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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 20, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)
[English]

JUDGES ACT

The House resumed from November 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising in this House to speak to Bill C-3, a piece of legislation that is absolutely vital. It is vital not only for today, but for the future on so many fronts.

Before I do that, I would really like to make a huge recognition of a life lost yesterday on Manitoulin Island, of an OPP officer for 28 years in the Little Current dispatch. He responded to a call only to not be able to go home and see his family.

I have first cousins who serve on the OPP. One of them, in fact, ironically, is the captain of the *Chris D. Lewis* OPP boat in my riding. I get asked a lot if I named that boat. The truth of the matter is that I did not; I am Chris B. Lewis.

We thank Constable Marc Hovingh for his service, not only to Ontario but to Canada.

I got a text from my mother last night. She is in Silver Water with my father. I know I am not speaking to Bill C-3, but this is very important. She sent me a text asking what was going on in Gore Bay. I told her I did not know what she was talking about. This is where our family cottage of 23 years is. To find out when such hurt happens on the largest freshwater island in the world and the smallest community, quite frankly, it is astonishing and it is sad.

My heart goes out to the family of Constable Hovingh and to all the residents of Manitoulin Island. I know he will be dearly missed, and I thank him very much for his service.

I would ask this House to please join me, just for 20 seconds of thought for the constable. This is absolutely astonishing. I will take 20 seconds of my time to remember him.

[A moment of silence observed]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the hon. member. I represent the riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking and I extend my deepest condolences to Marc's wife, Lianne and her children, as well as to all of his OPP colleagues, both currently serving and past, because we know that it also affects everyone, and to the community of Manitoulin Island because although he served in the Little Current detachment, he served all of Manitoulin and the area. I do appreciate the hon. member's comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Essex.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that very much as well and again, our hearts are with you and all the members of Manitoulin.

I have been reflecting on Bill C-3 and what an honour it is to stand in the House in this place. At the same time, I look at it from a different angle and I say why do I have the right to stand in the House and speak to Bill C-3. It is not because I sit on the justice committee. It is not because my office overlooks the Supreme Court of Canada, it is because I was duly elected to come to this place to represent all of my constituents.

I am a bit of a political geek. Along my path of trying to become a politician, I used to go on the various parties' websites and look at each individual MP and always be in absolute awe and dive into what they were doing and saying. Rona Ambrose was one person who resonated with me. For some reason, she really stuck with me and it took until last night for me to really understand why that was. Unfortunately, I have not had an opportunity yet to meet Ms. Ambrose and I hope at some point I do. I would love to talk to her at some point in time and what better platform to use than the House.

She was so far ahead of her time on this legislation. Unfortunately, as we all know, it has been introduced twice. It has failed twice and now it is being introduced for the third time. I believe it will get unanimous consent in the House and I do not want to speak for anyone, but I believe that to be the case. We have to celebrate the groundbreaking achievements that she made with this legislation. I want to thank Ms. Ambrose for her leadership on this legislation and I could never be prouder than to stand here in this place and speak to that.

I have 20 minutes, but I could probably talk for two hours or more.

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First and foremost, there are four females in my life who have been incredibly influential to me along the way on my path to where I stand here today, proud and excited to be a Canadian.

First and foremost is my mother. My mother allowed me opportunity. She allowed me the gift of being myself. She allowed me the gift of openness, truthfulness, not being pushed into a corner. She allowed me to smile. She allowed me to make my own decisions without fault and for that I will always be grateful.

The second person I admire, and this is a slippery slope, is my lovely wife Allison. It always goes my mother and then my wife, because my mom is the one who is going to send me a text afterward.

• (1015)

The second one is my wife Allison, coming up on 22 years, a woman who, again, allows me to do what she knows I believe is right, is right for Canada and is right for this world. She gives me the freedom. She gives me the longest dog leash ever to let me come to Ottawa and do what is right, absolutely without any question.

The third woman, who is why I am so passionate about Bill C-3 today, is my daughter Faith. Faith is 17 years old. She is going to graduate, likely with honours, this year from grade 12. Her ambition in life, all she wants to do, is to be a veterinarian. Notwithstanding the fact that it is tougher to get into the school to become a veterinarian in Canada than to become a general practitioner, the very fact is I do not care what she wants to do, but I am awfully proud of her.

Regarding the fourth person, about a year and a half ago when I was running to become a member of Parliament, I went to a school in the town of Essex, in my riding, and I spoke to a grade 5 class. When I got there with my handler, so to speak, we had to go to the principal's office. Who greeted me, other than this amazing young woman?

Her name is Jade. She is about yea tall, and has the most bubbly, energetic, fantastic, positive attitude one could ever imagine. I am telling members that they have never met anybody like this. By the way, I am happy that she is as young as she is, because she could run for my spot and probably beat me. She is just fantastic, and there are no rules with her. Yesterday, because I have not had a chance to talk to Jade as of late, I asked her teacher from last year if we could please set up a Zoom call, and we did. Not only did I get to speak to Jade for about 20 minutes, I also got to speak to the rest of the class.

Why am I saying this? Every day that we wake up we can learn something new, and I have to tell the House that if I did not say this, it would be an injustice to Jade. I asked Jade to tell me something exciting and what she wants to do. I was thinking she wanted to be the Prime Minister of Canada. I did not know what she wanted to do. Members have to understand that this beautiful young lady is just fantastic and full of passion for life. She said she wants to work in a museum.

I said, "In a museum? That is neat. Tell me something that I do not know."

She said, "I know," and she had her hand up.

I love it. She said, "I bet you don't know what a pangolin is."

I said, "A penguin?"

She replied, "A pangolin."

I said, "I have never heard of a pangolin in my life."

She said, "Well, it's just an aardvark with a whole bunch of scales on it, and they're really pointy, so nothing can get at it."

I said, "Wow."

Her teacher from last year, Mrs. Armstrong, was an enormous role model for that young woman, and I thank Mrs. Armstrong enormously for what she has done. I am telling members that Jade is the reason I stand in the House so proudly, and I know we have to fight going forward.

Why do I bring up these stories? Why do I bring up the women? It is because it is absolutely vital that we protect them. Let us just suggest, for a moment, that my mother, my wife, my daughter or Jade, along that path, had been assaulted. I do not believe any of them have ever been assaulted, but in the event that they had been, how would that have impacted my life? How would it have steered the ship of my life if they had not received due justice? Because of that, I am incredibly proud to stand here and celebrate my mentors. I am sure the members of the House have many mentors as well.

I had a Zoom meeting on October 27 with an amazing woman: Marion Overholt. We discussed the training for judges on sexual assault cases. I am going to read through a few of her points. First and foremost, I was a firefighter for seven and a half years, and we responded to all types of calls, whether a fire or a heart attack, but we responded, at some times, to assault victims, when the ambulance could not get there quickly enough. I remember one very dearly that I will not give details of. I recall it like it was yesterday, but I did not realize the people who were behind this. As a firefighter, I would go and put a fire out and go home to my family, but it continues on. I did not realize that until after this discussion with Ms. Overholt.

She has actually appeared before the justice committee in the past. She has 37 years of practice. She is a community legal aid worker, and works out of the local OPP detachment. She said, "In the past, victims have shied away from pressing charges, because they do not think that they would be believed." That is an incredibly powerful statement. If those four main ladies in my life did not believe that they would be believed, it would be an absolute injustice.

• (1020)

Ms. Overholt went on to say that sexual assault often happens in private, intimate settings involving no witnesses and often without clear evidence. The narrow focus then becomes about credibility. Often, the victim will not testify but the complainant will, potentially widening the gap.

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What does that mean? To me it means this, and I am going to go back to the basics.

Next year, hopefully, I will proudly see my daughter off to university somewhere, be it in Calgary, Guelph or the U.S. if COVID ever gets under control there. I believe that she needs the right, the confidence and the belief that if something happens to her, she can come forward and have a voice and not feel victimized, but will know that the courts and the justice will do their due diligence for her.

Getting back to my meeting on October 27th, Ms. Overholt went on to say that Crown prosecutors don't actually represent the victim. They represent the Crown, whereas the defence lawyer is there for the defendant.

That was an interesting conversation. The next time I am told that I am guilty or that I am a victim, I would certainly think that the Crown would go the other way and reach out to the victim, especially when the victim does not necessarily have a voice.

She went on to say that the burden of proof is high: Guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Victims often describe the trial as being worse than the assault.

What does that mean? We had some great discussion about this.

It takes so long to get to court. If somebody is victimized tomorrow, blessed that they are not, it can take years to get to court. By the time it gets to court, the healing process of the victim has begun to, I would suggest rudely, at least put a scab on it. The moment that it goes back to the court, the victim has to look the defendant in the eye, listen to the testimony, and the band-aid with the scab comes off, and they have to again live through what they already went through years prior. It is deplorable, and it is wrong.

I will speak quickly about training.

As I mentioned, I was in the fire department, and I trained for CPR, WHMIS and high-angle rescue ropes. In my personal business, I had to train for confined space. There were all kinds of training. This upcoming week, as a member of Parliament, I am taking harassment training. My point is that nobody is above the law, and should not be. If members of Parliament are good enough to do training, surely our judges are fine to do training. Why do I say that? Well, nobody is perfect. I do not really call it "training" so much as "tools in the tool chest." Let us have an open discussion, and if there is a case in Ontario then let us see what is happening in B.C. If there is a case in B.C., let us see what is happening in Newfoundland, and let those judges integrate and talk about this, because, quite frankly, this is a much larger discussion.

To conclude, I really want to thank Ms. Ambrose for bringing this legislation forward. I will be very proud and honoured to vote in favour of Bill C-3.

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-3 is about training judges related to sexual assaults, and is applicable to federally appointed judges.

The member made reference to being proud of his daughter. Yesterday, my daughter, who happens to be an MLA in the province of Manitoba, introduced the province's Bill 215, which is known as the provincial court amendment act. In essence, it does the same thing that Bill C-3 does for federally appointed judges. For us as a society to be able to move further on this issue, we need provincial and territorial legislatures to adopt similar legislation, so as he is proud of his daughter, I too am proud of my daughter.

I would encourage the Manitoba legislature to do what the House of Commons has done, and recognize a good idea that was brought forward by a Conservative interim leader. It will be supported unanimously here. Would the member recommend that the Manitoba legislature do likewise?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, I am unable to recommend it because I am not part of the Manitoba legislature, but this is absolutely vital.

I can appreciate how proud the hon. member is of his daughter and, rightly so.

I think we have to look at this on a national scale. I think it is absolutely vital that in each region and each province, we continue to push this forward to protect the most vulnerable, and make sure that the most vulnerable are the ones who have a voice at the table when it goes to the courts.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I honestly do not think that we hear enough feminist speeches like the one the member for Essex just gave in the House. We need more speeches like that.

I think that there should be more focus on these issues and that equality will be achieved when more men speak out on issues affecting women, and so I thank the member for his speech.

I listened with interest to the member's speech. I expected him to talk about what should be included in the training for judges. If the member for Essex were teaching it, what issues would he like to make judges aware of, for which we could propose possible measures?

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, specific to the training, and wrapping up my final point, I think the biggest thing is that we need the training to not only dive into the details, but to make sure that we have open communication across the country. Again, Ontario justices may not know what happens in B.C. We do not have to reinvent the wheel. Rather, that open line of dialogue needs to happen.

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It is absolutely vital, and will always be vital, for victims to have a true voice at the table, for them to be heard and to bring their issues forward without feeling like their voices are being left out.

• (1030)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that my hon. colleague acknowledged the revictimization of women who have experienced sexual assaults when they seek justice.

I wonder if the member also agrees that issues where women have experienced injustice are further compounded for indigenous and BIPOC women, who often experience a dual revictimization based not just on their gender, but also on their identity.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, I never thought I would be able to speak for 20 minutes and not even get to some of my other points.

In days past, I flew into two indigenous reserves in Manitoba. One of the elder's homes that I went to actually had a victim present. I have been speaking about this by way of Bill C-7, specific to people with disabilities and indigenous peoples.

I would strongly suggest that this should not stop in the House, but should be for all people across Canada, be they indigenous or people of colour.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is about young women and girls and ensuring that as generations grow, people understand that women are not objects. I appreciated the member's words and I know he will always defend women's rights when it comes to their safety and security.

I wonder if the member could continue on with some of his thoughts on how we can do more than just teach our judges. What can we possibly do in the education system to help young boys and girls understand their own sexuality as well as respecting others?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, long before it gets to training judges, it needs to happen in our schools. To some extent, the discussion has already started, but I have to question if it has gone far enough. A young woman going from grade 8 to grade 9 is one thing. However, when they come out of grade 12, go off to university and something happens there, which is much more likely, have we told them it is okay to stand up for themselves? Have we told them, both women and men, that it is okay to tell their stories, that they will be trusted and believed by our court system?

Therefore, yes, a lot more needs to be done within our school system for sure, and to some extent it has started. I can say that because I have a 21-year-old, a 19-year-old and a 17-year-old at home. I have watched them go through the school system and I know some discussion happens, but much more needs to be done.

• (1035)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the speeches throughout the week. There have been very heartfelt stories from all sides of the House. Just as we talk about the stigma associated with mental health, mental illness and mental injury, I cannot help but think Bill C-3 would help break the stigma and allow people to come forward more.

My colleague, the member Brampton North, is the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. She gave very impactful testimony about three sisters from my riding, the Pooni sisters, who came forward and gave their testimony about a long-standing issue of abuse.

Could my hon. colleague expand on how the bill would help break the stigma, obviously not everything, and critical barrier for those coming forward?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the incredible work he has done on the mental health file. He is an absolute ambassador for it and has personally reached out to me.

To his point, absolutely, much more needs to be done. Collectively, because everyone in the House agrees this is a vital issue, we will make this right.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

As I prepared to talk today about Bill C-3, I could not help, like many of us I am sure, to think back to what we had experienced and learned over the course of our lives. I am firmly ensconced in white guy middle age, in old white guy zone.

However, I started out in public life as quite a young guy. I was 21 when I was first elected to Huntsville town council and the Muskoka regional council, and I did not know anything. I was fairly clueless and needed to learn an awful lot. Among the first things I learned about were the needs that existed in my community.

There is a perception of Muskoka as the playground of the rich and the famous and that everything is rainbows and sunshine. However, the reality in a place like Muskoka, and certainly the entire part of my riding, Parry Sound and Muskoka, is that the people who live and work in these communities year-round have a median income about 20% lower than the provincial average. There are struggles, there is a housing crisis and there are a lot of social problems, which I, as a kid, tended to think only existed in places like big cities.

I was in the home of a good friend of mine, Claude Doughty from Huntsville. He was the mayor at that time. He was a dentist in town and left his practice to become a developer, and he has built lots of wonderful things. His wife Kim Doughty is one of the most dynamic women I have ever known. They live in a beautiful home overlooking Fairy Lake, a gorgeous, absolutely stunning place. We were sipping on a Heineken and thinking about how this was all wonderful and we had great things going on in our town.

Claude's wife Kim came home and she was clearly upset. She had a difficult day. I knew she worked with Muskoka victim services. I asked her what had happened that day. She proceeded to tell me some of the most tragic and heart-wrenching stories I had ever heard. What struck me more than anything was that the situations she described, these traumas, these fears, these anxieties that existed, were literally blocks away from this home in the lap of luxury overlooking Fairy Lake.

Claude and I were both quite distraught by what we heard and decided we needed to do something, so we got to work. I immediately spoke with the executive director of Muskoka Women's Advocacy Group, which ran a shelter for women, called Interval House, in Bracebridge. We recognized that we needed to do more for north Muskoka and certainly into the Parry Sound area.

Claude, with his building expertise, donated a piece of land. We started a campaign that consumed the community. We were able to build a six-room shelter and 10-unit transitional housing facility for women escaping violence in their homes. As that project started, I came to know an awful lot more people in the social service industry and business in our area.

One of the other amazing people I met through the process of starting this was a woman by the name of Carolyn Bray. Carolyn was the executive director of the YWCA of Muskoka. People called it the Y without walls. It was not about gyms; it was about programs and supporting women and girls. I learned a lot from Carolyn about the issue of sexual violence and how, yes, they were most certainly victims. However, she recognized the importance of not just supporting women and girls, but helping little boys who may have grown up in a circumstance where they saw domestic violence, saw the way their father treated their mothers and because of their own lack of understanding, fears, anxieties and mental health, modelled the same behaviour when they became intimate partners.

• (1040)

Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person. Security means without care and without anxiety. Sadly, we know not all Canadians experience security.

Sexual assault is the only violent crime in Canada that is not declining, and 67% of Canadians know a woman who has experienced sexual violence. Roughly 6,000 women and children sleep in shelters on any given night in our country. Despite these numbers, only 5% of sexual assaults were reported to police in 2014.

We know it is because of the fear. We have heard people talk about how women are afraid to approach the justice system for fear of being revictimized or reliving the pain of the experience.

