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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

LEXI

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, on February 24, Fredericton lost one of its precious lights. Lexi, at 16, was active, curious and kind. Her smile and her quick sense of humour were able to brighten any room she walked into.

Derived from Greek, Lexi means the one who protects humanity. Together with Lexi's family and our community, we will ensure her legacy does just that: keeps us safe.

We will continue to talk about her and everything that made her the person she was. We will continue to talk about the mental health services other young people so desperately need. We will not accept the status quo that we are living in a society where we turn away youth in their moment of greatest need.

We lost Lexi's light on this earth; now we have a guiding star. May it remind us to listen and support every spark so they may not fade out, that no darkness may overtake them.

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VICTIM SERVICES OF DURHAM REGION

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Victim Services of Durham Region for the critical role it plays in Whitby and across Durham Region in addressing human trafficking. Its efforts are focused on prevention and providing support for victims. We know that 90% of human trafficking victims in Durham Region are women and girls and 51% of survivors are indigenous females.

Every year, Victim Services of Durham Region raises awareness by giving hundreds of presentations at schools across the region. Over 50% of the presentations result in reported cases of human trafficking. It also works with families to educate parents to make them better able to recognize the signs of human trafficking.

Last year, “That’s Sus!”, a collaborative project between Victim Services of Durham Region and partners, received \$330,000 in federal funding for an online tool to raise awareness of human trafficking among at-risk youth. I am proud to say that these funds were made possible by our government’s national strategy to combat human trafficking. We must do all we can to eradicate human trafficking.

A heartfelt thanks to Victim Services of Durham Region for its dedication and leadership toward realizing that vision.

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NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nuclear is the future, and it goes beyond party lines. We are talking about the lowest greenhouse gas emitting, one of the most affordable, most scalable and frankly safest forms of energy out there. If one is not serious about nuclear, one is not serious about the economy or the environment.

Canada has been a pioneer in nuclear energy since the beginning. In fact, we were the second country in the world to produce nuclear energy.

One of the most promising forms of nuclear innovation is small modular reactors, or SMRs. If people are not too familiar with them, they do not have to worry; they will be hearing a whole lot more about them in the years to come. These are not traditional reactors. They are of incredible value for remote communities and small communities throughout Canada, allowing them to meet their energy needs of the 21st century.

I trust all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to hopefully support SMRs and recognize their value.

*Statements by Members***MADELEINE MONTESANO**

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I speak about generosity, kindness and advocacy to honour the passionate spirit of Madeleine Montesano.

Madeleine was not afraid of hard work or sacrifice. As a young French-Canadian nurse, she welcomed challenges as they came. Her motto was let us do what we have to do and can do; when we cannot, let us find those who can and allow them to assume the responsibility so we can all share the benefits. God has been good to us.

From parish involvement to active participation in democratic institutions, from cultural events to charitable organizations, Madeleine was unlimited in her passion and very generous in her philanthropic contributions to the community. When we care for someone deeply, their spirit lives forever in our hearts.

On behalf of her beloved husband Danny Montesano, my colleagues from Humber River—Black Creek, King—Vaughan and Eglinton—Lawrence, and all who had the indelible pleasure of knowing Madeleine, her legacy continues through all she touched.

Riposa in pace. Rest in peace.

* * *

[Translation]

**AWARENESS WEEK FOR THE ELIMINATION OF
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, I invite everyone in Val-d'Or and the surrounding areas to participate in the 21st Awareness Week for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is being held under the theme of "Together, united against racism".

This year, because of COVID-19, partners had to replace the Gabriel Commanda walk, which has been an important event for many years, with an individual solidarity march of 1.5 kilometres. People are invited to post pictures of themselves doing the walk on social media and to sign the banners that have been hung in front of Val-d'Or city hall and at the Complexe culturel Marcel-Monette.

Gabriel Commanda, a strong advocate for indigenous rights, is a historic figure in my riding. Thanks to him, for many years now, we have been aware of the reality of racial discrimination in an area where various indigenous peoples and non-indigenous people live side by side. As we have seen in the news in recent months, there is no respite from racism, and so the fight against racial discrimination must go on.

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MADE IN CANADA WEEK

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during made in Canada week, I had the opportunity to meet with Sherbrooke businesses that contributed to the fight against COVID-19.

Today I would like to applaud their efforts. MI Integration supplies N99 masks to 15 hospitals across Quebec, as demand steadily rises. SOS Odours, E2metrix and Laboratoire M2 are producing disinfectant and antiseptic cleaner. I want to say a huge thanks to

American Biltrite for producing medical equipment, such as its antibacterial flooring for hospitals. We also have Immune Biosolutions, which is making a significant contribution to Canadian research into treatment for COVID-19 and its variants.

I am proud to represent the city of Sherbrooke, which has really stepped up to meet everyone's public health needs.

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● (1410)

[English]

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we should always focus on national unity in the House. One of the biggest divides in Canada is between urban and rural areas.

Rural Canadians are part of team Canada, but too often they are picked last and get sidelined. It is more than just slow Internet and cell service. The Liberal plan for a clean fuel standard is exactly the opposite of a team Canada approach. It is nothing but a penalty.

The government's own review of regulation openly states that it will disproportionately impact vulnerable people with low incomes. It also says that rural areas, especially in the Atlantic provinces, along with those of us out west, will suffer from higher fuel and production costs. Heating costs are already going up, but now our workforce and job opportunities will be left out in the cold. Rinks and rural facilities at the heart of our towns and villages will take yet another hit.

Rural Canada, with its people and its communities, should not be punished for their way of life even if the Liberal government does not understand it. These great Canadians, as much as any other, deserve a lot better from their government.

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WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks World Tuberculosis Day and a day to draw awareness about the effects of TB, a disease with significant health, social and economic consequences. This year's theme is "The Clock is Ticking", and TB is an urgent matter.

In 2019, there were 1.4 million TB-related deaths around the world. The incidence of tuberculosis in Inuit Nunangat is more than 300 times higher than that in the non-indigenous, Canadian-born population.

Statements by Members

That is why we are actively working in partnership with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami across all four Inuit regions, investing more than \$27 million to reduce and eradicate this disease by 2030

We know that through rapid diagnostics and better tests, we are treating active TB sooner and preventing transmission to families and communities.

I ask my colleagues today to raise the awareness to end the stigma and discrimination associated with tuberculosis. It is time for a Canada and world without TB. I ask that we all work together to end this epidemic.

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SPECTRUM WORKS JOB FAIR

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2017, I had the pleasure of hosting a job fair in my riding focused specifically on people with autism. It was organized by Substance Cares. This event was not only the first of its kind in Canada but in the world. As we enter World Autism Awareness Month in April, I would like to highlight the reason for this initiative and its success.

Autism spectrum disorder currently affects one in 60 children nationally, and those with the disorder experience an 80% unemployment rate. Services and opportunities are limited, if not non-existent, for autistic people once they finish high school. In just five years, this event has attracted some of Canada's top employers and has garnered international media attention.

Prior to COVID, Substance Cares had expanded its job fair to Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver. This year this initiative will be held virtually on April 8 and is open to every province and territory in Canada.

I would like to applaud the co-founders and organizers of Substance Cares for their determination in working to bring about change through the Spectrum Works Job Fair.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are frustrated with the failure of the Liberals to manage this pandemic. The Prime Minister's failures on rapid tests and vaccines have had an immeasurable impact on our small businesses, health care system and Canadian families. Over the last year, we have seen a dramatic rise in mental health issues and addictions and overdoses, which has become a shadow pandemic.

Things must change. The new normal is not okay. The Liberals cannot keep asking Canadians to sacrifice more without being clear about when restrictions will be eased. That is why we are asking for a clear, data-driven plan to support the gradual, safe and permanent lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

The Prime Minister has been slow on the border and rapid tests, and he is behind the entire developed world on vaccines. The U.K. and U.S. have data-driven plans for lifting restrictions and reopening the economy. Why does Canada not have one?

• (1415)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of this House that COVID-19 is not a gender-neutral crisis. It has exposed an alarming rise in domestic and societal violence against women, especially ethnic, racial, and LGBTQ2+ minorities, nowhere more so than on social media platforms and nowhere more so than against women politicians and journalists.

Globally, 41% of women MPs, and 52% in Europe, have been the target of abusive, sexual or violent contact online, which often threatens death, rape or violence against their families. Online threats have real consequences, such as the assassination of U.K. MP Jo Cox in 2016. In 2019, this event caused 18 women in the U.K. alone to quit as MPs or not run again for Parliament.

It is urgent that parliaments join together with information and communications-based technologies to eradicate online violence and ensure gender safety on the Internet before it undermines democracy and good governance. The time to act is now.

* * *

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day, and it has been 23 years since my son Jaden was diagnosed. Jaden often needs help to navigate the world around him. Let us face it. We all need help sometimes.

Jaden also has many things the world needs right now. Surrounded by unrelenting noise, the world needs some quiet, and Jaden challenges us to slow down to wait for his thoughts to find expression in their own time and form. When we just pause and tune in to him, there is so much we can learn.

The world needs grace, and no matter what mistakes or poor choices I have made and will make, Jaden's love for me is almost impossibly pure and unconditional. The world also needs encouragement. Rest assured, Jaden stands ready with an enthusiastic high-five for quite literally everyone when we are able to come together again.

Statements by Members

Finally, the world needs gratitude. I am so thankful for the tens of millions of people around the world with autism whose unique abilities and perspectives will benefit all of us if we build societies that better include them.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Portage—Lisgar, I rise to say it is time to have a plan to see an end to the lockdowns, a plan to give back to the people the God-given freedoms our country guarantees them: the freedom to visit family and friends, the freedom to worship together, the freedom to allow children to play sports, even the freedom to plan a holiday, and the freedom to talk, hug, laugh and play.

It is time to reopen our economy and get our businesses and Canadians back to work. While other countries are making use of tools such as rapid tests, vaccines and treatments, Canada is behind. The U.S. and the U.K. have presented a plan to their citizens to safely reopen. The Liberal government here in Canada has no plan, and it refuses to provide any answers on a path forward.

Conservatives have a plan, a plan to secure jobs, secure mental health and secure the future. It is time to end the lockdowns and safely get back to normal. With Conservatives, Canadians will have a plan to do just that.

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● (1420)

HARDY BAY SENIOR CITIZENS' SOCIETY

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the name Rosaline Glynn is synonymous with the Hardy Bay Seniors. Rosaline was recently elected as chair, and I celebrate her dedication and hard work for seniors. She is an inspiration.

For example, at the end of 2020, Rosaline was a recipient of a certificate of appreciation from B.C. premier John Horgan for the work the society has done during COVID-19. The society used grants from the United Way to provide continuous food delivery to vulnerable seniors, offering more than 50 meals every two weeks. More recently, the Port Hardy council unanimously nominated Rosaline for the Order of British Columbia.

I also want to thank the amazing folks who are always there working with her: Kris, Donna and Candy, just to name a few. I also deeply appreciate the members of the board: Don, Ev, Ann, Bud and Pat.

I have been a member of the Hardy Bay Senior Citizens' Society for years, and I am so grateful for the amazing women who lead the way. I thank Rosaline for her leadership and her activism.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOLANGE DROUIN

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our cultural and musical institutions have been shaken to their foundations.

Solange Drouin, the executive director of the ADISQ, is stepping down after 29 years. This is difficult for me, because she and I experienced the golden age of Quebec's recording industry together in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when I was president of the ADISQ. This was also when the fight against piracy began, including illegal piracy and the sometimes legal, sanctioned piracy.

She was an extraordinary collaborator who was appreciated, respected, perhaps even a bit feared, but still loved by the entire arts and culture community. Her resilience was apparent, as she remained at the helm in a time of immense upheaval in the music industry. Some of her battles have yet to be won.

I would like to point out to the government that if it wants to give her a parting gift, it has the perfect opportunity to do so in the budget on April 19, by finally keeping its promise to force the digital giants to contribute to Quebec culture. This would be a meaningful way to honour three decades of commitment.

I do not believe that retirement would appeal to Solange, so my message to her is this: I look forward to seeing what you do next.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government last tabled a federal budget two years ago. That is two long years without a fiscal plan. We see the results. Canada has one of the highest unemployment rates in the G7 and record economic decline.

On our side of the House, Conservatives have a plan to secure jobs and secure the future. We believe that every Canadian deserves the security of a well-paying job. That is why our top economic priority is to enact a jobs plan to get Canadians back to work. We will take immediate action to help the hardest-hit sectors to help those, especially those women and young Canadians, who have suffered and lost the most; rebuild main streets by assisting small businesses and providing incentives to invest, rebuild and start new businesses; and create opportunities for all Canadians across this country.

We know Canada's recovery will begin by helping working Canadians. The Liberals are unable to improve Canada's economic fortunes, but Canadians can count on Conservatives to secure jobs, the economy and our future.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN WILD ANIMALS**

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today an event is being held for parliamentarians to raise awareness of the scourge of the international trade in wild animals.

[English]

I would have hoped there would be no need to address the need to curb the global commercial trade in wild animals, but unfortunately, too much money is still being made on the suffering and slaughter of wild animals. As an animal lover and a strong supporter for animal rights, I believe Canada needs to play an active role in developing a global solution to the wildlife trade.

[Translation]

It is our responsibility to invest in a sustainable environment, free from cruelty, so that animals may live in harmony with Mother Nature. I urge members to commit to abolishing trade in wild animals.

[English]

Animals, like humans, are sentient. They feel both pain and pleasure, and governments should take this into account in regulations governing their use and trade.

[Translation]

Canadians are concerned about the health and well-being of animals. I am sure that the majority of Canadians will join us in calling for an end to this shameful practice.

ORAL QUESTIONS
*[Translation]***VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic and lockdown have resulted in a mental health crisis. There has also been a wave of domestic violence across the country, including in Quebec. Yesterday, a seventh woman battered by her husband succumbed to her injuries. Existing programs do not work. What do we need to do right now to end this violence?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past five years, our government has been addressing the scourge of gender-based violence and we will continue to do so with record investments in opportunities for women and in the fight against domestic violence. We have brought forward measures against guns that include components against domestic violence. We have been working on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls for a long time. We will continue to work with all members of the House to fight against domestic violence and gender-based violence.

• (1425)

*[English]***HEALTH**

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's chief science advisor is warning against the government extending the second vaccine dose to four months. The scientists and physicians on the Prime Minister's immunization panel confirmed the only reason they are moving to four months is because the Liberal government has failed to secure vaccine supply.

Will the Prime Minister admit he has a supply problem, not a science problem?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we now have safe and effective vaccines available in Canada. We need to vaccinate as many Canadians as possible as quickly as possible. To maximize resistance in Canada to COVID-19, NACI has recommended that second doses can be safely delayed by up to four months. We will continue working with provinces and territories to ensure that communities are protected and that they are supported by science in the decisions that they make around spacing of vaccines.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, did the Prime Minister or his office task the national security adviser with investigating allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance in 2018?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the ombudsperson came forward with allegations, the minister quite rightly directed him to the Privy Council Office to follow up on those investigations. We know that allegations of sexual misconduct need to be taken extremely seriously and need to be followed up on by appropriate authorities, not by politicians. That is something that Ray Novak emphasized in his appearance at committee. We will always take very seriously allegations of sexual assault. We will always stand up for the women and men who step forward while they serve.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ray Novak consulted appropriate authorities. I have an email from the Prime Minister's former national security adviser saying that these serious allegations were never brought to his attention. He was the appropriate person the Prime Minister should have raised these serious allegations to, but he was never told an investigation was needed.

Why did the Prime Minister sit on serious allegations about sexual misconduct against the chief of the defence staff for three years?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the ombudsperson came forward to the minister with allegations, the minister quite rightly directed him to the appropriate independent authorities. That is the role the politicians need to take. In my career as leader, as we have encountered allegations of sexual assault and harassment, we have always forwarded those to appropriate authorities for proper investigation. That is what needs to happen in this situation and in every situation. We know we need to continue to work to ensure that there are resources and recourse available for anyone who comes forward, and we need to put an end to the culture that permits this.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve better.

According to an email from the Prime Minister's former national security advisor, allegations about General Vance were never brought to his attention. The person in the PMO in charge of opening an investigation was not aware of the situation. Why has the Prime Minister done nothing about this situation in the past three years?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our government has always acknowledged that we must protect and provide resources to those who come forward with allegations. That is exactly what we did in this situation.

The Minister of National Defence directed the ombudsman to the authorities having the ability to conduct an independent and rigorous investigation. That is the process that must be followed. We will continue to work to improve the process. No woman serving in our armed forces should be subjected to that. They must have recourse.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the crab fishing season starts in a few days, but around 40% of the port in Cap-aux-Meules is no longer accessible to fishers. It is one crisis after another, and the people of the Magdalen Islands are often the ones who suffer.

I would like a yes or no response from the Prime Minister. These people will be listening. Will the government either immediately repair the equipment or financially compensate the Magdalen Island fishers for their losses?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were concerned to learn about the issues at the port facilities in Cap-aux-Meules.

We are in touch with local authorities. We are looking into what we can do not only to make sure that fishers and everyone who uses these facilities are safe but also to ensure that the fishing season can proceed.

I know how important the fisheries are to the people of the Magdalen Islands. They can count on the federal government.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have already lost 35 seconds that could have been spent looking for a solution.

The Mauricie region has been working for quite some time on a project involving a high-frequency train that would go to Quebec City from Windsor. It was a Liberal election promise in 2015 and again in 2019. However, nothing has been done.

I recall comparing it to the Sasquatch. It is a mirage in a public transit desert.

We must answer the people of Mauricie with a yes or no. Will the high-frequency train be in the budget?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to point out to my hon. colleague that the budget will be tabled on April 19. He will have all his answers at that time.

I can confirm, however, that when I was in Trois-Rivières this week, I had a very good conversation with the mayor of Trois-Rivières, in which I emphasized our continued commitment, as well as the tens of millions of dollars that we have already invested in high-frequency rail, a project that is close to the hearts of not only the people of Trois-Rivières, but also all Quebecers and Canadians.

* * *

SENIORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic exposed the worst conditions of care for our seniors in for-profit long-term care homes.

There were more infections and deaths, but despite all the evidence, the Liberals, the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois voted against our motion to remove profit from long-term care.

Why did the Prime Minister choose profits over caring for our seniors?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the hon. NDP leader began his career in provincial politics and that he might be a little confused about where he is now.

We are in Ottawa. This is the federal government, and we are working in partnership with the provinces. We respect provincial jurisdiction. However, we know we need to work together to better protect the lives and dignity of seniors across the country.

We will keep working with the provinces, and we will keep respecting their jurisdiction.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, real leadership is about finding solutions, not finding excuses. With this approach, we would never have had universal health care in our country. It took leadership.

The proof is overwhelmingly clear: for-profit long-term care homes were the sites of the worst conditions of care in this pandemic. We saw the military go in and find that, in for-profit long-term care homes, syringes were being reused. We saw expired medication used. Despite all the evidence, the Liberals, the Bloc and the Conservatives voted against our motion to remove profit from long-term care.

Why does the Prime Minister choose profits over care and the lives of our seniors?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can always respect someone who does not forget his roots, but I need to point out to the hon. leader of the NDP that he is no longer at Queen's Park. He is now in the federal House of Commons where we respect provincial jurisdictions when it comes to delivering health care.

We will, however, continually work in partnership with the provinces to improve outcomes for our seniors. We have seen far too many seniors who are vulnerable because of the long-term care situations they are in, in both profit and not-for-profit models. We need to make sure that we are protecting all seniors across the country. That is exactly what this federal government will do.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I began my career in politics, I was a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence and we talked a lot about Operation Honour.

The purpose of this operation was to enable women to proudly serve in the Canadian Armed Forces in an inclusive and respectful work environment. Obviously, the operation was a failure.

Here is what I want to know. When was the Prime Minister made aware of the allegations against General Vance?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in our government, all allegations are taken seriously, and we ensure that they are followed up on by the appropriate independent authorities.

That is exactly what happened in this case. When the National Defence ombudsperson received a complaint, the minister directed him to the appropriate independent authorities so that they could conduct an investigation.

We know that there is still a lot of work to do, despite everything that has already been done. We need to move faster and that is exactly what we will do together.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is not being transparent. We never get any real answers. Enough with the cover-ups.

The question is very clear. When was the Prime Minister made aware of the allegations against General Vance?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been answering this question during the press scrums for months. Here, in the House of Commons, we always take such allegations seriously.

My office was made aware of the fact that the Minister of National Defence directed the ombudsperson to the appropriate authorities for follow-up. I only learned of the nature of these allegations in media reports in recent months.

[English]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Prime Minister, sexual misconduct at the highest levels of our Canadian Armed Forces continues unchecked. Serious allegations are ignored, investigations are shut down, critical evidence is lost and charges are dropped. Those who are complicit through their actions or their silence remain in senior positions. The government's consistent failure to act begins and ends with the Prime Minister.

What did the Prime Minister know and when did he know it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have answered that question a number of times, but we have demonstrated since forming government that we take extraordinarily seriously the responsibility to make sure that people are protected in their places of work, in their service to their country, and we have brought forward mechanisms and measures that continue to protect them.

