to a permanent home for the national centre. That is something that I believe will be a great resource going forward.

I have had the opportunity to take a look at how all of us can play a role in reconciliation. I was really quite impressed when one of the local schools, just recently, in Seven Oaks School Division, decided that it wanted to fly an indigenous flag alongside the Canadian flag at the front of the school. This was actually driven by children. Children started that campaign and wrote to the school superintendent. The superintendent first came back, as is my understand-

ing, saying that they could maybe just put up a flag stand, attached to the school.

The children of this elementary school said that, no, they would like to have a permanent pole. The superintendent ultimately took it to the school division as an idea that came out of the classroom, out of the school. That flag is flying there today, alongside the Canadian flag.

There was a wonderful feeling in that gymnasium, within the elementary school. They brought back a couple of the students who were in grade 6 when they initiated the letter campaign. Throughout the individuals speaking, I felt that the most touching part was when children going up to the mic talked about reconciliation and why it was important.

● (1700)

For me, education is an important aspect of reconciliation. All people of all backgrounds need to be engaged in the process, like on the statutory holiday when I walk along with indigenous people and others and when I go to the St. John's Park in recognition of indigenous reconciliation. It is more than indigenous people who are there. I think that is an important component to this.

We see that in the makeup of the proposed council itself. There would be the opportunity to recognize, through education, accountability and transparency, how we can continue to move forward, no matter what political entity is in power. I would like to think that we all have a role to play.

I look forward to continuing the debate, whether it is on the national council, children, language, the statutory holiday I just made reference to, or the murdered indigenous women and children. There are still indigenous women and children who are going missing and who are being murdered. These are issues that I would like to think most, if not all, members of the House give serious thought to, and by doing that, they can get behind positive legislation such as what we are debating today.

I hope the legislation passes quickly and passes with unanimous support.

● (1705)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is right. I agree the children are the future, and it warms my heart to hear the children of Aamjiwnaang singing *O Canada* at the Remembrance Day ceremonies in Sarnia—Lambton.

However, I think we need more. We need more action. There has been very slow progress on the 92 truth and reconciliation recommendations, and slow progress on the murdered and missing aboriginal women recommendations. How would this council, outside of the government, do anything to press the government to accelerate its efforts in reconciliation?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, one of the powers within the council would be to get a proper recording from departments and to provide reports. There would be, I believe, indigenous-led accountability to the different levels of government. As I indicated, this would not just be Ottawa.

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There are things that happen within our provinces, our municipalities, and communities of all sizes and aspects. We all need to play a role in this, and I believe the council would be in a wonderful position to ensure there would be accountability at all levels. I honestly believe, at the end of the day, that is going to be the greatest value in this particular call for action.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, reconciliation is essential. When I read the bill, I see the mission, but there is something that is still not clear. The most racist legislation in Canada is the Indian Act.

Can my colleague tell me if this bill will allow the council to suggest changes to the most racist legislation in Canada, or even abolish it?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I was first elected back in 1988, and I can tell members that, even as far back as April of 1988, people were talking about the Indian Act and it being racially imposed legislation. I do not fully understand the rationale for it even existing today. I would like to think that the council would, in fact, play some role in the future in dealing with the Indian Act.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North tried to boast about how much progress his government has made, especially when talking about the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. By the way, the Yellowhead Institute just reported that the government completed zero calls to action in 2023.

I will go back to the amendment I proposed in committee, which would make sure the legislation conforms with Bill C-15. It reads:

For greater certainty, in this Part, a reference to the placement of one or more children with a claimant for the purpose of adoption includes a situation in which one or more Indigenous children are placed, in accordance with the customs or traditions of the Indigenous group, community or people to which they belong, with a claimant, other than their parent, for the purpose of giving the claimant primary responsibility for providing their day-to-day care.

It would mean we could keep our kids in our homes. The core of reconciliation, the reason we have it in the first place, is that they kidnapped our kids and brought them into residential schools. There are more kids in care now than at the height of residential schools.

If this member is so dedicated to reconciliation, I am wondering why he will not bring our kids home and support this amendment.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I left the Manitoba legislature in 2010. A child advocate at that time said that Manitoba was in a child care crisis. Well over 10,000 children were in foster homes or being taken away from biological parents. I will remind the member that that was an NDP government. At the end of the day, not much has changed in the province of Manitoba.

It is one of the reasons we needed the legislation as a part of the call to action. That is why we brought forward the legislation, to better enable the communities, the indigenous leaders, to be able to take more control. It is because provinces and some governments,

such as the provincial government when I was in opposition, did not do anything to address the issue. They had the opportunity—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members they have an opportunity to ask questions, and they should wait for the answer. I know it may not be the answer they are looking for, but if they wish to add to their question, they should wait until it is time for questions and comments again.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North has, in congratulating his party and his government for bringing in UNDRIP, invited the inescapable question of how the government ignored and violated UNDRIP by giving the Crown corporation we own, the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, permission to drill right through and dredge right through the most sacred territory of the Stk'emlúpsme te Secwépemc Nation, right through the area called the "Pipsell", which Trans Mountain promised it would never touch, until it changed its mind.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we have to bring it back to the focus of the national council, and its primary responsibility, in good part, would be dealing with the calls to action. The reason I raise the calls to action is that there are 94 of them, and out of those 94, a majority of them are the sole or joint responsibility for the federal government. It is not only the federal government, but also other levels of government and other stakeholders, if I can put it that way, that need to be held to account.

The federal government continues to work. We can still do more. I am not saying that as government we have done everything we can. We continue to work and will continue to work on this critical file. The national council would ultimately complement and ensure a high sense of accountability and transparency well into the future because, in good part, its job would be to ensure that the calls to action are not only reported on but ultimately implemented. That is a good thing, and we need to remain focused on that.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak on this very important bill. In my colleague's speech, he said how important it is for all people to be engaged. I agree with him, so my question is why the Liberals are excluding the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

This group was founded in 1971. It is the largest group representing aboriginal peoples in Canada who live off reserve, and as of 2011, over 70% of aboriginal people lived off reserve. If we really believe all people need to be engaged, why would they not allow such a large group to be participating in this? Will that affect the legitimacy? Could he please explain why this extremely large groups was left out?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in many different ways over the last while now, a considerable amount of work and consultation has been done, and not only by the Government of Canada. Indigenous communities that, in good part, led the way also did a considerable amount of consultation, from what I understand. If the member has something very specific, as he just said, I would suggest that he bring it up with the current minister, to see if anything can be done on it.

• (1715)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the parliamentary secretary's speech he was talking about the specific location of the national council for reconciliation. He suggested Winnipeg. I wonder if he can expand on why he thinks that Winnipeg would be the best choice for that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suggested that because of the University of Manitoba and the efforts it has put into working with the federal government and indigenous leadership. It is now going to be investing tens of millions of dollars, and it is going to be on site, dealing with truth and reconciliation. It is not for me to make that decision, but I am hoping it lands in Winnipeg.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour once again to rise and speak to Bill C-29.

This flawed bill was the government's attempt, over nine years in office, to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 53 through 56. Indeed, since 2015, the Liberal government, for all its rhetoric on reconciliation, continues to ignore indigenous voices. It breaks promises and perpetuates the archaic, broken and paternalistic "Ottawa knows best" approach to indigenous issues.

We do not have to look very far to see this.

The Chiefs of Ontario, which represents more than 130 first nations in the province, filed for a judicial review because this Liberal coalition government refuses to listen to indigenous communities and axe the carbon tax. The first nations argue that the imposition of the price on carbon is leaving their communities worse off than others in Canada and breaching the principles of true reconciliation.

Abram Benedict, the Grand Chief for the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne said, "People feel that their rights are being violated." The chiefs want the federal government to redevelop the policy with their communities by either exempting first nations people from the price on carbon or allowing them to recoup all the costs associated with the system.

Many first nations members cannot benefit from the rebates delivered under the pricing mechanism, because the payments are linked to income taxes, which are not collected from individuals working on reserves. The leadership also argues that the price on carbon places a burden on their constitutionally protected rights to hunt, harvest or fish on their traditional territory because of the added fuel costs for all-terrain vehicles, trucks, boats and snowmobiles.

Furthermore, with respect to the long-anticipated national loan guarantee program, the Liberal government has remained silent on the details. Indigenous leaders are very concerned that oil and gas

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will not be included, sidelining over \$300 billion in projects over the next decade and \$40 billion in LNG projects ready to go next year. Indigenous leaders are asking for details, but this government refuses to engage with them and give them the details they actually need to plan.

This is not reconciliation. This is alienation.

This leads me to Bill C-29, the national council for reconciliation act. Speaking previously, I made it clear that it was important to use a consensus-building approach to improve this piece of legislation. Bill C-29 deserved, in its formation, a responsible look at areas where it needed improvement.

At second reading I pointed out that Bill C-29's foundation was cracked and would need some care and attention at committee if the government hopes to provide a workable council that is respected by all leaders, all communities and all organizations across Canada. I wanted to make sure that all five indigenous national organizations were represented, not just the three that were in the original bill, notably the Native Women's Association of Canada, NWAC, and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, both of which were ignored.

My colleague, the member of Parliament for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, added that he wanted the following addressed: The transparency and independence in the selection process of the board of directors; words that were purposely vague to avoid accountability; the lack of any measurable outcomes; the fact that it took over four years to bring the bill to the House in the first place; and, of course, lastly, that the Prime Minister should be the one responding to the council's annual report, as was the direction in the call to action 56.

In 2015 the Prime Minister claimed that building a good relationship with indigenous peoples would be the government's top priority. I am not sure what the word "priority" means to the Liberal Prime Minister, but to me it does not mean tabling any indigenous-related legislation at the last possible minute. Bill C-38 was introduced December 14, 2022, the last sitting day of a House sitting session. Bill C-53 was introduced on June 21, 2023, the last day of a House sitting session. Bill C-29, of course, was introduced June 22, 2022, which was the last day of a session. I do not know about my colleagues, but the trend certainly does not scream "priority" to me. Indigenous people deserve more than a last-minute Liberal effort.