I have had the privilege of learning throughout my life and growing up into this role. As shocking as what I heard many years ago in the lovely home of Mr. Doughty, it is dismaying that we are still here talking about these things, that we have not solved these problems.

Bill C-3 is an important next step. It is really a minor next step. We have much more work to do. I am honoured that I have the op-

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portunity to speak in favour of the bill. As a new member of Parliament who oftentimes sees how dysfunctional this place can be and how it takes forever to get anything done, I am thrilled that everybody gets the importance of the bill, of supporting women and ensuring that all women feel the same security and liberty I feel.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened attentively when the member talked about Interval House and the work he and his community had done to set that up.

Back in the early 1990s, my mother worked for Interval House in Kingston for quite a while. We really got to see some of the hardships women who were coming from abusive relationships were facing. I saw the work that Interval House could do to significantly change lives.

I know the member talked about creating an Interval House. Could he talk about the results he saw having Interval House in his community?

• (1045)

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, it has had a tremendous impact on my community.

I want to share a quick story that was in the newspaper about a woman who lived in a 17-year abusive situation with her ex-husband. When she left, she wound up in another abusive relationship in North Bay. When she left that one, she made it to Chrysalis house in Huntsville, which is the facility we built. She did not have bruises, it was not a recent event, yet she made it to Chrysalis house. She was scared. She did not know if it would accept her. She was offered a place to stay that was warm, safe and without judgment. She said that it was a feeling she had not known in 22 years. Imagine that.

She is doing really well. She stayed at the shelter and was able to move into the transitional apartment units next door, where there was support. She could get her life back together and get a job. She is doing really well. I am really proud of the role I played to get that place built.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I think that all of my colleagues will agree that this bill is critically important for protecting victims and improving our justice system.

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I would like my colleague to reassure members and the public regarding some of the criticism of this bill. Some are saying that the bill could make the justice system less independent, whereas I believe that the more training there is, the better. Training can help break down myths and taboos. I would like to hear my colleague speak to that.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I think an important point to make is that one cannot have too much education. There is no question that there are biases, myths and misunderstandings. As a society, we evolve. It is important for all of us to evolve along with it, so I would simply say that a little more education is always a good thing.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke a lot about domestic violence, but we know that many women who experience violence are not necessarily in a domestic dispute. In fact, if we look at the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, many women experience violence as a result of, for example, not having proper housing or a safe place to stay.

I really am thankful for the work he has done to find safe spaces for women. I wonder if, in addition to training on the issues women face in courts, he also thinks it is important to include training on issues of systemic racism and poverty, and the impact they have on women seeking justice who have experienced sexual violence.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, that is a completely important and accurate point. It is why I am pleased that one of the amendments made at committee was to include training related to systemic racism and the bias that exists in our society. I am glad that is in there.

We can talk about housing for many more hours. One of the reasons I came here was to talk about housing, so I appreciate my colleague's question.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging that I am speaking today from the traditional territory of WSANEC peoples. I raise my hands to them. *Hych'ka Siem*. All honour to my colleagues gathered here.

I want to specifically thank the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka and the Conservative caucus for organizing this morning's speeches so as to allow me an opportunity to speak to the bill. It highlights what I think will be a theme for what I want to say about Bill C-3 in that, right from the beginning, this bill started from a vantage point of non-partisanship. It was generous of the official opposition to grant me a speaking slot this morning as we are coming together to support good legislation.

We, of course, have referenced many times, that the origin of this legislation is entirely non-partisan in that, as we all know, it was put forward by Rona Ambrose. It is an extremely important piece of legislation. She put it forward when she was interim leader of the Conservative Party. It did pass Parliament. As we all know, it got bogged down in the Senate.

To see it come back here now as a Liberal government piece of legislation is extremely heartening. It is important legislation. I

want to emphasize a couple of things in today's presentation to let the Canadian public know the ways in which the bill has been improved from when it was first tabled, and improved again in a spirit of non-partisanship.

The essence of the bill, of course, is found in many decisions that enraged citizens of Canada. Men, women and non-binary people looked at this issue and asked, "What on earth?" How can we have judges make pronouncements from the bench, and I have already spoken to this in the House, such as that of the judge who famously asked why the victim did not keep her knees together?

Judges make assumptions against the interests of victims, assumptions that a woman who had been sexually assaulted would not have responded in a certain way, or that she would do the following things. Judges without any training imagine what they might do in similar circumstances, and then they hold that as evidence against the veracity of a victim's claims. These things are what gave rise to this bill.

However, I can say now, and the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre just made this point, that much of what is in this legislation could have been taken from a report that was not yet written when Rona Ambrose presented this bill as a private member's bill. It was not written yet, because the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry had not been reported.

I would point out to members themes 16, 17 and 18, and part 3 of the report of the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, which point to these very factors that judges and the judicial system do not understand and do not recognize. They do not take the sexual assault and high levels of violence against indigenous women seriously. They do not take it seriously, and they do not understand that they need to learn more. That is spoken to in this bill.

At the point the bill came forward, we have been very occupied as a society with questions of violence against racialized people, now the acronym BIPOC for Black, indigenous, people of colour. They are more at risk of violence and more at risk, in disproportionate numbers, of being jailed for crimes.

Again, this is a non-partisan observation, but the bill is improved through the work that was done in committee. Whereas I initially, and I apologize to the people whom I took by surprise, thought that we all agreed on this bill and that it should move along a little faster, the time in committee was well spent.

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The existence of a Black parliamentary caucus is relatively new, and it was formed as the world responded to the horrors racism and violence by police. That response was crystallized with the murder of George Floyd. There is now a Black parliamentary caucus.

That caucus is multi-party, and it took it upon itself to say that while the bill is to train judges to understand how women experience sexual violence, as well as how evidence should be received and how women are re-traumatized by that experience, could we not also use this training opportunity to broaden what judges learn.

For Canadians watching this, the bill now includes language that the continuing education for judges on matters related to sexual assault and social context now include the specific language “which includes systemic racism and systemic discrimination”. Again, it was a multi-party response and a way to improve the legislation.

● (1050)

I am particularly so proud of the work of the hon. member for Fredericton, who is a member of the Green caucus. Her amendment was accepted. Many Canadians would not know that as a party with fewer than 12 members of Parliament, Green Party MPs are not allowed to sit on committees. However, we do have a process, which is new since Stephen Harper. We can look at this new process as an opportunity, or we can look at it as being compelled to be at clause-by-clause in committee, but it is quite worthwhile when an amendment gets passed.

In this case, for her work, the hon. member for Fredericton is responsible for the amendment in the law, which, in reference to the group of people who advise on the content of the training judges are to receive, now includes the language, “Indigenous leaders and representatives of Indigenous communities”. That is a quote from the legislation with the new amendment thanks to the hon. member for Fredericton.

This legislation shows what we can do when we rise to our best selves, decide that an issue is not partisan, and embrace what my mother raised me to believe, which is that we can accomplish anything we want if we do not care who gets the credit. In this process, credit goes to everyone involved.

I thank again the Hon. Rona Ambrose for bringing this forward. I thank the hon. Minister of Justice and the current government for bringing it back to us as government legislation. I send thanks to everyone who laid a single hand. There are many fingerprints on this legislation, and they are all helpful. They are healing; they are feminist; they are racialized. However, we understand that we must do better.

This legislation is a first step. We must do more to ensure proper services for women who have been victims of sexual violence. For members who are looking for a model for their own community, in Victoria, B.C., the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre and Clinic is an absolute model for how to aid victims of sexual assault and violence. We must do more in our communities, and we must do more as parliamentarians.

I appreciate the time allowed this morning to speak to the bill. I look forward to its passage. I hope it will be unanimous.

● (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is amazing what we can do on the floor of the House of Commons. Last week, we passed legislation relatively quickly when all parties, including Greens, New Democrats, Conservatives and Liberals, came together. We passed wage subsidy legislation and rent assistance. It went on to the Senate and it has received royal assent.

Now we have yet another piece of legislation that appears to have the support again of Greens, New Democrats, Conservatives and Liberals. Hopefully, it will go to the Senate later today. I wonder if the former leader of the Green Party could provide her thoughts on how constructive we can be on the floor of the House of Commons when we collaborate and work together.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, this is not something that will surprise anyone who knows me in this place. I know that we accomplish our very best when we are able to set partisanship aside. When we are together in a common cause, the Parliament of Canada represents the best of Canada. When we allow ourselves to devolve into sucker punch ideas that go over really well in question period, that is when Canadians are disappointed in us.

If we can see ourselves, first and foremost, as parliamentarians and somewhere down the list as politicians, we will make Canadians proud of us. The words of our current Speaker, when he accepted the election as Speaker, were that we should conduct ourselves in ways that would make our children proud if they happened to tune in. Today is one of those days.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have about three minutes after question period to continue responding to questions and comments.

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

● (1100)

*[English]***HASTINGS—LENNOX AND ADDINGTON**

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to honour the following people and businesses. They have gone above and beyond during the pandemic response in Hastings—Lennox and Addington. I honour Karen and Harold Bailey from Centre Hastings; Joan Donaldson, Joanne Carol and Jackie Scott from Tudor and Cashel; Debbie Rollins, the long-term care director of Hastings Manor; the mask mate project in Napanee, which provided free mask mates for health care workers; Sarah Routhier from Belleville for her efforts on mental health; Dawn Switzer, the clerk-treasurer in Faraday Township; the following school officials from Bancroft: Wayne Stewart, Lisa Resmer, Terrace Suman, Marion Wilson, Rob Lake, Lisa McKenna-Sutherland and Pat Flagler; Morningstar Mission, the Lions Club and Marie's Place for delivering meals across Greater Napanee; Tim Hortons in Napanee for a record-breaking smile cookie campaign, with almost \$20,000 raised; and Tim Hortons Tweed, which gave free coffee for a search party for Brock Beatty, who tragically lost his life recently.

My heart goes out to the Beatty family for their loss. God bless.

* * *

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothsay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, trans rights are human rights. That is why I was proud to vote in favour of Bill C-16, which entrenched trans rights in the Canadian Human Rights Act in the last Parliament. It is also why I was proud to vote in favour of banning conversion therapy by voting in favour of Bill C-6 at second reading last month. However, despite the tremendous progress we have made toward ensuring the protection of the rights of trans Canadians over the past five years, we still have much work to do to ensure that we eradicate transphobia in Canada.

On this Transgender Day of Remembrance, let us reflect upon the lives that have been lost as a result of transphobia, and the hatred, violence and discrimination it fosters. Let us redouble our commitment to tackling the scourge of transphobia and ensuring that the rights of all trans Canadians are protected.

* * *

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I want to mark the Transgender Day of Remembrance and call attention to the more than 350 trans and gender-diverse people who were murdered this past year and the more than 3,500 people killed over the past decade worldwide just for being themselves.

Some might think that such heinous crimes could never happen here in Canada. Unfortunately, that is not the case. This past year alone, Canada saw the murders of two transgender Canadians. We must take this as a reminder that not only discrimination but also

hatred persist, and that we must continue to fight for safety and full equality for all.

While 2020 has been a challenging year for all of us, it has hit the transgender and gender-diverse community especially hard. COVID has brought even greater challenges to a population that already faces barriers in finding housing and employment and in seeking out supportive health care. I call on members to not only mourn the losses of our parents, children and siblings, but, at the same time, celebrate the strength and resilience of this community.

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*[Translation]***ANDRÉ CARPENTIER**

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Madam Speaker, November is diabetes month, and as the month draws to a close, I would like to say a few words, with less emotion than yesterday but just as much pride, in recognition of the exceptional work of Sherbrooke's own Dr. André Carpentier, who has become an international leader in diabetes research. He developed a series of molecular imaging methods to study how fats behave in the human body.

Dr. Carpentier and his team were the first to observe the thermogenesis of brown fat, and they are also the only team to have measured the metabolic breakdown of dietary fats. These advances will help develop drugs to treat certain complications associated with type 2 diabetes.

Dr. Carpentier is a professor of medicine and a physician-scientist at the Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke, the CHUS, and he is also the director or co-director of several diabetes research networks. In addition, in December, Dr. Carpentier will become the new scientific director of the CHUS research centre.

My hearty congratulations to him for his excellent work and his involvement on so many levels.

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*[English]***RENOVATIONS ON PARLIAMENT HILL**

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, for generations, Canadians have been proud to visit and showcase Parliament Hill, with our House of Commons, the Peace Tower and the Centennial Flame. However, with the ongoing work taking place here to renovate these historical assets, Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned with their cost in an accountability process that continues to spiral out of control.

This week, it was reported that another \$153 million was added to the now \$4.4-billion project, an amount growing with every update. It is now at least four times the size of the original estimates. It is very clear that the governance and oversight in this project are a mess. To use the old saying, there are too many cooks in the kitchen.

I love Parliament Hill and I am honoured to serve here, but it is projects like this that make the federal government look incapable of managing our tax dollars properly. I implore this chamber and the minister to intervene immediately, come up with a proper governance and oversight plan, and get this project back to a reasonable budget.

* * *

● (1105)

CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am here today to congratulate the Minister of Canadian Heritage for being a champion to our cultural industries with his vision for the future and for dealing with the immediacy of the pandemic. Ensuring that web giants contribute to the creation, production and distribution of Canadian stories is long overdue. Local new outlets play such an important role in our communities. Supporting them is critical, and so is helping our film and television industry.

Etobicoke—Lakeshore is a film hub in Canada, even known as “Hollywood North”. Cinespace and William F. White International Inc. are two of the big players creating jobs and supporting our local businesses. The pandemic hurt this industry in unconventional ways. I am proud that we stepped up to offer short-term compensation to address the lack of COVID-19 insurance, and I am proud we ensured financial support for gig workers, who are key to the film industry.

Film and TV are so vital to our cultural identity and my local economy. As we move forward, we will be there for them.

* * *

MIND THE GAP

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all seen heart-breaking tragedies among the elderly in our communities, especially those in long-term care. However, this crisis has only made visible and amplified problems that have existed for a very long time. Today, I pay tribute to Mind the Gap, a brave group of women in my riding who have been working for many years at all levels of government to find solutions.

Mind the Gap began as a peer support group of six women whose husbands suffered from Alzheimer's. Five of them experienced placing their spouses in long-term care, and most are now widows. What makes these women remarkable is that they have chosen to dedicate their time to using their lived experience to turn to advocacy. I first met them when they were advocating for a national dementia strategy. During the current crisis they have been providing thoughtful solutions, including advocacy for national standards for long-term care, and researching positive models from around the world.

At this very difficult time, I want to thank Mind the Gap members for turning their personal tragedies into a basis for action.

Statements by Members

TRAVEL AGENTS

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, hard-working travel agents are struggling. In my riding, for over 30 years Paull Travel has provided travel service. It is a company like many others, including independent travel agents, who, after decades of hard work, have found themselves in an impossible situation where the only avenue they may be able to take is to go out of business for good.

Brought on by the pandemic, but made more hostile by government's inability to provide rapid testing for Canadians and much-needed support for airlines, many travel agencies and independent providers are facing revenue decreases in excess of 90%. Paull Travel has done everything in its power to retain its all-female team of 13, many of whom are their families main earners, but with products sold being refunded, commissions are getting clawed back.

Nobody saw this pandemic coming, and the situations travellers have been left in are devastating. There is no debate there. However, at the end of the day, services provided should be services paid, and with any government support to the airline industry, travel agents cannot be collateral damage.

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● (1110)

RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, COVID-19 has been tough for everyone, but with Canada's hospitality industry facing so many unique challenges, it has been particularly difficult for local restaurants across the country.

Our government has provided billions of dollars in support through the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the commercial rent assistance program. The wage subsidy alone provided over \$3.6 billion to restaurants from March to September. With patio season wrapping up, restaurants head into a harsh winter, so I am glad that we have extended the wage subsidy and expanded the CEBA. However, it is not enough. Restaurants need our support.

Statements by Members

I want to take a moment to thank restaurateurs, management and industry staff here in Milton who have found a way to continue to serve during the most difficult year ever. I thank the Rad Brothers, EddieO's, Bryden's, Caribbean Vibes, the Thai House, the Green Eatery, Grill Daddy, Naan Guys and our local Paramount Fine Foods. I am sorry that I cannot name them all. Our restaurants here in Milton have found ways to serve our community, with great deals and free meals for veterans and the less fortunate, and help out where they can.

Canadians have been there, but we need to continue ordering in for meals and supporting the local restaurants that have always been there for us and will be when COVID-19 is history.

* * *

CLAUDE BENNETT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a great patriot, who, after a long life of service and sacrifice, duty and discipline to community and country, has gone home to his Lord and Saviour.