We recognize that there need to be more resources. We recognize there needs to be more work to end a culture that tolerates inappropriate behaviour far too often. We will continue to move faster and stronger on exactly this issue.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is defiant that he has consistently got it right for the men and women in uniform, but he failed to have General Vance suspended or allegations against him investigated. Worse still, he approved a salary increase of \$50,000 for him. He approved a replacement chief of the defence staff who also stands accused of sexual misconduct, and he continues to support a defence minister who has failed in his sworn duties.

When will the Prime Minister hold senior officers accountable, starting with the defence minister?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have no tolerance for any form of sexual misconduct. When such allegations are brought forward, we always take them seriously and forward them to the appropriate authorities. That is exactly what happened in this situation. The Canadian Armed Forces have launched an independent investigation of this matter.

With regard to the pay increases, decisions on salary increases are made entirely by professional public servants, and we respond to the recommendations of those public servants.

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's cover-up continues, so let us look at the Prime Minister's actions. On the one hand, the Prime Minister very publicly speculated about and directed the RCMP to charge Vice-Admiral Mark Norman in March 2018, but, on the other hand, the Prime Minister claims he could not politically interfere in starting an investigation into the allegations against General Vance, also in March 2018. Yesterday, the former military ombudsman called this flimsy excuse about political interference both “bizarre” and “weak”.

Why did the Prime Minister cover up these allegations?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we always take all allegations of sexual misconduct extremely seriously. No one should ever feel unsafe at work. We will continue to work to change the culture in the Canadian Armed Forces so that no one ever feels like they cannot come forward with allegations of sexual misconduct.

Since forming government, we have taken action to address and eliminate sexual harassment, not only in the Canadian Armed Forces, but across government. It is clear, though, that the measures we have taken have not gone far enough and we will do more and faster.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some would call that a failure.

Whether it is Vice-Admiral Norman, SNC-Lavalin, the WE scandal or General Vance, the Liberal playbook is so predictable: first, cover up the issue and pretend to be shocked when it becomes public; then throw money at the problem, in this case, a big, fat raise for the general accused of sexual misconduct; and, finally, when all else fails, blame the Conservatives because that defines real Liberal leadership.

When will the Prime Minister admit he turned his back on our troops by failing to direct his national security adviser to investigate General Vance three years ago?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allegations of sexual misconduct or inappropriate behaviour need to be followed up by the appropriate authorities, and that is exactly what happened in this case. The ombudsperson was directed toward the right people in terms of following up on an investigation. The ombudsperson was not able to share further information with the investigators and, therefore, the investigation did not move forward.

We will continue to take very seriously any allegations that come forward, as we always have. We will continue to work to ensure that there is a change in the culture and better systems in place.

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps missing the net in the shootout. We will try again with a yes-or-no question. Everyone will be listening.

Let us take a specific example. Say that Antoine Tremblay from Rimouski is 67 years old and wants to know whether the budget will include an increase in the old age pension that does not discriminate based on age. He does not want to have to wait until he is 75 to get that increase. Will the pensions for seniors between the ages of 65 and 75 increase, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the political games that the leader of the Bloc Québécois is playing are disappointing, because he knows full well that we cannot talk about what is in the budget before we table it in the House of Commons.

I encourage seniors in Rimouski and across Quebec and Canada to take comfort in the fact that we committed to increasing old age security for seniors when they turn 75 and that we are committed to supporting seniors with record investments during this pandemic. We even increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10% as soon as we took office. We will continue to support our seniors across the country.

HEALTH

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he just said what is in the budget, but it was not what we were after. I will try once more to get a yes or no answer. I think he will listen.

An Outremont man told us that he wants to know if health transfers will be increased, no strings attached, to 35% of health care costs, as requested by all premiers, including Quebec's. Let us say that the Outremont man asking this is named François Legault. Will this be in the budget, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows very well, I recently had some very good conversations with Mr. Legault about supporting the province's health care system and increasing our joint investments in areas like green energy production and high-speed Internet. We will continue to work hand in hand to ensure that Quebecers and all Canadians have the services they need both during this pandemic and beyond.

• (1445)

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whether it is destroyed documents with the B.C. Liberals, the gas plant scandal with the McGuinty Liberals or the SNC-Lavalin scandal with these Liberals, what do they all have in common? Well, it is the senior adviser to the Prime Minister, Ben Chin. That is the same Ben Chin that Craig Kielburger thanked for helping to shape the CSSG in the WE scandal.

Is the Prime Minister blocking the testimony of Ben Chin because Ben Chin has dirt on the Liberal elite from coast to coast to coast?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am stunned that the Conservative opposition continues to talk about the WE Charity in the midst of this pandemic, in the midst of the concerns that Canadians have about rebuilding our economy in terms of the work we are doing together.

While Conservatives continue to focus on us and on politics, we will stay focused on supporting Canadians. We will be focused on the families who need support, the small businesses that need help across the country and the jobs that will be created through fighting climate change.

These are priorities for Liberals that Conservatives do not seem to get at all.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, I agree with the Prime Minister that he is stunned. We also agree that they should be focused, as a government, on helping Canadians instead of helping insider Liberals. They gave a half-billion dollars to a company that gave members of the Prime Minister's family half a million dollars. They shut down Parliament and locked down committees and filibustered at committees.

The question is very simple. Will the Prime Minister let Ben Chin testify at committee, or is that the only job he is looking to protect?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Conservatives themselves pointed out a number of weeks ago, we are much more focused on supporting Canadians' jobs than we are our own.

Our focus from the beginning of this pandemic has been on delivering for Canadians, on supporting families, on supporting small businesses, on helping workers through this pandemic, and yes, on building back better, which involves recognizing that the jobs of the future require us to be responsible about the environment and that we cannot have a plan for the future of the economy if we do not have a plan to fight climate change. That, unfortunately, is what the Conservatives are trying to avoid at all costs by bringing up things that, quite frankly, were answered months and months ago.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the Prime Minister charity begins at home—his home.

In fact, when little children across Canada donated their lunch money, pennies and allowances to help poor kids and develop countries, somehow hundreds of thousands of dollars of that money ended up with the Prime Minister's family. He paid it back, of course, with a half-billion-dollar grant to the WE Charity, but committee information on how much his family got is now contradictory.

In writing, the total is \$566,000, but in Kielburger testimony, it is \$427,000. How much did his family get?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives continue to play politics, we will continue to focus on the supports Canadians need. While Conservative

politicians continue to say we did too much too fast to support Canadians, we will continue to say we have their backs. That is what we have had throughout this pandemic. Whether it is through direct supports to families, direct supports to workers, supports for the provinces and territories in their rapid testing and delivery of a safe back to school for kids, or support for the health care systems, we have continued to support Canadians. We have continued to focus on what matters to Canadians, unlike the Conservatives, who are focusing on what matters to them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he says he has Canadians' backs. He actually has his hands in their back pockets. The question was whether his family got \$427,000, as the Kielburgers claim, or \$566,000, as the written documents suggest. Either way, it is a lot of dough. It is real, serious and true dough. The question we want answered is, what did this money have to do with influencing the Prime Minister's decision to give half a billion dollars to this charity?

Will he let his staff who were involved in setting up this program testify at the ethics committee so that Canadians can know the truth?

• (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians tuning into question period today might be puzzled and wonder why the Conservatives are suddenly going back to failed lines of attack from many months ago. It is all about short-term politics for them. It is all about trying to change a channel on the disastrous convention they just had last weekend. It is all about trying to find something that makes them relevant to Canadians.

I recommend that if they want to talk about relevance to Canadians, they can talk about how we are going to work together to deliver for families through this pandemic, grow small businesses as we recover our economy and fight climate change to protect our future.

* * *

[Translation]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals make themselves out to be allies of students, but they are all talk and no action. What we see here is a record of failure. Not only did the Liberals break their promise to extend the moratorium on debt repayment, they also continued charging interest on loans. This is Liberal hypocrisy in action.

Oral Questions

The NDP just proposed a plan that will help students actually reduce their debts. For the Quebec government, it will mean a transfer of hundreds of millions of dollars to help students.

When will the Liberals finally do something to really help students?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is utter nonsense.

We have supported students every step of the way. We suspended student loan repayments, doubled the Canada student grants and introduced the Canada emergency student benefit, which has helped over 700,000 post-secondary students and recent graduates.

We will always be there to support our young people, who have suffered a great deal during the pandemic. They will help us build back better.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, imagine what it is like being confronted by racial slurs, being spat on, being kicked and punched and being killed.

Racist verbal and physical attacks for Asian Canadians are on a sharp rise. In Vancouver, anti-Asian hate crimes went up 717%. Every attack is aimed at stripping us of our sense of safety and dignity. It is a clear message to say that we are not wanted and we do not belong.

Will the Prime Minister stand with us by including anti-Asian racism in the national anti-racism strategy and in all the government's anti-racism policies and programs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rise in anti-Asian hatred and racism that we have seen over the past many months is absolutely horrific. It is unacceptable in Canada or anywhere else around the world.

As a government, as we move forward on anti-racism strategies with the secretariat, with record investments, with support for various communities, we will continue to directly and specifically support Asian Canadians who have seen a horrific rise in hate crimes.

It is absolutely unacceptable in Canada that we are seeing this. I know we all, in this House, stand united on this issue.

* * *

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now more than ever, Canadians need access to the Internet to participate in today's digital world. Having transitioned to working at home and taking online courses, people living in Quebec's rural areas need reliable Internet.

Can the Prime Minister inform Quebecers of the progress made on this file?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Châteauguay-Lacolle for her question and her hard work.

I was very proud to announce this week, together with Premier Legault, a joint investment of more than \$800 million to fast-track broadband projects in Quebec. This new investment will ensure that every Quebecer can connect to high-speed Internet by the end of 2022.

We will continue our work to connect all Canadian households in every region of Canada in the coming years.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that vaccine deliveries to Canada from Europe and India, two of the biggest sources of vaccines to our country, may be restricted.

Ninety-two countries have formal written exemptions from the EU's export control regulations, but Canada does not. Today the Minister of Public Procurement declined comment to The Globe and Mail on how proposed restrictions might affect the delivery of EU-made vaccines to Canada.

Can the Prime Minister absolutely guarantee that zero doses of vaccines will be held back from the EU to our country over the next two months?

● (1455)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we share the urgency of all Canadians to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines. We are concerned with the new reports of potential restrictions out of the EU, and we will be continuing to work with our counterparts, including direct contact from me to the highest levels of the European Commission, in order to ensure that Canada's supply of vaccines is not in danger and is not interrupted. This is something that we are working extremely hard on, and we will ensure that Canadians continue to receive the vaccines that we need.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it just blows my mind. We knew this was a problem two months ago, and we still have no guarantees from the Prime Minister on that issue.

Let us try another country.

On top of the EU restrictions, India has put a hold on major exports of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Has the Prime Minister contacted the Modi government yet to determine how many doses may be held back by India from our country over the next two months, and if so, how many doses may be affected?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this file as well, we continue to work very closely with officials of both of our countries to ensure that the promised doses continue to flow. At this point, we have no indications that the two million doses we will be receiving from the Serum Institute over the coming two months will in any way be affected. We will continue to ensure that this is the case.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been hoping for a vaccine and supporting vaccination efforts for all Canadians who want one. This is why today we are once again concerned about what is happening in other countries.

India just announced that the AstraZeneca vaccine will no longer be exported. A responsible prime minister would have seen that coming and started preparing, but this one did not. What does the Prime Minister have to say to Canadians who got the first dose but do not know when they will get the second one, especially now that India has turned off the tap?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want Canadians to be afraid of what the member opposite just said.

I assure all Canadians that we are confident we will receive doses from the Serum Institute of India in the coming months, as promised. We will continue to work with our international partners to ensure that Canada gets vaccine doses on schedule.

The Conservatives are trying to scare people. Canadians already have enough things to be afraid of, and I assure everyone that the vaccines will continue to arrive and that we will protect them.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way to reassure Canadians is to give them the straight goods, which the Prime Minister has failed to do.

Remember that in December, he was so proud to say that the vaccines were coming. In January, we went 10 days without vaccines, and he could not explain why. Today, it is India. A few hours ago, the European Union announced stricter export measures for vaccines.

Beyond the rhetoric, what is the Prime Minister's specific game plan for reassuring Canadians and telling them whether or not they will get the vaccines they are expecting, particularly the second dose vaccines?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we saw the Conservatives do this perhaps a month or a month and a half ago. When the European Union first mentioned possible restrictions, the Conservative politicians started yelling that Canadians were not going to get any more vaccines and that we would be in trouble.

Oral Questions

We were able to assure Canadians that we would continue to receive the vaccines, and that is exactly what is happening. We will continue to receive the vaccines, and we are working closely with the Indian government and European Union leaders to ensure that the flow of vaccines to Canada is not interrupted.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on January 27, the House of Commons unanimously called on the Minister of Immigration to grant citizenship to Raif Badawi. Two months on, nothing has happened. Mr. Badawi is still in a Saudi jail, and he is still not a citizen.

The Minister of Immigration has the legal power to act and could do so this very minute. He has had two months. I asked him about this yesterday and the day before, and he cannot explain his failure to act. Now I am wondering if the Prime Minister is asking him to disobey the House.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working on Raif Badawi's case for years. I myself have spoken directly to the king and the prince to make sure they are taking our demands and concerns about Mr. Badawi's detention and safety seriously.

All Canadian MPs want Mr. Badawi and his family to be reunited, and we will continue to support them in every way we can. We are seized with this matter, and we continue to raise it at the highest levels. We will keep working with all parliamentarians and use every means at our disposal to bring Raif Badawi back to his family.

● (1500)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would remind members that the request of the House to grant citizenship to Raif Badawi was unanimous. That unanimity includes support from the Prime Minister.

To recap, Mr. Badawi's family and his lawyer asked that he be granted citizenship, the House of Commons unanimously agrees, the Minister of Immigration agrees, the Prime Minister agrees. Seriously, if everyone agrees, why is Mr. Badawi still not a citizen two months later? What is going on?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a case like this, we will always try to do things that will help bring Mr. Badawi back to his family. That is always our priority.

We are well aware of all the wishes expressed by his family and by the House. We will do everything that is in the interest of Mr. Badawi and his family in order to reunite them, including conversations at the highest level to underscore Canadians' desire to see this family reunited.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, documents released last week by Global Affairs Canada paint a troubling picture of the naïveté of this government's foreign policy. After a bit of pressure was put on the government by the arms export lobby and by Turkish authorities, and after the government was told that these arms exports would be used for the defence of human rights, the government buckled and naively reversed its earlier decision and approved these arms exports to Turkey.

Will the Prime Minister now admit that this was a mistake?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when reports first came out about the possible utilization of Canadian technology in unsanctioned areas, we suspended the relevant export permits to Turkey, because we take very seriously the responsibilities we have under some of the most restrictive and constraining regulations in the world around arms exports. We will continue to push for proper accountability and transparency in arms exports, a system that was left in a very shoddy state after 10 years of Conservative government, which we were able to tighten up. We will continue to ensure that we have full accountability and full transparency, including from our NATO allies such as Turkey.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the documents also reveal something else troubling: The Liberal Party put its own self-interest first.

The documents reveal that when the foreign affairs minister met with his Turkish counterpart last September, the objective was not to discuss the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, and it was not to discuss Syria or other regional conflicts. It was to promote the Liberal Party and Liberal insiders. It was to promote Bill Morneau's candidacy for the OECD. Nineteen staff were put on this job.

Does the Prime Minister think it appropriate to put the Liberal Party's interests ahead of Canada's?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tradition of Canadian leadership in multilateral institutions around the world is one that Canadians of all political stripes have supported over the past many decades. It has been important to have Canadians serving in the highest instances of multilateral institutions to ensure and advance our values and our interests, and to demonstrate the competence and the commitment of Canada to shared global values, the rule of law and the growth of the economy in ways that, for example, recognize that climate change is an economic challenge that we all need to address together.

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in light of these revelations, will the Prime Minister promise not to make the same mistakes that contributed to fuelling the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict and that were inconsistent with Canada's interests and values in the region?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to note that in the many conversations that I have had with Nikol Pashinyan, the Prime Minister of Armenia, during this conflict, including when I met him several years ago, I told him that we will always be there for our Armenian brothers and sisters.

We know the challenges they are facing as a country, and we will always support them, because Armenia is a country that shares our values. We have deep ties with Armenia.

* * *

● (1505)

*[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was deeply troubling to hear the Conservative Party of Canada reject adding “climate change is real” to its policy book this past weekend. Whether we are talking about measures to get through this pandemic or addressing the serious issue of climate change, facts and science matter.

Can the Prime Minister please update the House, and all Canadians, on the importance of the environment when it comes to growing our economy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Markham—Stouffville for her question and for her long-standing dedication to public health.

Unlike the Conservative members opposite, on this side of the House the debate is truly settled: Climate change is real. Unlike the party opposite, we, along with Canadians, investors, industry and economists, recognize that a plan for jobs and growth must include a plan for the environment. It is a simple fact, and one that almost all Canadians recognize. Unfortunately, the Conservative leader's party has once again chosen to reject that.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, Chevron Canada announced that it was exiting the Kitimat LNG after seven years and \$3 billion. Why is investment fleeing this world-leading project? The Liberal appointee leading the Canada Infrastructure Bank said that risk and uncertainty are holding back private investment projects across the country.

It comes full circle. Liberals create risk and uncertainty and then blame investments fleeing Canada on risk and uncertainty. Can the Prime Minister please tell 4,500 more Canadian workers why their jobs are suddenly more risky and uncertain?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, global investors understand that climate change is real. The risk in their investments is often that there are mainstream parties in Canada, such as the Conservative Party of Canada, that do not accept that climate change is real and that we need to act. There are provinces across the country that continue to fight against the simple fact of putting a price on pollution as a way of moving forward to fight climate change and create good jobs. The resistance to understanding that climate change is real is the economic risk that all Canadians and investors face because of the Conservative party.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the day when the Prime Minister finally recognizes that reducing emissions is more than just increasing taxes and virtue signalling.

We have a real plan. This project, Kitimat LNG, would reduce 40 million tonnes a year, while at the same time displacing the influence of the bad actors right across the world. Not only that, capital is fleeing Canada. We are seeing that indigenous and non-indigenous communities are being hurt right across the country, and in fact 16 first nations had secured over half a billion dollars in commercial partnership agreements.

When will the Prime Minister finally get serious about reconciliation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities across the country have long understood that in order to have healthy communities, one must protect the environment. Canadians across the country understand that, in order to create jobs and growth, we need to fight climate change at the same time. Unfortunately, the Conservative party continues to misunderstand and not realize that the only way to move forward with a plan for jobs and growth for the economy is to also have a plan to fight climate change.

We will continue to do what is necessary to fight climate change while creating growth right across the country.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the Prime Minister could update us on his two-billion-tree promise.

Also, the Prime Minister talks a good game about supporting reconciliation, yet indigenous families, businesses and communities are all being deprived by the Liberals. There are 16 first nations communities that have lost agreements in training, employment, contracting, environmental stewardship and many more areas. Indigenous people want certainty and opportunity. Instead, \$35 billion has exited the country over the past five years.

Liberal policies are hindering reconciliation, so when will the Prime Minister stand up for indigenous communities and secure their future?

• (1510)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have continued to work with indigenous communities across the country in creating economic investments and opportunities,

Oral Questions

while at the same time investing in ending long-term drinking water advisories, in opening new schools and in creating opportunities for investments and partnerships. We have demonstrated that reconciliation goes a lot further than just trying to get them on board for a specific energy project that the Conservatives seem to want. It has to do with creating opportunities for growth long term, while at the same time fighting climate change and protecting the planet. That is what this Liberal government consistently does.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at its convention last week, the Conservative Party voted against recognizing that climate change is real. Pretending a problem does not exist is not a solution. It may even make it worse, whether it is a pandemic or climate change.

Could the Prime Minister explain why it is important to recognize that climate change is real and take action to fight it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine for this important question.

Perhaps the members opposite should spend less time questioning the science and instead go talk to people in Lac-Saint-Jean, who are seeing more and more forest fires, people in Montérégie and Outaouais, who have experienced two historic floods in the past few years, or any other Canadian who knows that climate change is real because they feel its effects every day.

While the Conservative Party refuses to acknowledge reality, we will take action for future generations by building a future that works for both the environment and the economy.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Parliamentary Budget Officer slammed the government's Infrastructure Bank on its failure to get things built. He found that after four years, the bank had finalized investment in only two projects and spent only 3% of its budget. The billions of dollars of private funding that the Prime Minister promised, not a single cent has arrived.

Points of Order

The government's privatization agenda has left communities without desperately needed projects. Will the Prime Minister finally stop trying to help his corporate friends turn a profit and instead focus on the needs of communities?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can understand that Skeena—Bulkley Valley is a long way from my home town of Montreal, but Montrealers see every day the construction going on with the electric transit system that is making a huge difference in Montreal already as it is being built. The Infrastructure Bank was a key partner in that, and we continue to invest in key projects right across the country.

We know that investing in public transit and investing in infrastructure is the way to create jobs now and opportunities for the future. We will continue to deliver for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for tabling the following document.

It is an email from Daniel Jean regarding the Minister of National Defence. Since the leader of the official opposition mentioned it, I am sure that all parliamentarians will be happy to read it once it is tabled.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everyone that health and safety standards are very important in the House and that people must always sit two metres apart.