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• (1720)

Need I say that, while the Prime Minister would love to take credit for being the first to advance reconciliation, it was actually the previous Conservative government that finally issued a formal apology on behalf of Canada to all indigenous people across the country? Actions speak louder than words, which is why I remind the House that 17 of the 19 amendments Conservatives put forward were passed at committee. It is the job of the official opposition to improve legislation where possible and to make it representative of all voices, and that is exactly what members on this side of the House did. Unfortunately, there was one amendment we proposed that was disproportionately voted down by the other parties, and that is what I would like to discuss for a few minutes.

One of the most glaring issues with Bill C-29 is the lack of representation on the national council for reconciliation. The bill sets aside three seats for the AFN, ITK and the MNC, three national organizations that the Liberal government deals with almost exclusively when it comes to indigenous issues across the country. It chose to ignore the other two major organizations, NWAC and CAP.

At committee, Conservatives got a motion passed to have both organizations recognized in the same manner as the AFN, ITK and the MNC, yet when the bill was reported back to the House, the Liberal-NDP coalition chose to deliberately vote against the will of its members on committee and remove the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples from the bill. The Liberal-NDP coalition chose to ignore the voices of large swaths of urban and poor people. CAP represents over 800,000 off-reserve indigenous voices, yet it has no voice when it comes to reconciliation. It has been alienated by the government and its supporters.

The Conservative senators in the other place tried hard to rectify this, but again the Prime Minister made sure his Liberal senators defeated that amendment. I often hear in meetings with indigenous leaders about the importance of economic reconciliation, not just to address their own issues with their own resources but also to return a sense of self-sufficiency and honour to a people who have had it stripped away by the paternalistic, archaic and irreparably broken Indian Act.

Conservatives also put forward an amendment to add a seat on the board of directors for someone from an indigenous organization that is focused on economic reconciliation. With many options available from a whole list of organizations that are all doing great work in this sphere, finding a well-established organization that has done historic work in creating economic opportunity for indigenous people would not have been a barrier. The lack of support for this amendment, it should be pointed out, came at the expense of not listening to multiple witnesses who clearly voiced their approval for the inclusion of an economic lens being a part of this board. To ignore these voices discredits the very process of reconciliation.

As the shadow minister for Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada, I hear regularly from indigenous groups and leaders across the country how important economic development and prosperity are to reconciliation. Having members with fiscal expertise on a commission directly focused on advancing reconciliation seems like a key com-

ponent to ensuring an economic lens is at the forefront of their work.

Instead, obstruction comes from the Liberal-NDP coalition, which looks down upon Conservatives who encourage economic reconciliation. We need to establish an economic national dialogue with indigenous leadership and organizations to remove the bureaucratic barriers to economic prosperity that exist at Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, with a goal of phasing out these government bureaucracies altogether.

Conservatives are moving in this direction, with the recent announcement of the grassroots, indigenous-led first nations resource charge. Common-sense Conservatives are ready to dismantle the “Ottawa knows best” archaic and paternalistic way of doing things. For hundreds of years, first nations have suffered under a broken colonial system that takes power away from their communities and places it in the hands of politicians in Ottawa.

The Indian Act hands over all reserve lands and money to the federal government. This means that first nations must go to Ottawa to ask for the tax revenues collected from resource projects on their lands. This outdated system puts power in the hands of bureaucrats, politicians and lobbyists, not first nations. The direct results of this “Ottawa knows best” approach have been poverty, sub-standard infrastructure and housing, and unsafe drinking water.

• (1725)

The first nations resource charge is a signal to indigenous peoples that the Conservatives recognize the need to correct the fiscal imbalance between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. This would ensure that they receive stable, annual fiscal benefits and to advance reconciliation by promoting first nations self-determination and economic development.

We tried to do this with Bill C-29 as well, yet the Liberals were not interested in hearing the voices of off-reserve indigenous peoples or even considering economic reconciliation on a national committee tasked with reconciliation.

Conservatives continue to observe Liberal and NDP MPs aggressively challenging indigenous leaders who appear as witnesses at the indigenous and northern affairs committee, advocating for economic reconciliation. Unfortunately, I find myself asking why. It seems there is an aversion to even having a discussion on economic reconciliation. This tells me that something does not add up.

What is it about indigenous peoples being the creators of their own destiny that Liberal MPs dislike? What is it about empowering the creation of healthy, strong and vibrant communities through prosperity that they do not like? What is it about using own-source revenue from true partnerships to solve long-standing social issues that they dislike? What is it about leaving behind the destructive grip of poverty to offer hope and opportunity to future generations that they dislike? Why will the Liberal government not listen to what indigenous people are trying to tell them? Sadly, the answer is that they are more concerned with political power and control.

By imposing their own views, rather than listening to indigenous voices, they create the same environment that indigenous peoples have lived under for far too long in this country. One group's world views and political opinions are forced upon another group.

This past week, on many different occasions, I heard the Minister of Indigenous Services claim that her department is focused on co-development with first nations. The Prime Minister even stood in this House and used the term "co-develop" as well.

This sounds like another Liberal buzzword used to create the illusion of equal partnership between indigenous leaders and Canada. In fact, in response to the use of the term, first nations leaders have pushed back and said that they are not sure who the Liberal government is co-developing with, because it is sure not them.

We heard from the national chief, Chief Elmer St. Pierre, of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples that "Reconciliation must start with inclusion". He added, "Despite the existence of five National Indigenous Organizations, the Liberal Government seems to be engaging in partisan politics by excluding CAP and the voices of urban Indigenous peoples."

"The government's attempt to divide and conquer by selectively recognizing certain indigenous groups is deeply concerning," stated Kim Beaudin, CAP national vice-chief. He went on: "Reconciliation cannot be confined to reserves alone, as the majority of Indigenous peoples now reside in urban and rural areas, demanding their voices to be heard."

What an embarrassing indictment of the Liberal government this is. To make matters worse, one of the three original council members, the ITK, an organization that represents Inuit peoples, has withdrawn its support of Bill C-29. The ITK's president, Natan Obed, fears that the reconciliation body created by the bill could undermine ongoing Inuit work to build a direct relationship with the federal government and advance Inuit rights and interests. He says that the bill, as it stands, also does little to make the federal government accountable for fulfilling its obligations on reconciliation.

On this issue of "co-development", which the Liberals insist is how they do business, President Obed said: "It has been debatable on the Inuit side on whether or not we would describe how we've

interacted with the federal government as co-developed.... These terms are largely subjective and we wanted to make them more clear."

Chief St. Pierre was much less forgiving, saying, "This extraordinary move by the Liberals is a slap in the face to thousands of survivors who live off-reserve.... For seven years now, the Liberals have trumpeted the importance of reconciliation, but this exclusion reveals their true colours."

It is time to fundamentally change the approach. Much of my work on this file was shared by my colleague, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River. In fact, it was that member who shepherded Bill C-29 through the House, and I wanted to take a moment to thank him for his work on this file.

● (1730)

Out of respect for his work, I would like to share a story from his riding, which really highlights the changes that are already happening on the ground in northern Saskatchewan. Having spent time with Pelican Lake First Nation's Chief Peter Bill, RCMP and two of Pelican Lake's own community safety officers, the member asked how the newly established community safety officer program was going. Chief Bill replied that the community now has six full-time employees and its own fully equipped vehicles, and it is in the process of training more officers. The RCMP also explained how helpful the program had been in the overall safety of the community.

How did Pelican Lake First Nation pay for this community service officer program? In fact, it was their own-source revenue, which was generated from their forestry business. They invested the profits to assist the overall health of the community, instead of waiting around for years while the government and the bureaucrats plan; meet; make frameworks, charts and graphs; do benefit assessments and feasibility studies; or use the signing of MOUs for photo ops.

Later that day, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River was at Flying Dust First Nation to participate in a walk of solidarity with residential school survivors. On that walk, he saw the hockey rink that was built a few years ago and, beside it, the newly built 6,000-square-foot sporting goods store and facility called Snipe and Celly. If one looks in the other direction, one finds the new Petro-Canada gas station located right on the highway. For the member, it was a stark reminder of what the MLTC Cree vice-chief, Richard Derocher, had mentioned to him earlier that day, when he spoke positively on reconciliation. He shared that his wish was that, one day, when people were either visiting or driving through the area, they would not be able to recognize when they were leaving Flying Dust First Nation and entering Meadow Lake.

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Generating prosperity through economic development works. It is a shame that this was not recognized by the government. The existing model of federal public servants determining who is and who is not ready for self-governance needs to change. Reconciliation must be centred on the future of indigenous peoples, not what is in the best interest of the Liberal government. By modernizing our approach to indigenous partnerships, we will modernize Canada and usher in a new age of economic prosperity and equality of opportunity.

Conservatives promote and believe in economic reconciliation. It is the solution to eradicating poverty and, with it, the social ills that poverty creates. With control put back in their hands, indigenous peoples can begin to manage prosperity instead of poverty and take concrete steps toward healing through self-determination.

Conservatives support off-reserve and non-status indigenous peoples. Unlike the Liberals and the NDP, we have demonstrated this publicly with our support of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples' inclusion on the national council for reconciliation. The Liberals and their NDP coalition partners effectively silenced the voices of the 800,000 off-reserve and non-status indigenous peoples when they voted against amendments that would have included CAP on the council. Let the record show that it was the Liberal, NDP and Bloc members who stood against the addition of economic reconciliation to the national council, while Conservatives recognized the importance of consultation and of hearing from as many diverse indigenous voices as possible.