Claude Bennett was humble but had nothing to be humble about. His 27 years as an alderman and member of provincial Parliament were distinguished. He saved countless lives by helping to bring the Ottawa Heart Institute to this city, an institute that, in the end, did three surgeries on him alone. He was relentless in his support of the community. He chaired Triple-A baseball, was the head of the Ottawa Sport Hall of Fame and became the president of the Canadian exhibition here in Ottawa.

He continued into his later years, playing an amazing 54 holes of golf on his 75th birthday and regularly walking as much as 10 miles in a single day. He is the great patriarch of the legendary Bennett family.

We all pay tribute to him and his life. He lives on through his family and friends in this world even as he passes into the next.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, Statistics Canada reports that nearly one in three small businesses does not know how much longer they can stay in business, and the government still cannot get its rent subsidy right.

Bill C-9 was written on the fly and had to be rushed through Parliament without proper scrutiny, even though the Liberals had months to get it right. As written, the bill excludes the businesses that need help the most: the ones that have fallen behind while waiting for the government.

The finance minister had a solution. She told the Senate finance committee that since she clearly intended for these businesses to qualify, the CRA can just interpret the law according to her intentions. Is that really how it works? Is it the minister's intention that counts? It is not the rule of law now; it is the rule of ministerial intention.

Intentions do not pay the rent and neither do endless announcements. It is November 20, the first is coming soon, and thousands of small businesses do not know how they are going to pay the rent.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, post-secondary students and recent graduates are still not getting the help they need. In my riding, many UVic and Camosun students have fallen through the cracks of the pandemic relief programs. They could not get summer jobs, and while the Liberal government helped out its friends, students got none of the \$900 million set aside to help them.

To make things worse, while students are struggling to pay rent, the government has started collecting on student loans again and continues to make money off the backs of students by collecting millions by charging interest on student debt. As we face this second wave of COVID-19 across the country, the Liberals are still leaving students behind, and I want to give a shout-out to the Don't Forget Students campaign.

It is time for the government to live up to its promises and start listening to students.

* * *

MÉTIS NATION

Hon. Jim Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, each year, on November 16, Métis people across Canada pay tribute to Métis leader and founder Louis Riel. He devoted and sacrificed his life to defending the rights of Métis people. Riel's legacy continues to resonate across the homeland.

In addition to recognizing Louis Riel Day, the Métis Nation of Alberta has declared the week surrounding November 16 as Métis Week. It celebrates the culture, history and contributions of Métis people to Alberta and to Canada, with events held across the province. As Métis Week comes to a close, I urge all parliamentarians and all Canadians to reflect upon the important contributions and sacrifices of the Métis.

Our government supports Métis nation-led initiatives for post-secondary education and housing in Métis communities. We will continue to work government-to-government with the Métis nation to make a real difference in the lives of Métis people.

* * *

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

EARLY CHILDHOOD WEEK

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to draw the attention of the House to the fact that this week is early childhood week in Quebec. The idea of designating such a week emerged from the 2015 "Tous pour eux" forum, which brought together local and regional stakeholders on the themes of childhood and the perinatal period.

Early childhood week reminds us how important it is to always enthusiastically support initiatives that help our little ones.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to express our heartfelt thanks to all the stakeholder organizations that are working for our little ones.

I also want to take this opportunity to recognize that today is Universal Children's Day. Children are our future. They represent joy and purity. We must continue our efforts to give our children the future they deserve.

* * *

[English]

NOVA SCOTIAN FISHERY

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, for months now the Nova Scotian fishing crisis has continued to escalate. Tensions have risen with each passing week. We have heard testimony at the fisheries committee from indigenous leaders, commercial fishermen, DFO representatives and academics.

The common thread in this crisis is that no one is happy with the performance of the Liberal government. Even the Liberal Premier of Nova Scotia said that he is “very dissatisfied” and that “We need the federal minister to sit down with all sides in a room. It is not enough to sit down with Indigenous leaders or with fishing associations by themselves.” On Wednesday night, the fisheries minister admitted that she has not even read the Marshall decision, which is a foundational ruling in this crisis.

Nova Scotians are tired of empty words and inaction. They need a minister who understands her job, does her homework and provides the necessary leadership to de-escalate this crisis.

* * *

BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is Global Entrepreneurship Week and I cannot think of a better time to highlight the winner of our local Vaughan chamber's young entrepreneur under 40, Robert Federici, owner of Ciao Roma in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

The Vaughan Chamber of Commerce has been serving our dynamic and entrepreneurial city of Vaughan for years, strengthening and fostering business relationships. The VC's 2020 Business Achievement Awards took on a virtual look this year, but the connection was not lost among the nearly 500 virtual attendees, cheering on winners such as DuROCK Alfacing, winner of the innovation and technology award; Pizza Nova, winner of hospitality; and other winners such as Fazzari + Partners, TACC Construction and the Cortel Group. There was a special recognition for the community spirit award winner, Peter Wixson, the founder of the Vaughan Food Bank, whose dedication over three decades inspires so many.

Small businesses know and can rest assured across this country that our government has their backs, as we all continue to face and battle COVID-19.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, this country is in a worse crisis than we ever could have imagined. Eleven months after COVID has hit, thousands of lives, millions of jobs and Canadians' freedom have been lost. Canadians were told in March, if they just followed the rules, we would flatten the curve and things would get better. Things are not better. The Prime Minister has failed in managing this crisis. Yesterday's report is proof of that. Canadians deserve some answers and the truth.

When will the Prime Minister realize that getting rapid, at-home testing, having reliable tracing and getting Canadians all the data is his job and he is failing miserably at it?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, from day one, we have been there to support provinces and territories in their responsibility to deliver health care. We have sent rapid tests, support for long-term home care, additional contact tracing and test processing capacity, and we have provided \$19 billion through the safe restart agreement.

Our vaccine portfolio is one of the strongest in the world and we are working with partners to ensure that we will be ready to deploy when the time comes. We have taken a team Canada approach to COVID-19 and we will continue to work to keep Canadians safe and health every day.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members to keep the back-and-forth down during question period so that we can hear what those who are speaking are saying.

The hon. deputy leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians are being kept in the dark by the Prime Minister. He is throwing numbers at them without any context. Too often, the government cannot tell us what activities are driving up COVID-19 numbers. One day, it is restaurants. The next day, it is weddings. Then it is schools, and then it is not. Our lack of detailed data prevents us from tracking outbreaks and knowing the highest-risk settings. One year after the first COVID case was flagged in China, Canadians still do not have answers.

When will the government release the data it is using to make decisions on this pandemic?

Oral Questions

• (1120)

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as weather gets colder, we need to keep practising the things that have kept us safe, the things that we have done that worked in the first wave, such as physical distancing, frequent handwashing and avoiding large or crowded gatherings.

We see the numbers going up, but the pandemic is not over yet. We must be vigilant. I know it is hard to be away from loved ones, but by staying apart, we are keeping each other safe.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals' plan is not working. The cases are going up, jobs are being lost and Canadians are at risk. We know South Korea was one of the first countries impacted by COVID-19. On Monday, it reported 230 new cases for a population of 51 million people. They knew for certain that 202 cases were community spread and 28 cases were imported. Countries like Taiwan had early access to rapid testing and that has helped them reduce their COVID numbers.

Why has the government not learned a thing from other countries like South Korea or Taiwan, which are doing things right, and instead is continuing to have Canadians fly blind on COVID-19?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know these are challenging times and Canadians have stepped up to help stop the spread of COVID-19. The federal government has been working closely, since day one, with provinces and territories to ensure they have the tools they feel they need to respond to the pandemic. Modelling shows that we need to keep working at the measures that have kept us safe. This includes, as I said before, physical distancing, frequent handwashing and wearing a mask. We will continue to do everything we can to keep Canadians healthy and safe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, we all remember in the spring when the Prime Minister would come out of Rideau Cottage to lecture us. He told us to get ready for the second wave. It has been nine months since the pandemic started in Canada, and there is still no plan. There is plenty of talk, but no real plan.

Thousands of lives and jobs have been lost, and hundreds of billions of dollars have been added to our national debt. Borders, rapid testing and vaccines are the Liberals' responsibility.

Where is the plan?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, while scientists around the world do very important work to find a vaccine for COVID-19, we are working to make sure that Canadians are able to get vaccinated when the time comes. That is why we are securing a range of vaccines and hundreds of millions of doses so that Canadians are safe and well served. A few vaccine candidates have published some very promising results and things seem to be moving very quickly. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that Canadians will have access to a vaccine when it becomes available.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, at some point they are going to have to stop insulting the public's intelligence. Canadians are no fools.

This morning, the minister said that we would have vaccines in the spring, but now we find out that the provincial premiers knew that Pfizer would have four million doses and that Moderna would have two million doses by March.

Why is the government unable to tell Canadians how many doses will arrive in March, so that we know what to do in the meantime?

Where is the plan?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in these uncertain times, Canadians have responded to our calls for action making changes to their ways of life. They have seen what works in wave one and they know what will work in wave two. We need to ensure that we do not put our guard down. There is work ahead of us to stop the virus. Our modelling shows us that we are reaching dangerous case numbers into the winter months if we continue current trends. I know these measures are hard, but we cannot afford to stop. We cannot let our guard down. We must continue to do this work until all are safe.

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[*Translation*]**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the current debate on the French language reminds us of a historical reality, which is that there are two solitudes in Canada.

The Bloc's proposal is very simple: to obtain citizenship in Quebec, newcomers must demonstrate a basic knowledge of French, just enough to understand what is happening in Quebec society. We are not talking about completing a doctoral thesis. We are just talking about saying hello to a neighbour or asking for service. Just the basics.

Everyone in Quebec thinks this is reasonable, but why is this causing so much discomfort here that the government wants to vote against it?

• (1125)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Our government is proud to defend the French language. I am a proud Quebecer who stands up for francophone values in Quebec. We are working on concrete measures to support the French language and further support francophone immigration.

Thanks to our efforts, particularly our decision to award additional points under the express entry program, there will be an increase in francophone immigration. We will continue to find ways to increase francophone immigration and to support the French language.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have a solution. Quebec wants to avoid creating two solitudes, one for Quebec society and one for newcomers.

It is a fact that fewer and fewer people speak French at home. It is a fact that newcomers are less inclined to use the common language than they are in English-speaking Canada, and the common language in Quebec is French. It is a fact that without knowing the common language, newcomers struggle to reach their full potential, when that is the very reason they choose to come here.

Does the government realize that by undermining the importance of French, it is hurting the very people it thinks it is serving?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As I said yesterday in my initial comments on the bill introduced by the Bloc, I myself am an immigrant, a child of Bill 101, and a Canadian citizen who did not speak French when she became a Canadian citizen. What matters is offering French language courses, providing support and welcoming immigrants to our country.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, this week, the Liberals voted against the NDP's motion to establish a tax on wealth and excess profits.

While Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, billionaires have become \$37 billion richer since the beginning of the pandemic. Yesterday, we learned that 80% of people support a tax on wealth and excess profits. The Liberals are still saying no.

Why does this government always put the interests of billionaires before the interests of ordinary Canadians?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have no doubt the NDP opposition motion was well intentioned, but it was very poorly executed. I point the hon. member to the Speech from the Throne, which committed to finding new ways to tax ultra-wealthy Canadians.

I have a question in return for the member. Why is it that the NDP, when given the opportunity to support a motion that raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could cut taxes for the middle class, voted against it? Why did it refuse to support the Canada

child benefit, which sent more money to nine out of 10 Canadian families and stopped sending cheques to millionaires?

We will always defend middle-class Canadians and we are not afraid to ask Canada's wealthiest to pay a little more.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary for children and families asked very crudely this morning who gives a fuddle duddle about pharmacare. Children, families and over 90% of Canadians care about pharmacare. Canadians know how to pay for it too. Over 80% support a wealth tax and excess profits tax. In this pandemic, billionaires have gotten \$37 billion in new wealth and banks have gotten \$750 billion in liquidity supports.

Why is it with the Liberals that banks and billionaires always come before Canadians? Why is the message to regular Canadians always, "Fuddle duddle you"?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the members on the Liberal government side to not heckle while someone else has the floor.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I question the appropriateness of the language used by the hon. member in his question.

In any event, I reiterate my point that we have committed to finding new ways to tax Canada's wealthiest. We will continue to move forward with measures that will support the middle class.

When we raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% to cut taxes for the middle class, the NDP voted against it. When we changed the child care benefit to put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families, the NDP voted against it. What separates us from the NDP members is they are happy to wave their arms to make a point and we will not be satisfied until we advance policies that make a difference.

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● (1130)

HEALTH

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, rapid tests are an essential tool to combatting the coronavirus. Other countries had rapid tests way before Canada did.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister recently said it was not his job to approve rapid tests, implying it was not his fault but rather Health Canada's. The Prime Minister is head of government. It is his job to oversee the regulatory approval process that leads to the approval of these tests.

When will he take action to reform the process and get these tests into the hands of Canadians?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member loves to talk about numbers. I will give him some numbers: over 4.6 million rapid tests have been sent to provinces and territories to date with over two million to Ontario, 1.2 million to Quebec, 354,000 to B.C., 327,000 to Alberta and 200,000 to Manitoba. The member speaks about moving rapid tests across the country. We have done that.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government can rattle off statistics all it wants. The reality is it was late in approving rapid tests and now we are late in delivering them to Canadians. There is a pattern here.

The Deputy Prime Minister went out of her way in September to say that the government would not lean on scientists to get a move on rapid tests. We need rapid tests at our borders. It is so important to our airline industry. Air Canada and WestJet have laid off over 30,000 people and are losing tens of millions of dollars a day.

When will the government take action to reform the process to get these tests into the hands of Canadians?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one minute the member asks for numbers. I give him numbers, I give him facts, I give him stats and then he ridicules me for giving him what he asked for.

We know the importance of having quick access to test results. Our department is fast-tracking the review of COVID test results, including rapid response test kits. We will continue our work with our partners, the provinces and territories, to ensure that people who need to be tested are able to be tested.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the FDA had approved five tests last August. Other countries had approved rapid tests way before Canada and have rolled them out across their countries at their borders, at their airports. Canada has yet to do so, and as a result, our airline industry is failing and tens of thousands of jobs have been lost. The airlines are at risk of failure. The government has failed to act on rapid tests to ensure their survivability.

When will the government take action, fix the process and get these tests into the hands of Canadians?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I clearly told the member earlier that we have taken action. Testing, and we realize this, is one of the most important tools we have to respond to COVID-19. Our officials, and I want to thank the Health Canada officials, are working around the clock to review and approve new testing technologies. We have approved six of these tests and we can expect more as the technology develops.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, all year long, responsible countries have taken direct action to approve and authorize rapid tests quickly. Unfortunately, our Liberal government took its sweet time.

This week, the Prime Minister said that it was not his job to deal with that and that the government was just following procedure. A real head of state makes those kinds of high-level decisions when the future of the whole country is at stake, as it is now. That is what is going on with rapid tests.

Why did the Liberals take so long to approve the rapid tests that are so important to our economy and the health of Canadians?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I guess I need to reiterate some of these numbers.

To this date, over 4.6 million rapid tests have been sent to provinces and territories: over 2 million to Ontario; 1.276 million to Quebec; 354,000 to B.C. I will go down the list: Manitoba, 200,000; Nova Scotia, 71,000; Saskatchewan, 87,000.

That is action right there. Our department is working around the clock to do what Canadians need to keep them healthy and safe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, the action the parliamentary secretary referred to came too late. Other countries, whether our neighbours, the United States, or countries in Europe and Asia, approved rapid tests this summer.

On July 7, 2020, only 172 new cases were reported in Canada, the lowest ever level. Yesterday there were 4,645 new cases. If the government had actually done the right thing back in March and approved the rapid tests as early as possible, we could have administered them this summer and prevented new cases. Why did the government drag its feet yet again?

• (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will take Canada's response to this COVID-19 pandemic over just about any country in the world.

To speak to the fact of politicians making decisions or overruling Health Canada officials, on this side of the House, we believe in science, we believe in evidence and we always will.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, history will tell if Canada did well in this situation compared to our neighbours.

[Translation]

That is because the United States did not waste any time. That country approved rapid tests this summer, while the Canadian government was dragging its feet.

The Prime Minister has shamefully said that that is not his job. The head of state must take responsibility and take the necessary steps to save the lives of Canadians. Why did the Liberal government drag its feet?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the contrary, the government did not drag its feet.

Again, I will reiterate that I will take the Canadian response to COVID-19 over most countries' responses to COVID-19 any day of the week. Again, I can go over the statistics, I can go over the data and I can read these over again. If members ask the same question, the answer will be the same.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I know we are in a pandemic, but it makes no sense at all that there has not been a budget since the election.

Never in its history has the federal government spent so much with so little transparency. It has been 19 months since the government has accounted for its spending. The Bloc called for a budget and the Minister of Finance refused, but she has been promising for months that there would be an economic update in the fall. We are now at the end of November. When will we have this economic update? I want a date.