Although we were very pleased to see three government members in the House today, everybody must keep two metres apart.

The Speaker: Everyone must always follow the two-metre physical distancing rule, but I want to remind members that they must not refer to the presence of members in the House. I believe the hon. member forgot that.

* * *

● (1515)

[*English*]

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

That, in addition to the measures in the motion adopted on March 22nd, 2021 condemning the rise of anti-Asian racism, in the opinion of the House, the government should also include anti-Asian racism in Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019-2022, and all anti-racism policies and programs.

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

Hearing none, 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)

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO QUESTION NO. 373

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning the government's response to Question No. 373, submitted on February 1, 2021.

The question was the following:

With regard to illegal firearms entering Canada: what is the government's estimate of the number of illegal firearms that have entered the country since 2016, broken down by year and by method of entry (air cargo shipments, land passenger vehicle smuggling, etc.)?

The response included a hyperlink to a site providing what the government claims is supporting information. The site was not a government source, but rather a non-government entity called "Open Parliament", which is available only in English. The French version of the government's response, signed by the member for Louis-Hébert, I might add, provides the same hyperlink, referring francophone readers to an English-only site.

This English link was provided in the response that was signed by the Liberal member for Louis-Hébert, tabled in the House on Monday, March 22 and printed at page 5053 of the Debates. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by Bosc and Gagnon states the following at page 612: "The Constitution Act, 1867 guarantees that a Member may address the House in either English or French....In addition, all parliamentary publications"—

The Speaker: Order. I will interrupt the hon. member because we had some technical difficulties. There was no interpretation, and we had a small delay between the video and the sound.

Could the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska go back perhaps 15 or 20 seconds, a paragraph or so, and repeat what he just said? The hon. member.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to repeat the last paragraph.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, by Bosc and Gagnon, states the following at page 612:

The Constitution Act, 1867 guarantees that a Member may address the House in either English or French....In addition, all parliamentary publications, such as the Journals, the Debates, and the Order Paper and Notice Paper, are printed in both official languages.

Page 615 of the same book reads as follows:

All documents tabled in the House by a Minister are required to be tabled in both official languages.

In addition, section 4 of the Official Languages Act states the following:

4 (1) English and French are the official languages of Parliament, and everyone has the right to use either of those languages in any debates and other proceedings of Parliament.

...

(3) Everything reported in official reports of debates or other proceedings of Parliament shall be reported in the official language in which it was said and a translation thereof into the other official language shall be included therewith.

I know that you are aware of all this, Mr. Speaker, but I think it is important to point it out in this case, especially in light of all the problems we have had with protecting French in everything we get from the government. There are many examples, and I will not list them all today, since that is not the purpose of my request.

On April 19, 1993, the then speaker of the House, in response to a question of privilege, said that statutes “are the highest form of command that can be given by this House. In my view, the disregard of that legislative command, even if unintentional, is an affront to the authority and dignity of Parliament as a whole and of this House in particular.”

I do not know why the Liberal member for Louis-Hébert—

The Speaker: Order. I must interrupt the member because we are having a technical issue again.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

• (1520)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I have been listening intently and the interpreter said that they had to stop because of technical issues.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, with respect to this point of order, which is quite pertinent and important, I invite my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska to repeat at least the last minute of his speech because it is an important issue, especially since we are discussing the two official languages. The interpreters should hear exactly what he said. I therefore invite my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska to repeat the last minute of his speech.

[English]

The Speaker: When did we realize we had problems with interpretation? I want to ensure that we do not miss anything.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, as soon as the interpreter made that comment, I stood up, so it was only a matter of five or 10 seconds. The important thing is that the technical issue be resolved so we can continue to hear this in its entirety. Otherwise we will continue to have this problem.

The Speaker: We are aware of it and I have spoken with the technical folks. They are looking into it to see what happened. There is a delay between video and voice. It seems to be central to our problem throughout question period today. I thank members for bringing that up.

Points of Order

[Translation]

I would ask the member for Richmond—Arthabaska to go back one paragraph so we can all clearly hear what he said. He has the floor.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I checked my Internet connection while you were speaking and it is excellent at this time. Therefore, the problem is not at my end.

I will go back a little.

On April 19, 1993, the then speaker of the House, in responding to a question of privilege, stated that legislative provisions were “statutes of the highest form of command that can be given by this House. In my view the disregard of that legislative command, even if unintentional, is an affront to the authority and dignity of Parliament as a whole and of this House in particular.”

I do not know why the Liberal member for Louis-Hébert chose to disrespect the French language in this manner. We do not know if it was intentional or just the result of negligence.

However, I believe that much like me, Mr. Speaker, you will recognize that there have been several failures on the part of this government with respect to the French language, especially during the pandemic.

The Commissioner of Official Languages clearly pointed that out in a report not too long ago. The government’s complete response to this question, as bad as it is, must be submitted in both official languages, as required by our Constitution, rules, customs and laws.

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member. I will take the matter under advisement and report back to the House, if necessary.

We have another point of order.

The hon. member for Louis-Hébert.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I just want to briefly respond to my colleague and assure him that this mistake was far from intentional. I will see to it that the situation is remedied as quickly as possible.

Respect for official languages, and French in particular, in the House and in this institution is very important to me. That is why I chose to join the Liberal Party rather than the Conservative Party, which systematically appointed unilingual anglophones as officers of Parliament and which is still refusing to appoint bilingual judges to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Speaker: There was a technical issue. Could the member repeat his last few sentences?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I will do so with pleasure.

I was simply saying that respect for official languages, and French in particular, is very important to me, so much so that I decided to join the Liberal Party rather than the Conservative Party, which, for 10 years under Stephen Harper, systematically appointed unilingual anglophones to our institutions and which is still refusing to appoint bilingual judges to the Supreme Court.

Private Members' Business

The Speaker: I would like to thank the members for their comments.

We will now continue.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION ACT

The House resumed from March 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-232, An Act respecting a Climate Emergency Action Framework, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:25 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-232 under Private Members' Business.

Call in the members.

• (1540)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 74*)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Bérubé
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias	Boulerice
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Chabot	Champoux
Collins	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Duvall
Fortin	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gill	Green
Harris	Hughes
Johns	Julian
Kwan	Larouche
Lemire	MacGregor
Manly	Marcil
Masse	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McPherson
Michaud	Normandin
Pauzé	Perron
Plamondon	Qaqqaq
Sangha	Savard-Tremblay
Simard	Singh
Ste-Marie	Thériault
Therrien	Trudel
Vignola	Wilson-Raybould
Zann— 61	

NAYS

Members

Aboulttaif	Aitchison
------------	-----------

Albas	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bessette
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Blois	Bragdon
Brassard	Bratina
Brière	Calkins
Carr	Carrie
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cormier
Cumming	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	d'Entremont
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diotte	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Fillmore	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gallant
Garneau	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gladu	Godin
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hallan
Harder	Hardie
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Jansen	Jeneroux
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kelloway	Kelly
Kent	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmieci	Koutrakis
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd

Private Members' Business

CANADA PENSION PLAN INVESTMENT BOARD ACT

The House resumed from March 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-231, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act (investments), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-231, under Private Members' Business.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 75*)

YEAS

Members

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Angus | Ashton |
| Atwin | Bachrach |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Bergeron | Bérubé |
| Blaikie | Blanchet |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Blaney (North Island—Powell River) |
| Boudrias | Boulerice |
| Brunelle-Duceppe | Cannings |
| Chabot | Champoux |
| Collins | Davies |
| DeBellefeuille | Desbiens |
| Desilets | Duvall |
| Erskine-Smith | Fortin |
| Garrison | Gaudreau |
| Gazan | Gill |
| Green | Harris |
| Hughes | Johns |
| Julian | Kwan |
| Larouche | Lemire |
| MacGregor | Manly |
| Marcil | Masse |
| Mathysen | May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) |
| McPherson | Michaud |
| Normandin | Pauzé |
| Perron | Plamondon |
| Qaqqaq | Sangha |
| Savard-Tremblay | Simard |
| Singh | Ste-Marie |
| Thériault | Therrien |
| Trudel | Vignola |
| Wilson-Raybould— 61 | |

NAYS

Members

- | | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Alghabra |
| Alleslev | Allison |
| Amos | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Arnold |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Badawey | Bagnell |
| Bains | Baker |
| Baldinelli | Barlow |
| Barrett | Battiste |
| Beech | Bendayan |
| Bennett | Benzen |
| Bergen | Berthold |
| Bessette | Bezan |
| Bibeau | Bittle |

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Lobb | Long |
| Longfield | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| Lukiwski | MacAulay (Cardigan) |
| MacKenzie | MacKinnon (Gatineau) |
| Maguire | Maloney |
| Martel | Martinez Ferrada |
| May (Cambridge) | Mazier |
| McCauley (Edmonton West) | McColeman |
| McCrimmon | McDonald |
| McGuinty | McKay |
| McKenna | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McLean | McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) |
| McLeod (Northwest Territories) | Melillo |
| Mendès | Medicino |
| Miller | Monsef |
| Moore | Morantz |
| Morrison | Morrissey |
| Motz | Murray |
| Nater | Ng |
| O'Connell | Oliphant |
| O'Regan | O'Toole |
| Patzer | Paul-Hus |
| Petitpas Taylor | Poilievre |
| Powlowski | Qualtrough |
| Ratansi | Raves |
| Redekopp | Regan |
| Reid | Rempel Garner |
| Richards | Robillard |
| Rodriguez | Rogers |
| Romanado | Rood |
| Ruff | Sahota (Calgary Skyview) |
| Sahota (Brampton North) | Saini |
| Sajjan | Saks |
| Samson | Sarai |
| Saroya | Scarpaleggia |
| Scheer | Schiefke |
| Schmale | Schulte |
| Seeback | Serré |
| Shanahan | Sheehan |
| Shields | Shin |
| Shiplay | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Simms |
| Sloan | Sorbara |
| Soroka | Spengemann |
| Stanton | Steinley |
| Strahl | Stubbs |
| Sweet | Tabbara |
| Tassi | Tochor |
| Trudeau | Turnbull |
| Uppal | Van Bynen |
| van Koeverden | Van Popta |
| Vandal | Vandenbeld |
| Vaughan | Vecchio |
| Vidal | Viersen |
| Virani | Vis |
| Wagantall | Warkentin |
| Waugh | Webber |
| Weiler | Wilkinson |
| Williamson | Wong |
| Yip | Young |
| Yurdiga | Zahid |
| Zimmer | Zuberi— 272 |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Private Members' Business

Blair	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Miller	Monsef
Block	Blois	Moore	Morantz
Bragdon	Brassard	Morrison	Morrissey
Bratina	Brière	Motz	Murray
Calkins	Carr	Nater	Ng
Carrie	Casey	O'Connell	Oliphant
Chagger	Champagne	O'Regan	O'Toole
Chen	Chiu	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Chong	Cooper	Petitpas Taylor	Poilievre
Cormier	Cumming	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Dabrusin	Dalton	Ratansi	Rayes
Damoff	Dancho	Redekopp	Regan
Davidson	Delteell	Reid	Rempel Garner
d'Entremont	Dhaliwal	Richards	Robillard
Dhillon	Diotte	Rodriguez	Rogers
Doherty	Dong	Romanado	Rood
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Drouin	Dubourg	Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Duclos	Duguid	Sajjan	Saks
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Samson	Sarai
Dzerowicz	Easter	Saroya	Scarpaleggia
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Scheer	Schieffe
Ellis	Epp	Schmale	Schulte
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Seeback	Serré
Fast	Fergus	Shanahan	Sheehan
Fillmore	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Shields	Shin
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Finnigan	Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Fisher	Fonseca	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simms
Fortier	Fragiskatos	Sloan	Sorbara
Fraser	Freeland	Soroka	Spengemann
Fry	Gallant	Stanton	Steinley
Garneau	Généreux	Strahl	Stubbs
Genuis	Gerretsen	Sweet	Tabbara
Gladu	Godin	Tassi	Tochor
Gould	Gourde	Trudeau	Turnbull
Gray	Guilbeault	Uppal	Van Bynen
Hajdu	Hallan	van Koeverden	Van Popta
Harder	Hardie	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Hoback	Holland	Vaughan	Vecchio
Housefather	Hussen	Vidal	Viersen
Hutchings	Iacono	Virani	Vis
Ien	Jaczek	Wagantall	Warkentin
Jansen	Jeneroux	Waugh	Webber
Joly	Jones	Weiler	Wilkinson
Jordan	Jowhari	Williamson	Wong
Kelloway	Kelly	Yip	Young
Kent	Khalid	Yurdiga	Zahid
Khera	Kitchen	Zann	Zimmer
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Zuberi— 273	
Kram	Kurek		
Kusie	Kusmierczyk		
Lake	Lalonde		
Lambropoulos	Lametti		
Lamoureux	Lattanzio		
Lauzon	Lawrence		
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier		
Lefebvre	Lehoux		
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert		
Lightbound	Lloyd		
Lobb	Long		
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)		
Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)		
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)		
Maguire	Maloney		
Martel	Martinez Ferrada		
May (Cambridge)	Mazier		
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman		
McCrimmon	McDonald		
McGuinty	McKay		
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)		
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)		
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Melillo		
Mendès	Mendicino		

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

● (1555)

[*English*]

EMANCIPATION DAY

The House resumed from March 22 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 36 under Private Members' Business in the name of the member for Richmond Hill.

● (1610)

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

Private Members' Business

(Division No. 76)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bessette	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Chen	Chiu
Chong	Collins
Cooper	Cormier
Cumming	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diotte	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Fillmore
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gallant
Garneau	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hallan	Harder

Hardie	Harris
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Ien
Jaczek	Jansen
Jeneroux	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kelloway
Kelly	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Maloney	Manly
Marcil	Martel
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Medicino	Michaud
Miller	Monsef
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Nater	Ng
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poillievre
Powlowski	Qaqqaq
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rayes	Redekopp
Regan	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Sahota (Brampton North)
Saini	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Saroya	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shin

Business of Supply

Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sloan
Soroka
Stanton
Ste-Marie
Stubbs
Tabbara
Thériault
Tochor
Trudel
Uppal
van Koeverden
Vandal
Vaughan
Vidal
Vignola
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould
Yip
Yurdiga
Zann
Zuberi— 335

Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sorbara
Spengemann
Steinley
Strahl
Sweet
Tassi
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Viersen
Virani
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williamson
Wong
Young
Zahid
Zimmer

Carrie
Chong
Cumming
Dancho
Deltell
Diotte
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Hallan
Hoback
Jeneroux
Kent
Kmiec
Kurek
Lake
Lehoux
Liepert
Lobb
MacKenzie
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Ruff
Sangha
Scheer
Seeback
Shin
Sloan
Stanton
Strahl
Sweet
Uppal
Vecchio
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williamson
Yurdiga

Chiu
Cooper
Dalton
Davidson
d'Entremont
Doherty
Dreeshen
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Gray
Harder
Jansen
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kusie
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
Lukiwski
Maguire
Mazier
McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Morrison
Nater
Patzner
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Saroya
Schmale
Shields
Shipley
Soroka
Steinley
Stubbs
Tochor
Van Popta
Vidal
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Wong
Zimmer— 122

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—PLAN FOR REOPENING THE ECONOMY

The House resumed from March 23 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of Ms. Rempel Garner relating to the Business of Supply.

● (1625)

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

(Division No. 77)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Brassard

Aitchison
Alleslev
Arnold
Barlow
Benzen
Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Bragdon
Calkins

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Bains
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bessette
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice

NAYS

Members

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bagnell
Baker
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias
Bratina

Private Members' Business

Brière
Cannings
Casey
Chagger
Champoux
Collins
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Dhaliwal
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Ien
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacGregor
Maloney
Marcil
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès
Michaud
Monsef
Murray
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saini
Saks
Saraï
Scarpaleggia
Schulte

Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chabot
Champagne
Chen
Cormier
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hajdu
Harris
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jaczek
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Manly
Martinez Ferrada
Mathyszen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qaqqaq
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schieffe
Serré

Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh
Spengemann
Tabbara
Thériault
Trudeau
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Vignola
Weiler
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Zann

Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Tassi
Therrien
Trudel
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vaughan
Virani
Wilkinson
Yip
Zahid
Zuberi— 212

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO REDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM ACT

The House resumed from March 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-230, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-230.

● (1640)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 78)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Bains
Battiste
Bendayan
Bessette
Bittle
Blair
Blois
Bratina
Cannings
Casey
Champagne
Collins
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhillon
Drouin

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bagnell
Baker
Beech
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Chen
Cormier
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Dong
Dubourg

Private Members' Business

Duclos	Duguid		
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall		
Dzerowicz	Easter		
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Aboultaif	Aitchison
Ellis	Erskine-Smith	Albas	Alleslev
Fergus	Fillmore	Allison	Arnold
Finnigan	Fisher	Baldinelli	Barlow
Fonseca	Fortier	Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Beaulieu	Benzen
Freeland	Fry	Bergen	Bergeron
Garneau	Garrison	Berthold	Bérubé
Gazan	Gerretsen	Bezan	Blanchet
Gould	Green	Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Block	Boudrias
Hardie	Harris	Bragdon	Brassard
Holland	Housefather	Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Hughes	Hussen	Carrie	Chabot
Hutchings	Iacono	Champoux	Chiu
Ien	Jaczek	Chong	Cooper
Johns	Joly	Cumming	Dalton
Jones	Jordan	Dancho	Davidson
Jowhari	Julian	DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Kelloway	Khalid	d'Entremont	Desbiens
Khera	Koutrakis	Desilets	Diotte
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Doherty	Dowdall
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lametti	Lamoureux	Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Falk (Provencher)	Fast
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lefebvre	Lightbound	Fortin	Gallant
Long	Longfield	Gaudreau	Généreux
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Genius	Gill
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Gladu	Godin
Maloney	Manly	Gourde	Gray
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Hallan	Harder
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Hoback	Jansen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon	Jeneroux	Kelly
McDonald	McGuinty	Kent	Kitchen
McKay	McKenna	Kmieć	Kram
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Kurek	Kusie
McPherson	Mendès	Lake	Larouche
Mendicino	Miller	Lawrence	Lehoux
Monsef	Morrissey	Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Murray	Ng	Liepert	Lloyd
O'Connell	Oliphant	Lobb	Lukiwski
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor	MacKenzie	Maguire
Powlowski	Qaqqaq	Marcel	Martel
Qualtrough	Ratansi	Mazier	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
Regan	Robillard	McColeman	McLean
Rodriguez	Rogers	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)	Michaud	Moore
Saini	Sajjan	Morantz	Morrison
Saks	Samson	Motz	Nater
Sarai	Scarpaleggia	Normandin	O'Toole
Schiefke	Schulte	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Serré	Sgro	Pauzé	Perron
Shanahan	Sheehan	Plamondon	Poillievre
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Raves	Redekopp
Simms	Singh	Reid	Rempel Garner
Sorbara	Spengemann	Richards	Rood
Tabbara	Tassi	Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Trudeau	Turnbull	Sangha	Saroya
Van Bynen	van Koeverden	Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Vandal	Vandenbeld	Schmale	Seeback
Vaughan	Virani	Shields	Shin
Weiler	Wilkinson	Shiple	Simard
Wilson-Raybould	Yip	Sloan	Soroka
Young	Zahid	Stanton	Steinley
Zann	Zuberi — 182	Ste-Marie	Strahl
		Stubbs	Sweet
		Thériault	Therrien
		Tochor	Trudel
		Uppal	Van Popta

NAYS

Members

Routine Proceedings

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C-14, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020, and other measures.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-279, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (voting age).

She said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to present this bill, not for the first time but as a reintroduction with some modifications, to change the Elections Act such that Canadians aged 16 years and older can vote.

Certainly we see a crisis in the youngest demographic in this country not voting. Clear empirical evidence that we reviewed when we had a special committee on electoral reform pointed in the direction that people who start voting stick with their voting habit, but if we do not vote when we become eligible to vote at age 18, we are unlikely to start at 25 or 30. Voting at age 16 is a key way of refreshing, restarting and rebooting our democracy.

I note parenthetically that there was a similar bill that I also supported before the House, Bill C-240, from the member for Vancouver Kingsway, as well as one started in the other place by independent Senator McPhedran, Bill S-209. I certainly hope the House will be able to debate and vote on one of these worthy pieces of legislation to improve the state of our democracy.

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

* * *

● (1645)

Haida Gwaii Residents Tax Deduction Act

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-280, an act to amend the Income Tax Act with regard to residents of northern or intermediate zones.

He said: Madam Speaker, Haida Gwaii is well known across Canada, not only for its spectacular beauty and the rich culture of the Haida people, but also for its remoteness. To get to Haida Gwaii from Prince Rupert in good weather is a seven-hour ferry ride. It is hard to get any farther west in Canada.

Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vignola
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williamson
Wong	Yurdiga

Zimmer—153

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

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

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 72 minutes.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, as the last vote was taking place, we were unable to access the site and see each of our colleagues' votes simultaneously. I tried to refresh the page, but it did not work. I think it is important that the system be fully functional so that all votes count in the House.

I would ask you to take note of that and check what happened from a technical standpoint. I do think it is very important that we be able to see how our colleagues are voting as we go.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable. That is a very good point. We will check with our technicians to make sure it does not happen again.

Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, The Environment; the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, The Environment.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. This report concerns its participation in the Bureau meeting and in the 46th annual session of the APF, held by video conference from January 19 to 29, 2021.

I would like to thank all the staff who supported the members and senators. They did an excellent job.

Routine Proceedings

Residents of Haida Gwaii are hardy and resilient. They call the islands home for all kinds of reasons, but cheap groceries is not one of them. In fact, most goods and services cost more on Haida Gwaii than on the mainland. The biggest cost is the ferry or plane trip to Prince Rupert, which many families must take several times per year, whether for medical or dental appointments or for other essential reasons.

The northern residents deduction is a tax deduction meant to offset the high cost of living in Canada's remote communities. It also helps attract skilled workers and promotes economic development. However, the current eligibility criteria for the northern deduction is deeply flawed. Back in the nineties, the federal government decided to change the criteria according to arbitrary lines on a map. The problem is that those lines do not include all of Canada's remote communities that struggle with high costs of living.

When the eligibility criteria changed, Haida Gwaii was downgraded from the northern—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): May I interrupt the member? I would ask for just a short summary of the purpose of the bill, so that we can eventually get to the speech when the time comes for debate, please.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, the bill I am introducing today would amend the Income Tax Act to explicitly make the residents of Haida Gwaii eligible for the full northern residents tax deduction. Island residents have been pushing for this for over a decade and it is long overdue.

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

• (1650)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That given that Greece is celebrating the 200th anniversary of its declaration of independence in 1821; that Greece and the Greeks have contributed so much to the world; that the Parthenon marbles are a universal symbol of Hellenic and world civilization; and that this House passed a resolution, Motion No. 318, in the 37th Parliament, supporting the return of the Parthenon marbles to Greece, therefore, may the House join in celebrating the 200th anniversary of Greek independence and urge the government to call upon the United Kingdom to return the Parthenon marbles to Greece in order to be restored in their authentic context, as the marbles represent a unique and integral part of world heritage and should be returned to their country of origin in this year of the bicentennial celebration of Greek independence.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

PETITIONS

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I am presenting three petitions on behalf of concerned Canadians, all regarding the un-

rest, violence, human rights abuses and humanitarian crisis in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

These petitioners are requesting of the Government of Canada to, one, call for an end to violence and for restraint from all sides and parties involved in the Tigray conflict; two, allow humanitarian access to the region and independent monitoring; three, call for international investigations into credible reports of war crimes and gross violations of human rights law; four, engage directly and consistently with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments on this conflict, and finally, promote short-, medium- and long-term elections monitoring in Ethiopia.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present petition e-2962 on behalf of one of my Davenport residents, Christopher Keefer. This petition has received almost 6,000 signatures and has been duly certified. It concerns the use of nuclear power in Canada as an option for a more environmentally friendly energy source.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to uphold its commitments under the Paris Agreement by maintaining its CANDU nuclear reactor fleet in Canada and abroad and to continue to support research and deployment of small modular reactors.

As Canada looks to fulfill our commitment to achieve net zero by 2050, we have to put all options on the table in order to reduce our emissions. This petition presents one great idea of how we might be able to do that.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wish to table a petition from Canadians highlighting how Bill C-6 restricts the choices available to Canadians and the LGBTQ community.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to do five things: one, ban coercive, degrading practices that are designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity; two, ensure that no laws discriminate against Canadians by limiting the services they can receive based on their sexual orientation or gender identity; three, allow parents to speak with their own children about sexuality and gender, and to set house rules about sex and relationships; four, allow free and open conversation about sexuality and sexual behaviour; and five, avoid criminalizing professional and religious counselling voluntarily requested and consented to by Canadians.

These issues were raised at the justice committee during its study on Bill C-6, and appeals were made to parliamentarians by witnesses to better define conversion therapy in the legislation. The goal is to ensure that no Canadians are restricted in terms of access to any professional or spiritual support that they have freely chosen.

All of us in the House should consider the concerns raised by these petitioners, and the bill should be amended accordingly.

• (1655)

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to present this petition, which has signatures from across Canada.

The petitioners are concerned about Canada's trade relationship with China. They are calling upon the House of Commons to, one, make policies to ensure Canada rebuilds its manufacturing base for essential goods and focuses on trade partnerships with democratic countries that respect the rule of law; two, ensure Canada reduces dependency on countries like China, where evidence supports violations of human rights, and takes punitive measures for violations of human rights; and three, direct the Standing Committee on International Trade to investigate and provide a report on Canada's trading relationship with China, including the ongoing implications of the Canada-China FIPA agreement, and specifically examine human rights violations in China and Canada's supply chain dependency on China.

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to table petition e-3106 in the House. The petition seeks to improve seniors' financial situation and improve their lives in general via the services available to them and how they can access those services.

Over 20,000 petitioners endorsed these demands on behalf of seniors. This is a spectacular demonstration of how powerful my fellow citizens in the Lower St. Lawrence and across Quebec can be when they join forces, and this is just the beginning.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, last month, honourable members voted overwhelmingly to support a motion from Canada's Conservatives on Communist China. Our motion called on the government to recognize that a genocide is currently being carried out by the People's Republic of China against Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China.

Today it is my honour to table a petition from Canadians across this country that calls on the government to formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are being subjected to genocide. Canadians are once again calling on the Liberal government to follow Parliament's lead by recognizing the Uighur genocide.

It is time for this government to respect the will of this place as well as the will of Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

JUSTICE

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, the residents of Cypress Hills—Grasslands are very concerned about the rising rate of domestic violence here in Canada. As such, the petitioners are calling upon the federal government to amend subsection 8(2) of the Privacy Act to allow for disclosure of personal information to a third party for the purpose of implementing Clare's Law. The RCMP needs to have every tool at its disposal, and Clare's Law is another tool that it could use.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to present a petition today that is signed by my constituents and other Canadians. They are concerned by the horrific mistreatment of the Falun Gong by Communist China. There are credible allegations of torture, murder and organ harvesting. The petitioners want the government to impose Magnitsky act sanctions, which would include barring entry to Canada to 14 officials and freezing their Canadian bank accounts. The official petition I am submitting spells out the names of these officials.

As the member of Parliament for Edmonton Griesbach, I believe it is vital to support human rights worldwide.

• (1700)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to present a number of petitions today.

The first is from Canadians from across the country who are very concerned about the treatment of the Uighurs in China. They are looking for the Canadian government to recognize the genocide, as the House of Commons has done, and for the government to impose Magnitsky sanctions on Chinese officials with regard to the Uighur genocide.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second is a petition from Canadians from across the country. They are especially concerned about the lives of the elderly with regard to Bill C-7 and the inclusion of mental illness. The petitioners call on the government to support measures to protect human life, as all human life should be regarded with great respect. They are calling on the government to support Canadians who are the most vulnerable and defenceless, instead of facilitating their deaths.

Routine Proceedings

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is from Canadians from across the country who support the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners. The petitioners recognize the importance of owning firearms and are concerned about the impact of hearing loss caused by damaging noise levels from firearms, and the need for noise reduction. The petitioners acknowledge that sound moderators are the only universally recognized health and safety devices that are criminally prohibited in Canada.

The majority of G7 countries have recognized the health and safety benefits of sound moderators, and allowing them for hunting, sport shooting and noise reduction would be welcomed. The petitioners are calling on the government to allow legal firearms owners the option to purchase and use sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting activities.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am presenting is on behalf of Albertans. They want to draw the House's attention to the recent StatsCan report, which highlights that a disproportionate number of young men died between May and October. The petitioners also recognize that young men are three times more likely to commit suicide.

Albertans have suffered an energy downturn, an oil price war and a federal government unwilling to support major pipeline investment projects. Alberta has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada.

The petitioners are calling on the House to approve shovel-ready projects across the country, letting Albertans get back to work, and to ensure the TMX expansion is complete, that local communities and organizations are supported, and that the 988 national suicide hotline is quickly created.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is from Canadians across the country. These petitioners are concerned about the accessibility of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and the impacts on public health, especially on the well-being of women and girls. They recognize that we cannot say that we believe in preventing sexual violence toward women while allowing pornography companies to freely expose our children to violent, sexually explicit material day after day. This is a form of child abuse.

They note that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires Canada to develop the means to protect children from forms of media that are injurious to their well-being. As such, these petitioners call on the House of Commons to enact meaningful age verification on adult websites.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the final petition I am presenting today is a petition from Canadians from across Canada who are opposed to conversion therapy, but are concerned with the current definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6. They want coercive and degrading therapies banned, but are concerned about the definition in Bill C-6. They al-

so are concerned about private conversations that would be limited, and the chilling effect that Bill C-6 is having. They ask for a clear and fixed definition of conversion therapy.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will just remind members to have very short comments, particularly when they have more than one petition to introduce.

The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition, similar to some of the other members', is with respect to the genocide against the Uighur population. It is calling upon the government to follow up on what Parliament has already passed to formally recognize the genocide in China, as well as to call for the use of sanctions in the Magnitsky act against those responsible for the heinous crimes in China.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): The second petition, Madam Speaker, calls upon Parliament to move quickly with the proposed legislation to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent, or as a result of a financial transaction, and to render inadmissible to Canada any and all permanent residents or foreign nationals who have participated in this abhorrent trade in human organs.

IRAN

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling eight petitions in the House today. The member for Kingston and the Islands wants me to table more. I am gathering signatures on a day of solidarity with him after his struggles over being blocked on Twitter, but I do not have that petition today. People can find that petition online to sign. I have eight other petitions.

The first petition I am tabling calls on the government to list Iran's IRGC, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, as a terrorist organization.

The petitioners note that, in response to the storming of Capitol Hill in January 2021, the Liberal government listed Proud Boys as a terrorist organization within less than a month, thus demonstrating an ability to move quickly and efficiently in listing a terrorist organization. However, it has been nearly three years since a motion passed in this House calling for the listing of the IRGC as a terrorist entity. No action has been taken by the government.

The petitioners call on the government to immediately list the IRGC as a terrorist entity and to explain why there has been a three-year delay.

• (1705)

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition highlights the plight of Falun Gong practitioners in China and the horrific persecution they have faced at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.

The petitioners call for the use of Magnitsky sanctions, as well as other measures, to address the horrific forced organ harvesting and trafficking that is taking place in that context.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the third petition zeroes in on the issue of forced organ harvesting and trafficking in the context of Bill S-204, a bill that has just passed second reading stage in the Senate and will now be considered by the justice and human rights committee.

The petitioners are calling on all parliamentarians in this and the other place to work to get Bill S-204 passed as quickly as possible. This bill would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ that has been taken without the consent of the person from whom the organ came.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the fourth petition I am tabling deals with Bill C-7, the government's euthanasia bill.

The petitioners are very concerned about the fact that the government is, through this bill, removing safeguards it said were vital not so long ago. They are expressing particular concern about the removal of the 10-day reflection period, the reduced requirement around witnesses, and other problems in the bill, including the government's inclusion, at a late stage, to allow euthanasia for those with mental health challenges.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the fifth petition I am tabling highlights the plight of Uighurs. The petitioners are calling on the government to recognize the genocide and apply Magnitsky sanctions to those officials who are responsible for that genocide.

The next petition I am tabling highlights the human rights and humanitarian situation in Tigray, Ethiopia. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to take a number of steps, including engaging directly with Ethiopian and Eritrean governments on this conflict, and promoting short- and long-term election monitoring.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second-to-last petition calls on the government to fix the definition in Bill C-6.

The final petition—

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but that is all the time we have for today. You will have to bring it back at another opportunity.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.) moved that Bill C-22, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to speak to Bill C-22, which proposes much needed reforms to the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, or CDSA.

[Translation]

These proposed reforms are first and foremost about addressing the systemic discrimination and unfairness in our criminal justice system, which includes the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples, Black Canadians and members of marginalized communities in Canada's prisons.

Government Orders

The policies that we are targeting in this legislation have not accomplished their goal of deterring crime or keeping our communities safe. What they have done, rather, is disproportionately criminalize and imprison communities that are already discriminated against, especially indigenous peoples and Black Canadians.

We need a policy that is truly effective, that protects all Canadians and that ensures that our justice system is fair. We need a justice policy that is, well, just. In particular, the Speech from the Throne committed to address systemic inequities in all phases of the criminal justice system, including from diversion to sentencing.

These are the primary areas of focus of my proposed legislative reforms.

• (1710)

[*English*]

There are three components to the changes we are proposing in Bill C-22. First, it would eliminate mandatory minimum penalties in all drug offences, a tobacco offence and some firearms offences. Second, it would reverse the previous Conservative government's severe restrictions on the availability of conditional sentence orders, or CSOs. Third, it would require police and prosecutors to consider other measures for simple possession of drugs, such as diversion to addiction treatment programs rather than laying charges or prosecuting individuals for simple possession of an illegal drug.

Before describing the proposed changes in detail, it is important to understand the impact our existing sentencing laws have had on the over-incarceration of indigenous persons, Black Canadians and members of marginalized communities. In 2020, indigenous adults accounted for 30% of federally incarcerated inmates, despite accounting for approximately 5% of the general Canadian adult population. Indigenous women account for 42% of all federally incarcerated women. Similarly, Black adults represent 3% of the overall Canadian population, but they now represent 7.2% of the federal offender population.

These figures are staggering, and the trends have continued to grow year after year. We must do something to turn the tide.

One of the main contributors to these negative trends has been failed sentencing policies. This includes the former government's increase to and indiscriminate use of mandatory minimum penalties of imprisonment, also known as MMPs. This one-size-fits-all approach to crime mandates that anyone who commits an offence, regardless of the circumstance or the individual's degree of responsibility for that crime, must be imprisoned for at least the amount of time prescribed in that MMP.

I ask members to consider the following scenario: A single mother struggling with substance use has begun selling drugs in order to support her addiction and have a bit of money left over to put food on the table. She is charged and convicted of drug trafficking. Even though the judge recognizes prison time would not be appropriate in her circumstance, they have no choice but to order the mandated prison time. As a result, she is separated from her children, her job and her life.

Now, I ask members to contrast this situation with the individual who runs a network and specifically targeted her and other vulnera-

ble individuals like her to get them hooked on drugs and eventually trafficking to fuel their addiction. Because of the mandatory minimum sentence, the judge cannot choose to send only one of these two individuals to prison. They must both be punished in the same way.

I ask my colleagues what that serves. Bill C-22 proposes to eliminate all mandatory minimum penalties for drugs, which were brought in by the previous Conservative government in 2012. It would also eliminate MMPs for some firearm offences, which we know have a disproportionate impact on indigenous and Black communities.

[*Translation*]

Between 2007 and 2017, 39% of Black and 20% of indigenous offenders were placed in federal correction facilities for an offence that carries a mandatory minimum sentence.

[*English*]

During that time, the proportion of Black Canadians admitted to federal corrections for importing or exporting drugs increased from 33% to 43% in 2017. Even worse, the proportion of indigenous offenders admitted for firearms-related offences punishable by a MMP more than doubled.

In a similar vein, Bill C-22 would reverse the previous Conservative government's severe restrictions on the availability of conditional sentencing orders, which give judges the option to order that a sentence be served within one's community under strict conditions, if the individual does not pose a risk to public safety, and if the penalty given would have been less than two years of incarceration.

Previous Conservative governments would have us believe our communities are safest when we put all criminals behind bars and throw away the key. That is simply not supported by the evidence. When it comes to lower-risk and first-time offenders, prison is actually associated with elevated risks of recidivism and worse outcomes in both the short term and the long term.

On the other hand, alternatives such as conditional sentencing, or CSOs, are an effective and proven way to enable more effective rehabilitation and reintegration by enabling individuals to maintain their employment, or continue caring for children or family members in need. The data is clear. We just have to listen to it.

The removal of restrictions on CSOs is crucial to reducing the failed trend of Conservative justice policies that have made it difficult, if not impossible, for judges to sentence individuals appropriately. This individual tailoring of sentences is supposed to be a fundamental principle of our criminal justice system, yet it has been altered by these policies.

Government Orders

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Our sentencing laws have also prevented sentencing courts from giving full effect to the Gladue principle enshrined in paragraph 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code, which is based on restraint and requires courts to consider all available sanctions other than imprisonment for all offenders, with particular attention to the circumstances of indigenous offenders.

[*English*]

With respect to indigenous women offenders, these targeted measures will have real and measurable impacts. Take, for example, the changes to CSOs. Prior to the previous Conservative government's restrictions, many indigenous women received conditional sentences with positive outcomes. After the restrictions, indigenous women in the same circumstances were instead sent to prison. By restoring the availability of CSOs, more indigenous women can heal within their own communities, continue caring for their children and family members, and have access to culturally appropriate support services. This is effective criminal justice policy in action.

These failed so-called “tough on crime” sentencing policies have made the criminal justice system less efficient. For instance, in cases involving offences with MMPs, the evidence demonstrates that trials take longer to complete, accused persons are less likely to plead guilty and a stark increase in successful charter challenges before Canadian courts. In short, MMPs also clog up our criminal justice system.

Let me provide an overview of the bill. Bill C-22 will repeal MMPs for all drug offences that were enacted by the previous Conservative government in 2012. It will also repeal MMPs for certain offences involving—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I appreciate listening to the minister's speech, but the connection is fuzzy and is cutting in and out. It appears he is in his Parliament Hill office, so I wonder if it would be possible for him to deliver the speech in the chamber. We would then not have a connection problem, and we could hear him. Given that he seems to be in the building anyway, it would make sense.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is a problem with the connection cutting in and out. I do not think it is the sound, but rather the Internet, because we also see the image failing for a few seconds.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on the same point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I have been listening and have had no issues with hearing both the English and the translation of the minister. I do not know if some might be a little more challenged to hear it, but what I object to is the member standing up to highlight something that is personal. I should not be penalized for not standing inside the chamber, but should be respected for being able to appear inside or outside the chamber, and my motivation should not be challenged on why I

might be in one place versus the other. I do not think that is appropriate.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I too am sitting in my parliamentary office, and although I am in a different building, I too have had some connection problems. This is a very important speech that I have been trying to listen to. For many of us, it is a very personal speech, and I would really like to hear it, but the sound has been coming in and out, I am afraid.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will ask the minister to resume, because the interpreters have not complained yet, so we have been able to get the interpretation done.

An hon. member: It is not the interpretation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is usually the problem with connections, that we do not get the interpretation, but the interpretation is working in this case, so I will let the minister resume. I would remind members that we do not usually refer to where the members are, particularly now.

The minister will please proceed.

• (1720)

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I remind the House that I have taken all decisions based on the health and safety of my employees, following regulations and meeting the needs of my constituents, as well as Canadians across the country in my portfolio.

I will provide an overview of the Bill C-22. The bill would repeal MMPs for all drug offences, which were enacted by the previous Conservative government in 2012. It would also repeal MMPs for certain offences involving the use or possession of firearms and a tobacco-related offence. We know that MMPs do not deter these crimes or keep people and communities safe. In eliminating these MMPs, Bill C-22 would restore judicial discretion, reduce the time and money spent on needless litigation, and address systemic barriers to equality.

[*Translation*]

We have always held that serious criminals should be treated seriously. As such MMPs will remain for the most serious offences including murder, child sexual offences and firearm offences linked to organized crime.

These changes go hand in hand with the proposed measures in Bill C-21, an act to amend certain acts and to make certain consequential amendments with regard to firearms, to increase maximum penalties for certain firearms offences related to gun smuggling and trafficking.

Government Orders

This would allow judges to issue stricter sentences for the most serious gun crimes, including gang-related violence, while enabling a broader range of options for lower-risk and first-time offenders, including alternatives that could help prevent them from becoming hardened criminals behind bars. This is critical to helping keep our communities safe.

[*English*]

With Bill C-22 serious crimes would be sentenced seriously and proportionate to the gravity of the offence and degree of responsibility of the offender.

The second area of proposed reforms I would like to discuss focuses on realigning the conditional sentence regime with the purpose for which these sentences were originally intended, namely, to address the overreliance on incarceration for less serious non-violent crimes. A CSO is a sentence of incarceration of less than two years that may be served in the community under strict conditions. It is only available if a judge is satisfied that doing so would pose no risks to public safety.

Bill C-22 would repeal a number of restrictions brought in by the former Conservative government on the availability of CSOs. The additional restrictions have limited judges from imposing CSOs in appropriate cases. The current restrictions have resulted in more people being sent to jail and more charter challenges and have contributed to the over-incarceration of indigenous persons, in particular.

In July 2020, in the case of the *Queen v. Sharma*, the Ontario Court of Appeal struck down the provisions in the Criminal Code limiting the availability of CSOs for offences punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of 14 years or life, or 10 years if drugs were involved. The court noted that these limits on the availability of CSOs undermined the remedial purpose of the Gladue principle in the Criminal Code by limiting a judge's ability to impose fit sentences to take into account the circumstances of indigenous offenders, including the well-documented impacts of colonialism and residential schools.

Bill C-22 seeks to reform the CSO regime in a way that would allow courts to order sentences other than incarceration in appropriate cases that focus on restorative justice principles. We have heard a strong and positive response from the legal community to these proposed changes. These changes would have real, measurable results. Again, CSOs would only be available for those facing sentences of less than two years and where the judge is satisfied that there is no risk to public safety. They would not be available for more serious offences, including murder or attempted murder, torture, advocating genocide, and criminal organization and terrorism offences punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years or more.