To conclude, I am proud of the work our Conservative team did in making Bill C-29 a better version than what originally came to the House.

• (1735)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to remind the member that the bill speaks to requiring the national council for reconciliation to have a minimum of nine members and a maximum of 13. Just because it names four organizations does not mean it excludes others from becoming board members.

Does the member agree that there is nothing in this legislation stating that CAP shall not be a member of the national council for reconciliation?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's work on committee. She is correct: There is nothing really saying that CAP cannot be on this board. The point is that there were spaces set aside for ITK, MNC, the AFN and the Native Women's Association of Canada, NWAC, for guaranteed spots on this panel. The point that we are trying to make is that, with respect to first nations, for sure, the vast majority live off reserve. CAP is a group that represents not only off-reserve indigenous peoples but also Métis and other indigenous peoples. Therefore, we have a governing body that represents so many voices that may or may not be guaranteed a seat on that committee. With respect to the structure, and this is the overarching body, it is important to have those voices on this board. Our point was that they should be included, not excluded.

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague across the way. I have enjoyed my time in committee with him. I am a little disappointed

that his speech was verbatim from what appears to be a Conservative staffer, because there were a few things written in there that he may want to reflect on. If I understood correctly, there was reference to aggressive questioning at committee by members on the Liberal and New Democrat side. In his speech, the member referred to obstruction or interference with economic reconciliation; phrasing it as a question, he asked what they do not like about allowing indigenous people to be creators of their own destiny.

I note that, on that committee, which I am proud to sit on, the member for Nunavut, the member for Northwest Territories and the member for Sydney—Victoria are all indigenous. I just want the member to clarify: Is he suggesting that the three indigenous members of the committee are interfering with the ability of their people to create their own destiny?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, the point was that the government itself is creating policies that prohibit or severely stunt the growth of the oil and gas sector and even the mining industry and lumber, our natural resources. A lot of these are on first nations land and have the ability to create wealth in those communities, with jobs and opportunity. Bills such as Bill C-69 and others are hampering that growth. The government is using policies behind the scenes to stop investors from investing in the first place and creating jobs, opportunity and wealth there. This is creating the continued dependence on the government for handouts, in the form of program funding, that I am talking about.

When they do have a project, they have the resources leaving the community; the community then has to turn around and go to Ottawa to ask for them back. We think that system is broken, and the status quo is not working. We think there is actually a better way, which is listening to first nations themselves and these leaders in the community, such as the First Nations Tax Commission, the First Nations Financial Management Board and many others. They are doing amazing work, and they want to change how the status quo operates. That is what we support.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague's passionate speech here, as well as that of my colleague across the way, and I have a question.

Where will the funding for this national council for reconciliation come from? There were some figures provided in 2019, but now we are talking about adding investigators, monitoring and recommending measures. Where will this budget come from? The bill does not mention that.

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, we are not actually sure. The member is right; the bill does not mention that. That is one of the many questions we had in committee with respect to this piece of legislation. We tried our best to bring it up. As I said, there were lots of voices in committee that talked about putting a reserved seat for an organization that focused on economic reconciliation for indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, that did not go through, but I still think the point is the same. It is important to have that lens when we are talking about reconciliation. Otherwise, we still have this broken system that is failing indigenous people, and it is time to change.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on an excellent speech and his excellent work. I want to ask him a question about economic reconciliation as it relates to procurement. One of the ways we advance economic reconciliation is that we seek to ensure that government procurement is available to indigenous-owned businesses as well as to businesses owned by other historically disadvantaged communities, and that there are not aspects of the procurement system that are excluding people who have been historically disadvantaged.

One of the problems we have seen as we have unravelled the Auditor General's arrive scam report is that there are systems built into government procurement that are designed to advantage incumbent players; that is, someone has to have had a certain number of contracts with the Government of Canada already. This means that if someone has not dealt with the government before, has started a new business or has had other governments as clients but has never sold products to the federal government before, they are systematically disadvantaged.

In the past, I have heard from stakeholders asking, for example, why we are not meeting our targets in terms of indigenous-owned businesses' getting government procurement. We then find out, in the context of the procurement ombudsman's report, that one of the reasons is probably that there is a systematic advantage, as a result of the way the system is designed, that steers toward incumbent players and insiders, even if other people have innovative ideas.

I would be curious to have the member's thoughts on how we can advance economic reconciliation by addressing some of the issues in the arrive scam scandal, and more broadly, on what prevents new entrants from participating in government procurement.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, my friend from Alberta has a great question and a great point. We, as a party, believe in reducing and eliminating these barriers to entry and to competition, but the people who believe in big government quite enjoy these barriers. There are big companies, and the government department has to deal with only a few of them. This is why economic reconciliation is so important.

When we are creating jobs, opportunity and wealth, other businesses will spark up. As long as we create the environment for them to do so and create the entry to the marketplace by reducing barriers, there will be opportunity and jobs sparking up in oil and gas, lumber, and mining. There are many opportunities here in Canada. We just have handcuffed ourselves to the point where for

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businesses, unless they are big players, as my friend mentioned, it is very difficult to get into the field. Abundance equals peace; let us have more jobs, opportunity and wealth for all.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his dedication to advancing reconciliation in all ways as he moves forward.

Could he talk more about the innate nature of economic reconciliation and what it means for indigenous people he discusses with?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Fort McMurray—Cold Lake for her leadership on this very important file. It has been great serving with her on the committee the last few weeks, and I appreciate her views.

She points out something really important. Even in my speech I mentioned the fact that indigenous peoples are then able, with the wealth and the revenue stream, to create their own paths and not have to ask Ottawa for permission to do so. That is the way it should be.

● (1745)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is such an honour to rise today to talk about Bill C-29. I want to let the House know that the NDP wants the bill to pass. I am always very honoured to work with my good colleague, the member for Nunavut. She has put a lot of effort in to amend the legislation to make it much stronger.

If we want to reconcile in this country, we must focus on children and families. I say that because I want to go back to why we have to have these discussions in the House to begin with; it is for the country to try to reconcile, as was affirmed in the Haida Nation case, the sovereignty of indigenous people with the assumed sovereignty of the Crown. I share that because it was an assumed sovereignty that began a violent genocide of indigenous people in Canada, which began with the dispossession of lands and led to the dispossession and kidnapping of our children and taking them off to resident schools, where they experienced all kinds of abuses.

It is important to note that, as we sit here in the House debating the bill before us, there are more kids now in the child welfare system than there were at the height of residential schools. We will not reconcile in this country until all governments make a concerted effort to bring our kids home. However, I worked on the legislation in committee making amendments, and that does not happen in real time, even though in the last session the Liberal government passed Bill C-15.

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I would like to read article 5 of Bill C-15, under the title “Consistency”. It says, “The Government of Canada must, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the Declaration.” I share that because at every turn on matters impacting children, the Liberal government continues to not support the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous people to make decisions about our own children. I will give an example: The national child care strategy, until the NDP amendment, did not support the inclusion of honouring the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples to make decisions on matters impacting our children.

Why is this significant? First, it is because the government is now obliged to ensure that all legislation is compatible with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Second, it is because one of the most serious violations that has reverberated in our communities and has had lasting impacts is when they robbed us of our children and shipped them off to residential schools. I have said in speeches before that, as a mother, I cannot even imagine the pain that reverberated in our communities when those communities fell silent each September when they stole our children, many of whom never returned home.

I share that because every day, even now, there is a growing movement of residential school denialism, where survivors and descendants have to confirm the fact that genocide did occur in residential schools and that many of our children did not in fact return home but are buried around schools around the country. What school needs a graveyard? What school is built with a graveyard attached?

• (1750)

There was nothing about the residential schools that was about education. I say that because although the government talks a good game of reconciliation, and although it passed Bill C-15 in the last Parliament, it is one thing to pass a bill but another thing to change colonial behaviour, a tradition of colonial violence in this place. That includes something I had to experience today, having the member for Winnipeg North lecture me about the dark cloud I place on this place when I talk about the ongoing genocide of indigenous women and girls, and when I complain about the fact that the government has not moved fast enough around the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I will continue to listen to what she is saying, but I did not attribute anything to the specific member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member has risen on a point of order that is not a point of order; it is a point of debate. If he thinks that the member is mistaken in some substantive point she made in her speech, the appropriate time to raise that would be during questions and comments. We should not be using points of order to make points of argument.

The Speaker: That is noted.

I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre's very poignant speech, but the hon. member for Windsor West is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I was here at that time, and one could feel it.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

I would like the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre to please continue.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I am just pointing out that the member did mention Winnipeg Centre. I assumed the comments were made toward me when he said my riding, but let us leave that.

Going back to what I was saying, the fact that he felt a need to defend himself in the middle of my speech is another example of what I had requested in my point of order, which was for him, through you, Mr. Speaker, to leave his white male privilege at the door and not to tell indigenous women what to talk about when they are talking about indigenous kids.

We are here today because of the violent kidnapping of our kids, which has had lasting impacts on our families. It goes back to the dark cloud our parents and families felt when they robbed our kids, leaving our communities silent. Can members imagine being in a community without laughter and without play? I cannot imagine that and not to have the privilege of being able to raise my son. For no reason other than who I am and where I was born, the government is able to steal my child and to have that legislated. That is why these amendments are so critical to legislation if we are going to reconcile and to honour this new bill, Bill C-29. That is why amending legislation so it is compatible, especially on matters impacting our children, is so critical. I would argue, through you, Mr. Speaker, that the government violating its own law and its own constitution by not ensuring legislation is compatible with Bill C-15, as we saw with the child care legislation in the last session that we managed to get through committee.

Now the government is going against amendments to make the legislation compatible with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and is trying to overturn it in the House. If the Liberal government is not willing to give our kids back when we have more kids in child welfare than we did at the height of residential schools and when we know that 90% of kids in care are indigenous and that all this new adoptive care legislation will probably not apply to 90% of parents, which once again will leave the financial burden on families to care for their children, then the government is not ready to reconcile.