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the suggestion that the government has not been transparent with respect to our pandemic response is ludicrous. The reality is that from the very beginning, under exceptional circumstances, we made a process, in agreement with other parties, to provide regular updates. In fact, I attended as a witness before the finance committee, where I believe that hon. member was personally in attendance.

We have provided regular information. We will be providing a fiscal update in the very near future. I look forward to sharing the details, including the measures included in that document, with that member and all members of the chamber.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the parliamentary secretary that being accountable

Oral Questions

does not mean systematic obstruction for hours on end in committee.

The government made two key promises, to give an economic update and to hold a meeting with premiers on health transfers, but so far it has refused to provide dates for either of them. The two go hand in hand.

The government has just announced catastrophic forecasts on the spread of COVID-19. It cannot just stand by and watch from afar. In its economic update, it must show flexibility in providing for a sustainable increase in health transfers.

Will the government do its share on health in its economic update? When will it make the announcement? We would like to have a date.

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can reassure the hon. member that we will be providing an update on fiscal projections this fall, and he will have that information as soon as it is available.

I do not want to prejudge conversations that may happen between the federal and provincial governments. However, if the member has feedback that he would like to provide to inform those discussions, I would invite him, as I always do, to contact me directly so we can incorporate his ideas as well as ideas that may come from members of any party in the House of Commons.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, this has been a rough week for the French language in Canada under the Liberal government.

The government has denied that French in Montreal is on the decline, and the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada called the Charter of the French Language oppressive. These people withdraw their comments, erase their tweets or, having painted themselves into a corner, walk out on the paint.

Yesterday, at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, the Liberals tried to sweep a study on the decline of the French language in Canada under the rug. Why are they abandoning linguistic communities across the country?

● (1140)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Oral Questions

Our government recognizes that the use of French is declining in Quebec. As a francophone, I consider the French language to be more than a simple matter of debate. It is the language I use to speak, to write and to be who I am. This perspective is shared by all of my Liberal colleagues from Quebec and by all other members of the Liberal Party.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, what are these elected members waiting for? When will they get to work? It is when the going gets tough that we discover who our real friends are.

Yesterday, francophone and Acadian communities and the anglophone minority in Quebec understood that the Liberals are abandoning them in their time of need. Why? Because the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada and the Quebec Community Groups Network are asking the government to do this one thing: to modernize the Official Languages Act.

However, yesterday, the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages refused to ask the government to introduce its modernization bill before Christmas. Why? Do they want a national crisis?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague is a bit off base. I want to remind him of the facts.

The party that he belongs to made cuts to CBC/Radio-Canada. It made cuts to francophone communities. It took minority communities that wanted to defend their rights to court. The Conservatives said that there was too much French during their leadership race. Still today, they are refusing to appoint bilingual judges to the Supreme Court. That is the party that my colleague represents, and we will not take any lessons from them.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, it looks like a fight has broken out in the Liberal Party. On one side, a member who denies the decline of French in Montreal and the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada who says that Bill 101 is oppressive. On the other side, ministers and a leader acting as though everything is fine and dandy when clearly, it is not.

All week, the Liberals have refused to commit to introducing their Official Languages Act modernization bill, and we have not heard a peep from the members for Compton—Stanstead, Saint-Maurice—Champlain and Brome—Missisquoi.

Why?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can tell my colleague that that is not true.

We are here, we are on it, and we will always protect and promote our languages. My fellow MPs from Quebec and I are francophones and Quebecers above all.

We have taken concrete action and will continue to do so.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, would you like proof that the Liberals are all talk and fail to keep their promises?

At the Standing Committee on Official Languages yesterday, they adjourned a debate on the decline of the French language and prevented the tabling of a motion calling for the modernization of the Official Languages Act. As a former Liberal prime minister from Quebec once said, “a proof is a proof”.

Why are the Liberals from Quebec refusing to commit today to introducing a bill before Christmas to modernize the Official Languages Act?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have taken concrete action, we have consulted, reports have been produced, and we are working closely with the provinces, particularly Quebec. We are making sure that the legislation we introduce is sustainable.

It is funny, but it seems as though the members opposite are only now realizing the importance of loving French.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the spotted owl is listed as endangered in Canada. There was once 1,000 of them here, but after old-growth forest loss, there are only three left.

Two of those owls nest in the Spuzzum Creek valley of British Columbia, where their critical habitat is being logged right now. Under the Species at Risk Act, the Minister of Environment can make an emergency order to force provinces to protect species. If there were ever a case to make such an order, this appears to be it.

Will the minister act immediately to protect this species before it vanishes from Canada?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for passion and commitment to endangered species. He knows that our government is extremely serious about endangered species and protecting them. The spotted owl is very much in our sights to protect.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, last night, at 2 a.m., the Liberal parliamentary secretary for housing responded to a post promoting the NDP pharmacare bill with “WGAF”. It would be unparliamentary for me to expand on the acronym, but it basically means who really cares. The answer is 93% of Canadians care, including those who have to choose between paying their rent, putting food on the table and buying medicine they need.

Is the real reason why Canadians still do not have universal public pharmacare, after 23 years of Liberal promises, because the Liberals simply do not care?

• (1145)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate a chance to apologize for that tweet. It was a very strange one coming from me, and I regret that acronym was used. It was not intended. It was a typo.

An hon. member: It was a typo?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: That being said, our commitment to pharmacare is in the throne speech, and the commitment to ensuring that we support vulnerable Canadians, including ending chronic homelessness. They were all part of the throne speech. We are very serious about delivering on these commitments.

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[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our broadcasting system is out of step with the digital era and disadvantages Canadian broadcasters. That is why our government has introduced a bill to ensure that online broadcasters contribute their fair share to support Canadian music and stories.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell the House how this bill will benefit all Canadians from coast to coast to coast?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Kings—Hants for his important question.

The Canadian broadcasting, film, television and interactive media sectors contribute as much as \$19.7 billion to Canada's GDP and represent nearly 160,000 jobs. Modernized legislation would result in an increase in contributions to Canadian music and stories of as much as \$830 million per year once the new system is put into place.

Being represented on screen and in productions is essential for affirming one's identity, including in one's own language. I encourage all hon. members of the House—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

[*English*]

LABOUR

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, extremely concerning reports of bullying, harassment and conflicts of interest have been reported within ISC's offices in Atlantic Canada. Last year, out of desperation, a staff person raised this issue with the former ISC minister and the Prime Minister, but they have yet to receive a response. Several other allegations, including some of a sexual nature, have gone without action by the current government.

What is it about healthy workplaces that the government cannot seem to get right?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, workplace harassment and violence are completely unacceptable. That is why we introduced and passed Bill C-65 to protect employees from harassment and violence in federal workplaces, including Parliament Hill. With regulations now in force, this legislation will come into force on January 1, 2021.

By instituting new processes and protections under the Labour Code, the regulations will support all workers, including the ones mentioned by the hon. member, to ensure that our workplaces are more healthy and more safe.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, this week at the INAN committee, we heard from the CCAB and NACCA of repeated delays, similar to the first wave, in access to supports for indigenous businesses.

They also reported that out of several hundred applications from indigenous businesses to supply PPE, only seven were awarded contracts, representing 0.04% of the total federal spend.

For a government that likes to talk a lot about reconciliation, why are these indigenous businesses being left behind again?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I, too, listened to the CCAB talk about procurement and express its concerns, and I have shared those concerns with the Minister for Public Services and Procurement.

Having said that, we recognize that indigenous businesses face unique challenges and may be disproportionately affected by this pandemic. We announced \$117 million to help indigenous communities support their local businesses and economies, and a \$16-million stimulus development fund to support indigenous tourism.

We are committed to helping indigenous businesses through the pandemic and into the recovery.

Oral Questions

• (1150)

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, one in three small businesses across Canada is losing money every day they try to stay open, and as of January 1 they will be hit with a major hike in Canada Pension Plan premiums. This is an onerous and untimely burden on small businesses struggling to survive, and for employees transitioning off of emergency benefits.

Will the government do the right thing and postpone the CPP premium hike?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, right from day one, we know how important it is to support businesses and the workers they employ, particularly those small businesses all across the country. They are littered in all of our main streets and our vibrant communities, so we are supporting them to help pay for payroll, supporting them with small business loans and supporting them with important fixed-cost support like rent. We are doing that, and we are going to keep doing that to support our small businesses across the country.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, if we hope to reopen our economy and protect the health and safety of Canadians, access to rapid testing is imperative.

Countries around the world have shown that rapid testing is a safe alternative to quarantine. In fact, the head of the WHO said that rapid testing is a critical tool for governments to reopen their economies and ultimately save both lives and livelihoods, but the Deputy Prime Minister, who heads Canada's COVID response, compared access to rapid testing to selling snake oil to Canadians.

Does the health minister agree with her colleague's point of view on rapid testing?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have said before, testing is one of the most important tools we have to respond to COVID-19. Our officials are working around the clock and, again, I want to thank the Health Canada officials for working so hard to approve new testing technologies. We have already authorized six of these tests. We can expect more as the technology develops.

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[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, one month ago, the government asked for a special committee to study all COVID-19 spending. Since then, we have learned that Ottawa gave \$600 million for medical equipment to two businesses that do not manufacture medical equipment without a call for tenders. They are two shell companies and one put \$237 million in the pockets of a former Liberal MP. This has raised a lot of concern in my riding. I, too, am concerned, because since this came to light, the government has blocked its own com-

mittee from studying COVID-19 spending. It is interesting and another blatant example of the government's lack of transparency.

Can the government leader in the House explain why the government is not setting up its own committee?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government was transparent from day one. Furthermore, we are working with the different parties on everything we are putting in place and doing.

We have a minority government. No bill could be adopted without the support of one party or the other. Sometimes, all parties agree.

That is transparency. That is collaboration.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, Raif Badawi has been in prison in Saudi Arabia for eight years, but a window has finally opened for him and his family. Tomorrow, yes, tomorrow, Saudi Arabia will host the G20 summit. The Saudi monarchy has a history of showing clemency when it hosts major international events.

Yesterday the Bloc called on the government to take this opportunity to request that Raif Badawi be released, but the government responded that it was concerned.

Concern is not enough. The question is simple: Is the government working on demanding the release of Raif Badawi?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we remain very concerned about Raif Badawi. I met with his wife, here in Ottawa, and the minister is in constant contact with his family. Protecting human rights, including the freedoms of expression, thought, conscience and religion, are integral parts of Canada's foreign policy.

We have raised the issue at the highest levels and we have called for clemency on many occasions.

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[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, at least 400 of the summer camps across Canada employing 70,000 people are facing bankruptcy next year. Meanwhile, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reports that hundreds of thousands of small firms have received zero support because they fall through the cracks. Every day, more and more shops, restaurants and hotels in Parry Sound—Muskoka and all across Canada are forced to close their doors.

Why has the government completely abandoned small business, summer camps and the tourism sector?

• (1155)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for raising the issue of summer camps. It is a serious concern as seasonal businesses, particularly those that support youth, have been a focus of our government. Unfortunately, the support is challenging to get to seasonal businesses such as summer camps. We did provide substantial support to the non-profit and charitable sector with emergency funding. Some of this supported summer camp programs, but there is clearly more work to do on the seasonal industries and we are committed to making sure Canada's children are properly taken care of, as are those businesses.

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AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Madam Speaker, over 82% of travel agents are women whose income is solely tied to commissions from selling airfares and vacation packages to their clients. However, when airlines refund customers, the airlines automatically claw back the commission that a travel agent has earned.

Running a small business is no easy task. With the majority of this industry being women, will the Minister for Women and Gender Equality ensure that any bailout package to our airline industry protects these Canadian women?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are aware of the frustration many consumers are facing and we have heard the voices of travel agents across the country. This is an important issue and it is why we are working with all parties to find a way forward. We will continue to be there for Canadians and expect airlines to do everything they can to compensate their customers. Our government continues to work hard to ensure that Canadians stay connected across the country as we build our economy.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to talk to small businesses in my riding. One owner, Paul, told me that he was supposed to launch his business on April 1. Of course, that did not happen due to COVID and business has been slow since. He has invested almost half a million dollars in his business, his entire family's life savings. He is not eligible for the wage subsidy and he is not eligible for the rent subsidy because he is a new business. For the sake of Paul and thousands of businesses across the country like his, let us not have talking points.

What does the minister say the government is going to specifically do to help Paul and save his family and the thousands of businesses like his across the country?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, helping Paul's business and the many businesses like his is exactly what we

want to do and what we are doing to help them. The regional relief and recovery fund is invested with \$1.6 billion across the country through the regional development agencies to help businesses like Paul's and many others.

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since the beginning of the pandemic, entrepreneurs in my riding have been telling me about the challenges they are facing. Thanks to our work together, I know that many of them have been able to access emergency assistance that has helped them to maintain a number of jobs.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages give the House an update on the additional assistance for small businesses?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Châteauguay—Lacolle for her question and her involvement with the businesses in her region, which I was able to see first-hand when I met with her and the chambers of commerce in her region.

On November 5, we announced additional assistance for our businesses, which will quadruple the funding for the network of community futures development corporations and business development centres like those in my colleague's riding by giving them targeted and technical support. Regional economies are facing significant challenges and our government is there for the businesses that Quebeckers care about.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada is absent from the new build nuclear reactor market. The small modular reactor business is worth hundreds of billions of dollars and tens of thousands of high-paying jobs for decades. By including nuclear in Canada's energy mix, we can meet our emissions reductions targets and turn on the lights when the sun does not shine or the wind does not blow.

When is the government going to listen to scientists like Greenpeace founder James Hansen and get into the game?

Oral Questions

● (1200)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is a tier 1 nuclear nation with a sector that contributes \$17 billion each year to our economy and employs over 76,000 Canadians. Small modular reactors are an innovation that could deliver safe, non-emitting energy and play a part in getting us to net-zero emissions by 2050. We are working with over 100 partners from across the country to develop Canada's SMR action plan to seize this opportunity, which will be released soon.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, Keystone XL is vital energy infrastructure. It provides jobs, certainty and much-needed revenue for municipalities. It is essential for economic recovery. It also plays a key role in reconciliation.

One of the best stories about Keystone remains untold. The chief of Nekanect First Nation in my riding is the president of Natural Law Energy, a growing alliance of first nations who have an equity stake in the pipeline, but now the future is uncertain.

Will the Prime Minister fight for indigenous Canadians and ensure Keystone XL is completed?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know workers in Alberta and across the country are worried about the future of Keystone XL. I want them to know we are making the case for this project. The Prime Minister raised it on his first call with the president-elect. We will continue making the case on behalf of workers in our sector.

One of the strongest arguments for this project is that we have a government that is fighting climate change and putting a price on pollution, has committed to net-zero emissions by 2050 and is making investments to help our energy sector become more sustainable than ever. This is the record we will be able to present to our partners in the U.S.

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HOUSING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government is failing first-time homebuyers. It promised its first-time homebuyer incentive would aid 20,000 Canadians in the first six months, but it only reached a quarter of that in seven months and it does not accomplish its primary objective to improve affordability in high-cost regions. Sixteen people in Toronto used the program and one person in Vancouver.

When will the government implement housing policies that work for first-time homebuyers?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the first-time homebuyers mortgage program is designed to create a pathway to home ownership in a new and different way, which supports first-time buyers by supporting them in acquiring their down payments.

We recognized, as we rolled the program out, that Vancouver and Toronto required exceptional bandwidth and a different quantifier

in order to make this program more successful. The throne speech is committed to doing this and we will see measures in the upcoming budget that will actually accomplish the issue raised by the member. Real estate values in Toronto and Vancouver are different and we need to make sure the approach is different in those two cities as well.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a number of measures to support our small and medium businesses have been announced over the past few months. From the Canada emergency wage subsidy to the regional relief and recovery fund to provide more support for our businesses, our government has answered the call.

The Prescott-Russell Community Development Corporation helped finance 64 businesses owned by women. Can the minister tell the House about other measures the government has taken to support female entrepreneurs across Canada?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, COVID-19 is affecting all Canadians and is having a significant impact on female entrepreneurs. To address that reality, we are committed to advancing women's economic independence.

We provided an additional \$15 million to support women through the women entrepreneurship strategy. The independence of female entrepreneurs is a priority, and we know that when women succeed, everyone succeeds.

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[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians are tired of governments committing to weak targets and then missing them, again and again. They want action now, but the government keeps putting it off. Its new climate bill, while a small step in the right direction, just is not good enough. The world's top scientists have told us that we are running out of time, and the next decade will be the most critical.

Why did the government leave out the 2025 milestone target? Why is the government trying to avoid real accountability for a full decade, for the most critical 10 years?

Routine Proceedings

• (1205)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the bill has strong accountability and transparency provisions that include a legally binding process for the government to set and achieve climate plans every five years between 2030 and 2050.