I would now like to turn my attention to describing the third set of important legislative reforms proposed by Bill C-22, which support our commitment to public health-centred approaches to drugs and substance use.

Bill C-22 aligns with amendments proposed by Private Member's Bill C-236, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, in terms of evidence-based diversion measures, with certain

technical amendments. I would like to thank the member for Beaches—East York for his private member's bill and his leadership in this area. We agree that these changes to treat addiction as a health issue would improve the state of the criminal justice system in Canada, particularly as we examine better approaches to dealing with the opioid crisis, and believe that changes like these may very well help save lives.

Substance use is first and foremost a health issue. Bill C-22 would enact an evidence-based diversion framework in the CDSA with a set of guiding principles informed by Canada's drugs and substances strategy, as well as principles adopted by the United Nations and the World Health Organization. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, on February 19, released a statement in support of C-22's treatment of drug possession offences. It is clear that we must move toward more effective ways to address public safety concerns relating to substance use.

These reforms are also inspired by the successful approach used in the Youth Criminal Justice Act. They would require peace officers and Crown attorneys to consider alternatives to charging and prosecuting. That includes diverting individuals to a public health agency before proceeding with a charge or before proceeding with a charge once laid. It is worth noting that prosecutors and law enforcement work together in determining which charges to lay in a specific situation and, as such, extending this requirement to both would help ensure that appropriate discretion is exercised.

The reforms proposed would encourage the diversion of simple drug possession cases away from the criminal justice system and focus on the needs of the individual.

Another important benefit of these reforms is that individuals would not have the stigma and the legal costs associated with being charged with a criminal offence. Moreover, these reforms are consistent with the director of public prosecutions' August 2020 guideline that requires prosecutors to pursue diversion for simple drug possession cases.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

These proposed amendments will support my 2021 supplementary mandate letter commitment to divert first-time, non-violent individuals charged with simple drug possession at an early stage.

These proposed legislative reforms will generate several long-term benefits to the criminal justice system, including overall cost reductions, and will lead to more effective responses leading to less recidivism. I am confident that Bill C-22 strikes the right balance. Indeed, it has been applauded as much-needed legislation. It responds to long-standing calls for reforms by the Quebec Bar and the Canadian Bar Association.

[English]

Our changes reflect several calls to action made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, calls for justice by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and recent calls by the Parliamentary Black Caucus.

Moving forward, we will do more. We have committed to support the application of Gladue principles and Gladue report-writing in the criminal justice system. We have also committed to supporting community justice centre pilot projects across Canada, which will provide more culturally appropriate services to address root causes of crime. Finally, we have noted our support for the implementation of the impact of race and culture assessments, which will better inform sentencing decisions, as they will be based on an understanding of the systemic inequalities faced by racialized groups such as Black Canadians.

[Translation]

In advancing these reforms, I am conscious that some stakeholders and parliamentarians may believe that Bill C-22 does not go far enough or, for others, it goes too far.

Bill C-22 is an important step that advances evidence-based reforms, which will alleviate some of the negative trends plaguing our criminal justice system. It will ensure that sentencing judges are better able to consider the entire context, circumstances, and seriousness of an offence when they impose a sentence.

• (1730)

[English]

The time has come to break with the past, the so-called tough-on-crime policies of the previous government, whose only benefit has been to make politicians look tough. We can do a better job and we will.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to refer the minister to a BC Civil Liberties Association report, which states:

Today, there are approximately 50 offences carrying a mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment in the Criminal Code, the vast majority of which came into force in 1995.

Mandatory minimums were the hallmark of former Liberal governments. What political party was governing Canada in 1995?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his apparent change to being critical of mandatory minimum penalties, which I can glean from the question.

Government Orders

Mandatory minimum penalties simply have not worked. We have focused in this bill on mandatory minimums that result in the over-incarceration of Black and indigenous Canadians, in particular, and that have served to clog up the criminal justice system. They are not helping anybody. They were simply fuelling the ideological tough-on-crime narrative, which has not proven to be true empirically, has not served our communities, has not made us safer and not helped victims.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, the minister knows that my question is going to be about why he has not gone a bit further. Why are we still talking about criminal penalties for the personal possession of small amounts of drugs when all health authorities recognize that we should treat addiction and drug use as a health problem, and not as a criminal problem? Why be so timid? Why do we not just move to eliminate those criminal penalties altogether?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his dedication to this issue. Like him, I feel that there is a serious question that needs to be studied here, particularly in light of the very serious opioid crisis in various parts of the country. I also understand and agree with the idea that we ought to treat health problems as health problems, and not as criminal problems.

What I was doing here, and I hope the hon. member will understand this, was attacking one part of that, the part that revolves around criminal sentencing, so I stayed within those parameters. This is not to preclude larger debates from happening in other areas, which I would welcome.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me congratulate the Minister of Justice for bringing forward this bill. I know he has put a tremendous amount of work into it.

It is extremely important that we look for more diversion programs, more opportunities to decrease the number of people throughout our cities who are in jail for miscellaneous things and who have criminal records that will prevent them from getting viable work later on.

When we talk about diversion programs, I would be interested to hear from the minister some examples of where he thinks the diversion program could be better played out in the justice system.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, during the 2019 election, I met with leaders of the Black community in Toronto, at a meeting in Scarborough.

They were univocal in asking us to support the kinds of programming they did. Around the table, there were ministers, in the religious sense, other community workers and ex-convicts who were working in their communities. They were developing programs that worked with kids, after-school programs that kept kids out of gangs.

Government Orders

They said that they wanted me to get these kinds of programs supported so that we would not send kids to jail, because when we send them to jail, they just end up becoming hardened criminals.

In the fall economic statement, we have supported community justice pilot projects in cities like Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, precisely to target these cultural communities and to give police officers and prosecutors alternatives to divert people from the criminal justice system.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for introducing Bill C-22.

I used to work for a community organization focused on alternative justice. We worked on preventing crime among young people who sometimes had drug problems. We obviously quickly learned that criminalization was not a solution in some cases. What these people needed was more support. Public health plays a very important role in this issue.

However, would the minister agree that the federal government should be sending money to the provinces so that they can ensure that these struggling young people and young adults, who will not have a criminal record, will get the support they need from public health?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

I am working with my counterparts across Canada. The principles in this bill could obviously apply to other bills. I am prepared to work with my counterparts in Quebec and across Canada to find the best and fairest solutions.

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Madam Speaker, some of these so-called minor offences to which the minister refers are: robbery with a firearm; extortion with a firearm; weapons trafficking; importing or exporting, knowing it is an unauthorized firearm; and using a firearm in the commission of an offence. What these offences all have in common is that each and every one of them had a mandatory prison sentence, as it should, assigned to them before the Conservatives took government.

I appreciate that the hon. minister and I will not agree on a soft-on-crime approach, but I wish he would be upfront with the fact that these mandatory minimums are Liberal mandatory minimums. Would the minister at least admit that?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, reading between the lines, I am happy with the member's criticisms of mandatory minimums. That is quite a great deal of progress from someone who was an integral part of the justice hierarchy in the previous Conservative government.

I want to correct the record. We are not touching mandatory minimums where there is gang-related offences involved, where there is arms trafficking involved or where there are prohibited weapons involved.

The mandatory minimum with respect to robbery, for example, only applies to long guns. It is one particular subset of that offence. It is, again, something that is disproportionately touching Black and indigenous communities across Canada.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister has presented lowering sentences and increasing judicial discretion as a solution to systemic racism in the justice system. We acknowledge there are problems of systemic racism in many institutions, including in the justice system.

It is not obvious to me, though, how lowering sentences across the board addresses those problems. It does not seem to me that increasing discretion or lowering sentences across the board actually tackle the specific problem of systemic racism, unconscious bias and judges making decisions that reflect certain presumptions that may have been influenced by racist ideas, intentionally or not.

What does the minister have in mind that actually addresses directly the problem of systemic racism?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, the presumptions upon which the hon. member bases his question are completely false based on the evidence. If people are Black or indigenous, they are more likely to be stopped by the police. They are more likely to be charged with a crime that carries a minimum mandatory penalty.

The point of bringing back discretion for first-time offenders, offenders who do not pose a risk to society, is precisely to keep them out of the criminal justice system. Serious offences will be punished seriously. We are giving back discretion at the lower end of the spectrum so judges, for example, can take into account a Gladue report, which tells judges they should be accounting for very particular circumstances, such as residential school or history of intergenerational trauma.

This is precisely what we are doing. It is true to the common law, but it is also true to better justice policy and it has been a call from every major commission in Canada over the last number of years.

• (1740)

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Madam Speaker, what we have heard from the minister on a very important bill, Bill C-22, has certainly been educational so far. I think the minister and everyday Canadians probably have a very different idea of what a serious offence is and the types of offences for which criminals should be held accountable.

I would like to ask for unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-22.

When this bill was first introduced, I read the news release on it, heard the minister's comments and, like many Canadians, took the government at its word about what this bill would do. Unfortunately, when we actually saw the text of the bill, we saw that this was not about simple possession of drugs; that this was not about minor crimes, as the minister just remarked in his statement; and that it was not about minor offences.

I want to highlight the text of the bill and what it actually would do. I think most Canadians would be alarmed by the approach the government is taking.

First, I will talk about mandatory minimums and the elimination of mandatory prison time for what the government is saying are minor offences. What are these minor offences? They include robbery with a firearm; extortion with a firearm; weapons trafficking; importing or exporting knowing a firearm is unauthorized; discharging a firearm with intent; using a firearm in the commission of an offence; possession of a prohibited or restricted firearm with ammunition; possession of a weapon obtained by the commission of an offence; and possession for the purpose of weapons trafficking. What do all those mandatory prison sentences have in common? They predate the previous Conservative government. Most of them are one-year minimums that were brought in by Liberal governments. We did not hear the Liberal minister mention that in his press release, and it would have been good of him to do so.

I think Canadians would be surprised that the bill in fact would do away with minimum sentences on all those offences, and that was certainly not made clear by the government. In fact, the government's messaging was primarily framed as turning a page on Conservative justice policy. There are two things that are worth raising on that.

I am proud to support strong sentences and prison time for individuals who conduct drive-by shootings, robbery with a firearm or crimes like weapons trafficking. This is impacting Canadians from coast to coast. Whether people live in an urban centre or a rural area, they deserve to be safe from crime. In fact, I think most Canadians would agree with that, which is why the Liberals will not talk about what offences they are actually repealing mandatory prison time for. We just heard the Minister of Justice speak. He did not list the firearms offences, like I just did, that would have their punishments lowered under the bill.

Second, the former Conservative government certainly did bring in some mandatory prison sentences for violent offences like the ones I just listed. It is worth noting, though, that if we trace the mandatory prison sentences back, we can trace many of them to 1995 and beyond, under former Liberal governments. In fact, we can even trace the mandatory prison sentence for using a firearm in the commission of an offence back to former Prime Minister Trudeau in the 1970s. Many of the mandatory minimums being maintained by the Liberal government, being kept in the Criminal Code were implemented and strengthened by a former Conservative government.

This is all to highlight the fact that this is largely the Liberals leaning heavily on warped communications to make reforms to the Criminal Code to weaken penalties for crimes that most Canadians would say deserve mandatory prison time.

Now I will touch on the mandatory prison time being eliminated under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. The Liberals would have us believe this is just about simple possession of drugs. In fact, Bill C-22 tells us it is just the opposite.

Bill C-22 would eliminate mandatory prison time for trafficking or possession for the purpose of trafficking; importing and exporting or possession for the purpose of exporting; and production of a substance schedule I or II, for example heroin, cocaine, fentanyl and crystal meth. People would be forgiven if they were confused, because the federal government's news release does not mention that it will be eliminating mandatory prison time for drug traffickers. It does not mention that they will be eliminating mandatory prison time for those importing or exporting drugs. Nor does it mention that Bill C-22 would eliminate mandatory prison time for the production of drugs like heroin, cocaine, fentanyl and crystal meth.

I hypothesize that the government's news release does not mention any of this because it recognizes that Canadians would not support eliminating mandatory prison time for drug traffickers. To be clear, these are not people in simple possession of drugs. These are people who are preying each and every day on addicts, on people who need help. These are the individuals taking advantage of them in our communities. These are the people involved in criminal activities and are actively preying on those who struggle every day with addiction.

• (1745)

There is a component in the bill that codifies principles that police officers and prosecutors should follow when determining whether to lay charges, but the fact is that police officers already have the ability to use their discretion when determining to lay charges. Further, the director of public prosecutions previously issued a directive to prosecutors telling them to avoid prosecuting simple possession charges unless there are major public safety concerns. This change, in practice, will therefore have little impact.

The Conservatives believe that those struggling with addiction or mental health issues should get the help they need. Many Canadians struggling with addiction should have access to treatment rather than prison if their crime was non-violent. However, the bill before us would do absolutely nothing to address that.

I will now move on to the conditional sentencing component of the bill.

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Bill C-22 would make a number of offences eligible for conditional sentencing, which means a person would serve their sentence from the comfort of their own home. Again, the government's news release does not outline what those offences are. The minister referred to them as minor offences. Well, here are some examples of offences for which a conditional sentence would be available under Bill C-22: manslaughter, discharge of a firearm with intent, sexual assault with a firearm, robbery, breaking and entering a dwelling-house, breaking and entering a place other than a dwelling-house, assaulting a police officer causing bodily harm, sexual assault, abduction of a person under 14 and kidnapping. The government did not mention any of these specific offences in its news release. It completely brushed over this point and referred to them as minor offences. I think almost all parliamentarians and Canadians would agree that those are in fact serious offences and that people should not be serving a sentence from the comfort of their own home if they have just finished burning down one of ours.

The government has said that removing the section of the Criminal Code that prevents conditional sentences from being issued for the offences I just listed would allow for more effective rehabilitation and reintegration by enabling individuals to maintain employment or to continue caring for children or family members. Quite frankly, I do not think someone convicted of kidnapping, sexual assault, manslaughter or the many other offences I listed should be eligible for house arrest, and I think most Canadians agree on that point.

The Conservatives support reducing recidivism, but Bill C-22 is not the way to tackle it. In fact, my colleague, the member for Tobique—Mactaquac, has introduced Bill C-228, an act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism. This bill would set up a framework of measures to help reduce recidivism, reducing the number of people coming into continual contact with the criminal justice system. I hope members on all sides of the House will support it.

We have seen a trend from the government in its failure to respond or stand up for victims of crime. In November of last year, the federal ombudsman for victims of crime called on the government to proceed with the in-depth parliamentary review of the Canadian victims bill of rights, as required under the legislation, so that further means to protect victims of crime could be identified. This has yet to happen.

This is an opportunity to strengthen the act and ensure that supports are made available for victims. The federal ombudsman for victims of crime said that based on the data available to her, it appeared the objectives of the act established in 2015 have not been met. Her office released a series of recommendations in a progress report that should be reviewed more fully in the parliamentary review that the government should proceed with quickly to ensure that victims and their families receive the support they deserve.

A few days after the report from the federal ombudsman was released, a decision by the Quebec Court of Appeal struck down a section of the Criminal Code allowing for consecutive life sentences. This was the case of a man who murdered six people in a Quebec City mosque in 2017—

• (1750)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): My apologies, but we have to go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had the chance to do a background review on my hon. colleague, and I see that he was a lawyer before his time in Parliament. I was too, and I know there are going to be different ideologies on this legislation through and through. When I look at it, I do not see how I, as a parliamentarian, should have the discretion to decide sentences.

The member talked about discretion a lot in his speech. As he is someone with a legal background, does he not believe that we should be giving judges and the people who can hear the facts and particular circumstances of a case the discretion to put sentencing in place, as opposed to allowing parliamentarians, without any context, to set mandatory minimum sentences?

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, I agree that judges should have discretion when it comes to sentencing, but this is also the role of Parliament. We are the ones who decide, through the Criminal Code, what is a criminal act, and we set out the parameters for a minimum sentence or a maximum sentence. That is part of our job and it is not a partisan thing. Many of the minimums being eliminated by the Liberal government were introduced by previously Liberal governments. This is about ensuring that there is an appropriate sentence for someone who commits a very serious crime.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Fundy Royal for his speech. This is not about reducing sentences but tailoring them. This also does not mean that some offences are not necessarily serious.

When the member said that police officers can use their own discretion when determining whether to lay charges, sometimes the reality is that charges must be laid because the actions were serious, even though the external circumstances would justify a different penalty.

In the end, as the previous speaker stated, that is why this bill seeks to put power back into the hands of judges. Does the hon. member not believe that judges have adequate training?

If we simply needed people to look at a chart of minimum sentences and tick one off, could we simply do without judges and their many years of training?

Is the member questioning judges' training?

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, the bill does not deal with minor and insignificant offences. It deals with what I would say are very serious offences, such as robbery with a firearm and extortion with a firearm. Parliament, in its wisdom in the past, has assigned to offences not only maximum sentences, which impact a judge's discretion, but also minimum sentences. This has been done with Parliament's wisdom. It is up to us and within our power to change that, but it has always been the case that Parliament sets out the parameters whereby judges sentence people.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague's intervention was very interesting. I was very happy to hear him talk about support for those struggling with addictions and struggling with the possession of small amounts of drugs.

I am wondering whether he supports emergency exemptions for the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act concerning personal possession and supports the full decriminalization of possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use, potentially even going so far as to support safe supply. We have listened to health care providers, frontline service workers, police and public health officials, and we know this is the way to save the lives of people struggling with addictions. Is he supportive of those initiatives?

● (1755)

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, I think a lot of us were quite surprised about this when we read the bill. This has nothing to do with the simple possession of drugs. In fact, it has everything to do with the people who are preying on addicts in our communities. For trafficking, possession for the purpose of trafficking, importing and exporting, and even the production of schedule I and schedule II drugs, minimum sentences are being removed. We are lessening the sentences of those who are preying on victims. That is moving in the exact wrong direction. I agree—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am speaking this afternoon to Bill C-22, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

The Liberals have advertised this bill as a response to the disproportionate number of Black, indigenous and other marginalized Canadians caught up in Canada's criminal justice system. They have advertised this bill as removing what they have characterized as unfair and disproportionate mandatory jail time for what they claim to be minor offences. The Liberals have repeatedly advertised in that regard that Bill C-22 eliminates mandatory jail time for simple possession. On its face, it all sounds pretty good. The only problem is that Bill C-22 is not as advertised by the Liberals.

The bill has very little to do with helping marginalized Canadians and persons who are struggling with drug addiction, as the Liberals have advertised. It has absolutely nothing to do with eliminating mandatory jail time for simple possession, because there is no mandatory jail time for simple possession. Rather, Bill C-22 is about the government advancing a radical, ideological agenda that is not evidence-based. It is based on putting the rights of criminals first. Through its false advertising, this cynical government in a

cynical and dishonest way is seeking to change the channel from what the bill is really all about. Quite frankly, I believe the more Canadians learn about Bill C-22, the more alarmed the vast majority of Canadians will be.

It is true that this legislation does eliminate mandatory jail time, but it does not eliminate mandatory jail time for so-called minor offences. Rather, the bill removes mandatory jail time for some extremely serious offences, including serious firearms offences.

What sorts of firearms offences does this legislation eliminate mandatory jail time for? Those offences include robbery with a gun, extortion with a gun, discharging a firearm with the purpose of inflicting injury, weapons trafficking, using a gun in the commission of an offence and possession of a gun obtained in the commission of an offence. I could go on.

I say this to the government, through you, Madam Speaker: How does that benefit or help marginalized Canadians? The simple answer is that it does nothing in that regard. Instead, it helps give a free pass to dangerous criminals.

This is quite ironic because this is the government that talks a lot about getting tough on guns and gun crime. When the Liberals talk about getting tough on guns, what they really mean is getting tough on law-abiding Canadians who own guns. We see this in Bill C-21, which was introduced three days before the Liberals introduced this deeply flawed piece of legislation, which imposes onerous new restrictions on law-abiding firearms owners and threatens law-abiding firearms owners with jail time if they fail to comply.

● (1800)

There we have it, in terms of the Liberal approach. If someone happens to be a law-abiding firearms owner, the Liberals are coming after them and threatening them with jail, but if they happen to be a serious criminal who commits serious offences with guns, the Liberals are here to help them stay out of jail. Talk about a mismatched set of priorities on the part of the government. Talk about putting ideology ahead of common sense and public safety.

This legislation would not just eliminate mandatory jail times for serious firearms offences. This bill would also remove mandatory jail times for serious drug related offences, as my colleague, the member for Fundy Royal, pointed out. These include drug trafficking, exporting and importing drugs, and possession for the purpose of trafficking. I could go on.

Government Orders

That is very inconsistent with the false advertising of the government, which says this bill is about helping people struggling with addictions. In fact, what this bill is really about is helping those who prey on some of the most vulnerable Canadians, including Canadians who are struggling with addictions. It is simply a further example of the dishonest approach the government has taken with respect to selling this deeply flawed and ideological piece of legislation.

The difference in the approach of the previous Conservative government, compared with the approach of the current government to Canada's criminal justice system and holding dangerous criminals accountable, could not be more stark. The previous Conservative government worked tirelessly to strengthen Canada's criminal justice system by holding dangerous criminals accountable under the law.