The government took over 13 non-compliance orders in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling to let them know that it was intentionally racially discriminating against indigenous and first nations kids on reserve on matters impacting child welfare. It finally came up with a settlement that was \$17 billion less than what was ordered by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling. Then, I have to listen to the government talk all the time about how it wants reconciliation, when we constantly have to fight for the fact that our kids deserve the same as other kids in the country, and I have to go to committee and fight for the EI legislation.

I would like to, once again, read to the House the amendment that would allow us to uphold Canadian law and that was passed at committee, even though the Liberal members abstained from the vote and outright voted against it during the national child care legislation. They are now trying to overturn it in the House because it was passed at committee.

● (1755)

I will read the amendment, which states:

For greater certainty, in this Part, a reference to the placement of one or more children with a claimant for the purpose of adoption includes a situation in which one or more Indigenous children are placed, in accordance with the customs or traditions of the Indigenous group, community or people to which they belong, with a claimant, other than their parent, for the purpose of giving the claimant primary responsibility for providing their day-to-day care.

I will refer to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the NDP's attempt to make this legislation compatible. It says:

Article 19

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

Article 20

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.

2. Indigenous peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.

That would include equal benefits under EI.

It goes on to state:

Article 21

1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

Once again, like *The Twilight Zone*, I am here fighting to bring our kids home. I am here having to plead with the government as to whether it is really ready to reconcile or not. I have been told there is a bill, Bill C-54, that the government will put forward and that it wants to consult with indigenous people. My reply is for the government to find me one indigenous person who would argue against the right for them to raise their children in their own traditions and

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customs. The kinds of things we have to consult on, basic human rights, being used as a stalling mechanism is another form of institutional racism. I will provide a couple of examples.

How do indigenous people feel about clean drinking water? Let us consult on that for four years. How do indigenous people feel about toilets and how fire trucks are going to get to their communities so their houses do not burn down? The government asks them to say how they feel about that. Find me one indigenous person who feels they need to consult about human rights and life and death matters at every turn. I can provide a whole list. I can give an encyclopedia of them, in fact. I can point out the Indian Act that the government developed without the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples.

I can name a million resource extraction projects where militarized police are smashing in the doors of indigenous women, being called out by the United Nations where there was no consultation, yet when we ask to bring our kids home, when we say we want to uphold Canadian law so this new legislation is aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, something the government is obliged to do, what does it say? It thanks me for my work and says it needs to consult on it.

What do I call that? I call it systemic racism. What do I call child welfare? I call it a pipeline to murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. What do I call that? A pipeline to the justice system. What do I call the sixties scoop? I call it a loss of identity, the disruption of our families that we will never get back and the ongoing genocide of our families.

● (1800)

This is shameful, and I am going to call out this shame unapologetically, because it is time for all governments, without excuse, to bring our kids home, period. It is time for our kids and our families to get the same resources that are afforded to other families in this country.

Do you know what I think the problem is, Mr. Speaker? I am going to be fully transparent here. It is money. Because 90% of kids in care are indigenous, the government is going to fight it every step of the way, like it did the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

Do you know what that tells me? It tells me that we are less than, still, in this country. Our kids are not as valuable. Our women and our 2SLGBTQIA+ people will continue to go missing and be murdered. Why? It is because the government has completed zero calls for justice in 2023.

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They finished 13 altogether out of the 81 that they are responsible for as the federal government, yet I had to hear a speech about the dark cloud that I place over their heads. I will tell you something. I will tell you a dark cloud.

I have a friend whose loved one was just murdered in an incident involving grotesque police brutality. That is a dark cloud. That is called systemic racism.

If that is dark, if people say, “Oh, you want your clip, Leah. There, you got your clip, I heard,” and if that is what they think it is about, I do not care. We are going to bring our kids home, and I am going to fight this government or any other government that comes in its place to give us the resources we need to bring our kids home.

I will not be questioned by a member whose riding has the highest number of kids in care in the whole country, justifying and celebrating how well his government is doing, when I am now, once again, fighting his government so that our families do not have to live in poverty. That is disgusting, and it is racist.

• (1805)

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke a bit about the Indian Act. That word itself is a violent, racist word that harkens back to an extremely violent colonial history. The previous name was even more repugnant, if such a thing is possible. The current Indian Act is an amendment to an old law whose name I would not even dare utter.

What does my colleague think about the fact that today, in 2024, a supposedly modern and contemporary country that claims to be open, multicultural and progressive can still have a law called the Indian Act?

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, we passed legislation in the last Parliament. In fact, I worked with the current Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, amending it, putting this bill forward. We have something, in fact. It is not a lack of legislation. It is now a fact of pushing for a change of colonial behaviour.

We have the TRC's 94 calls to action. We have the 231 calls for justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which provide a framework and a path forward.

We have legislation, Bill C-15, to make sure any legislation going forward respects the human rights of indigenous peoples, because we know, globally, that we needed a declaration because there has been a universal, global violation of the human rights of indigenous peoples throughout the globe.

I am just heeding the government's call to act on the very legislation that it supported.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask this member a specific question about anti-indigenous violence and reconciliation. One of the sad, continuing examples of anti-indigenous violence that we have seen in this country has been a series of attacks on churches in in-

digenous communities. Many churches in indigenous communities, sacred spaces for indigenous Christians, steeped in personal and familial traditions and sometimes containing important community records, have been vandalized or burned down. These acts of arson are not just damaging to property; they are also very dangerous to human life. I have noticed that we have not heard anything from the NDP on these incidents.

Will the hon. member join me in condemning these attacks on churches that we have seen in indigenous communities?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I am kind of concerned with this question, because there seems to be a presumption of who has done it. I am not sure who is burning the churches and why the member is relating it to this speech, but is he insinuating that it is indigenous people? Does he have proof of that? If he does not, I would say that is a stereotype. I would also call that racist. I would first ask the member if he had proof, and then I would be willing to discuss it, because without knowing what the answer is, it is really hard for me to answer what the root of that issue is.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her intervention in today's debate and for making it relevant in so many ways, not only to the history but to the future.

My question to the member is about the future. She mentioned residential schools, in particular, and finding gravesites. The reality is that there is so much more work to do, and I would like to know from her a recommendation of what we can do to kind of get past that or at least acknowledge it. A school should not have a record of youth being buried at it.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, it is not about getting past it. History is important, but I would say that this history continues with the child welfare system, and it is about justice. We cannot get past things when things are still in our way that impact our ability to receive justice. For example, the fact is that we still have a crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. Where is the justice?

We need to implement those 81 calls to action specifically, and I would call for all of them, but specifically the 81 still tasked to the federal government to complete. We need to not just read and talk about reconciliation, but implement and lift up the 92 calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We need to ensure that all legislation is compatible with Bill C-15, especially on matters impacting our kids. Ninety per cent of kids in care are indigenous. Do members know why? It is because of the “inter-generational impact of colonization”, most specifically residential schools.

This government has to allow this amendment to go through. It has to if it is serious about reconciliation.

• (1810)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the conversation about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I know that, right now, it is an area particularly being highlighted. There is work that we have been doing for the last several years in order to get both the calls for justice as well as the implementation. However, the member mentioned 81 items that are still outstanding from a federal perspective. I wonder if she could talk about how the Red Dress Alert, for example, is part of that, because it is one of the things that she had advocated for for many years.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed working with the minister very much on the Red Dress Alert. I have to say that I have appreciated, since he has been appointed, that in very short order he has actually pushed things forward. That is reconciliation to me. That is justice.

The Red Dress Alert will save lives. However, it needs to be implemented. We have had a number of consultations to date, and we need to get it implemented in short order. We know that it is a crisis. Through the consultations, we found that there is wide support in figuring out what it is going to look like, but the sooner we get it in place, the sooner we will save lives.

Again, we should never have to use a Red Dress Alert. We need to deal with the root causes so that we do not even have to use the system. However, right now, we are in a crisis, and we need something to deal with the end game, because the system is so broken that it has resulted in this. We need to respond to those 81 calls for justice. I look forward to working with this minister to get the Red Dress Alert out the door as soon as possible.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, just to follow up to my previous question, I thought my question was fairly clear. I characterized those attacks on churches as a form of anti-indigenous violence. That is, somebody has, in many cases, burned down churches in indigenous communities, and I see that as attacks on those communities. I thought that was clear in my initial question, but I will repeat the point. I am in no way making any assumptions or suggestions about who is doing that. I am concerned not only about how those attacks on churches undermine religious freedom, but also about how they are an aspect of destruction of the cultural property of those indigenous communities. We have not heard statements from the NDP condemning those attacks on churches.

Again, in the spirit of condemning anti-indigenous violence, I wonder if the member would be willing to join me, to join us, in condemning those various attacks we have seen on churches in indigenous communities.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, again, I will give him the same response. I do not know what the motive was or who burned down the churches. Second, because I do not know that, I cannot call it anti-indigenous violence. I have not heard him debate anti-indigenous violence when he talks about residential school denialism. I know what the motivation is for that. I know where it is coming from. They are very public about it. I do not have the facts, so I cannot assume the motive. That is a basic premise in law. I think as legislators, we can understand the basic premise in law, that I cannot read into an action where I have no facts, and I do not know

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what the motive is. Maybe he should do some research. Maybe he would understand potential motives, or he could talk to officials.

• (1815)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really outstanding that we are still debating this bill. I consulted my notes from the last time I addressed the chamber to speak to the bill, which was November 30, 2022. At that time, I highlighted the fact that the bill was missing some important pieces. Specifically, it was missing economic reconciliation as a factor. Economic reconciliation was heard about throughout testimony on the bill. It is something I bring up because it went through and was brought forward by a number of witnesses, yet the bill still contains no actual piece on economic reconciliation. I believe strongly that economic reconciliation is going to be an integral part in how we go forward and move with these kinds of pieces.