The very structure of the Paris Agreement is based on the year 2030, as the hon. member will know, as is the B.C. plan of her province, Quebec's plan and those around the world. We will meet those targets on our path to net zero by 2050.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the government has failed to meet the warnings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The climate accountability act fails utterly to heed the warning that we have to cut emissions roughly in half by 2030 in order to keep the window open of holding to 1.5° Celsius.

By the time the climate accountability act asks anyone to be accountable, that window could have closed forever. Will the government improve this act, such that it meets the warnings of science while there is still time, for God's sake?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her passion and commitment to this issue.

We are committed to transparency and accountability in this legislation, which will help businesses and people know that they can count on Canada to be a great place to invest. It also sets very clear goals that Canadians expect us to deliver on. They will hold our government and future governments to account if we do not.

I will remind the hon. member that it was the Canadian electorate who ultimately held the Conservatives to account, in 2015 and 2019, on their hostility to climate action. Be assured, we will follow through on this important net-zero commitment.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

As the Speaker has ruled repeatedly over the years, it is just as inappropriate to say something indirectly as it would be inappropriate to say it directly. Earlier, at the very beginning of question period, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby I believe used an expression that everyone in the room knew was an inappropriate sentiment, using indirect language to say what he could not say directly.

I just want to raise that to your attention. There are still some of us who have sensibilities about certain words and we think that the Speaker should be aware of that.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, just in response, if you consult Hansard you will see many, many, many uses of that particular term, which is used in a less derogatory way than the term that was actually used by the parliamentary secretary for children and families on Twitter this morning.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will make sure to look at the blues to see the exact language that was used and will come back to the House should I need to do so.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands asked an extremely good question. She was very emotional when she asked it. Now I am at home in my riding of Oakville North—Burlington, but it appeared to me that when the camera went back to the chamber, there was an awful lot of laughter at the fact that she was emotional about climate change.

I think that is extremely inappropriate. She is a very passionate member of the House and I do not think that her question should be treated lightly.

• (1210)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I greatly appreciate the information, clarification and support that the hon. member is providing on this point.

I do want to remind all members that, whenever someone is delivering a speech in the House or making a statement or asking a question, there should be respect on all sides of the House. We may or may not be in agreement. However, I think it is important to allow people to ask the question and not be responsive unless you are the person who needs to respond.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GREEN MUNICIPAL FUND

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2019-2020 annual report for the Green Municipal Fund.

* * *

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to subsection 36(1) of the Energy Efficiency Act, I am honoured to table, in both official languages, the “Smarter Energy Use in Canada Report to Parliament Under the Efficiency Act for 2018-2019”.

*Routine Proceedings***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions. These returns will be tabled in electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in relation to the motion adopted on Thursday, October 8 regarding the business management risk program.

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

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following three reports of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans: the first report is entitled "Striped Bass in the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence and Miramichi River: Striking a Delicate Balance"; the second report is entitled "Aquatic Invasive Species: A National Priority"; and the third report is entitled "In Hot Water—Lobster and Snow Crab in Eastern Canada".

I would like to thank all members of the committee, our clerk, analysts and indeed all our staff for their hard work on these reports. The co-operation and collaboration of all members is something of which our committee is quite proud.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114 and pursuant to the House order made on Wednesday, September 23, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third 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 would like to move concurrence at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask for those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to moving the motion please say nay. Hearing none, it is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay. Hearing no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1215)

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition today that deals with an issue that has been going for some time.

The petitioners are asking the government to consider that the Trans Mountain pipeline is not in Canada's interest and that public funds should not be spent in pursuit of building a pipeline that no longer has markets, is in a less and less competitive position, is less and less economically justifiable and, of course, violates any commitment to meet climate targets.

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am bringing this petition forward today on behalf of those who are calling on the House of Commons to pass a Criminal Code prohibition of abortion for sex selection. The rationale is that it is legal in Canada because Canada has no restrictions whatsoever on abortion, but because we have such a commitment to equality between men and women here at home and on the international stage, it is inappropriate that we allow this to take place at the earliest stages of life for baby girls.

The petitioners quote a 2019 Dart & Maru/Blue poll, which indicates that 84% of Canadians across Canada agree that it should be illegal to have an abortion if the family does not want the child to be a certain sex. The World Health Organization, United Nations Women and the United Nations Children's Fund indicate that it is a growing problem internationally, and our own Canadian Medical Association has indicated that it is a growing problem in Canada.

LIVE MUSIC INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, many of Canada's musicians and workers in the live music industry are facing extinction and need support, which is why I am glad to have the opportunity to present a petition from my constituents who value the important role of live music in our communities, cultures and our lives.

The petitioners are worried that many of our established musicians and live performance workers will be forced to leave their careers in the music industry and many young musicians and budding techs will never get a start. They are calling for guaranteed financial support for individual musicians and techs into the summer of 2021 to fund and extend the music ecosystem's support models, and to create project funds that go directly to musicians for developing music content through virtual platforms.

RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, today is National Child Day in Canada and World Children's Day internationally, so it is an honour and privilege to present e-petition 2667, which has 2,454 signatures.

The petitioners note that Canada's foreign policy indicates a priority commitment to the protection of the rights of children around the world. They note that the Secretary-General of the United Nations released his report on children who were in conflict on June 20, 2019. It reiterated that the UN special representatives called upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards as well as to cease the use of administrative detention for children and end all forms of ill treatment in detention and to cease any attempted recruitment of detained children as informants. They note that Israel has the distinction of being the only country in the world that automatically and systematically prosecutes children in military courts that lack fundamental fair trial rights and protections.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ensure the human rights of Palestinian children are protected by instructing a special envoy to promote, monitor and report on the human rights situation of Palestinian children living in the occupied Palestinian territory and Gaza.

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, in advance of National Housing Day this Sunday, I am tabling e-petition 2826, in which 2,057 people note that over 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness every year and 1.7 million households are living in substandard or unaffordable housing.

The petitioners call upon the federal government to adopt the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness recovery for all plan to end homelessness, with timelines and targets; expand federal investments in community-based homelessness responses; meaningfully implement the right to housing; build a minimum of 370,000 new units of supportive and affordable housing and develop a new homelessness housing benefit; stop the loss of affordable rental housing to financialization by limiting purchases of distressed housing by large corporate funds; put in place a national guaranteed minimum income; and implement an indigenous-led urban, rural and northern housing strategy.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 115, 117, 120, 121 and 123.

[Text]

Question No. 115—**Mr. Corey Tochor:**

With regard to the government's campaign to make Bill Morneau the Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: (a) what is the current budget for the campaign; (b) what are the costs incurred to date, broken down by item; (c) what are the projected costs, broken down by item; (d) how many government officials have been assigned duties in relation to the campaign; (e) what are the duties that each of the officials in (d) have been assigned, broken down by title of the official; and (f) what are the details of any contracts signed in relation to the campaign, including (i) vendor, (ii) date and duration, (iii) amount, (iv) description of goods or services provided?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers. With regard to part (a) of the question, as is the case in campaigns

Routine Proceedings

for leadership positions in multilateral organizations, the government will provide diplomatic support, advocacy and strategic advice to advance Mr. Morneau's candidacy. This support will be cost-effective and consistent with relevant Treasury Board guidelines and policies. As the OECD secretary-general selection process is just beginning, it is not yet possible to estimate the total costs that may be incurred to support Canada's nominee, particularly in the current context given the global health situation.

With regard to part (b), so far, the campaign has incurred \$6,265.76 in hospitality costs to support outreach with OECD member delegates and other OECD-related representatives based in Paris. These expenses reflect standard diplomatic practices, including for such selection processes.

With regard to part (c), as of the date of this request, the department is working on the projection of costs for the secretary-general campaign, which will be aligned with the costs normally associated with campaigns for high-level international positions where member countries put forward candidates.

With regard to part (d), the department has not assigned any officials exclusively for the purposes of the OECD secretary-general campaign. Nevertheless, as the lead department responsible for the relationship with the organization, a number of officials in the department and at the permanent delegation of Canada to the OECD are providing support with respect to the campaign in line with their regular duties.

With regard to part (e), the duties of strategic policy advice, advocacy and support will be carried out by the assistant deputy minister, strategic policy; director general, international economic policy; director, international economic relations and strategy; deputy director, OECD unit, international economic relations and strategy; policy adviser, international economic relations and strategy; policy analyst, international economic relations and strategy; Ambassador, Canada's permanent delegation to the OECD; deputy permanent representative, permanent delegation to the OECD; counsellor, permanent delegation to the OECD; counsellor, permanent delegation to the OECD; program officer, permanent delegation to the OECD; and strategic communications and program officer, permanent delegation to the OECD.

The duties of communications advice and support will be carried out by the director general, strategic communications; director, strategic communications foreign policy; director, media relations; and senior communications adviser.

The duties of coordination of diplomatic outreach will be carried out by the director, official visits, office of protocol; visits coordinator, office of protocol; and visits officer, office of protocol.

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With regard to part (f) of the question, there have been no contracts signed in support of the campaign to date.

Question No. 117—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to the Wet'suwet'en Nation and TC Energy's Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline project: what are the details of all in-person and virtual consultations and meetings conducted by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the Minister of Northern Affairs or the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, the Wet'suwet'en elected chiefs and councillors, and the Wet'suwet'en people, and all First Nations along the path of the pipeline, between August 1, 2018, to present, including, for each in-person or virtual consultation or meeting, the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) name and title of the First Nations, groups, organizations or individuals consulted, (iv) recommendations that were made to the ministers?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, insofar as Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada is concerned, the response is as follows. With regard to TC Energy's Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline project, consultations were not conducted by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations or the Minister of Northern Affairs or the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, as this is a provincially regulated pipeline.

Question No. 120—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to the contract signed between Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Nathan Cullen (Reference Number: C-2019-2020-Q4-00124): (a) was \$41,000 the final value of the contract, and, if not, what was the final value; (b) what was the start and end date of the contract; (c) what specific services did Mr. Cullen provide in exchange for the payment; and (d) was the \$41,000 just for Mr. Cullen's services, or did that amount cover other costs, and, if so, what is the itemized breakdown of which costs the payment covered?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the original estimated contract cost was \$41,000, including taxes. The final value of the contract is \$21,229.11, including taxes.

With regard to part (b), the start date was February 24, 2020, and the end date was March 17, 2020.

With regard to part (c), the scope of work in the contract defined the following services: discussions between representatives for Canada, British Columbia and the Wet'suwet'en Nation with regard to the establishment of a negotiation process to advance the recognition and reconciliation of Wet'suwet'en aboriginal title and rights; specific interventions when political issues arise; in consultation with the federal team, provide strategic advice to the minister and senior departmental management; provide strategic advice to the federal team; attend engagement sessions and meetings at key times when highly sensitive issues are discussed and/or when important messages have to be delivered to the other parties; and meet with senior officials of CIRNAC.

With regard to part (d), the breakdown of the \$41,000 was as follows in the contract: fees: \$20,000; other expenses: \$10,000; travel: \$10,000; GST: \$1,000. Payments of \$21,229.11 were made against the contract and the details of the amounts paid, final value, are as follows: fees: \$16,000; other expenses: \$4,980.10; travel: \$0; GST: \$249.01. "Other expenses" include, but are not limited to, food for participants and conference boardroom charges for the event at the hotel.

Question No. 121—Mr. Todd Doherty:

With regard to government statistics on the impact of the various measures taken during the pandemic on the mental health of Canadians: (a) has the government conducted any specific studies or analysis on the mental health impacts of the various measures put into place by various levels of government (self-isolation, social distancing, business closures, etc.); and (b) what are the details of all such studies, including (i) who conducted the study, (ii) general findings, (iii) which measures were analyzed, (iv) findings related to each measure, (v) where results were published, if results were made public?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada recognizes that COVID-19 has resulted in varying degrees of stress for many Canadians who may not have ready access to their regular support networks. That is why the government is funding an online portal of psychosocial supports.

This new portal, called Wellness Together Canada, makes it easier for Canadians to access free, credible information and services to address mental health and substance use issues. The portal also connects Canadians to peer support workers, social workers, psychologists and other professionals for confidential text sessions or phone calls.

The portal is available free to all Canadians in both official languages on a 24-7 basis. It is the result of a consortium of leaders in mental health and substance use care, including Stepped Care Solutions, Kids Help Phone and Homewood Health.

With regard to part (a), the Centre for Surveillance and Applied Research, CSAR, is contributing funding or subject expertise to several studies to understand changes in mental health and mental illness among Canadians during the COVID-19 period. However, these are under way and not yet complete. They include the Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health, SCMh; the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Ageing, CLSA, COVID-19 study; the Covid-19, Health and Social Interaction in Neighborhoods, COHESION, study; and the COMPASS study of high school students in Ontario, Alberta, Quebec and British Columbia.

With regard to part (b)(i), the SCMh is being conducted by Statistics Canada. Results will be analyzed by the Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC. The CLSA COVID-19 study is being led by principal investigators at McMaster, McGill and Dalhousie universities. The COHESION study is being led by researchers at the Université de Montréal and the University of Saskatchewan. PHAC researchers will be involved in future analyses. The COMPASS study is being led by researchers at the University of Waterloo. Some analyses will be conducted by graduate students funded by PHAC.

With regard to part (b)(ii), as these studies are currently under way, there are no findings that can be reported at present. Early findings from the CLSA COVID-19 study are anticipated by the end of 2020, early findings from the COHESION study are anticipated during the first quarter of 2021, and PHAC analyses of SCM data will begin in February 2021, with the intention of making the results publicly available as soon as possible.

With regard to part (b)(iii), as these studies are currently under way, no analyses have been completed to date.

With regard to part (b)(iv), see response for part (b)(iii).

With regard to part (b)(v), see response for part (b)(iii).

Question No. 123—**Mr. Dean Allison:**

With regard to the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program: (a) what was original budget for the program; (b) what is the latest projected budget for the program; (c) what was the original expected number of businesses that would apply for the program; (d) what was actual number of businesses that applied for the program; (e) of the applications in (d), how many were successful; and (f) does the government have any statistics regarding what percentage of commercial property landlords whose tenants enrolled in the program accepted a 25 per cent reduction in rent, and, if so, what are the statistics?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development), Lib.: Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a), the original budget for the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance, CECRA, program was \$2.97 billion total combined from federal, provincial and territorial governments. This includes funding for forgivable loans disbursed and program administration costs.

In response to part (b), the projected budget for CECRA is \$2.97 billion.

In response to part (c), 60,000 submissions by property owners was the original expected number of applications.

In response to part (d), as October 4, 2020, 74,774 applications had been received for the program from property owners. Each application represents one property with one or more impacted small business tenant.

In response to part (e) of the applications in (d), as of October 5, 2020, 59,404 applications by property owners were approved; 5,935 were under review.

In response to part (f), individual small business tenants did not directly enroll in the CECRA program. Rather, eligibility for CECRA was based on applications submitted by commercial property landlords on behalf of their eligible tenants. All property owners who enrolled in the program were required to provide a 25% rent reduction to their eligible tenants in order to be approved. Failure to comply with this program requirement would put the property owner in default of the loan agreement, and the loan would become repayable.

* * *

● (1220)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Lead-

Routine Proceedings

er of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 116, 118, 119 and 122 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 116—**Mr. Corey Tochor:**

With regard to the government's approach to influenza immunization, also known as the flu shot or flu vaccine: (a) how many doses of the flu shot has the government procured or arranged for the 2020-21 flu season; (b) when are all the doses expected to be available and what is the expected timeline regarding how many doses will be available each month; (c) what are the details of any related procurement agreements or arrangements, including (i) date the agreement was signed, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount of doses, (iv) delivery date, (v) financial terms; (d) how many flu shot doses does the government project will be needed for the 2020-21 flu season; and (e) how many flu shot doses does the government project will be available for Canadians by (i) November 30, 2020, (ii) December 31, 2020?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 118—**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:**

With regard to the government's commitment to bring high-speed Internet to Indigenous communities in the 2016, 2018 and 2019 federal budgets: (a) what are the total expenditures on this commitment since April 1, 2019; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by project, including (i) name of community, (ii) description of project, (iii) projected cost of project, (iv) total expenditures to date, (v) average Internet speed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 119—**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:**

With regard to the government missing the June 3, 2020, deadline to release a national action plan in response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: (a) what are the details of all in-person and virtual consultations conducted by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, the Minister of Northern Affairs, the Minister of Indigenous Services, or the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, in relation to the development of a National Action Plan, including, for each consultation, the (i) date, (ii) location, if the consultation was in-person, (iii) name and title of the First Nations, groups, organizations or individuals consulted, (iv) recommendations that were made to the minister, (v) ministers and government officials in attendance; (b) what are the details of all in-person and virtual meetings between the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, the Minister of Northern Affairs, the Minister of Indigenous Services, the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and provincial or territorial governments, including for each meeting the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) recommendations that were made to the minister, (iv) provinces or territories represented; and (c) with regard to the consultations in (a) and (b), what is the (i) total of travel costs covered by the government, (ii) total of accommodation costs covered by the government, (iii) daily per diem rate to which stakeholders are entitled, (iv) total paid out in per diem?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders*Question No. 122—**Mr. Ted Falk:**

With regard to entry into Canada by individuals who are neither Canadian citizens nor residents, by air since the restrictions on travel into Canada by foreigners went into effect in March 2020: (a) what is the total number of foreigners who have entered Canada since the restrictions went into effect; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by (i) month, (ii) passport issuing country, (iii) reason for admittance in Canada (diplomat, essential worker, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, as you will know, pursuant to our rules, I submitted a letter yesterday on behalf of myself, the member for Nanaimo—Lady-smith, the member for Fredericton and also on behalf of Annamie Paul, the leader of the Green Party of Canada. We appreciate very much that the Prime Minister convened a high-level briefing yesterday for all leaders of the parties assembled in the House of Commons.