Among the measures taken by the previous Conservative government was ending house arrest for some very serious offences. Bill C-22 would eviscerate the measures that were introduced by the previous Conservative government by allowing persons convicted of some very serious offences to serve their time in their homes, perhaps next to you, Madam Speaker, instead of behind bars where they belong.

Offences that could be served in the community if this legislation is passed include manslaughter, prison breach, criminal harassment, sexual assault, kidnapping, kidnapping a minor, motor vehicle theft, theft over \$5,000 and arson for a fraudulent purpose. That is just scratching the surface.

Bill C-22 would put the rights of criminals ahead of victims, public safety and safe streets and communities. It is why we, on this side of the House, will vigorously oppose this legislation every step of the way.

• (1805)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, my father, who was a political commentator, once referred to a Conservative minister of justice as the “minister of crime and punishment”, and I am very proud to be speaking on behalf of a government that has a minister of justice.

The Conservatives have several times referenced the discretion of the police in the justice system, and it is clear that Conservatives trust the police more than judges. I will let them explain that.

Extreme crimes would still get extreme sentences. That is clear. This bill deals with mandatory minimum sentences, and is focused more on prevention than on punishment. The former governments' approaches, Liberal and Conservative, clearly have not worked. The situation is getting worse. It is getting more violent and there are more victims. The status quo is unacceptable.

Every time we talk about prevention, whether it is gun control or new investments in housing, child care, education, health care or recreation, Conservatives vote against prevention. There is no evidence, none, that mandatory minimum sentences prevent crime. There is none.

If there is no evidence mandatory minimum sentences prevent crime, what are Conservatives prepared to do to stop a crime before they respond to it with more punishment? Why are they more interested in building jails than building housing, saving people rather than saving—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I regret to interrupt the member to advise him that he is supposed to be wearing a tie during his interventions, and he is not.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member is quite right. I am sorry I did not notice that.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: My apologies.

We will give the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton the opportunity to respond.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I would say respectfully to my colleague that I disagree with the premise of his question that mandatory jail times do not work. Mandatory jail times have always been part of Canada's criminal justice system. If the hon. member talks about prevention with respect to, for example, firearms offences, surely that hon. member would recognize that 80% of firearms offences in Canada occur as a result of guns smuggled into Canada. That is why I was very surprised that the hon. member, who represents a downtown Toronto riding that has issues with gun violence, would have voted against the hon. member for Markham—Unionville's bill—

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Point of order. Point of order. That is not an accurate representation of my vote. If you—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Would members respect the fact that I have to give them the opportunity to speak? If the member for Spadina—Fort York has a point of order, he needs to ask for it.

Does the member have a point of order?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, I do have a point of order. If the member opposite would care to check the record and check the facts, he would see that I actually supported his colleague's motion. I spoke to it in the House and was thanked by many of the member's colleagues for standing on that principle, not because it is a preventative measure, but because I do not think guns should be coming into this country.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I apologize to the hon. member unreservedly for my error with respect to his vote, but it is unfortunate that his colleagues did not take his lead.

Government Orders

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague will not be surprised that I view the issue of mandatory minimums quite differently than he does. I believe that most people would agree that serious offences and serious offenders should receive commensurate sentences. However, I do not see anything in this legislation that prevents a judge from sentencing according to the unique circumstances of each crime.

Why does the member feel that parliamentarians are better positioned to assess what the sentence should be for a particular crime than a judge who is specifically trained in making those assessments and determinations?

• (1810)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, mandatory jail times have always been part of our criminal justice system. It appears that the Liberal government would not agree with the statement of the hon. member because the government is not rolling back all mandatory jail times. However, I would submit it is rolling back mandatory jail times quite inappropriately for a number of serious offences. On that basis, I cannot support the bill.

I would note that among the sections being revoked, in terms of mandatory jail times, is section 244(3)(b), which was upheld by the Alberta Court of Appeal about a year ago with respect to the reckless discharge of a firearm, so some of these—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): A very brief question from the hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, and I would like to share some facts with him.

Studies show that minimum sentences have actually contributed to the criminalization of certain people and have created problems within some of the more marginalized communities, such as indigenous people. They are more in need of public health supports than incarceration. Minimum sentences result in the disproportionate incarceration of indigenous people and members of other marginalized communities. These observations are based on facts. I would like to hear my colleague's views on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. member, I do not accept that eliminating mandatory jail times in any way helps persons in marginalized communities when we are talking about offences as serious as the ones provided for in this bill regarding mandatory jail times.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rh al Fortin (Rivi re-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-22. In our opinion, this is an important bill that deserves to be carefully examined in committee and then debated in the House.

The Bloc Qu b cois believes in the principle of honest and impartial deliberations before an impartial court. We think it is important that judges have the necessary discretion to render appropriate decisions. They must first decide whether a crime has been com-

mitted and then they must determine the sentence for that crime, if applicable.

Some rather tragic situations have occurred in the current context, where Parliament decided a few years ago to tie the hands of judges with minimum sentences. I am thinking of a relatively recent case. Two or three years ago, a young man who was about 22 or 23 years old had a girlfriend who was about 15. He was in a relationship with her. The parents of both young people were okay with it and consented to it. The young people were open about the fact that they were dating. There were no secrets. At one point, the young man was sentenced, and the Court of Appeal had to reduce that sentence. The Court of Appeal indicated in its decision that it was rather absurd to impose minimum sentences in situations like this one, where the judge clearly needed to be able to exercise some discretion and use judgment in enforcing the appropriate standards.

We think judges should have that discretion, so we are in favour of getting rid of mandatory minimums wherever possible.

That said, eliminating mandatory minimums does not mean a free-for-all. It means that judges we trust, who have a modicum of intelligence, experience and knowledge of the justice system, will be able to adjust a sentence, instead of simply imposing sentences over which they have no discretion whatsoever, just because lawmakers decided at some point that it should be that way. That is one thing.

I would say that our confidence in the justice system shows in the objections we have repeatedly raised, as all my parliamentary colleagues have witnessed, with regard to the Liberal government's partisan appointment process. I can still hardly believe that we were told they were using the infamous "Liberalist" to check whether candidates for the bench had any relationship with the Liberal Party. That really bothered me because a system like that undermines public confidence in those judges. That was just an aside, but we have been consistent about that.

Let me just say that we think that the justice system should work and we should be able to have confidence in it. Our job as legislators is to pass legislation and ensure that judges are unhindered, that they are completely free to apply the law objectively and judiciously.

I would add that we must never forget that the job of the legislator is to decide what constitutes an offence. Our work on a criminal offence is to determine whether drug possession is an offence or not, whether murder is an offence or not. I hope it will continue to be, but theoretically it is up to the legislator to make those types of decisions. As part of the executive branch, police officers have to apply or enforce the laws voted in by us, and the judiciary has to decide whether the Crown is right, whether an offence has been committed. We have to be consistent and eliminate minimum penalties. I completely agree with that.

Government Orders

I also think that diversion measures are rather important. In Quebec, we have a rather unique system with young offenders and youth law. There were fierce debates several years ago before I was elected when the previous government wanted to impose minimum sentences on young offenders. In Quebec, we believe we must try to rehabilitate young offenders. In Quebec we have expertise on diversion programs. We are pleased to see that the current government wants to move the legislation in that direction.

● (1815)

Getting back to the topic of drugs, in recent years, drug addiction problems have been dealt with as Criminal Code offences. We believe that this is a public health issue rather than a judicial one.

I am not talking about drug traffickers. When someone brings 100 kilograms of cocaine into Canada, we agree that it has nothing to do with the person having a drug addiction. That individual does not need to spend time in a rehabilitation centre, but rather to be tried and duly punished.

On the other hand, when we are talking about simple possession or a young person with a drug addiction, we need to look after that person. That young person needs to be loved, treated fairly and supported in their recovery. That is what we believe, and we therefore plan to support Bill C-22.

I do not know how much time I have left, but I could go on and on about why I believe in the principles of diversion and judicial discretion. I also want to mention that I have been listening to my Conservative colleagues and, although I do not agree with everything they have said, I also do not disagree with everything they have said. They are right about a few things. I think the bill is far from perfect and therefore needs some fine tuning. We need to hear from experts in various fields at committee, propose amendments and improve the bill, because there is considerable room for improvement.

I have serious concerns about clause 20 of the bill, which would add a section 10.2 to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, giving peace officers, or police officers, the power to either lay an information for certain offences, to give a warning or to send the offender to a program, such as a rehabilitation program, an agency or another service provider. I think that rehabilitation programs are good, but I am hesitant to give police officers the authority to make this decision without any legal framework.

Personally, I like the system we have in Quebec. If a police officer wants to lay an information, they first go to the Crown prosecutor, who will choose whether to authorize the charge and may decide to send the offender to a program instead of proceeding to trial. The Crown prosecutor is given some leeway, while Bill C-22 would give that leeway to police officers.

I have a lot of friends who are police officers, and I have a lot of respect for what they do. I am not saying that they are unable to show discretion, diligence or good judgment, but I still believe that Crown prosecutors or the director of criminal and penal prosecutions should have some oversight over this specific issue.

New clause 10.4, which the bill would add to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, states that the police force in question

may keep a record or registry of any warnings or referrals. Should the “may” not be a “must”? That would ensure that there is a record of all of the warnings and referrals made by the police. What is more, should a provision not be added to enable the director of criminal and penal prosecutions to check that record from time to time or to ensure diligent follow-up? I do not think that leaving all the discretionary power in the hands of the police without any follow-up or oversight is the right solution.

I am not willing to give carte blanche with regard to Bill C-22. I think we need to examine it. I would like to hear what police officers think of the bill. I would also like to hear from people working in detox facilities or in offender rehabilitation. I would like to hear from all of those people and from Crown prosecutors, but I do not know how comfortable they would feel testifying before a parliamentary committee.

● (1820)

I would like to examine every aspect of these provisions because this is so important. I have to say that I am a little disappointed to see this happening at the end of the legislative process.

There has been talk of an election. Mr. Trudeau seems to be hinting at a spring or fall election.

Will we have time to pass Bill C-22 before Parliament is dissolved? I—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member not to name his House colleagues.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I apologize.

I was saying that the Prime Minister has been hinting at an election call. My fear is that the writ will be dropped and Parliament dissolved before we pass Bill C-22. That would be a real shame because society needs us to improve the existing judicial process with respect to some of the sentences in Bill C-22.

I would like to add one thing. I listened to my Conservative colleague go over some of the sentences covered in Bill C-22. He said that some sentences should not be in it. I think there are others that are maybe not included but that should be. Once again, this should all be looked at in committee. Personally, I am open to collaborating with my colleagues from the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and any other party so we can make sure our judicial process reflects voters' concerns.

That sums up my thoughts on the subject.

In closing, let me reiterate that the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of Bill C-22 so that the committee can study and improve it. I think this bill has plenty of room for improvement.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's remarks. He seemed to suggest that he believes that the legislature has no role in sentencing—that it is up to the legislature to determine what is a crime, but that it is up to judges alone to determine sentencing. I think there is a strong case to be made, though, that legislatures in a democracy have a responsibility to at least establish something like sentencing starting points. We can debate whether mandatory minimum sentencing starting points and other mechanisms are appropriate.

The reason for the legislature to have a voice in sentencing is twofold.

Number one, in a democracy, it is the job of a legislature to establish the relative seriousness of a crime and to say, through sentencing starting points or mandatory minimums or other mechanisms, that we view something as a very serious crime and that we therefore have set a higher sentencing starting point, and that we view something else as a less serious crime and have therefore set a lower starting point.

Another important reason for the legislature to be engaged is a matter of equality. Different judges likely have different opinions about the sentences that are appropriate for certain crimes, so to have a standard sense of what the sentencing starting point is for a particular crime ensures equality for people who go before different judges for the same crime.

Does the member agree in principle that legislators in democracies should have some role in establishing, at the very least, starting points for sentencing so that there is equality and so that there is some social voice speaking to the court about the relative seriousness of certain kinds of crimes?

● (1825)

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I am glad that my colleague asked me that question. It may surprise him to learn that I agree with him, at least in part.

I agree that it is obvious that legislators have a role to play. There needs to be some room to manoeuvre. In some cases, we have to use minimum sentences. Often we have to use maximum sentences. We must establish the criteria for determining whether a de facto situation is a crime. That is the role of legislators. That is what we have always done and must continue to do.

Where my colleague and I disagree is that I think we must give judges more discretion. My colleague is right to say that different judges have different opinions, but I think that is precisely what makes our justice system successful.

Personally, if I am charged with a crime, I would not want to be evaluated and judged by a machine or a computer. I like the idea of standing in front of a human being who will listen to my explanations and decide whether I am right or wrong. I agree with having minimum sentences and maximum sentences, but we have to give judges room to manoeuvre so that they can dispense justice effectively and judiciously.

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I agree. I think that judges should have the ability to make decisions on sentencing.

One of the disappointments to me, after hearing calls from the British Columbia government and the Canadian Chiefs of Police Association to decriminalize drugs, is that this bill does not go far enough. We know that the war on drugs is a colossal failure. It means that the people who get targeted do not have the means to protect themselves, such as indigenous people and people of colour. They get targeted much more than white males do. We know this is a failure.

Does my colleague think that we should be going further and look at European models for dealing with the war on drugs and decriminalize this completely to take it out of the hands of organized crime?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I think the complete decriminalization of drugs is also an important issue, one that we are going to have to debate one of these days. It is inevitable.

Bill C-22 does not steer us towards completely decriminalizing the use and possession of drugs. Like my colleague, I think we also need to examine that possibility. However, I do not believe we will be doing that with Bill C-22.

Let us start by supporting this bill and trying to improve it as much as possible to address our constituents' concerns. This would be a step in the right direction.

I would be very open to the possibility of studying this matter. The Bloc Québécois has already indicated where we stand. We are in favour of studying this important issue.

As I said earlier, I see drug addiction as a health problem, not a criminal problem.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord for his heartfelt speech, which was articulate and very persuasive.

For the benefit of our colleagues, I would like him to elaborate on the negative repercussions of the minimum sentences that are currently in effect for certain circumstances, in particular with respect to the potential rehabilitation of offenders.

● (1830)

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé for his question. He always asks questions that are relevant and often too tough for me to answer.

Government Orders

Earlier, I cited the example of the young couple accused of enticement of a minor. I do not remember the exact charges, but I thought the case was rather frightening. There are situations that are not criminal in nature. In this instance, we are not talking about someone who misled and manipulated a young girl without her consent and behind her parents' backs. We are talking about an open, normal, healthy relationship that was supported by the parents of the young couple, who wound up in court. The young man unfortunately had to be sentenced because of the minimum sentences. I think this is a terrible situation.

My colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé is right about drugs. We are talking about people who have a health problem, who are addicted to drugs. Instead of receiving treatment, they are sent to prison, where they may meet people convicted of drug trafficking or other, more serious crimes, and spend one month, one year, six months or 10 years with them. It does not matter how long—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I need to give others a chance to ask questions.

The hon. member for Essex.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find this kind of interesting. Bill C-21 potentially throws airsoft firearms owners and paintball gun owners in jail, while Bill C-22 literally allows criminals and gangs to run free, those same gangs that do drive-by shootings.

Bill C-22 eliminates mandatory prison time for those who commit armed robbery. Can the member confirm that he supports the elimination of mandatory prison time for someone found guilty of an armed robbery?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

We have already been asked why we would support Bill C-21, which would take certain firearms off the market.

I can understand why he would say that Bill C-21, at face value, appears to restrict or prohibit weapons that are harmless, or, at least, not harmful or the same type we want to restrict or prohibit.

We took the same approach with Bill C-21. We said that it needed to be studied in committee and amended. If my colleagues want perfect bills that can be passed as soon as they are introduced, I encourage them to immigrate to Quebec. Once we become a sovereign nation, we will have excellent pieces of legislation. The only thing we can do now is study the federal government's bills, and there is no question that they need amendments.

We have to study them in committee so that we can hear from experts and get people to reconsider poorly worded bills. My colleague is right; Bill C-21 must be improved.

I do not believe that people playing with toy guns need to be sent to prison. When I was a kid I played with guns and I did some things that my children and grandchildren may not be able to do today. I do not see how I, or anyone else, could have been sent to prison for such activities.

My colleague is right: Bill C-21 needs to be improved, and so does Bill C-22.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke will have five minutes to begin his speech and to resume the next time the bill comes to the floor.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would be pleased to rise in the House today rather than just speak to a pinhole camera, as I always say, but let me say that New Democrats will be supporting Bill C-22 at second reading, because there are some good ideas in it. However, if we are going to be amending the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, we see Bill C-22 as a real missed opportunity. We have two very important crises in front of us as Canadians. One is the opioid crisis and the other is the over-incarceration of indigenous people, Black Canadians and Canadians living in poverty. We had a real chance to tackle both of those issues in this bill and, instead, the government has given us a very tepid response.

What we should see in this bill is a change to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to decriminalize the personal possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use, and we should also see a second provision that would automatically expunge previous criminal records for personal possession of drugs. If we had those two things in this bill, we could tackle the problem of addiction by moving it clearly to the health system rather than the criminal justice system, and we could tackle one of the main causes of over-incarceration of marginalized people in Canada.

The policies that New Democrats are talking about are more effective, more just and even cheaper. I want to talk about mandatory minimums. The one good idea in the bill is to eliminate mandatory minimums for drug offences. New Democrats have certainly long argued for this. Conservatives, in their speeches, have been saying that the bill would eliminate mandatory minimums created by the Liberals, which is true and I am for that, and it creates a lot more mandatory minimums created by Conservatives, and I am also in favour of that.

Mandatory minimums do not do a thing to prevent or deter crime or make Canadians safer. All that mandatory minimums do is to guarantee that some people who should not be in prison at all, who would be better off in rehabilitation or diversion programs, are incarcerated. Mandatory minimums end up costing the public money, and having spent 20 years as a criminal justice instructor before coming here, I can say that those who go to prison actually end up far more likely to reoffend than those who do not. Therefore, rehabilitation and diversion programs are a great success and mandatory minimums stand in the way of those programs.

When it comes to overrepresentation, there is no doubt that when we look at the statistics of how many indigenous people are in the correctional system, though they are only 4.9% of the population, they make up over 30% of the people incarcerated in Canada, as the criminal investigator, Ivan Zinger, reported. If we look at Black Canadians, in the last census though they were about 3.5% of Canadians, they are more than double that percentage of the prison population. Many people who live in poverty end up embroiled in the criminal justice system because of very minor drug offences. Again, if we are looking at what the real solution is to both of these problems, it is decriminalization of the personal possession of small amounts of drugs.

Let us take the example of Portugal, which decriminalized personal possession in 2001. We see some very positive results as a result of that legislative action. There have been steep declines in overdose deaths in Portugal, in drug usage, in new cases of HIV and hepatitis C infections and in drug-related crime. Overdose deaths declined from over 400 per year to less than 40. Drug usage declined among all age groups, but it was an especially large decline in the 15-year-old to 24-year-old age group. New HIV infections declined by 90%. Portugal previously had the highest rate of drug-related HIV cases, and decriminalization led to that very steep decrease. It also led to a decrease in incarceration, by about 75% for drug offences.

This measure had lots of related impacts. First of all, the police reported that they had much more time to devote to serious drug trafficking cases when they were not messing with personal possession cases, and it helped eliminate many long delays in the Portuguese criminal justice system by taking many of these minor cases out of the court system.

• (1835)

Did it solve all problems related to addiction and drug use? No, of course it did not. Observers have pointed to the need that if we decriminalize personal possession, we need strong prevention and treatment programs to go alongside that. We need things like supervised injection sites, needle exchanges, provisions for the safe supply of drugs, better access to anti-overdose medications and improved access, obviously, to drug prevention and treatment programs.

Certainly the opioid crisis makes more dramatic action than this bill offers necessary. On the south island, in 2019, there were 65 overdose deaths. In 2020, during the current pandemic crisis, there were 120 deaths. In British Columbia as a whole in the period of COVID, the number of toxic-drug deaths doubled in that time period.

Private Members' Business

Is decriminalization of the possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use still an idea outside the mainstream? Certainly I felt like an outlier when I first began talking about this as a city councillor in 2008, though, of course, Portugal was my example then as it is now. However, now we can add to the list of supporters of decriminalization of personal possession, including big city mayors, from Kennedy Stewart in Vancouver to Valérie Plante in Montreal; the Elizabeth Fry Society; the John Howard Society; virtually every criminal justice researcher; the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police; the World Health Organization; the Global Commission on Drug Policy; and various UN agencies.

While the New Democrats are offering support for this timid bill, it does do one good thing in eliminating those mandatory minimum sentences for drug offences. However, what we are offering is also criticism for the failure to take on the bigger questions that lie behind our failure to confront the opioid crisis, the over-incarceration of indigenous people, Black Canadians and Canadians living in poverty.

The New Democrats will continue to fight for more effective, comprehensive and cheaper measures to get these two jobs done.