The fact that the bill is still here, and that we are still in the process of debating it after having numerous amendments, speaks to the failure to do consultations in advance. I am very proud of my Conservative colleagues and all members of the INAN committee who worked hard to make the bill so much better in the committee process. Then the bill went to the Senate and was amended further. It was amended because the government failed to do adequate consultations before bringing it forward.

In my estimation, and from everything I have been able to ascertain, that tells me that the bill was not done properly to begin with. Typically, good bills with adequate consultation do not actually require that many amendments or need to be in the chamber for this length of time. This speaks to the government's overall failure to consult, and its having a very paternalistic approach to pieces. I am frustrated tonight that we are still here debating the bill. I am frustrated, on behalf of many indigenous people I have talked to in my riding, that economic reconciliation still has not come to pass.

I think this is an important piece because the track record on the legislation before us should be noteworthy. Even though there is cause for some congratulations, and indeed I truly believe this is an important step forward, it has been very frustrating that we brought forward indigenous partners and we brought forward stakeholders who highlighted a missing piece of economic reconciliation, and it was completely blindsided.

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We also heard that a not-for-profit organization would be established to monitor, evaluate and report the progress being made toward reconciliation, and that it would respond to call to action number 53 made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is worth noting that during the entire year of 2023, the Liberal government that purports to be there for indigenous people and says that is its number one relationship, did not accomplish a single TRC call to action. In fact, there are 94 calls to action, and 81 are still unfulfilled. The piece of legislation before us, had the Liberals put the work in from the beginning, would have fulfilled one of the calls to action.

The problem was not stalling by the Conservatives; Conservatives worked quite collaboratively with many members of the House to ensure that things were going forward so the bill would be the best possible piece of legislation. It is just frustrating that we see there would be an oversight body, yet we are still missing the mark when it comes to some of the pieces. Conservatives have been supportive of the legislation and the very concept around it from the very beginning. I want to highlight that fact. My speaking poorly of this is in the hopes that at some point, when a future parliamentarian looks at this piece of the bill, they will see there were concerns being raised when it was first brought forward that highlight the missing piece.

I have had the great fortune, in my time as an elected official, to get to know Dr. Willie Littlechild. He was a chief. He is now a Companion of the Order of Canada. He was a member of Parliament for Wetaskiwin—Rimby. He is truly such an amazing, wonderful man. He is a great hockey player. He has pretty much done it all.

• (1820)

Dr. Wilton Littlechild, when this bill was first introduced in 2022, said the council will be an important tool for Indigenous Peoples to hold the government accountable to achieving meaningful change for our peoples.” He also said, “We need to know where we are today as far as reconciliation and how do we measure the advancement of reconciliation”.

As with almost all Liberal initiatives, the establishment of this council sounds like a very good thing. Indeed, in many respects it is, but now we come to the first problem with Bill C-29. The act stipulates that the first board of directors would be selected by the minister in collaboration with a transitional committee. However, the transitional committee was selected by the minister in December of 2021, so this raises some pretty serious questions about how independent the new council would be. I have seen the body of this council. It is made up of members such as Dr. Wilton Littlechild, so I do not have any concern with the members who have been put on this council. However, I believe the mechanism by which it was done was not right.

When I was a kid, my mum used to say the ends do not justify the means. One has to do things with the right intention along one's path for it to be ultimately good. I try, in every step I take, to remind myself of the important words of my mom that the ends do not justify the means. While I think that the committee and the composition of that council have some amazing, wonderful people who will really help our country move toward reconciliation, it was

not done in a consultative way, in a way that would move us further toward reconciliation. That is problematic to me because the ends do not justify the means.

There have been so many concerns brought forward by my Conservative colleagues. I know the NDP brought forward many amendments when it went to committee, as did others. It seems to have been almost rushed. It is whatever is the most convenient for the government at the time.

I understand that this is complicated. Reconciliation is not static. One phrase Dr. Wilton Littlechild has used frequently has really stuck with me. He said that it is not reconciliation, but “reconciliation”. It is the idea that we need action. We cannot just sit here and continue to consult, continue to get stuck in the bureaucratic processes and the red tape. We really need to reach past that. How can I make things better?

The fact that we are still here in this chamber more than a year after I gave my last speech on this, still having these conversations about how this bill is better than it was, but still not as good as I believe it could be, is very frustrating. If it is frustrating to me, it has to be intensely frustrating for those who have been working toward this.

One interesting piece about this bill is that it is very prescriptive. It sets aside three permanent seats, one for the Assembly of First Nations, one for the ITK and one for the MNC. They are three national organizations that the Liberal government has almost exclusively dealt with when it comes to indigenous issues in the country.

One thing that I have heard very clearly in my role as the member of Parliament for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake is that the AFN does not speak for the first nations, specifically in Treaty 8. They speak more broadly, but chiefs who I have chatted with, who I have had an opportunity to sit down with and have conversations with have told me that the AFN does not represent them, so consulting with the AFN is not consulting with them. They believe that is an issue when it comes to their inherent treaty rights. I believe this is indicative of the overall issue we are facing when it comes to how the government is approaching some of its dealings with indigenous people. It is going to some of these larger, umbrella organizations rather than having what could be sometimes some very tough conversations.

We have to do very difficult things as people, but people, I believe, are able to do tough things. I try to live in a space where, if I have something difficult ahead of me, I try not to kick it down the road. I try to deal with it in the moment because the faster I can deal with something difficult, the more likely I am going to learn and the more likely I am going to stop and live in that space of discomfort until I can find a space of magic.

• (1825)

The fact that the government is looking to these big national organizations rather than sitting down with each and every chief to have these conversations, to me, highlights perhaps a lack of reconciliation. I know that would require a whole bunch of work, and I do understand that there are some pragmatic challenges with this, but the fact that there is not representation of women or children designated on the council is problematic.

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I have had an opportunity, through the years since I was elected and in my time just casually growing up in Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, to have many important conversations with a variety of first nations elders and hear how important the relationship of women was in their society, how the matriarchs of the community help guide how the decision-making processes are, how sacred women are and how sacred the power of women is. The fact that there is no space for women specifically in this takes away from that sacred recognition that exists in many indigenous communities of the power of women, the power of children and the power of these positions.

It is really frustrating that there are not on-the-ground communities, because when someone is sitting there and making the decision from Ottawa, they do not necessarily understand the reality on the ground in a community like Fort McMurray or Thunder Bay or Timmins. They are a bit further insulated from those nitty-gritty minutia problems. It is often in the nitty-gritty minutia that we can find the simple solutions.

They failed to include them, despite the fact that Conservatives put forward many amendments trying to include the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, which represents the 800,000 off-reserve indigenous people in this country. That failure overlooks the important fact that indigenous people do not just live on reserves. Many have chosen to move off reserve, and many have not chosen to move off reserve but were forcibly removed from their reserves. The reality is that there are over 800,000 people in this country who are first nations who do not live on reserve. Through this process, their voices are not prescribed into this bill as being included, so it is very frustrating. In fact, Kim Beaudin, vice-chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, noted, “Bill C-29 is really very, very disappointing...the federal government has ghosted the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.”

“Ghosted” is the term being used. That is a slang kind of comment meaning when someone just stops talking to a group. I do not understand how a government that is trying to move forward with reconciliation would leave aside the voices of people who are living off reserve because theirs perhaps are more difficult to include.

In fact, Kim Beaudin later said that exclusion from the council was more than just simple oversight by the government. He said it was part of an ongoing strategy to exclude off-reserve and non-treaty status people from the decision-making process. Again, I quote: “One thing that is really frustrating is that this is a divide and conquer policy that’s been around for hundreds of years by the federal government and these organizations—ITK, MNC, AFN—they’re playing right into that playbook.”

Those are not my words. Those are the words of the vice-chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Kim Beaudin.

As I mentioned at the outset of my remarks, Conservatives support this bill. We believe that reconciliation is critically important, but it is worth highlighting the fact that the ends do not justify the means. I believe that the means of preparing this legislation are part of why we are still here, more than a year later, still having these conversations and still in this space, because the work was not done before the legislation was brought forward.

• (1830)

They did not make it clean and neat, because it was easier not to. As was pointed out, it was divide and conquer. I do not know if that necessarily was the case, and I do not want to assume why members made certain decisions, but it is now pointed out. It has been pointed out many times by members of various parties in this House that voices were excluded.

I am just going to continue laying it down there, because it is important to highlight. Sometimes a mistake is not made intentionally. Sometimes it is an unintentional mistake. However, I was taught that if one has made a mistake, whether it was intentional or not, then one has to do better. When we know better, we do better. When something has been brought to our attention as not as good as it could be, we try to make it right. The fact that the government has failed to do what it can to make it right is frustrating. It is frustrating to a number of indigenous people who have brought forward their concerns to me on this bill. They feel like they have not been heard, that this is not their version of reconciliation.

As important as this bill is, it also highlights the failure of the Liberal government to listen to Canadians, and to listen meaningfully and to consult with indigenous peoples. This is, of course, not the first time we have spoke about the Liberals' inability to consult and listen.

Most recently, the Chiefs of Ontario and Attawapiskat First Nation filed a lawsuit against the federal government over what they allege is discriminatory and anti-reconciliatory application of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act to first nations.

This is a troubling pattern that we have been seeing, over and over again, with the government, where it is not spending the time to understand what its jurisdictional space is. It steps over the line, and then instead of correcting it, it waits until it goes all the way to a court, the most expensive option. We are seeing increased costs. We are seeing a space where people are waiting in limbo for court decisions to be made, because the government went too far. It goes too far, time and time again.