The information, as we all know, is sobering.

In my letter to the Speaker, I identified what I thought was Dr. Tam's most recent projection that we could hit as many as 10,000 cases of COVID a day. It turns out that is one of the more optimistic models, if we all do everything we can over the holiday period. If we fail, we could have 60,000 cases a day. This is, indeed, sobering.

Some might say that this is not a new emergency, that we have been in this emergency since March. I put it to you, Madam Speaker, that we are now in a second wave and the advice is deeply concerning from medical professionals. This is a non-partisan issue. I plead with people that if we can have an emergency debate, it must be non-partisan.

Canadians want to see us work together, but they also want to know that parliamentarians are seized with this new information and want to work together to give Canadians a coordinated response that brings into play the best advice throughout Canada from our public health officers and others. If we have an emergency debate, with only 15 sitting days left in this calendar year 2020, we need to rise to the occasion as parliamentarians and let Canadians know we understand the second wave emergency demands the best of all of us.

I thereby ask the Speaker's office to grant an emergency debate, so we can bring our best non-partisan concern for the well-being of all Canadians to the floor of the House of Commons.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her intervention. After careful consideration and looking at the information she has provided and looking into other information, I do not find the request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

JUDGES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her speech.

This bill would require prospective judges to take training, but it does not apply to judges who are already on the bench and cannot be removed.

Does my colleague hope that this requirement for new judges will encourage incumbent judges to take the training as well? We hope that incumbent judges who are already hearing cases, especially sexual assault cases, will also get up to speed on current knowledge, especially with respect to consent.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I think she is right. It is clear that judges who are already on the bench also need training to learn about the circumstances of women who are victims of sexual assault. I hope that this bill will also make this training available to judges who are already on the bench.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, if this kind of training were in place long ago, does she think the situation we have with respect to the missing and murdered women could be impacted?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, there is so much about systemic racism that is part of the cultural genocide identified by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Certainly, the relationship with law enforcement must be taken into account.

The fear that marginalized women have is going to someone who is there by his or her job description to protect them but may in fact represent a threat. Yes, training for judges would certainly have helped, but I do not think it would be sufficient to avoid the ongoing scandal of the way missing and murdered indigenous women and girls are treated and our societal response.

Government Orders

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cumberland—Colchester.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code. This bill is very important to me as a lawyer, as a woman, but also as the shadow minister for women and gender quality. As such, I am pleased to stand in this place and debate the bill.

However, I am disappointed that because of the Prime Minister's continual lapse in ethical judgment, instead of facing scrutiny for his decisions, he chose to prorogue Parliament and the casualty was having to reintroduce the bill, meaning victims of sexual assaults still cannot get due justice. It is shameful.

Bill C-3 would add new eligibilities for lawyers seeking appointment to the judiciary to require the completion of a recent and comprehensive education in sexual assault law as well as social context education. It would require the Canadian Judicial Council to submit an annual report to Parliament regarding the details on seminars offered on matters relating to sexual assault law and the number of judges attending. It would do this while still maintaining the balance between judiciary independence and a fair criminal justice system, which is very important to me and to all Canadians.

The rationale for the need for the bill is all too familiar, given the recent spotlight on the treatment of sexual assault victims during trial. Sadly, this certainly is not something that is new.

Let us explore the current state as it stands now.

There is piecemeal training and education available in certain jurisdictions but it is not mandatory. In 2016, a judge was found to have relied on myths about the expected behaviour of a victim of sexual abuse. That case was overturned on appeal for obvious reasons.

We have heard instances of judges using insensitive language. For example, in 2014, Justice Camp made a comment to a sexual assault victim in my home city of Calgary, asking her why she could not keep her knees closed together. Comments like Justice Camp's are all too familiar and further lead to the stigma that the courts are not there to protect the victims.

In 2019, nearly a dozen cases were going through Canada's court system that shed light on how some judges continued to rely on myths and stereotypes when informing their decisions on sexual assault cases.

We are still hearing similar misinformation about the experience of sexual assault victims or victims of abuse, which can lead to poor decisions and, as we have seen, possible miscarriages of justice sometimes resulting in new trials. Retrials can be incredibly painful for complainants, potentially further revictimizing them as they have to relive the trauma by constantly retelling lawyers and judges their horrific experiences, in some cases, preventing them from being able to mentally heal.

The way victims are treated during their court proceedings as well as in the public eye is a major hindrance to reporting the crime in the first place, particularly if the person who committed the as-

sault is someone in a position of authority or if it is someone they know, such as a father, brother or uncle.

Other victims witness how other sexual assault victims are treated in the justice system and are terrified that if they come forward, they will be treated the same way. It is well documented that sexual assault cases are one of the most under-reported crimes in Canada. Of reported cases, only 12% result in a criminal conviction within six years compared to 23% of physical assaults, as reported by Statistics Canada.

We know the reasons for under-reporting include shame, guilt and stigma of sexual victimization. Because of this, many victims do not believe they will see a positive outcome in the justice system, which is why they do not come forward. This simply cannot stand.

What can we do? The best way to prevent this type of sentiment is through education and training. The path forward that this legislation sets out would allow for more confidence in the criminal justice system by ensuring lawyers who are appointed to the bench are trained and educated in this very specific type of case.

• (1230)

The hope is that once this bill passed, and with education and training, the future state will be that the stories we once heard of victims being made to feel less than will not be repeated. This legislation is intended to help reduce the stigma of coming forward to report the crime and to see justice prevail for the victims.

The hope is that with education and training, victims of sexual assault will be treated with respect to avoid at all costs revictimizing them, which can be incredibly traumatizing for the individual. This will let other victims know they can be confident in our justice system and feel safe in coming forward.

Ms. Ambrose, as she provided her testimony before the status of women committee, said, "Really, to be honest, for me it's about building confidence. Women do not have confidence in our justice system when it comes to sexual assault law."

This has to change if we are ever going to see an increase in sexual assault being reported and convicted. This piece of legislation will bring us one step closer to eliminating barriers and giving victims of sexual assault more confidence to come forward.

I hope this bill passes quickly as this will only move us forward as a society and help grow confidence in our justice system.

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[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Calgary Skyview for her speech. I am fortunate to serve with her on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which has actually already studied this bill, but that was some time ago, and we know that the pandemic has exacerbated the problem of violence against women.

I am actually just about to present a petition signed by one of my constituents. Her blog, *Les Mots de Myra*, or Myra's words, shares powerful testimonials from women who face prejudice when they try to speak out about their sexual assault cases. I would like to hear the member's thoughts on that. December is coming up, and so is violence against women awareness week.

Is it not time for all of us here in the House to come together to pass this important bill, which is a big step forward for victims and survivors of sexual assault?

[English]

Ms. Jag Sahota: Madam Speaker, I sit on the committee with the member, and I enjoy our conversations. It is time to start talking about women. The pandemic has highlighted what, to some extent, we already knew. It has brought all the problems to the surface.

This legislation is a step in the right direction in that women will feel more comfortable coming forward and talking about their experiences without having the feeling of revictimization. That is the whole purpose. I am very thankful that the bill is here before Parliament. All the parties seem to be supporting it, and I cannot wait for it to pass.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to pick up on the member's comment, we also cannot wait for the bill to pass.

It is encouraging that last week we had all-party support from the Greens, New Democrats, Conservatives and Liberals for the wage subsidy legislation and the rent subsidy assistance program. The legislation received royal assent just yesterday. It goes to show just how effective the House can be.

We now have another piece of legislation before us, and once again, it is receiving all-party support. Could the member provide her thoughts on how good it is to see all parties getting behind legislation in the hopes that it also receives royal assent soon?

Ms. Jag Sahota: Madam Speaker, the member's question is different than the usual one of venting on how previous governments screwed up.

The Conservative Party was there for Canadians. When the Liberals brought in a bill that addressed the concerns and helped Canadians, Conservatives were there for them, co-operating with the Liberal government in passing those bills to make sure that the help gets to Canadians as fast as possible.

In certain instances we also pointed out deficiencies that were highlighted by our constituents who could not meet the criteria for

these programs. Yes, definitely in terms of helping Canadians, the Conservative Party has been there, and there has been acknowledgement from the other side as well that Conservatives have supported Canadians. We will continue to do that.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have spoken to a number of people in my riding about this bill.

I have also spoken to sex workers who are disproportionately impacted by the stereotypes and prejudices in our justice system. What they said to me was that this kind of bill is very important, but they also want parliamentarians and politicians to start listening to sex workers, and to acknowledge that sex work is work.

I am wondering what the member's comments on that would be.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Madam Speaker, the bill is here before Parliament and is about to get passed. It addresses the concerns that women have and women face when accessing the justice system. I am going to leave it at that.

This is a step forward in the right direction.

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak to Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, at third reading. Bill C-3 should receive all-party support since it is a vital step forward in achieving justice and equity for women and girls who are still too often affected by rape and sexual assault in our society today. It is still very much misunderstood, and it is an affront to all women.

Bill C-3 would amend the Judges Act to require candidates seeking an appointment to a provincial superior court to commit to participating in training related to sexual assault law and social context. This is a critical piece of legislation that is necessary to ensure that judges understand the context in which offending occurs. Thanks to amendments made by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, candidates must also commit to participate in training on systemic racism and systemic discrimination. This is an idea, and a bill, whose time has come.

The bill would also require the Canadian Judicial Council to ensure that those knowledgeable in the field, potentially including sexual assault survivor organizations, are consulted in the development of this new training.

The bill would also assist in assuring transparency in judicial decision-making by amending the Criminal Code's sexual assault provisions to include a requirement that judges provide reasons for their decisions either in writing or in the record of the proceedings. This requirement complements existing legal requirements for reasons, including specific obligations for judges to provide reasons in sexual history evidence. These amendments are critical to a fair and effective response to sexual assault, which we know disproportionately impacts women and girls.

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Canada has come a long way in this regard. We have one of the most robust sexual assault legal frameworks in the world, but we must not forget the misogynistic myths and stereotypes to which Canada's existing legal and, I would say, largely patriarchal regime responds, nor the fact that those very same misogynistic myths and stereotypes persist to this day.

For example, pre-1983, sexual offending laws were repealed and replaced with the affirmative consent model that we now have in place. The previous laws accepted as fact, first of all, that a complainant who fails to resist is in fact consenting and, second, that a complainant who consented to sexual activity with the accused before an alleged sexual assault likely also consented to any subsequent sexual activity. We now know that these are false. They are misogynistic myths and stereotypes that distort the court's ability to seek the truth.

We also now know that they have a detrimental impact on victims who, as I have said, are overwhelmingly women and girls. Their impact is compounded when they intersect with other discriminatory stereotypes. In particular, they deter women and girls from coming forward to denounce their assailants, which means that those assailants cannot be held accountable.

While I was in the legislature in Nova Scotia for 10 years as an MLA, a bill came before us. I rose in the House as the status of women critic to discuss these issues and the fact that too many women and girls were part of the #MeToo movement because we have been sexually assaulted or raped in our lives, if not once, possibly twice. We never know. Sadly, this is a major crime and should be considered a major crime in Canada. We need help to make sure that assailants are taken to task and that this does not continue to happen.

In Nova Scotia, there was a case where a young woman was raped in a taxi and the reason given in court was that she was drunk and, therefore, the judge said even drunk people can consent. She was passed out. I do not think a woman who is passed out in the back of a taxi, expecting to be driven home after she has given her address, should be held accountable for the male driver stopping the taxi and raping her in the back seat.

● (1240)

As a staunch feminist, and as somebody who has been sexually assaulted and raped in her lifetime, I can say that these kinds of laws need to be changed and amended. Otherwise, more women and girls will not be able to come forward, just as I did not 30 years ago.

When a law is misapplied, appeals follow. Perhaps even a new trial will be ordered. This can significantly lengthen the criminal justice process and continue to harm victims.

Victims tell us that their interactions with the criminal justice system are often experienced as revictimization. It is therefore critically important that sexual assault matters be resolved as quickly, efficiently, effectively and compassionately as possible. Otherwise, victims will not want to come forward to denounce their assailants. They will not have confidence in the system that is supposedly there to protect them.

What can we do about this problem? How can we help our criminal justice system function fairly when addressing one of the most complex and, I would say, abhorrent human behaviours, a behaviour that is based on dominance, aggression, violence and power? It is not a sexual act in the sense of what some people may call sexy. It is violence and it is about power. It must be stopped, with zero tolerance.

I believe that all members of the House should support Bill C-3, which would assist in ensuring that judges have the education they need to understand sexual assault law, what misogyny is and systemic racism and to make the right decisions so that the right decision is made in each case. The people who are most impacted by the sexual offending and the social context in which the sexual offending occurs need to have justice and need to believe in our legal system.

With that, I will add that in Cumberland—Colchester we have many incredible feminists who are fighting for justice for women and girls. I would like to mention Linda MacDonald and Jeanne Sarson in particular, who have been very vocal and very active with regard to laws about non-state torture and human trafficking and about our need to crack down on the awful actions of the people who are profiting from human trafficking and sex trafficking. It is our intent to bring Canada into the 21st century so that we have people who understand what feminism is really all about and its importance. It is important to understand where the woman is coming from in these cases.

As an actor, I did a scene where I was being raped at knifepoint. The director and producer, on the spur of the moment, wanted me to show my breasts. They wanted to show a knife cutting into my shirt to show my breasts, and I said I was not going to do that. I was a young actor but I stood up for myself. They said, "Well, what are we going to do, then?" They wanted the scene to be impactful. I said they could just pan up to my face and show how I feel, how the victim feels, instead of trying to titillate an audience with this act of violence and aggression. That is, in fact, what we did.

That is the kind of thinking that Canada needs, and more creative people need as well, so that we can stamp out this awful behaviour.

● (1245)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for sharing her story. It was so impactful. When a woman can stand in the House of Commons to share her story, we know we are doing our jobs.

One of the concerns I have right now relates to the discussions on COVID delays. This has to do with women as well. With COVID delays, is there a concern that some of these cases may be thrown out? I am not just looking at Bill C-3. What will happen if some people are outside of the normal time frame of 18 months? What does the member think the government can do, and what should we all be doing, to make sure that women find justice?

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Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, I too am concerned about this. As a woman who has gone through it, I know 30 years is a long time to have no justice and to be looking back and saying I would have, should have, could have. I believe anybody who has been assaulted sexually or in any other way needs to have justice done.

In Nova Scotia, we passed laws whereby a person could go back 20 years. I believe something like this should also be considered in this particular case. It is an emergency situation and women should not suffer because of that.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester, Nova Scotia, for her very moving speech and for sharing her experience with us.

She also talked about films. I recently had the chance to see the film *Woman* by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, a portrait of the female experience around the world. She also talked about the importance of Canada joining the 21st century. I had the opportunity to talk to representatives from the Australian embassy about the importance of training judges to set prejudice aside when they hear sexual assault cases.

This bill does not solve every problem, but it can help us ensure that women in Quebec and Canada can have judges who are a little more sensitive to their case. I would like my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her words.

I come from Australia and am well aware of Australian film, which is very strong. Part of the reason I moved to Canada when I was a kid was that my mom and dad felt Australia was very sexist and racist at the time. Canada was a beacon. We came over with 2,000 Australian teachers on a boat in 1968 because Pierre Elliott Trudeau had asked for teachers to come to Canada, as there was a lack of teachers.

Any step forward is a good one. Obviously most feminists would like things to be rapid-fire, and there are many other things we can and should do. I would therefore be very happy to work with the member and talk about what other things we can do and introduce here, for all parties. I put that out to her. Let us get together and talk about what else we can do. I am very interested in talking with her to come up with some conclusions.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for sharing her lived experiences with all of us.

While the bill is important, and I hope it will pass through the House, another issue that weighs heavily on me is the 231 calls for action with respect to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. The government promised that on the anniversary of the release of those calls to action, a national action plan led by indigenous women would be available. However, we do not have such a plan.