• (1840)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:42 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-224, An Act to amend An Act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are four motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-224. Motions Nos. 1 to 4 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 4 to the House.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ) moved:

Private Members' Business

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-224 be amended by restoring the long title as follows:

“An Act to amend An Act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces”

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-224 be amended by restoring the preamble as follows:

“Whereas the residents of Quebec are the only ones in Canada who have to submit both a federal tax return and a provincial tax return;

And whereas the National Assembly and Government of Quebec have expressed their desire to put an end to this situation by entering into an agreement with the Government of Canada to allow residents of Quebec to submit a single tax return and to make the Government of Quebec responsible for collecting the taxes;”

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-224 be amended by restoring Clause 1 as follows:

“1 An Act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces is amended by adding the following after section 20:

20.1 (1) The Minister, with the approval of the Governor in Council, may, on behalf of the Government of Canada, enter into an agreement with the government of a province under which the government of the province will collect the federal personal and corporation income taxes on behalf of the Government of Canada and will make payments to the Government of Canada in respect of the taxes so collected, in accordance with such terms and conditions as the agreement prescribes.

(2) The Minister, with the approval of the Governor in Council, may, on behalf of the Government of Canada, enter into an agreement amending the terms and conditions of an agreement entered into under subsection (1).

(3) Any agreement entered into under subsection (1) must provide measures to mitigate the impacts that the implementation of the agreement may have on the employment of affected persons.

(4) When an agreement is entered into under subsection (1), the Minister shall undertake, on behalf of the Government of Canada, negotiations with the foreign taxing authorities in order to amend the income tax treaties, income tax agreements and tax information exchange agreements that they have entered into with Canada so that the government of the province has access to all the tax information necessary to implement the agreement from those taxing authorities directly.”

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-224 be amended by restoring Clause 2 as follows:

“2 Within 90 days of the coming into force of this Act, the Minister shall undertake discussions with the Government of Quebec in order to enter into, within a year, the agreement referred to in section 20.1 of An Act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces.”

• (1845)

He said: Mr. Speaker, thank you for reading all of my amendments into the record.

I am very proud to introduce this bill in the House. The bill seeks to establish a single tax return administered by Quebec. I am also very proud that my bill received the support of a majority of the elected members of the House at second reading. The committee study went well. We had some enriching and constructive debates. From my perspective, the concerns about the transition and about jobs have been satisfactorily addressed. The proof is that the NDP decided to support the bill. I also believe that the committee study of this bill confirmed that Ottawa would maintain its own tax policy, and the only change would be having just one tax collector, namely Revenu Québec.

I cannot find the words to describe my shock and surprise at the Conservative members' decisions during the vote in committee. They chose to reject every clause of the bill, even its title. It was unbelievable. Obviously, the Government of Quebec has expressed

its disappointment with the Conservatives' about-face in committee. They did not invite any witnesses and seemed to support the bill but then chose to vote against it.

That is why I am calling on the members of the House to vote again on this bill, which seeks to establish a single tax return for Quebecers. If my colleagues support this bill, I encourage them to vote in favour of the amendments that I am proposing today and to support the implementation of a single tax return administered by Quebec.

I would also like to sincerely thank the member for New Westminster—Burnaby for supporting the bill in committee. The NDP said that it supported the principle of the bill but expressed concerns about protecting jobs. The debates in committee showed that it is perfectly possible to keep jobs in the regions. Since the federal public service is already understaffed and overly concentrated in Ottawa, the government would be free to reassign some staff to other duties.

The Syndicat de la fonction publique et parapublique du Québec, or SFPQ, explained to the committee that it is fairly common to see employees move from one level of government to another and that this can be easily done. Employees would be able to keep their jobs and all of their benefits.

Let me go over what is proposed in the bill. It calls on the government to undertake negotiations with Quebec to enter into an agreement about a single tax return that would be administered by Quebec. The bill states that discussions must be undertaken within 90 days and an agreement reached within a year. That seems good to me. The bill also allows Revenu Québec to access Quebec taxpayers' foreign tax information for consistency. Lastly, the bill calls for special attention to maintaining jobs.

That is exactly what the Government of Quebec and Premier François Legault want. It is exactly what all parties in Quebec's National Assembly want, unanimously. It is exactly what Quebec's business community and unions, such as the Centrale des syndicats du Québec and the SFPQ, want. It is exactly what the people of Quebec want. According to the Research Institute on Self-Determination of Peoples and National Independence, eliminating duplication could save \$425 million a year.

I was so surprised to see the Conservatives drop this bill during the vote in committee. They used job protection as an excuse to justify their actions. The bill I am introducing calls for protecting those jobs. In 2019, the Conservatives moved a motion in favour of a single tax return in Quebec and it proposed nothing to protect jobs. When the previous Conservative leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, said he supported a single tax return administered by Quebec, he never talked about protecting jobs. When this commitment was unanimously adopted at the Conservative convention in Halifax, it was never a question of protecting jobs. When this ended up in the Conservatives' platform during the last election, there was not a single word about job protection.

As soon as the bill was rejected in committee, the Conservative Quebec lieutenant was quick to note that his party was in favour of a single tax return administered by Quebec even though the Conservatives had just rejected this bill. The same goes for the Conservative leader: at his party's convention last Friday, he again made a very clear commitment to support the plan. The Conservatives are in favour of a single tax return provided there is no risk of it coming to fruition, but as soon as it gains traction they flee. I am asking the Conservative members to fix their mistake in committee and support the amendments I am presenting to implement the bill. Let them listen to the commitment made by their leader and their Quebec lieutenant.

● (1850)

Newspaper columnist and former Conservative Party staffer Marc-André Leclerc urged the Conservative leader to support my bill, saying that he “has a duty to prove that his love for the Quebec nation is not a fleeting love”.

Quebec Conservatives are disappointed with the way the Conservatives voted, because the bill has widespread support in Quebec.

I now want to reveal some new information to the House. The work done in committee helped us uncover the real reason that the government and the Liberal members are opposed to this bill. The reasons given in their speeches do not hold water and can be described as ridiculous at best.

From written correspondence provided in response to a question that I had submitted to the Department of Finance, we learned that Ottawa makes a lot of money from administering provincial taxes. Therefore, it is not in Ottawa's interest to let the provinces administer their taxes themselves. Above all, Ottawa does not want to set a precedent or give the provinces any ideas about administering their taxes themselves by following Quebec's example with this proposed single tax return.

In committee, the representatives of the Departments of Finance and National Revenue told us that Ottawa does not charge the provinces anything for collecting their taxes. By the Liberals' telling, the Canada Revenue Agency is practically a charity that is there to serve the provinces.

The only thing is that is not at all how it works. We have learned that the tax collection agreements are stacked heavily in favour of Ottawa. In these agreements, the federal government must remit to the provinces all of the taxes it collects on their behalf, without much of an effort. As soon as the federal government makes a little

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effort, it keeps the difference for itself. In five years, the federal government pocketed \$4.5 billion in provincial taxes that it kept from the provinces. That is almost \$1 billion a year. That is a tidy sum, and is certainly enough to convince the Liberals to oppose the Quebec National Assembly's unanimous request. It is best not to give the other provinces any ideas, for fear that Ottawa would lose out on \$1 billion of the provinces' money a year. That may also have been the reason the Conservatives decided to fight the bill.

In presenting my amendments to the House, I encourage all members of Parliament to support a request from the Quebec National Assembly and its premier. I urge the Conservatives to change their minds. Scoring a goal is all well and good, but not when it is in your own net or in Quebec's. I urge the New Democrats to be consistent and show solidarity with Quebec's unanimous demand. It is possible to save the jobs. I urge the Liberals to do this for Quebec and work to make the government more efficient. By this, I mean that we need to eliminate duplication, since the work does not need to be done twice.

The government has the means to protect the jobs in the regions, as long as the will is there. The federal public service is understaffed and is far too centralized in Ottawa. I am calling on the Liberal members and all members of the House not to be swayed by the argument that Ottawa makes \$1 billion a year on the backs of the provinces and that things need to stay the way they are. This is not right, and I would even say it is cheap.

I would also remind the House that after years of negotiation, Quebec City managed to come to an agreement with Ottawa regarding the collection of sales tax from businesses. Rather than Ottawa collecting the GST and Quebec collecting the QST, Revenu Québec collects both the GST and the QST at the same time. This means far less paperwork for businesses and generates significant savings. Revenu Québec is present in every region of Quebec, and this system works well. It has been successful, and no one complains about it.

Could we do the same thing with income tax? That is simply what this bill proposes, and I am confident that it will pass in the House.

● (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish a good evening to all my colleagues as we continue to operate virtually in this very extraordinary period of time. I am thankful for the opportunity to speak during today's report stage debate on Bill C-224, an act to amend An Act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces.

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As the House is aware, after careful study, the majority of our colleagues on the finance committee have recommended that this legislation not proceed further. To briefly recap, this legislation would authorize the Minister of Finance to enter into agreements with the provincial government. As a result of these agreements, and under Bill C-224, the province would then be able to collect personal and corporate income taxes on behalf of the Government of Canada. Additionally, within 90 days of the legislation coming into force, the Minister of Finance would be obliged to undertake discussions with the Government of Quebec in order to enter into an agreement within one year.

During my time today, I would like to review the serious issues raised with this bill during the committee stage that prompted members to make the recommendation not to proceed with Bill C-224. Specifically, I want to mention four important areas of concern. They are the bill's potential impacts on public service employment levels in Quebec, the delivery of benefits to residents of Quebec, the fight against international tax evasion and the significant implementation cost of this proposal.

First, as noted by officials from the Canada Revenue Agency who appeared before the finance committee, Bill C-224 would create tremendous uncertainty surrounding job security for the nearly six thousand CRA employees in Quebec, as well as many other CRA employees outside of Quebec.

A CRA official who appeared before the committee on February 16, 2021, said, "The agency's workloads are national, meaning that the work of a particular province can be done in several other provinces. Therefore, although the impact on jobs would be most significant in the province which would choose to repatriate tax operations, many jobs across the country could be impacted."

This is a real concern about job security that was also shared by representatives of various public sector unions who also appeared before the finance committee. For instance, the president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada stated, "it's critical that we not lose sight of the impact this could have on employment in Shawinigan and Jonquière, where the Canada Revenue Agency provides good jobs to a great many people. I cannot think of a worse time than the middle of a pandemic to start thinking about cutting jobs in smaller communities."

The CRA is a government leader in the decentralization of its jobs. They are not at all concentrated in the national capital region, as is often the case with federal jobs. Employees cannot be easily redeployed to other departments. Similarly, the national president of the Union of Taxation Employees echoed this apprehension about the job losses that could result due to the passage of Bill C-224 by informing the finance committee of the following:

...massive job losses will clearly ensue if this bill is passed and the federal government hands over administration of Quebec's federal taxes to the provincial government. The Canada Revenue Agency currently employs approximately 6,000 people in Quebec, and our union represents about 4,000 of them. Revenue Québec has around 12,000 employees. Together, the two agencies therefore have a total workforce of approximately 18,000 people. If we compare that to the CRA's total workforce in Canada outside of Quebec, which is about 39,000 employees, it's easy to see that there would be a surplus of employees in Quebec if the bill is passed.

I would like to point out that the vast majority of jobs that would be lost are held by people living in the province of Quebec. They pay taxes there and greatly contribute to the province's economic activity. Basically, they are Quebecers from all over Quebec, as the national president of the Union of Taxation Employees pointed out when he said, "Included in these job losses are more than 1,200 employees in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region and 1,500 in Mauricie."

As I have clearly demonstrated, Bill C-224 could represent a serious negative impact on job security for the thousands of public servants in Quebec, which is especially unfortunate because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

[*Translation*]

In that regard, I cannot believe that the Bloc Québécois, a party that claims to stand up for the people, could imagine that jeopardizing the livelihood of thousands of Quebecers in the Quebec City region is a good idea.

As the Bloc Québécois leader said yesterday at a press conference, when you take an interest in the regions, you take a real interest.

● (1905)

[*English*]

The second area of concern I would like to highlight with Bill C-224 is its potential negative impact on the delivery of benefits to residents of Quebec, as explained by the CRA official who appeared before the finance committee. The CRA and the Government of Canada use information obtained by the CRA to administer key federal benefit programs, such as the guaranteed income supplement and the child care benefit. Tax information is needed to administer these programs to ensure individuals get their benefits. This official went on to state that a transfer of administration to a province could impede the administrative effectiveness of these programs, which are crucial for the well-being of Canadians. Without tax information on hand, COVID-19 emergency benefits, which are crucial to the well-being of Canadians, would not have been possible to implement as quickly.

A third point of concern I would like to flag with Bill C-224 is its potential negative impact on Canada's fight against international tax evasion. Part of the CRA's mandate is to ensure the tax compliance of Canadians, both domestically and abroad. For this reason, the Government of Canada has signed many critical international tax treaties and tax information exchange agreements to help ensure the CRA's ability to fight international tax evasion. However, as noted by the CRA official at the finance committee, convincing our partners to make changes to include other subnational tax administrations is not a given.

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A representative of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada warned that Bill C-224 could negatively affect Canada's fight to combat international tax evasion, stating that because international agreements aimed at fighting tax evasion are signed between central governments, it would be difficult for Quebec to perform the federal government's work in this area without a great many treaties being redrafted. This could lead to increased tax evasion at a time when billions of dollars are sitting offshore that the government is trying to recoup. This is money that is badly needed to fund the public programs and services Canadians depend on every day.

A fourth and final concern with Bill C-224 is the significant potential implementation cost of the proposal, as there would clearly be cost increases and loss of economies of scale. A CRA official explained to the finance committee that the required integration between both the CRA and Revenu Québec processes and techniques would incur significant additional expenses.

In summary, these four areas represented real, substantive worries for the expert witnesses who appeared before the finance committee and helped inform the recommendation of the majority of the members of the finance committee not to proceed with this bill, a recommendation that I also support.

Before concluding, though, I would like to briefly note the important efforts the Government of Canada, through the CRA, has taken to reduce the administrative burden on Quebec taxpayers. In fact, the CRA has started discussions with the Province of Quebec to simplify or combine some tax forms and to simplify the income tax return process. This is an important and responsible step that I think all members would applaud and support.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for almost three years now, our party has been actively fighting for a single tax return for Quebec. Our position goes back a long time.

For a political party like ours, which respects provincial jurisdiction, listening to the provinces and collaborating with them is crucial. After all, we are the party that gave Quebec its UNESCO seat, that recognized the Quebec nation and that fixed the fiscal imbalance. We are the party that fought for the Meech Lake accord. In short, the Conservative Party has an excellent record when it comes to respecting the provinces and their jurisdiction.

The provincial government and Quebecers themselves responded very positively to the idea of a single tax return, which our party advanced in 2018. Currently, Quebec is the only province with two tax returns, one for Ottawa and the other for Quebec. This situation dates back to the Second World War. In 1941, the provinces agreed to temporarily hand their power to tax personal and corporate income over to the federal government. That situation ended up being permanent, not temporary.

However, in 1954, the Government of Quebec created its own personal income tax and started administering its own income tax system. The ability to administer its own system is critical to Quebec's autonomy.

Just as Quebec marked Canadian history in 1954, we have the possibility in the House of Commons to simplify life for Quebecers and continue the march toward a single tax return for Quebec, administered by Quebec. It is an idea we have been presenting for nearly three years now. At first Bill C-227 provided its sponsor the opportunity to take a positive step in that direction and bring us together around his bill, but now it is a different story.

First, the deadlines set out in the bill are unrealistic. Did it ever occur to the member for Joliette that the party currently in power is the Liberal Party of Canada, a party that is hostile to provincial demands?

As currently worded, the bill calls on the federal Minister of Finance to enter into discussions with the Government of Quebec within 90 days of the passage of the bill. What is more, the bill recommends discussions on an agreement within a year. Do they honestly believe that the Liberal Party of Canada will negotiate in good faith with the Government of Quebec to allow it to have a single tax return?

It would have been wiser for the Bloc Québécois to wait for a Conservative government to be elected before initiating such discussions, since the Conservatives are much more in tune with the needs of the provinces. There is no doubt that an agreement negotiated by the Conservative Party of Canada and the Government of Quebec would have been much more beneficial for la belle province than one negotiated by a Liberal government.

In fact, recent events show that the Liberal government is not very responsive to Quebec's demands. Quebec is calling for an increase in health transfers with no strings attached. The federal government responded by seeking to impose Canada-wide standards in Quebec's long-term care facilities. That shows a complete lack of trust in Quebec.

Fortunately, the Conservatives not only want to increase health transfers in a stable, predictable way with no strings attached, but we also want to take action for Quebec in other areas, namely by applying Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses, such as banks, and by giving Quebec more authority over immigration.

Second, rather than sticking to one bill to obtain a single tax return for Quebec, the member for Joliette chose to use this opportunity to promote a completely different agenda. That should not have happened.

Nowhere in its unanimous motion to support the creation of a single tax return did the Quebec National Assembly request negotiating powers with tax administrations in foreign jurisdictions in order to amend the tax treaties and agreements regarding income tax and Canada's tax information exchange agreements. That is a whole other debate that is hindering the passage of the bill.

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● (1910)

Although we support Quebec's autonomist vision, foreign relations are definitely a federal jurisdiction. Why, then, include this in the bill?

Is the Bloc Québécois really set on having a single tax return? Did it not know that including this clause would derail the debate? The Bloc Québécois's position on this issue is unfortunate, but not surprising.

The Bloc Québécois is using this clause to have it both ways. The single tax return is in itself a huge win for Quebec. The Bloc Québécois always has to push the envelope.

Third, the bill provides no guarantee that Canadian public service jobs will be maintained following this change. The people of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord know me. I have always said that the single tax return should be brought in without causing any job losses. I can say that this bill does not provide any guarantees about that.

The public service has quality, well-paid jobs in the regions. The Conservative Party has always wanted the regions, and not just Montreal, to develop and have their fair share of the pie. It is in the same spirit that the provincial government has a plan to move public service jobs to the regions.

Unfortunately, if our Bloc Québécois colleagues had paid attention to what was said by the stakeholders who appeared before the committee, including the union representing the workers, they would know that the bill, in its present form, does nothing at all to protect jobs.

This bill jeopardizes an important sector for regions like Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and the Mauricie. We are in the midst of a pandemic; now is not the time to jeopardize jobs. Now is the time to take action for our families, our workers and Quebec.

If the purpose of Bill C-224, in its present form, was to encourage the creation of a single tax return, then it misses the mark. The Bloc Québécois should leave managing to managers and let the Conservatives finish what they started with respect to the single tax return. In other words, the Bloc should let the Conservatives introduce, negotiate and implement the single tax return. The Bloc Québécois's bill is a very good illustration of the expression "give someone an inch and they will take a mile".

Rather than proposing effective solutions for Quebeckers to make their lives easier, the Bloc Québécois's bill just stirs up quarrels between Ottawa and Quebec. The Conservative Party will continue to push for a pragmatic and effective solution to give Quebeckers the single tax return they deserve, while respecting workers and the regions.

I will close by saying that the Conservative Party will not need a private member's bill to take action. We have every intention of forming the next government, of picking up the phone to call the Government of Quebec and of negotiating and creating a single tax return for Quebeckers.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we just heard was a pre-election speech full of partisanship. It is actually quite interesting.

I would like to say one thing before I begin my speech.

As the NDP deputy critic for the environment, I must point out that the announcement about an endangered species in the St. Lawrence River, the copper redhorse, did not get the attention it should have from the Liberal government's Minister of Environment. Biologists were forced to admit that this government is not very serious. The proposals being made do not reflect the fact that we really need to protect an endangered species.

I listened carefully to the speech from the member for Joliette. There may be a misunderstanding at report stage. This is really important to the NDP. It is part of our tradition. We generally believe that bills should not be killed in committee after being supported at second reading. It was therefore for the sake of consistency that my colleague voted to bring this bill back to the House. We thought that made sense. While the Conservatives were filibustering and trying to block the bill in committee, we voted for it in principle. My colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby did what needed to be done, in the progressive tradition of the New Democrats, to respect that basic principle and bring the bill back to the House.

This does not mean that we were reassured by the work in committee and by what we heard there. I will come back to that in a few minutes. It was a Bloc member, a colleague of the member for Joliette, who gave us the final argument, confirming that there was no way to be sure that this bill would guarantee and protect very important jobs in the regions, particularly in Mauricie and Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

I wanted to set the record straight at the outset.

I am going to back up a bit. I too want to briefly go back to the Second World War. In 1941, the provinces administered income taxes, but in a concerted war effort, there was a willingness to give the federal government the means to take action, which was only natural. Then there was an attempt and willingness to hold on to that power. Once one has a certain power I imagine it is hard to let go of it. However, in 1954, the Government of Quebec reinstated a provincial tax.

Shortly after, in 1955-56, an agreement was reached to ensure that Quebec taxpayers would not pay a higher percentage in taxes than Canadians, who paid only to Ottawa. Then, Ottawa started providing subsidies or payments proportional to the amounts that were given to the different provinces. That system seems to work well, but as a result Quebeckers have long been the only citizens to have to file two tax returns. I will come back later to the modern definition of two tax returns, since many things have changed since 1955-56. Sometimes it is good to go over it again.

We agreed, in principle. Before the Conservatives took on that position, the NDP had adopted a resolution at its convention, stating that we agreed with having a single tax return for Quebeckers. We believe that the Government of Quebec should have that autonomy. The resolution had two parts, however. The member for Joliette will recall my previous speeches, in which I said that we agreed with the principle, but that this measure must not come at the expense of the public servants working in Quebec's regions. Otherwise, we would just be trading four quarters for a dollar. We would be giving a government an additional power, but penalizing thousands of families.