In this particular case, while non-indigenous taxpayers get approximately 90% of charges refunded through tax rebates, this is not the case for first nations members, because property and income on reserve are tax exempt. Most indigenous people do not use the income tax system if they are living on reserve. Therefore, chiefs are now demanding a judicial review of the policy, something that they said would have been unnecessary if federal officials had bothered to engage with them to begin with.

We are in an expensive, costly court battle over something that probably could have been avoided had there been some actual meaningful consultation and dialogue. That is the difference. Consultation does not necessarily mean that everyone is going to get their way. It means that there is an understanding of the arguments, and perhaps someone can make a change to identify those concerns and prevent them from having to go to court, time and time again.

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However, the Liberal government seems to be more keen on satisfying its agenda than sitting down and doing the tough work, and actually having those tough conversations.

In contrast to the Liberal government, Conservatives are listening to first nations. Last week, we announced support for an optional first nations resource charge that would enable first nations to take back control of their resources and their money. This is a first nations-led solution to a made-in-Ottawa problem. First nations and the First Nations Tax Commission developed the plan, brought it to the Conservatives, and we accepted.

Putting first nations back in control of their money and letting them bring home the benefits of their resources would help get local buy-in for good projects to get ahead. Only common-sense Conservatives would fight for real economic reconciliation by supporting first nations taking back control of their money and their lives.

Bill C-29 is deeply flawed, as I have pointed out. Conservatives have proposed numerous amendments to improve it. I am very proud of the work that my colleagues have done to improve this legislation. Many of the amendments have been rejected by the Liberal-NDP government, which continues to implement an “Ottawa knows best” policy, which generally fails to accomplish their goals, no matter how laudable they might be.

On this front, we will continue to support Bill C-29, but not without some very serious reservations on this very seriously flawed bill.

• (1835)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member spent a lot of time in her comments dealing with the makeup of the national council itself. It is important to recognize that the minister did work in collaboration with the transitional committee, a committee whose membership she made reference to. The very impressive group of people in the membership of that committee came up with the terms of the future board, including the four identified groups that would ultimately get appointments.

I wonder whether the member could add her further thoughts on what specific groups she would suggest should be incorporated into the legislation, or whether she is okay with the four that are listed.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, if the member had been paying attention to my speech, he would know that I made it pretty clear that we believe that the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples should have been included; I have mentioned on a number of occasions the fact that it was not.

The ends do not justify the means. I have looked at the composition of both of the councils, and there are some truly stunning people who will do some amazing work. I have no issue with the composition of either council. However, it was not done in ways that advance reconciliation, but in a top-down approach, where the minister got to name people. I do not believe that if we are actually trying to work on reconciliation, old paternalistic approaches to the problems are the best ones going forward. I truly believe that if we want to have transformational change when it comes to reconciliation, we are going to have to make a transformational difference.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's riding has a very large number of indigenous people within it. It is also central to Canada's energy sector, and she spoke a bit about that in her speech in the context of the carbon tax.

It seems to me that when the government talks about reconciliation, what it actually means is listening only to some indigenous people who share its views on resource development and environmental issues, and that in the process it very often ignores indigenous people who are looking for economic reconciliation and opportunity, and who are part of the development of Canada's resource sector. I have posed this question to the government in the past with respect to what reconciliation means in the context of the indigenous communities that are asking for and benefiting from energy development and wanting the projects to proceed instead of being blocked. The response I always get back is essentially that it claims indigenous people agree with it.

We recognize that there is a diversity of perspectives within indigenous communities, but many are involved in the resource sector. I wonder whether the member could share a bit about what she is hearing in her riding on economic reconciliation and the role indigenous peoples are playing in energy development.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague rightly pointed out, I very proudly get to represent a majority of Canada's energy industry, in the Fort McMurray—Cold Lake riding in the oil sands.

It is really interesting that, last week, the member for Timmins—James Bay brought forward a piece of legislation, a private member's bill, Bill C-372, that would make it illegal for people to talk positively about fossil fuels. Just today in the National Post, there was an op-ed by Stephen Buffalo, who is the CEO of the Indian Resource Council and also a member of the Samson Cree Nation. He is a really wonderful man. He stated, “In other words, it would make it illegal for anyone with a connection to the fossil fuel industry, including First Nations involved in oil and gas development, to discuss the benefits this will bring to Indigenous communities.”

It is a pretty sad state of affairs that the NDP thinks that is the way toward reconciliation with first nations.

• (1840)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague publicly on the arrival of an addition to her family.

There was a lot of discussion in her speech about resource extraction. I have said many times in the House that I firmly support the human right to free, prior and informed consent. Often, I hear the Conservatives talk about nations that choose to participate in resource extraction.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague supports, with the same level of enthusiasm, the free, prior and informed consent of communities that do not wish to participate in the resource extraction sector. If so, how would her Conservative government, should they ever form government, deal with that?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her congratulations on the birth of my little boy. He is nine months old, and it is very tough for me to be here while he is at home in Fort McMurray, but this is exactly the kind of work I have been sent here to do by the people of Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, and I am very proud to do so.

What I do know is absolutely not okay for first nations is to point-blank tell them, through a private member's bill, like the one that was brought forward by the member for Timmins—James Bay, that they are not legally allowed to say anything positive about an industry that supports them and that they could go to jail for up to two years or have a half-million-dollar fine simply for telling truth and facts. That is both censorship and goes against any form of economic reconciliation, so I am very disturbed. Over the weekend, I had an opportunity to talk to a number of indigenous people throughout my riding who shared the concern they have with that bill and how tone deaf it is to tell indigenous communities in my riding and across the entire country what they can and cannot say about industries they want to participate in.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am going to ask the member a similar question to what I asked a previous Conservative member, because she spoke to it as well. She mentioned that, by CAP not being mentioned as one of the board members, it is being prevented from being a voice in this board. However, I give the same reminder that the national council for reconciliation will have a minimum of nine members and a maximum of 13, so in addition to the four, there are going to be several other board members that can be on this national council for reconciliation.

Can the member tell us where she sees, in the bill, that CAP is being prevented from being on this board?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate learning from the member opposite on the INAN committee, and I know that her kindness is one reason we do better in this place. I do want to highlight the fact that, yes, the bill would not preclude CAP from being on the committee, and I really hope that, at some point, it would be named to it. However, I think it is an absolute oversight to not include an organization that represents 800,000 people who live off-reserve, and I believe that is an important voice that is missed.

Yes, the bill does not preclude CAP, and I hope it is included, but I do think it is a mistake not to have included it to begin with.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member spoke about humility, and sometimes we do not get things right, but it is important to recognize when we do get things wrong and correct them. In this case, I am wondering if she has any further comments on that.

• (1845)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, I believe that humility is absolutely key in doing good in the world and that the government could learn a thing or two, and all of us could learn a thing or two, if we simply admitted when we made a mistake and tried our best

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to make things better. That is, unfortunately, not something I have seen very much of from the current government since I have come here.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to address the House on Bill C-29. My understanding of the schedule today is that I have about 12 minutes and then we will continue when we next come back to the bill. I know some members are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to ask questions or make comments, but they will sadly need to wait until this bill is next up for consideration.

It has been a pleasure for me to listen to many of the interesting and insightful speeches that have been given by my colleagues. There might have been a few less interesting and insightful speeches given, but I will not name any names.

I wanted to, first of all, identify some of the key aspects of this bill and then drill into a few specific areas around reconciliation. Bill C-29, for those just joining us, deals with the creation of a national council for reconciliation. This is a body that was called for in the calls to action associated with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and it now seeks to, through legislation, give life to that specific recommendation by creating a council that would be responsible for, in various fora, providing advice and recommendations around reconciliation. This specifically responds to calls to action 53 through 56.

I would just note out of interest that we do seem to see a number of these legislative proposals from the government for the creation of advisory councils or bodies that would be representative of some community of concern and provide advice to the government on specific issues. What I always look for in these kinds of proposals is whether these advisory bodies would have the capacity to authentically represent the people they are supposed to represent or whether these advisory bodies are subject to such a level of control by the government that they would be more limited in being able to be representative or operate independently.

I can think of a similar case of the creation of an advisory body on child care, where the government said it was going to create a child care advisory body. In every case, the impulse of the government is to say it is going to create this consultative advisory body that will be an important stakeholder that will inform it of situations on the ground, but then to, at the same time, create a system in which the power of creation of appointment, and maybe in some cases in an ongoing way and in other cases just in the first instance, is by a minister. This obviously creates challenges for that body to be authentically representative or to challenge the government with an alternative conception of how to proceed in a policy area that may be different from what the government is proposing.

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If the government says it wants to have an independent body advising it that is going to be championing specific issues such as child care, reconciliation and some other issue and yet it is going to choose the people on that body, then to what extent is that body able to be a meaningful check on what the government is doing? This is an important area of caution in general. I would hope to see, and suspect the framers of the calls to action were more thinking of, a council for reconciliation that could provide that check on government.

I note the legislation, Bill C-29, does identify certain organizations that should be represented on the council. The problem with that is if the minister is still choosing the individual, that there must be someone from this group and someone from this group, or if the minister exercises a greater degree of discretion for a majority of those individuals, again that creates some obvious problems. It is something we need to be cautious about.

I note as well, as my colleagues have, there was no representation for the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. Members have pointed out in questions and comments it is possible the council might choose someone, in replacing a position, with an affiliation with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, but it is also possible it might not. The fact that there are protections for the inclusion of specific voices and not for the inclusion of the voice that represents indigenous people living off reserve is a problem as well, and one that Conservatives have highlighted.