I would like the member's comments on that. What can be done to get the government to put forward that plan and not use COVID as an excuse?

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, as a matter of fact, I am a member of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and yesterday the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations came to our committee and answered that question. She said that it is coming out very shortly. We will have a national strategy, and I do believe her. I have enjoyed working with her.

I know we are all very frustrated with the delay. There is a wonderful first nations community within my riding, Millbrook First Nation, and I work very closely with the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association. I will give a shout-out to Karen Pictou.

We need to move forward on this. The time has come. Women demand it and we deserve it. I will work with the member to make sure this happens in a very timely fashion.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

[*Translation*]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wants to request a recorded vote or request that the motion be passed on division, I invite them to rise and so indicate to the Chair.

[*English*]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Therefore, pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, the division stands deferred until Monday, November 23, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

• (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 1:30 at this time so we can begin private members' hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is there unanimous consent to see the clock at 1:30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS LABELLING

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.) moved:

That: (a) the House recognize that (i) Canadians understand that climate change represents a threat to our way of life and are looking for opportunities where they can make a difference in their day-to-day lives, (ii) Canadian consumers want and deserve to know the environmental impacts of the products they purchase so that they can make informed decisions, (iii) Canadian industries have already begun to see the benefits of selling sustainable produced and locally grown products, (iv) the government can play a role in bringing together consumer interests and Canadian businesses to create a clear and concise metric by which Canadians can consider the impacts of their buying habits; and (b) the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be instructed to (i) undertake a study to recommend a consumer-friendly environment grading label on all products available to Canadian consumers and to provide recommendations to the industry sector on ways to implement the labelling regime, and that the study examine, among other matters, the possibility of having the environment grading label include greenhouse gas emissions, water and energy usage, and waste creation, (ii) invite various stakeholders in Canada such as farmers, the industry sector, and environmental experts to appear before the committee on this study, (iii) schedule no fewer than 12 meetings for the study, (iv) report its findings and recommendations to the House within one year following the adoption of this motion.

He said: Madam Speaker, today I have the privilege of speaking to my Motion No. 35, which if adopted would launch a study on the creation of an environmentally conscious labelling regime.

If the members would indulge me, envision a Canada where a consumer could walk into a store, pick up two similar products, and imagine that through a trusted label on the package, they could choose the product that is better for our environment and our future. Imagine a Canada where consumers know each day what their carbon footprint is, by the choices they made that day, as well as other important environmental factors. Imagine going into restaurants across Canada and seeing a consistent environmental grade to help those who wish to make environmentally friendly choices.

Climate change represents an existential threat to our way of life and our prosperity. It is a challenge of our time, and addressing it will require a Canada-wide approach. Let me be clear, government has an important role to play, industry has a role to play, and, yes, individuals, each and every one of us, all have a role to play.

I believe Canadians understand this. They are able; they are willing. Put simply, Canadians, if given the opportunity will make choices every day that help slow the effects of climate change. While it is true that emissions are largely driven by our largest businesses, those businesses are driven, in part, by us, the consumers.

Some farmers have suggested that every time we pick up a fork or spoon, we are voting. We are making a choice for our future. Our actions and choices, day in and day out, may only have incremental impacts, but together we can drive large-scale change through individual responsibility and the global marketplace. The policy and vision being proposed today is a study of an environmental grading label, a label that takes into account factors like greenhouse gas emissions, energy and water usage, and waste created.

Such a label on products would encourage buying local and would have a positive economic impact for our country while empowering everyday Canadians to do their part in the struggle against climate change. Imagine for a moment that on the label, just

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below the calories, ingredients and carbs, there was a clear indicator of a product's environmental impact. Imagine being at a grocery store and being able to compare the environmental impacts of two brands of canned meat right there in the aisle.

In a world of more choice and options when shopping, we can choose organic, local and Canadian raised. The next step is to give consumers opportunities to spend their money on choices with less environmental impact.

Imagine having that information available, presented clearly and concisely, and being empowered to make the environmental choice if we want to. Colleagues, that is what environmentally friendly labelling is about, empowering consumers through information so that they can make the choices that reflect their beliefs.

I first tabled this motion in February 2020. The world looked very different back then. If anyone had told me the next time I would be speaking in Parliament to this motion that it would be from my dining-room table, I probably would not have believed it. Yet, I speak today from my home as a result of a global crisis.

We already know that a climate crisis is on the horizon. Many would say it is already here. The United Nations has been clear on our need to cut our carbon footprint in half globally within 10 years. The UN Secretary-General has stated that there has never been a more important time to listen to science. Failure to heed these warnings and take drastic actions to reverse emissions means we will continue to witness deadly and catastrophic heat waves, storms and pollution.

We have heard the alarm bells sounding for decades, and yet Canadians often feel there is nothing they can do personally to stop it. Environmental labelling would give them that capability.

The motion I present today is just one part of the solution, this I know, but it is a vision for a better Canada. It empowers consumers with the ability to make an environmentally friendly choice every day. This motion came about because of the concerns I have heard from my constituents across Cape Breton about the largest crisis facing our future.

● (1300)

The youth in my riding and ridings across Canada are frightened of the future we are leaving to them and indeed I agree. The burden we have left to future generations is unfair. We can take steps to change that as leaders. We can make a better world. The battle is not lost. Canada can help lead that battle.

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As I have said, Canadians are looking for a way that they can contribute, but when facing challenges like climate change, one that is systemic and global, it can seem overwhelming. Businesses around the world have recognized this shift and realize consumers want to act. I want to give a few examples.

The Shelton Group, a sustainability-oriented ad agency, has noted that people want to do their part but the problem can seem too enormous. A recent study by Ogilvy Earth division found that while more than 80% of American shoppers claimed to want to make more sustainable choices, many did not. Another study has similar results, with 87% of consumers concerned about environmental impacts of their personal buying habits.

There is no singular reason for this discrepancy, but it is clear that one of the biggest contributing factors is awareness. A survey by McKinsey & Company showed that while consumers wanted to do their part, they did not know how to act on that belief. The study noted, in particular, that many attempts to label green products had been meaningless at best and confusing at worst.

On top of that, there just is not any consistency. In many cases, these labels are useless to the consumer and vague. It is unclear what standards are being used and whether they are consistent across the country. We need to begin to have a consistent standard on what it means to have green or environmentally friendly products.

To quote then CEO, Steve Howard, of the Climate Group, referring to one attempt to label a product based on a life-cycle analysis, he asked, "What does it mean to say a bag of chips contains 75 grams of carbon?" He continues, "I have a Ph.D. in environmental physics, and it doesn't mean a thing to me."

In other cases, the labelling regimes resemble a PR exercise more than an attempt to communicate any quantifiable or qualitative information about the product. Worse, because of limited and haphazard adoption of this practice, mostly by bigger companies, local businesses that may, in many cases, be major beneficiaries of greater consumer awareness are left behind.

Local farmers and businesses, by virtue of being local, are often the best choice for our environment, but they are often left in the dust by large farm factories and companies that can pour significantly more PR dollars into packaging and communications. This is a place where the government can step up.

This is where we, as legislators, have a clear role to fulfill. The government has a long-standing role in mandating that companies present information to consumers on the basis of public health, public interest and democratic will. The environmental impact of the products we consume clearly fulfills all three of these criteria.

Moreover, Parliament is in the unique position to bring together experts and stakeholders from across industry and academia to determine not only what information should be considered in such a labelling regime, but how to express it to the consumer in a manner that is clear, concise and comprehensible for everyday Canadians.

As such, the motion would empower a standing committee to summon industry, small business, environmental experts, academics and farmers to come up with a collaborative way forward.

This committee mandate would be tasked with reporting to the House its recommendations on how we could move forward as legislators in creating a labelling regime.

The labelling regime would empower and inform consumers, while benefiting local economies and incentivizing greener business practices from our biggest companies. An environmental labelling regime would help make Canada a world leader in fighting climate change. It is a bold and practical step forward to address climate change. It would bring greater legitimacy to our efforts to lead on the world stage. It would set an example for green transparency and consumer rights. It would truly be a cultural shift of monumental proportions.

Canadians deserve to know the environmental impacts of the products they purchase so they can make informed decisions. Growing up in Cape Breton and growing up listening to people who care about our beautiful ecosystem, ensuring quality of life for our future generations is vital.

● (1305)

I was taught by indigenous elders and knowledge-keepers that the choices we make today must take into consideration the next seven generations. I was taught that we are connected to our environment and whatever we do to the environment, we do to ourselves. What I am proposing is taking an important step toward environmental reconciliation.

Government studies and motions can be a vision for a better tomorrow. This motion would ensure a proactive role by bringing together consumer interests in Canadian business to create a clear and concise metric by which Canadians can consider the impacts of their buying habits. This would empower Canadians by helping make environmental choices every day to protect our environment and our future.

I believe that if Canadians were informed about things like the waste created, water used and greenhouse emissions of the products they purchase, they would make better choices for future generations and that when industries see that Canadian consumers want to do their part, they too will make the necessary changes to their products.

This motion, if passed, is a win for our planet, for our country, for Canadian businesses and for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. *Wela'liq.*

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate when all members bring their individual private members' motions or bills to this place. It is an opportunity for members of Parliament to show where their priorities are.

By utilizing the term “all products in Canada”, what is this saying to small, micro-entrepreneurs who, let us say, assemble small jewellery or crafts? What about restaurants right now that are struggling and want to put out a new product, perhaps a house salad dressing? Why would they have to go through the cost of figuring out how much water or greenhouse gas emissions they use?

To me, it seems the member is asking for these small, micro-businesses that are already suffering under COVID-19 to bear a lot of red tape.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, just this week I went to a farm, where I purchased meat and vegetables from local farmers. None of these had the nutritional guide on it that Canadians have said is law.

When people go to flea markets or small businesses, this is not a burden we would be placing on them. However, I would add that local farms and businesses will benefit the most from this because local is probably the most environmentally friendly. This is something that a study could really dive into, to ensure that we are not burdening small and medium-sized enterprises with this.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I read the member's motion, I wondered whether he knows that eco-labelling already exists. I felt that his motion did not take into account the role that Quebec and the provinces play in managing eco-labelling.

What does he think about that?

[*English*]

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, indeed, a number of restaurants, a number of provinces and a number of places are taking leadership on this, but the problem is they are inconsistent. What I am proposing is a Canada-wide labelling program that is consistent.

I understand that there is different eco-labelling, but it is just too confusing to consumers. I am looking for clear and concise consumer-friendly information just by looking at the package and understanding what it means.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is unclear how effective eco-labelling really is on influencing consumer behaviour and, ultimately, on reducing environmental impacts. A study from the U.K. ultimately recommended that companies be required to modify the source of their products rather than rely on consumer decisions.

Eco-labels could be good for consumer choice and demand for more sustainable products to help push producers to create more environmentally friendly products. My concern is the focus on the individual, especially when we have a government that recently put forward a climate bill that had no target for 2025 and no accountability for 10 years, that bought a pipeline and that has taken decades to modernize the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

The member opposite talked about eco-labels being inconsistent. The government is inconsistent and I am wondering how he stands behind that.

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Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, one of the things that I can only share from my experience of being a member of Parliament for a year is that we all have a role to play moving forward. However, I have been Mi'kmaq for my entire life. Indigenous knowledge, and indigenous knowledge holders, have told Canadians for generations that we need to do more for our environment and that we need to foster those relationships that we create.

Indigenous scholars are out there asking for environmental reconciliation. We all have a role to play in this, and I hope this is something we can look toward and say that this is a positive step along with all the other things we are doing. I am proud that I have a government that just yesterday stepped up and made sure that in the future we would have accountability for our environment.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the chance to speak about this motion from the member for Sydney—Victoria.

I would like to start by saying I agree with the beginning of the motion, which says that Canadians are looking for opportunities to make an environmental difference in their day-to-day lives. Also, more information is certainly a good thing. However, this motion and its goals have serious problems that I would like to speak about today.

It is undoubtedly true that a great many consumers use and like products every day that have labels that mark them as environmentally friendly. These labelling regimes are virtually all voluntary, and each company decides if it is going to participate and if that is in its best interests. Certainly a great many do, and that is an example of the market at work. From EcoLogo, to the Marine Stewardship Council and organic produce, these voluntary labelling regimes have been very advantageous for a great many businesses. Indeed, a report from the OECD on labelling regimes, such as the one proposed by the member, states that except for labelling related to energy efficiency, virtually every labelling regime is voluntary.

However, the language in the motion related to recommending “a consumer-friendly environment grading label on all products available to Canadian consumers” is full of pitfalls.

First, the motion instructs the committee to recommend a regime. There is no allowance for the committee to study various regimes and then decide not to recommend any labelling. Committees must be allowed to determine the results of their own studies.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Second, although it is important for any regulations to be consumer friendly, this motion does not mention the need to be producer friendly or industry friendly.

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Any future rules must be designed to ensure that producers are not unfairly punished. If anyone is thinking that I am just talking about big corporations, allow me to show how this regime could harm small businesses.

The member mentioned a labelling regime that would apply to all products in Canada, which to me sounds like it would be mandatory. The motion also lists the elements covered by this regime, such as greenhouse gas emissions and water and energy usage.

This proposal could have devastating consequences for small businesses in Canada. One example would be someone who has a second job making jewellery to sell on Etsy. Will this business owner now have to include information on the greenhouse gas emissions generated by the jewellery they are selling? What about a small family restaurant that decides to bottle and sell their house sauce? Will the restaurant have to hire a consultant to measure and calculate the energy and water used to produce this product in order to meet the labelling requirements?

I assume that when the member presented this motion, he was thinking that large companies would be able to do these calculations much more easily. However, the motion talks about a regime that would apply to all products in Canada, meaning every single product in Canada. Such a regime would decimate Canada's product-based small businesses. There is no way they could possibly comply.

[English]

It would also create a booming industry for consultants, and higher consumer prices, as businesses struggle to comply with these rules and the added costs. The member for Sydney—Victoria may say that is not the situation he wants and it is why he is calling for a study, but then why would he so clearly lay out in the motion that he expects the committee to “recommend a consumer-friendly environment grading label on all products available to Canadian consumers”? He does not suggest looking into the regimes to see what our best practice is. He says to recommend a regime that applies to all products. If the member disagrees with my interpretation then he is perfectly able to perhaps amend his own motion to make this abundantly clear.

I would now like to briefly touch on the regimes that already exist and why strictly voluntary regimes are ideal. The Ecolabel Index lists 456 different regimes globally that address various environmental measures. I gave a few examples earlier, but many of these will be well known to Canadians. For example, the organic label has long been used by producers and consumers to make buying choices. It is completely voluntary, and many choose to use it. EcoLogo is another one used in Canada that shows a product is among the top 20% most environmentally friendly products in the market. I know that dining in restaurants is down now, but I am sure that many people will recognize the Ocean Wise symbol that demonstrates seafood meets certain sustainability principles.

I give all of these examples to show that these labels are not bad. The issue is when they are forced upon companies without understanding the impacts. I completely support any producer or company that believes applying and complying with these regimes is best for their business. I also completely support any consumers who

wish to make their buying decisions based on that information. That is the free market at work: a willing buyer and a willing seller.

What I do not support is a top-down, Ottawa-knows-best regulation that removes producer choice and destroys small businesses. An OECD report states that the negative side of mandatory regimes, such as the one being considered in this motion, is that they have huge compliance costs and an increased complexity of supply chains.

● (1320)

[Translation]

It would be completely impossible for small and medium-sized businesses to abide by the guidelines set out in a mandatory Canada-wide regime, and such a regime would kill all the businesses that are barely hanging on right now because of the pandemic.

Statistics Canada data show that self-employed workers, many of whom would be affected, are still feeling the burden of the pandemic weighing on their business. This Liberal plan would kick them when they are down. Let us not do that. Instead, let us find ways to support struggling businesses.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention our frustration with the use of motions in the House to control committee agendas. I spoke about this in the context of Motion No. 34 just a few weeks ago.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development and every party has excellent studies to propose, but we do not have very much time. It is not appropriate for a member who is not even part of the committee to propose a motion that would require 12 meetings to study. This motion would paralyze the committee for two months when we already have a lot of important work on our plate.

The sponsor of the previous motion was willing to amend his motion to make it more acceptable in that regard. I am wondering whether this member would be open to doing the same.

A motion that orders a committee to recommend a regime is not appropriate and should not be examined. If the motion was about examining how voluntary regimes work and let the committee decide on the number of meetings, that would be different.

As I mentioned, I am very concerned about this motion and its impact on Parliament, Canada and Canadian businesses, particularly small businesses that are fighting to survive. Attacking entrepreneurs who are following—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The member's time is up. He may be able to continue during the next reading. I congratulate him on his French, which is much improved.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Repentigny.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the intention behind the member for Sydney—Victoria's motion. Government measures, effective policies and the quality of the policies put forward are at the forefront of my mind as environment critic. However, I have to point out some of the flaws in this motion.