● (1850)

We have also spoken about economic reconciliation, and I will come to that. However, I want to add to the conversation with some reflections on diversity in procurement and on the inclusion of indigenous businesses in procurement. This is something that has been on my mind and the minds of many members today, of course, with the release of the explosive arrive scam report from the Auditor General. This report contains a variety of findings that I know we have had an opportunity to discuss and will have more opportunity to discuss in the House. Basically, the Auditor General found multiple levels of incompetence and corruption in government procurement associated with the procurement of the arrive scam app, with \$60 million spent, but no certainty about how much money was actually spent; a complete lack of documentation and tracking; a two-person company that was hired, with no IT experience, to do an IT application; and on and on. Why in the world was this company hired? Who made this decision? We are still asking these questions.

However, the Auditor General's report builds on work that was done by the procurement ombudsman, who identified aspects in the procurement system that are loaded towards insiders. This is important for the discussion that I want to have in the context of the bill before us, which is diversity and inclusion in the context of procurement.

For a long time, there have been asks from indigenous business owners. I have also met with leaders in the Black business community and representatives of other communities, who are saying that they want to see more inclusion of businesses from their community in the procurement system. Governments have talked about this. They have set targets, which they have not always achieved. There

has been discussion about whether we should set quotas or targets, how we should do this, and all of that.

However, if we look at the existing system, and this was revealed through the procurement ombudsman's report, we have a situation where there is actually strong protection in place for incumbent businesses. Therefore, we had a situation with GC Strategies, which is not what we think of as an incumbent business. It is not massive; it is a two-person company with lots of close connections with government. It gets the work, it subcontracts and it makes a lot of money in the process. There are a lot of problems there. However, we have this incumbent business with close relationships to the government. Then we find out that GC Strategies sat down with the government to discuss what the terms of the contract were going to be. Therefore, this company has a significant advantage, because it is sitting down with people in government that it has a relationship with, and it says, "We think you should ask for these specifications in the contract." I think that process is effectively rigged.

The government then puts requirements in, where it says, "You have to have a certain amount of experience of having procured with the government." This is a structure that advantages existing incumbent businesses with a lot of privilege. If a company is part of a historically disadvantaged community, such as an indigenous business owner or a business owner from another community who does not have the same privilege of access or incumbency in the existing system, then it is disadvantaged. It is not a matter of saying that people who may not have the best product should be advantaged. No, it is actually saying that, if we took out the protections for insiders who are not providing a good product, which is clear in the case of ArriveCAN, then we would probably see more diversity in procurement. If we had a more open, democratic, accessible procurement process where we were not protecting incumbent bidders, I think we would see more indigenous-owned and minority-owned businesses being able to engage in the procurement process.

When we talk about this issue of economic reconciliation, providing jobs and opportunity for people of diverse backgrounds, one easy way to do that is, to coin a phrase, to remove the gatekeepers. We can break down the systems in place that are preventing people who are in a situation where they may not have generational money, privilege or access to government, but who have good ideas and who have started their own businesses, from being able to access government procurement.

● (1855)

Part of economic reconciliation is to authentically democratize procurement to allow the opportunity for more businesses in Canada that have not sold to the Government of Canada before to nonetheless pitch their product as the best product. The other thing we heard from the procurement ombudsman is that they actually had a system for disadvantaging those who present low prices. It is crazy. People who did not ask for enough money when they were selling their product to the government got cut out.

One can imagine how, for someone who has not sold to the government before, but who says that they know what they are doing, that they can build this app, that they have a great product and that they are going to charge less to try to get the business, to still make a decent return but to try to charge less, with the existing system that the government has put forward, that new entrant, who might be trying to pitch at a lower price, is actually disadvantaged in the evaluation system purely because of the low price he has charged.

We want to create jobs and opportunity for all Canadians. Part of how we do that is by removing the gatekeepers that prevent authentic diversity and inclusion in our procurement system.

I might be on the verge of being done. When I come back, I will have more to say about economic reconciliation, jobs and opportunity for indigenous Canadians and how Conservatives will remove the gatekeepers to help make that happen.

I know that there is some discussion of a possible UC motion to allow me to speak more, but I think I will save the surprise for when I come back.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise on behalf of the living, breathing, flesh and blood women and men of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

That Canadians are real is never something I expected to be debating in this place, yet in response to my question about my constituent Edmund's gas bill, the Minister of Natural Resources denied Edmund's existence. He claimed that Edmund was not an objective fact but a Conservative opinion.

We have seen these proud socialists engage in inflation denialism. We have seen them resort to balanced budget denialism. They have now reached a new low of Edmund denialism. The only thing they will not deny is giving fentanyl to children.

I would like to assure the House that Edmund is not some Conservative opinion. He is real. His gas bill is real. The \$72 he paid in carbon taxes in December alone on his gas bill is real. The \$9.41 of HST he paid on the carbon tax is very much real. The quarterly climate bribe this NDP-Liberal government loves to brag about works out to be \$39 a month, but 72 is bigger than 39. I understand that math denialism is central to the NDP-Liberal coalition's ideology, but most Canadians I know can count past 100. These proud socialists can scream "fake news" all day long, but 72 is larger than 39.

The minister is entitled to his opinions, but he is not entitled to invent alternative facts. If the minister would like to come up to the Ottawa Valley, I would be pleased to introduce him to Edmund. The minister could tell Edmund to his face that, according to Statis-

tics Canada's Social Policy Simulation Database and Model, he does not exist.

In the minister's response to my question, not only did he claim that Edmund was just my opinion, but he also took the time to mansplain what I already know or, at least, what he thinks I know about the often cited statistic that 80% of Canadians get more in climate bribes than they pay in carbon taxes. It is actually a great illustration of what former extremist Liberal environment minister Catherine McKenna said about repeating a big lie over and over again.

These Liberals, along with their media allies at The Canadian Press and the CBC, have repeated the 80-20 claim so often that they forget it is not real. Reality is complex. It is messy, so we make models. Those models inform us about reality, but we must never forget that they are not real. No model can capture the full lives of people like Edmund.

When one locks oneself away in a social media bubble, it becomes hard to tell the difference between the real world and simulation. It is time that these Liberals took the red pill or pulled off their Apple goggles and wake up to the reality that Canadians like Edmund are facing. Edmund is not alone. There are millions of Canadians just like him.

Like Edmund, they have worked hard all their lives. They follow the rules, yet after eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, they are being left behind. As long as this socialist coalition clings to power, they will fall further behind.

The Liberals can deny that these Canadians exist until they are red in the face, but it will not change the facts. Canadians are hurting. The common-sense Conservatives have a plan to turn that hurt into hope. That is why we are going to axe the carbon tax, build new homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

Working together, we will deny this NDP-Liberal coalition another four years in government.

● (1900)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought maybe what I would do is reflect on the word "real" that my friend amplified during her four minutes. I give her credit, she knows the four priorities of the Conservative Party. She probably even has the bumper stickers already produced, ready for circulation. In fairness to the member, I suspect that if she does not have them, she will likely be the first Conservative to have the actual bumper stickers.

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She sticks to the points. I know she puts a great deal of effort into her every word. Sometimes we hear that we should not let the facts deny a potentially good speech. I suspect that my friend across the way adhered to that. She made reference to the 80%, so let us take a look at the 80%. It is the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer, not the Liberals or the NDP or anyone else, who has said that 80% of people will receive more back through the carbon rebate than they will pay in the carbon tax.

She would say that if we do this or that, then maybe people might pay more. All of “this or that” does not take into consideration things such as weather patterns or the impact that climate change is having on farms, and that also needs to be taken into consideration.

For now, what we should do is acknowledge that the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer is correct when he says that 80% of Canadians will actually receive more money back than they are paying in through the carbon tax. The rebate is bigger than the tax for 80%-plus. In Winnipeg North, I suspect the percentage is even higher. I do not know that for a fact, so I cannot say that as fact.

What I can say is that the Conservatives do not talk about cancelling or getting rid of the rebate portion. All they talk about is getting rid of the tax. In reality, it would do two things. One, it would reinforce that the Conservative Party is loaded with climate deniers. Two, it would take net disposable money out of 80%-plus of the residents I represent. However, we would not know that if we listened to the Conservatives.

If we listen to the Conservatives, we would think that it is for everyone in Canada, yet provinces like British Columbia and Quebec do not have the carbon tax. However, that does not stop the Conservative leader from going around saying, what I would suggest is misleading information, through social media and other forms, to Canadians that they are going to be better off because if they axe the carbon tax, they would have more money. However, that is factually incorrect on a number of fronts.

The bottom line is that I think it is good to have a sound, solid environmental policy. It would be nice to see the Conservative Party share what their new environment policy is. We know that back in 2021, their environmental policy also had a price on pollution or, dare I say, a carbon tax. In fact, the first administration, virtually in North America, to have a carbon tax was the Conservatives in the province of Alberta.

● (1905)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing to see the parliamentary secretary continue to deny Canadians the truth.

The carbon tax is not a price on carbon. It is a tax on individuals. It is a tax on energy. It is a tax on everything that uses energy. It is no more a price on carbon than income taxes are a price on earnings.

The truth is the government does not know what the price on carbon is. They even admit it on their website. They are trying to get farmers to make costly investments to reduce methane emissions by promising to give out carbon credits. Yet, the one question every farmer asked was, “How much is the credit worth?”

The government cannot say. It cannot say because it does not know. When it comes to a price on a carbon offset, the government admits that the price of something is determined by the supply and demand for that thing. Only a proud socialist could believe that government could set a price by decree.

It did not work for Pierre Trudeau and it will not work for the Prime Minister either. That fact is just undeniable.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is amazing in terms of the places around the world where we see a price on pollution actually being implemented, or a carbon tax. We could talk about Ukraine, which has a price on pollution, a carbon tax, as do countries like Poland, many European countries and, in fact, Mexico. People often say the United States does not have it. It does not have a national carbon tax, but many states have a carbon tax.

The reason I say that is, at the end of the day, having a price on pollution, making the polluters pay, is sound public policy. Unfortunately, it is being distorted to the nth degree by the Conservative Party, all in an attempt to have a shiny bumper sticker of deceit for Canadians. I think that is sad. We are supposed to be here to develop and to encourage sound public policy.

HOUSING

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, every home bought by fraudsters is one less home that Canadians can buy. It is basic demand and supply. All else being the same, when demand increases, naturally prices go up. When there is less supply, prices also go up.

In the GTA, and in many real estate markets across Canada, we see not only the increasing demand as our country continues to receive from immigration, but also the alarming allegations of mortgage fraud where fraudsters are buying up homes and, in turn, reducing supply. This double whammy of increased demand and decreased supply due to fraud has made home ownership so out of reach that, in Toronto, people will have to save, on average, for 26 years for a down payment. That is a quarter of a century.

That is why I asked the Prime Minister on February 7 about the incidents of very significant alleged mortgage fraud being conducted at a major Canadian bank. I had mentioned unbelievable evidence of a person living in Canada, having no income or employment, somehow still able to obtain HSBC mortgages to purchase not one, not two, but at least four homes, simply based on a fake statement that the individual had equally fake high incomes from employment in China. That astounding information was lost on the Prime Minister, who either did not understand the question or simply did not care to address the issue of mortgage fraud. I then asked how the government could make more housing available and affordable to Canadians when fraudsters are out there buying multiple homes that, in turn, create housing scarcity and drive up house prices.

I would like to have been told that the government is aware of the issue and is doing something to address the damage created by money laundering and mortgage fraud in Canada. Instead, the Prime Minister seemed more interesting in waxing poetically on the foreign ownership ban. Given housing unavailability, unaffordability and record-high interest rates, it is a little late in the game for the Prime Minister to be suggesting that the government is stepping up on housing and will continue to do so while the Conservatives have no plan. Quite frankly, Canadians, at this point, do not care which party has a plan as long as it works. Unfortunately, the Liberal plan has been failing.

Home ownership is out of reach for so many Canadians that even if they found a home, they could not afford it. To top it off, we have money launderers and mortgage fraudsters adding fuel to real estate markets, especially those in urban markets. They are gobbling up multiple homes under false pretenses. In one case, a casino worker owned three homes, claiming to earn \$345,000.

In another, someone, somehow had \$10,000 in student loans that they still owed, but claimed to earn \$700,000 annually working remotely in China. The most incomprehensible one was the one that I cited to the Prime Minister of an individual with no income or employment who was somehow financed to own four homes. Just from these three examples, those are eight fewer homes for Canadians. That might not matter to the Prime Minister, but it sure does to Canadians struggling to find a home.

Therefore, I have to ask, yet again, how can the Prime Minister make housing more available and more affordable, when he and his government are turning a blind eye to money laundering and mortgage fraud in Canada?

● (1910)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would disagree entirely with the impression that the member is trying to give, which is just not even remotely close to the reality of the situation. For example, I would challenge the member to cite a prime minister in the last 50 or 60 years who has done more in terms of investing in housing in all sorts of ways. That is not only in terms of financial commitments; we have seen other budgetary measures whereby we have attempted to deal with issues such as fraud and foreign ownership.

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We understand and very much appreciate the value and the importance of being able to own a home. That is why this government, like no other government in the last number of decades, made a decision years ago, not just in the last 24 hours. Shortly after being elected to government in 2015-16, we consciously said that as a national government we wanted to be proactive in dealing with housing going forward, and we brought forward the first-ever national housing strategy.

It is important that we recognize that it is not just the national government's responsibility. We can lead, which we have done, both financially and legislatively, and we have reached out to the many different stakeholders. We need the stakeholders also to come to the table, and we are seeing that. We are seeing literally hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in working with mayors and other jurisdictions to ensure that we can increase the housing supply.

I am a bit concerned that the member talked about the issue of immigration. I do not believe we should even attempt to blame the issue on immigrants. At the end of the day, whether it is provincial governments or the national government, we have recognized and believe in the power of immigrants and how they have lifted all of us higher. It is in good part something that we will continue to work on with other jurisdictions. I do not like the tie-in to immigrants on the issue of fraud. This is a government that has recognized the issue; we are working with others to resolve it. Most importantly, we are recognizing the national government's lead in ensuring that we have more housing and more affordable housing, because we understand the importance of it.

Unlike the Conservatives, we will work with other jurisdictions. We are not going to go around saying that this or that person is a bad mayor. I have not heard the Conservatives say anything good about mayors. It is important that we recognize that we need to work with other jurisdictions, because often it is the councils and in some areas the provinces that actually have more tools than we would have, outside of financial supports.

● (1915)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I have to give it to the parliamentary secretary, to home in on one word, "immigrants", and try to spin it as some kind of xenophobia. I am the son of immigrants. I am the son of refugees. It is simply stating a fact that as immigration increases and there is not the housing supply, there is more demand and there is pressure for housing prices to go up.

The parliamentary secretary speaks about reality and says that no one has done more than this government. Let me tell him about the reality. Let us accept what he has said at face value. The reality is that it takes 26 years for a Torontonion to save up enough for a down payment for a home. Is that the best the Liberals have? Is that plan working for them? Is that success for the Liberal government? Give me a break.

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Therefore, I will ask it again: How are they actually going to address housing unaffordability and unavailability and record-high interest rates, so that the dream of home ownership can actually be possible?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the government is very much concerned about the cost and affordability of housing. That is one of the reasons it is imperative that the Government of Canada continue to work with municipalities and provinces in particular, but also the non-profit organizations that are out there. I am a big fan, for example, of Habitat for Humanity. Without that organization, there are literally hundreds of people in the city of Winnipeg alone who would never have had the opportunity to own a home. The organization does a lot of good work.

There are a number of advocates and organizations out there to give that helping hand. We need to work collectively to try to make things more affordable. All I can tell the member is that the Government of Canada is at the table, and we are going to do what we can.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in follow up to my last session question period rhyme, we will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

Poverty, chaos, and gross food inflation
Have become severe across this great nation
Liberals they deny it, but these are just facts
And that's why the Tories will first axe the tax.

You know costs are up if you know how to add
So many young adults must live with their dad
While Liberals just think of their photos and combs
A new Tory government will build the homes.

Deficit spending kills jobs, drives up prices
On things ranging from homes to cheap kitchen spices
Liberals promise change, but at best they'll nudge it
The Tory party will soon fix the budget.

Car thefts, extortion, drugs, deaths and disorder
Under the misrule of PM wakeboarder
It's getting dire, it is surely past time
For some new leaders that will quickly stop crime.

This session, these topics on which we'll opine
Axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget, stop the crime
The call will resound across this great nation
As people prepare for bright transformation
As we prosecute government trespasses
Liberals do nothing and sit on their...hands.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will withhold my comments on the poem itself. I wish I had been given it in advance because I would have taken it line by line and provided a few thoughts. The poem might not have rhymed as well, but it definitely could have been a little more factual. When we are in the House, facts are really important.

For example, the member is concerned about inflation, as well member should be, and ties it to axing the tax, along with axing the rebate. I have to make sure we include both of them, which is only fair, because that is telling Canadians what Conservatives would really do, but it would only be for the provinces that both pay the tax

and receive the rebate. I would add that qualifier, too. Therefore, B.C. and Quebec would not be included, which is a fairly high percentage of Canada in terms of population.

We could ask farmers about inflation and how it is impacting food production into the future, but I believe the greater threat to food production in the future is climate, things like floods. Earlier today, in the first hour of debate, members on all sides of the House talked about floods and the impacts they are having. Floods, droughts, fires and other natural disasters, which are all on the increase, are all based on climate change, something the Conservative Party refuses to recognize. I can tell the member opposite that there is a very good chance they will have a much larger, more significant impact on inflation.

When the Conservatives talk about axing the tax, it might sound nice, it might even look nice on a bumper sticker, as I referred to earlier, but, at the end of the day, it is not sound government policy, even if we try to tie it into inflation. The Governor of the Bank of Canada indicated that the percentage of the carbon tax increasing inflation was 0.15%, just a fraction. Let us compare Canada's inflation to countries that do not have a national price on pollution, like the United States. I pointed out some of the states do, but we would find that in many areas, their inflation rate is higher than Canada's inflation rate. This whole idea of cutting the carbon tax and the rebate would somehow drive the price of food down is quite misleading.

In the poem, the member said the Conservatives are going to build homes. The leader of the Conservative Party was responsible for housing when he was minister. I need to remind my colleague across the way that he bombed on the issue. He did not even come close to dealing with the housing issue. I want to be nice, so I had best leave that one.

On car theft, let us look at Manitoba. It was at its very worst when Stephen Harper was prime minister.

● (1920)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, on this side of the House we want to axe the tax. It seems across the way their priorities are to distract and to axe the facts, so let us insert some facts back into this discussion.

As we seek to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, let us be clear that the NDP-Liberal carbon tax is a failed experiment. The government has spent eight years talking about it and about how raising taxes is going to save the planet. It has not worked. The government has not met any of its environmental targets. The environment minister might be planning on climbing on a roof somewhere again because the government has not achieved the results it promised. It was an experiment, one of trying to force people to pay more to see whether that would fix the environmental problems we have. Clearly, it has failed.

Let us axe the tax instead of taking the government's approach of axing the facts.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member across the way gets the gold star for the day for the number of times he said, “axe the tax”. He does deserve a pat on the back for that.

However, let us take a look at the reality of the situation. The Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc all support a price on pollution. Countries around the world support it; they actually have a price on pollution, or a carbon tax. The Conservatives are the only group that does not, even though in 2021 each member, including the member who just spoke, actually campaigned on a carbon tax. However, they flip-flopped on that; they made a change just be-

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cause they got a leader with a nice idea for a bumper sticker. That does not make good public policy.

I look to the Conservatives to ask them to tell us what their plan is for the environment. What would they do—

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7:25 p.m.)

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