I want to start by saying that the Bloc Québécois is not in favour of Motion No. 35, even though we recognize that eco-labelling has its virtues and that such a mechanism is worthwhile. Over the past 40 years, there has been a lot of demand for that type of labelling.

That said, aside from the fact that the motion calls for 12 meetings of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, which would take up a lot of time, there are some issues with the wording of the motion itself, starting with the fact that it says the government has the capacity to create a “clear and concise metric by which Canadians can consider the impacts of their buying habits”. It is not the government's job to operationalize that. What we need to figure out is whether it can be done.

Experts have written hundreds of documents analyzing the vast eco-labelling landscape, and there is a virtually infinite body of technical knowledge on the subject. We can certainly see why. Eco-labelling actually exists already. The flexibility and rigidity of various systems and logos fall into three categories: certifications, self-declared claims and environmental product declarations.

For instance, Quebec has 10 certification bodies in the construction and renovation sector, 10 for residential and industrial cleaning products, eight for electronics, 13 for the food sector, and so on.

Furthermore, the motion ignores the role played by Quebec and the other provinces in managing eco-labels. Creating a single label that would cover all products is impossible. Under no circumstances could a single certification apply to all consumer goods, because each sector, and even each subsector, has its own unique characteristics. For example, one cannot compare the environmental sustainability or the carbon footprint of a fish with that of a two-by-four. If that were possible, it would be worrisome and even pointless.

I would also like to point out that Canada imports a lot of goods, and based on the current wording, the motion would apply to all imported goods, as well. Every organization behind a logo must provide clear information on the measures and criteria it applies to authorize the use of that logo. This information is available to consumers. The vast range of criteria behind a logo cannot be standardized.

From a business perspective, eco-labels are used to promote the products on which they appear. Manufacturers have made organizational and financial efforts. They have put in place procedures to have the privilege of demonstrating their environmental probity. Generally, they make these efforts because they know that consumers notice them.

In other words, there is an important business aspect in the ecosystem of eco-labels that must be considered. Consumers' appreciation of businesses that show good corporate citizenship is real

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and growing. I think that is excellent news. It means that Quebec and Canadian consumers and consumers around the world where these ecosystems exist can make choices.

For the average citizen with an awareness of the environmental issues caused by the goods they consume, seeing an eco-label will surely generate a feeling of satisfaction. It is a confirmation of their values and it helps the cause of environmental protection. Some consumers only buy eco-certified products.

Companies that agree to a certification process are committed to doing better, which does not go unnoticed. It is not nothing. Let's talk about corporations that have implemented ISO 14000. The Bureau de normalisation du Québec is an expert in this standard and responsible for its successful implementation in Quebec. It knows the positive impact this has had on thousands of businesses. Some labels even include social criteria such as workers rights and fair trade. Motion No. 35 gives the impression that eco-labelling does not exist, but that is not true.

● (1325)

The website of Quebec's environment and climate change ministry has some interesting information for anyone who wants to learn more about this.

Canada's Competition Bureau has also looked at environmental claims with the Canadian Standards Association. Canada has national expertise on standards, but it should be pointed out that, in order to do what Motion No. 35 is asking, we would need to work within a set of standards. It is important to consider these standards in order to avoid what is known as greenwashing. Working within a set of standards is an ever-present concern when it comes to obtaining these environmental logos or accreditations, no matter the category of products.

It is no secret that we are already very well aware of the environmental impact of certain industries.

We are not ruling out the potential of eco-labelling in the green shift that is needed, but we will focus on several sector-based actions. Here are a few examples: develop energy efficiency and recovery in all sectors; demand that Canadian manufacturers optimize their production operations with processes that are safe for the environment and human health, without compromise; focus on efforts to update the list of banned chemicals; monitor production conditions in this industry sector; promote organic farming and animal husbandry practices, with proximity between production and destination as a priority; and support production activities that genuinely take the life cycle of the product into account. I could go on with many other examples.

I would now like to change tack a little and point out that my colleague put his motion into context by saying, “Canadians understand that climate change represents a threat to our way of life and are looking for opportunities where they can make a difference in their day-to-day lives”.

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Personal responsibility is commendable. Making consumer choices based on our values is also commendable. We are responsible for the things we purchase. However, perhaps the government members should stop always criticizing citizens for their climate actions and look toward the big players, those that have a real impact on the crisis affecting us, such as the oil sector, the gas sector and the nuclear sector. We hope that the government members will introduce binding legislation to meet the Paris targets.

I cannot end my speech without mentioning another label, the GMO label for genetically modified organisms. I know that this is not so much about whether these GMOs produce greenhouse gases, but about identifying the foods we eat. GMO labels should indicate that these are genetically modified living organisms that pose a risk and a threat to biodiversity. If there is an eco-labelling issue that deserves our attention, it is that one.

For more than 10 years, 85% of Quebeckers have been calling for such labelling. Initiatives were even put forward here in the House more than 10 years ago, when the Bloc Québécois tabled a bill that was never adopted.

In Europe, labelling GMOs has been mandatory since 1997, for 23 years, and European countries even strengthened their legislation in 2004. Why can Europeans know the characteristics and identification of what they are eating, but we cannot? We already have a fairly clear picture of what is harmful to the environment in Canada.

The government has missed several opportunities to take action on the inherent threats of climate change. When we are elected, we take responsibility, and when we make promises, we must keep them.

● (1330)

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians understand the threat of climate change and biodiversity loss. They want to be better consumers and make more sustainable choices. Environmental grading labels, or eco-labels, could provide Canadians with information about the environmental impacts of products and allow them to make more informed choices.

This could also incentivize producers to create more environmentally friendly and sustainable products to meet consumer demand, but we need to ensure the burden of environmental protection does not fall on individuals alone. Any consumer labelling should always be coupled with strong regulatory standards and real climate action.

The possibility of having the government implement an across-the-board environment grading label that includes greenhouse gas emissions, water and energy usage and waste creation is certainly an interesting idea. Worldwide there are 456 eco-labels in 199 countries, covering 25 industry sectors.

These labels cover a wide range of environmental criteria for products from cosmetics and clothing to cleaning, home and garden and paper products. Some eco-labels are created and managed on a national level while others are international in scope. They may be

based on a narrow set of considerations or more complex full life-cycle assessments.

Consumers who want to make more environmentally friendly choices often have trouble recognizing the meaning of the wide range of labels they are faced with. It is not always obvious which specific environmental claims are true, what they mean or what assurances exist, if any, regarding their accuracy. While consumers distrust private businesses to provide credible environmental information, they do trust governments and environmental NGOs to provide that information.

If the government were to play a role in implementing an environmental grading label for all products and services available to Canadian consumers, it could help to address some of these issues. However, it is unclear how effective eco-labelling really is on influencing consumer behaviour, and ultimately on our goal of reducing environmental impacts.

As I mentioned, a study from the U.K. recommended companies be required to modify the sources of their products rather than rely on consumer decisions. Eco-labels could be good for consumer choice, and increased demand for sustainable products could help push producers to create more environmentally friendly products, but these labels should be attached to strong regulatory standards so we are not relying on consumers to shop defensively.

We need to ensure the burden of environmental protection and climate action does not fall on individuals. We should be taking strong action to strengthen regulatory standards and enforcement. We also need to be better on producer accountability, especially when it comes to plastics.

The modernization and strengthening of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, or CEPA, is one way this can be done and is very important. The purpose of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is to prevent pollution and protect the environment and human health. It sets out rules for preventing and regulating toxic substances and for managing pollution.

However, CEPA is out of date and badly in need of reform. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development reviewed CEPA in 2017 and made 87 recommendations to strengthen and modernize this act, but so far the government has failed to act.

One of those recommendations is that the right to a healthy environment should be enshrined in law. This is so important, and I want to give a shout-out to the member for Winnipeg Centre who put forward a motion not only to enshrine the right to a healthy environment in law but to make sure the foundation is built upon a recognition of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Too often, vulnerable and marginalized populations bear a disproportionate burden of environmental harm, and CEPA lacks provisions to protect those who have been made vulnerable or to safeguard against environmental injustice. We need protection for people who are inequitably impacted, including front-line workers, women, children, the elderly and people living in pollution hot spots, too often indigenous communities.

The NDP would like to see an environmental bill of rights that would ensure all Canadians can enjoy a guarantee of clean water, land and air. These are the changes my NDP colleagues and I have been pushing for.

● (1335)

I also want to acknowledge two exceptional young people from my riding of Victoria. They have been advocating for environmental rights since they were seven and 10 years old. They have created a petition with the House of Commons, urging the federal government to update CEPA, including amendments to recognize environmental rights in Canada. Today is the last day for the petition to be open for signatures. It has already gained 8,000 signatures from people across the country.

I am awed, inspired and thankful for the leadership that Franny and Rupert have shown in their advocacy. However, young people should not have to be advocating for these rights. Their government should be leading the way on protecting our environment and our health.

When it comes to waste creation, Canadians thought they were doing their part when it came to recycling. It turns out that less than 10% of plastics disposed of by Canadians every year is recycled. It is now clear that recycling alone is not enough; we need to also stop producing so much waste. Almost half the plastic produced in Canada is from packaging, yet packaging is not included in the government's plan for a ban on the use of plastics. Dealing with our waste does not just mean disposing of it or recycling it. We need leadership on waste reduction targets and a plan to get to a zero-waste Canada. In order to do that, producer accountability, when it comes to the production of plastics, is critical.

Canada is not anywhere close to being on track to meeting its climate targets and we know that those targets are not adequate to achieve the greenhouse gas reductions we need to avoid catastrophic climate change. We are not even close, which is, I guess, the reason why the government is trying to avoid accountability for the next 10 years. The scope of the cuts to carbon emissions is so beyond what the government thinks is achievable and it is definitely beyond what this motion and eco-labelling attempt to do through making more sustainable purchasing choices.

Canadians want to do their part, but we should be careful not to emphasize individual purchasing choices over the bold systemic

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changes we need to address the climate crisis. We need to end fossil fuel subsidies. We need to implement real climate accountability. We need to invest in sustainable jobs and a low-carbon future.

Canadians understand that the threat of climate change and biodiversity loss pose a great existential threat to our environment, to our health, to our communities and to our future. They want to make better and more environmentally sustainable choices, but they also expect their government to do its part in protecting our land, air and water.

One way of doing that is by setting strong environmental standards and requiring producer accountability. The burden of environmental protection cannot fall on individuals alone. We need to prioritize taking strong action to strengthen regulatory standards, modernizing CEPA and taking bold action on the climate crisis.

We cannot keep putting off action on the climate crisis. Canadians are worried about their future. Parents should not have to worry about the air their children breathe. Students and young people should not have to march in the streets just to draw attention to the crisis that is happening because politicians and people in leadership positions are not protecting their future.

The recent climate accountability bill was a good step forward, but it is not enough. This eco-labelling motion is an interesting idea, but we need to focus on what our priorities are, especially in the upcoming 10 years. This is why it is so egregious that the government has left out a five-year milestone target. It has put off accountability for the next decade, the most critical decade.

Jack Layton was the first person to put forward a climate accountability bill in the House and he would not want us to wait another 10 years to see accountability. We need to push the government to take real climate action. We need investments in good jobs, in the kind of good, long-term sustainable jobs of the future.

I want to thank the member again for putting forward the motion, but we need to focus on what is important to Canadians, and that is real climate action.

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• (1340)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for this opportunity to speak. I am honoured to rise today in support of my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria, on his private member's motion: an instruction to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I would like to thank the learned member for passionately bringing forward this considered motion and for his continued and tireless hard work in helping Canadians understand the environmental impacts of the products they buy and use.

Our government shares the hon. member's concerns about the negative impacts of climate change and pollution, and we know that Canadians from coast to coast to coast are eager to take action on these important issues. When given accurate and accessible information, Canadians are eager, in their day-to-day lives, to make informed decisions about their health and the environment. Our government has already taken important steps to equip Canadians with the clear, accurate and objective information that they need to understand the environmental impacts of the products they purchase and to confront the growing global crisis that is climate change.

Canadians have long understood that more informative labelling on packaging can lead to more informed consumer decisions. Since 2007, when nutritional labelling became mandatory, Canadians have had the opportunity to make informed decisions about the food they put in their bodies. Nutrition labelling has been designed to be easy to find and simple to read to permit Canadians to make informed food choices. Essential information, such as where the food was grown, prepared and packaged, has proven incredibly popular, as have counts of calories, vitamins, minerals and preservatives. All of which, I might add, has been calculated to single servings.

Now Canadians want the same level of ease in finding information about the environmental impact of consumer products when it comes to exercising their purchasing power. Just as Canadians want to know what they are putting in their bodies, they also want to know their footprint on the environment. Instead of counting calories, they are counting carbon. Instead of asking what preservatives are in their food, they want to know how much particulate matter is in the air. Instead of protein, they are asking about pollution. Not all Canadians have weight loss goals, but almost all Canadians do have “waste less” goals.

As always, our government understands that protecting the environment and growing the economy go hand in hand. Having access to this information could also help support Canada's transition to a circular economy. Moving towards a circular economy means focusing on new, innovative approaches and technologies to create economic opportunities out of materials that might otherwise be thrown away as waste, while at the same time promoting innovative product and commodity designs that can easily lead to reuse or recycling.

Canadians are already making environmentally responsible choices when they shop, and they want to play an active role in

minimizing the environmental impacts of the products they buy and use. This is why so many cities and municipalities have taken steps to ban single-use plastic bags and why we are seeing a wave of zero-waste groups on social media.

Canadians have said that they are willing to pay more for sustainable products. While this shows that Canadians are ready to take strong action to protect the environment and to fight climate change, our government does not believe that Canadians should have to pay for making the right choices. This is why the Government of Canada has introduced the climate action incentive as part of our plan to put a price on pollution and combat climate change.

Canadians take these issues very seriously and are interested in knowing about the ingredients in the products they buy and how they can safely recycle products after their use and reuse. Canadians want the information they are looking for to be accessible, easy to find and without the use of extra packaging. At this moment Canadians are also keenly aware of affordability and competitiveness, as is our government.

• (1345)

Consequently, the motion put forward by the hon. member would enable members and Canadians to better understand how product labelling can empower Canadians to take further action on important issues such as greenhouse gas emissions, water and energy usage, and waste generation. There is a lot of interest in the role of labelling. There is also a need to better understand the ways it can be useful and some of the practical challenges associated with broader use of labelling requirements. I think the motion could be broadened in scope to include possible topics such as chemicals in products, recyclability, durability and digital labelling.

Therefore, I move that the motion be amended by:

(a) replacing “and (b) the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development” with the following: “and (b) the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology”;

(b) replacing “(iii) schedule no fewer than 12 meetings for the study” with the following: “(iii) schedule no fewer than six meetings for the study”; and

(c) adding in part (b)(ii) after “waste creation”, the following: “chemicals in products, recyclability, and durability, and which labelling could also include digital labelling to avoid increasing the need for packaging”

• (1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): To propose an amendment, the author of the motion needs to be in favour of the amendment. Therefore, I respectfully ask the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria if he is in favour of the amendments.

Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, I am, and I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his comments and for his really well-thought-out amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), given that there is consent, the amendment is in order.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be the seconder of the motion. I think the member has brought forward a vision that many Canadians hold dear to their hearts. Recognizing the value of packaging and labelling and how it is that we can better inform the consumer is, in good part, what this motion is about. I thank the member also for moving forward with the amendment.

I do not understand why people would not support a motion that provides the opportunity for the consumer to be that much more knowledgeable. We know the people of Canada today want to be more sensitive to our environment and to climate change. The motion we are talking about today will further the cause of better informing consumers with respect to what they are choosing and its impact on our environment. That is the reason why I feel fairly confident in what the member is hoping to accomplish with the motion.

I specifically look at our younger people. I think there is a lot we can learn from the young people of Canada today as they continue to heighten their expectations of leaders of all different political stripes at all different levels of government, and challenge us to move forward. That is something the mover of the motion has done for all members of the House of Commons. What the motion does is it asks members to recognize the reality of what our constituents would want us to be looking at. That is why I believe the member

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has done a great service to the House of Commons by allowing us to participate in a debate that is very important. I know we will get another hour of debate coming up when the motion comes forward and I look forward to that ongoing discussion on the motion.

Suffice it to say, when we look at climate change, we just had a major announcement from the minister and the Prime Minister yesterday responding to what it is Canadians want us to bring forward. Whether it is the climate action plan of the government of the day or a motion from a private member on a good initiative, combined or individually, they send a very strong message, which is that we are listening and want to deliver in tangible ways, not only looking at the bigger picture of government but also the important role individuals in society have to play.

I look forward to being able to conclude my remarks when the motion next comes up for debate.

● (1355)

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

It being 1:57 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:57 p.m.)

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