We therefore voted in favour of the bill at second reading. The bill would be sent to committee. We did our homework before going to committee. We met with people working at Revenue Canada tax centres, to ask them how the work could be rearranged and what additional tasks these employees could take on. We need to come up with a game plan and make some guarantees that these people will not be left high and dry. Half of them would maybe be saved, while the other half will have to look for work.

● (1915)

It is much more complicated than it seems, as demonstrated once again in committee. It is not as easy as waving a magic wand and saying that now that something is written in the law, it will undoubtedly happen. The Bloc Québécois lent this magic wand to the Conservatives for a few months, until the Conservatives also realized that it could not be done. Today, it is rather amusing to see the Conservatives listening so carefully to the federal public service unions. They are not quite so attentive when they are in power, but for now, they seem to have listened to reason and understood that people cannot be trained, be reassigned and have their work reorganized in that manner.

For example, assigning people to fight tax havens would be a good thing, but it is not at all the same type of work, and the skills and requirements are different. This is magical thinking. Workers in the sector told the committee as much, and I believe that out of respect for these workers and their families, we should really be listening to them, because they are the experts. The NDP did its homework before going to committee, but we continued to listen to them.

We heard other things in committee too. For example, the Bloc Québécois claims that tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars can be saved with nary a job lost. It is a new magic wand, and I would sure like to know how that works. Basically, the money pays for labour and wages. If they are claiming savings of hundreds of millions of dollars, they cannot also say that all those people will stay employed. That makes no sense. It is like saying the government is going to cut taxes and increase spending. It is exactly the same contradiction.

During an exchange with the member for Joliette, the member for La Prairie said that only “44% of the 5,300 people are really useful”. That is right in the Standing Committee on Finance evidence. He just said that the other half are technically useless. I would like him to tell the other 3,000 employees that they are useless. Is that the Bloc Québécois' vision for regional economic development and respect for workers? That is really bad.

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The member for La Prairie went on to say, “This means that 2,332 of the 5,300 people would remain employed”. It is not hard to figure out that this means 3,000 people would lose their jobs and their pay. That is what the Bloc Québécois and the member for La Prairie said, and anyone can read it in the committee evidence. They are prepared to sacrifice 3,000 jobs in the regions. They are prepared to sacrifice 3,000 families because they have sunk their teeth into this and are not willing to let go.

There is something Bloc Québécois does not realize. In addition to hurting workers, is not having to fill out two paper tax returns really that useful nowadays? The reality is that hardly anyone fills out their tax returns at home using two forms they picked up at the credit union, right by the door, like they did 15 or 20 years ago.

Most professionals say that, since 2016, the majority of Quebeckers, at least 60%, have their tax returns done by chartered accountants and that 40% still complete their own tax returns. Of that 40%, 75% complete their tax return using online software. When people complete the online form, they are actually completing an income tax return, and the online software puts the information in the appropriate boxes for the little blue sheet or the little red sheet. This hardly has any impact on people's lives anymore. We are talking about 10% or 12% of Quebeckers who still complete two copies of their income tax return on paper.

Is that worth sacrificing 3,000 good jobs? Is that worth making 3,000 families suffer? That percentage drops every year. In a few years, hardly anybody will be filing a paper tax return on their own without the help of a professional.

For all of these reasons, the NDP will not support this bill because it does not serve the interests of Quebeckers and workers.

● (1920)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we spoke about proverbs earlier. As I listened to my Conservative Party colleague and my NDP colleague, it made me think of these words from Falardeau: “We always go too far for people who are going nowhere.” That neatly sums up how change scares people like them, even if it is for the better. They get scared the minute we start talking about change.

The Conservatives, who are traditionally in favour of the idea of a single tax return, introduced and debated a motion in the House in 2019. They based it on a motion that was unanimously adopted by the Quebec National Assembly on May 15, 2018. I know because I was the one who moved that motion in the National Assembly.

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The Conservatives spent an entire day debating that motion. Now they are telling us that they no longer support it, because they know the Liberals do not want a single tax return. They want to kill the bill before the Liberals do. That is a great way to play politics—do the dirty work because they know someone else will do it anyway. Are we here to make life better for people, or are we here to play politics for the sole purpose of protecting our jobs?

While the Conservatives know that a single tax return would be better for everyone and for all Quebecers, it would also be a win for the Bloc Québécois. The last thing the Conservatives want is for us to prove once again that the Bloc is useful to the public. That is the problem.

They would rather see people continue to spend money unnecessarily on two tax returns, and see public servants continue to do the same work twice. However, those public servants could be freed up to do other things. We never said they should be fired. We said that, since they are already being paid, why not use these competent individuals to do something else in the public service at a time when there is a shortage of workers? Am I the only one here who understands that? It is obvious.

According to a scientific study by the Research Institute on Self-Determination of Peoples and National Independence, known as IRAI, the public service would save \$287 million. There it is in black and white, backed with evidence, and yet, it is being opposed.

A hospital like Hôpital Pierre-Le Gardeur costs \$205 million to build. That is what the savings could amount to for Quebec. With that money, we could build at least one hospital a year, which would improve people's health. That is what we want to do for people.

It makes no sense to have officials doing the same work at two different locations. This does not mean that jobs in the regions will be eliminated. Those people could do other things. We know that the public service is understaffed. There is a shortage of workers. It is looking for people right now. The pandemic will not last forever.

The Conservatives just cannot understand that. They no longer know what to say and are mixing up the dates and figures. They swear that they did not see it that way. You are either for the single tax return or against it. It is like being pregnant: Either you are pregnant or you are not; there is no in-between.

Sure, we will have to sign agreements with the other countries, because we will become tax collectors. That is what the Conservatives need to understand, but are not able to. As soon as we try to do something good for Quebec, they oppose it.

Quebeckers support the fight against climate change, but they do not even understand what it is.

Quebeckers support protecting supply management, but they oppose it because they would rather sell their western beef. They voted against supply management. That is a fact.

There is a consensus in Quebec on medical assistance in dying. They wanted to block it. Nothing ever changes with the Conservatives.

This, here, is a smart bill that has been fine-tuned. We have been thinking about it for decades. We did this in 1991 with GST and QST. We managed to set up two collectors, two sales taxes with different parameters. We have done it before, and this is no different. Revenu Québec does it, and it saves us more than \$190 million a year.

I see that the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has steam coming out of his ears yet again. This happens every time we try to do something good for Quebec. He is unrecognizable and says things that make no sense. He is saying that people no longer file paper tax returns. That is obvious. Does he really think that we do not know that?

The IRAI estimates we would save \$99 million for businesses and \$39 million for people who file their tax returns at home. These figures took into account that people use their computers to file.

● (1925)

A scientific study by François Vaillancourt has shown that it takes a person in Quebec 10% more time to file their taxes because they have two returns to fill out. It does not say that it took 50% more time, but 10% more time, because we know that people are not filing paper returns. By saving that 10%, businesses would save \$99 million and individuals would save \$39 million, for a total of \$425 million in savings for Quebec. That is what is driving us.

The National Assembly of Quebec wants this. The Premier of Quebec wants this. Business people want this. Even accountants want this. The Conservatives told the Premier of Quebec that they supported it. They told Quebeckers that they supported it. However, they just did an about-face yet again with explanations that make no sense.

At some point, we have to be here for the right reasons. For our part, we are here for the right reasons. We are in politics for our people. We respond to the aspirations of Quebec. We are here when Quebec needs something. We are here for a single tax return. We are here for climate change. We were here to prevent medical assistance in dying from being at the mercy of the religious right in the Conservative Party. We were here and we will continue to be here.

I was happy to be a Bloc member because the Bloc is the only party that truly stands up for Quebeckers. The Conservative Party is unable to look Quebeckers in the eyes and tell them that they stand up for them. I do not know how Conservative members from Quebec can look at themselves in the mirror. They are completely out of touch with the reality of Quebeckers. Quebeckers are no fools.

The same goes for the NDP. It is no better. It said it would vote in favour, but then it messed everything up by voting against in the end. As for jobs, now they are being cut because of this drive to optimize the public service. The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has obviously never run a company. The idea is not to fire these people. It is to find something more constructive for them to do so they can serve the public even better for the same pay. Who could be against that?

We have reached this point because the Conservative Party cannot figure out what to focus on. It is even using unions to justify its actions. That really takes the cake. The Conservatives are tying themselves in knots trying to explain an untenable position.

Before I go to bed at night, I look at myself in the mirror, I look at my constituents, I talk to them. Last weekend, people who used to vote Conservative told me they could not imagine the Conservatives being against the single tax return. I told them that if they were in the House, they would have other reasons not to vote for the Conservatives anymore.

I can say that we, the Bloc Québécois, look voters straight in the eye. I am not embarrassed to say that we will fight tooth and nail for them. We are here for that very reason, and we will be here as long as Quebec is sending money to Ottawa. That is our money, and we are going to make sure that it is managed properly, because the single tax return will pay off for Quebeckers.

That is why members will always find the Bloc Québécois in their path. We will push for this because we can do the math. The only interests we care about are Quebeckers' interests.

• (1930)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 4.

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

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 14, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1935)

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to get clarity on a question I

Adjournment Proceedings

asked regarding the federal government's approval of the proposed Grassy Mountain coal mine.

Albertans are overwhelmingly opposed to this project and any other coal projects that would open up the eastern slopes for coal exploration or development. At least 28 municipalities, including the four largest cities in Alberta, have expressed grave concerns over potential expansion of coal mining in Alberta. An online group called Protect Alberta's Rockies and Headwaters has swelled to more than 36,000 members in only a few months. Over 100,000 Albertans have signed petitions to stop open-pit coal mining in the Rockies. In fact, just this week, I tabled a petition from Latasha Calf Robe, a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy, with over 18,000 signatures, urging this government to act to protect our Alberta environment from the massive and cumulative impacts of open-pit coal mining.

This is not, or should not be, a partisan issue. While I am the only Alberta member of Parliament prepared to stand against the UCP government on this issue, Albertans speaking out against the disastrous decision to rescind the 1976 coal policy and the subsequent selling off of mining rights to the eastern slopes have come from all sectors, all regions and all political affiliations.

Open-pit coal mining is a sunset industry with extremely limited potential to provide economic benefits for Albertans and extremely high potential to cost Albertans in environmental cleanup, lost jobs and economic growth in industries like tourism, farming and ranching. Albertans are already facing extraordinary cleanup costs associated with abandoned oil and gas wells; coal mining on the eastern slopes promises a second costly environmental reclamation liability. In fact, the only ones who will benefit from this mine project will be Gina Rinehart, the Australian billionaire who owns Benga Mining.

I can tell members that neither Ms. Rinehart nor any of the mining executives from Benga Mining will be the ones living downstream of this project. It will not be their water supply at risk, it will not be their environment that is irreparably damaged, and it certainly will not be their livelihoods that are destroyed.

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The people who stand to lose the most if the federal government approves this project will be the Canadians who live downstream. The Grassy Mountain coal project threatens the water supply for much of southern Alberta, including drinking water and irrigation water. I have spoken with many farmers and ranchers in the area. One rancher who irrigates his property via the Oldman River, Mr. Holtman, spoke to me of his deep concerns. He told me that he has lost all trust that the Government of Alberta will protect him and his ranch. He is worried about what will happen if the water that he and his neighbours depend upon for their livelihoods becomes poisoned.

It is not just Albertans who will be impacted. If the Grassy Mountain project goes ahead, it will open the door to further projects in the eastern slopes, which together threaten both the South Saskatchewan River and North Saskatchewan River basins, including the Oldman, Bow, Red Deer and North Saskatchewan rivers. We have already seen the devastating impacts of open-pit mining in B.C., where the leaching of selenium and other pollutants into watersheds has caused massive damage, devastating fish habitat and species at risk.

On behalf of my constituents, on behalf of the indigenous communities who were not adequately consulted, on behalf of all Albertans who cherish our Rocky Mountains and the water and wildlife within, I am urging this government to reject the Grassy Mountain coal project and all subsequent open-pit coal mining on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

Can we count on this government to do the right thing and stop this dangerous and destructive project?

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.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the question by the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona regarding the proposed Grassy Mountain coal project. The proposed metallurgical coal project is currently undergoing a rigorous environmental assessment by an independent joint review panel. The panel was established jointly by the federal government and the Alberta Energy Regulator in 2018. The panel process is ensuring a thorough and transparent review of the project based on science and traditional knowledge, meeting the high standards that Canadians have come to expect in a federal environmental assessment.

The work of the panel is ongoing and it would be premature for me to opine on the potential environmental effects of this project while the assessment is under way. The independent panel, however, does have a mandate to consider the potential effects of this proposed project on not only the environment, including the effects on water quality and quantity, but also its socio-economic implications. The panel is also considering the contribution of greenhouse gas emissions that are directly attributable to the project.

Canadians have told us that they want to have a meaningful voice in how these types of projects are considered and contribute to an informed decision-making process. That is exactly what this government is doing through the environmental assessment of the Grassy Mountain coal project. Through the environmental assess-

ment, various stakeholders have been provided with opportunities to provide their views and perspectives, including the economic benefits or drawbacks of the project.

To inform the panel's assessment, a public hearing was held recently, from October 27 to December 2, 2020. The public hearing provided a very transparent and open opportunity for the panel to hear directly from numerous interested parties, including those with local and regional interests that could be affected by the project. These views will help inform the environmental assessment and this government's decision on whether the project will be allowed to proceed.

The panel is now preparing its report for submission to the minister by June 18 of this year. The report will provide the panel's conclusions on the significance of any adverse effects and recommendations for ways to mitigate effects related to the project. I can assure the House that before any decision is made regarding this project, the panel's report and the views of participants brought forward in this assessment will be given due consideration.

Our government is committed to a federal assessment process that is robust, based on science and indigenous knowledge; protects our rich natural environment; respects the rights of indigenous peoples and supports our natural resources sector. I have heard from many concerned citizens that this project goes against our national objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As part of this assessment process, the direct emissions of the project will be considered in the decision-making process and balanced carefully against our climate change commitments.

In addition to this project-specific review, I would like to bring to everyone's attention other initiatives our government is undertaking to assess and mitigate the environmental impacts of coal mining activities in Canada, including any impacts related to emissions of greenhouse gases. These initiatives include the strategic assessment of climate change, the strategic assessment of thermal coal mining, the pan-Canadian approach to pricing carbon pollution and the clean fuel standard regulations.

Further, our government is committed to ensuring that our waters are safe, clean and well managed. Environment and Climate Change Canada is developing coal mining effluent regulations under the federal Fisheries Act. The goal of the regulations will be to reduce the risks posed by harmful substances like selenium from coal mining effluent in order to protect the aquatic environment.

In closing, I want to assure the House—

● (1940)

The Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, we have passed the time allocated for the first segment. The hon. parliamentary secretary will have an extra minute at the end that he may wish to use.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Adjournment Proceedings

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I tabled legislation calling for changes to the federal Impact Assessment Act. In the changes I proposed, I asked that the federal government take on an impact assessment of all future coal projects, regardless of their size. As the minister knows, the federal assessment only happens if a project states that it will produce more than 5,000 tonnes per day. We have seen time and time again that companies propose amounts just under that threshold to avoid federal assessment. In fact, right now the Tent Mountain project is proposing 4,925 tonnes per day, which I think is clearly an attempt to avoid federal scrutiny.

Knowing that the Alberta Conservative government has lost all credibility to protect the Alberta environment, would the minister support such changes to the Impact Assessment Act?

• (1945)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that our government will take the time necessary to ensure that the decision on this project is based on evidence and science, and that the views of indigenous peoples and the public are considered.

The Government of Canada is undertaking a consultation process with potentially affected indigenous groups to ensure that no decision on this project is taken without a full understanding of its impacts on rights and any required accommodation is in place to address those impacts if the project proceeds. This government is committed to ensuring that strong measures exist to reduce greenhouse gases, and is committed to an emissions reduction goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, in 2019, Parliament recognized that we were in a climate emergency. While it is true that the provinces have jurisdiction over natural resources, climate change does not recognize political jurisdictions. The federal government is responsible for upholding the international climate accords that Canada has signed. It is incumbent upon all levels of government to work together to address this emergency with the urgency it requires. The time for dithering and jurisdictional squabbles is over. It is time to act.

Canadian old growth forests are under threat. Their destruction and mismanagement will accelerate climate change and biodiversity loss, but a clear path to preserving these endangered ecosystems is open to us if we commit ourselves to the principles of UNDRIP and recognize the rights and title of indigenous peoples and their stewardship of these lands.

Unfortunately, there are far too many hurdles and roadblocks, and time is running out. While I commend the federal government's commitment to plant two billion trees, there is concern that the tree planting program will be nothing more than a taxpayer-funded subsidy for the forestry industry. Seedlings are planted mostly in clear cuts, replacing trees that had a far greater capacity to capture and store carbon. These monoculture tree farms lack biodiversity.

I also commend the government's commitment to protect 30% of Canada's terrestrial areas by 2030, with a focus on protecting intact ecosystems and areas of high biodiversity value. This is why I am urging the government to work with first nations and with the

provinces to protect Canada's old growth ecosystems before it is too late.

The terrible reality is that, from a government perspective, it is relatively simple to clear cut an old growth forest. Protecting and preserving these endangered ecosystems is more difficult. Since colonization, the economy has been based on the extraction and removal of resources. We talk a good game about preservation, but the hurdles and roadblocks that must be overcome to save endangered ecosystems lay bare the underlying values and priorities of governments.

On Vancouver Island, only 9% of the original valley bottom big tree old growth forest is still standing. Just 2.6% of this is protected in parks. Contrary to its repeatedly stated commitment to protect old growth forest ecosystems, the provincial government continues to allow old growth logging.

The B.C. government is also looking at doubling the annual allowable cut in northern B.C. so whole trees can be ground up and exported as biofuel pellets. This flies in the face of climate accountability and should be opposed. There are plenty of second-growth forests available for a healthy forest economy.

The focus should be on value added manufacturing so that forest resources are used to maximize jobs and economic benefit rather than for raw log exports. The Canadian boreal forest is also a globally significant carbon bank and stores more carbon than is currently in the world's atmosphere. The soils, wetlands and trees of the boreal forest soak up twice as much carbon as a tropical forest. Without protection, the boreal forest could become a major carbon emitter.

If we are truly committed to the principles of UNDRIP, and to recognizing the rights and title of indigenous peoples, governments must provide critical financing for first nations land protection initiatives and support sustainable economic alternatives to old growth logging for the first nations communities in these unceded territories. It is the responsibility of the provincial and federal governments to remove the hurdles and roadblocks to first nations land protection initiatives. It cannot continue to be easier to cut a forest down than to protect it.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (1950)

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.): Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's concern for old growth forests as they provide rare and important habitat for wildlife, especially migratory birds and species at risk, like southern mountain caribou, spotted owl and many others.

While the provinces and territories have jurisdictions over the vast majority of our forests, the conservation and biodiversity is a shared responsibility. ECCC, Environment and Climate Change Canada, takes this responsibility very seriously. With our provincial and territorial partners, we have identified the forest sector as a priority to improve conservation outcomes for our species at risk.

Through our priority sectors initiative, we have recently launched a process to develop a species at risk conservation action plan with provinces, territories, indigenous communities, the forest industry and environmental groups. When complete, this action plan will identify and prioritize opportunities for the alignment of conservation and forest sector policy and practice with positive outcomes for species-at-risk conservation and sector sustainability.

Further, Canada is co-operating with the provinces and territories to protect 25% of our lands and waters by 2025. Our intent is that this will include more old growth forests as protected areas. The process will involve engagement with indigenous partners, provinces and other interested partners and organizations.

B.C. and Canada are looking forward to pursuing co-operation on old growth forest-related conservation opportunities under the recently announced bilateral nature agreement that is currently being negotiated by federal and provincial partners.

Finally, the government is working with provinces and stakeholders to develop robust land use and biodiversity criteria as part of the clean fuel standard to ensure that there are no adverse land use impacts or loss of biodiversity from growing and harvesting biofuel feedstock. Only biofuels made from feedstock that meets these criteria will be eligible for credit under the clean fuel standard. Under the proposed regulations, forest feedstocks must be harvested according to a management plan that prevents negative impacts to old growth forest stands or forests.

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, if Vancouver Island old growth were a banquet table, there would only be crumbs remaining.

The first nations have only recently been invited to share in some of the small economic benefits from logging the last of these ancient ecosystems. We cannot expect first nations that are struggling with the legacy of colonization to engage in the lengthy administrative processes necessary to protect endangered ecosystems without serious government support.

Canada is a climate laggard. We have the worst record of the G7 countries for emissions increases. People are fed up with government inaction. On Vancouver Island, land defenders are taking direct action and gearing up for another war in the woods, much like the campaign to save Clayoquot Sound, which became an international movement in 1993.

The Liberal government could avoid an international black eye by stepping up to protect endangered old growth ecosystems now. I hope it will do so.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the hon. member for his advocacy and passion.

I want to assure him that this will also be an important part of Canada's plan to tackle climate change. Temperate old-growth forest, for example, functions as an important carbon reservoir. Nature-based climate solutions, such as tree planting and ecosystem restoration, which will be undertaken as part of the recently announced natural climate solutions fund, would allow carbon to be absorbed or would prevent carbon from being released into the atmosphere.

This will have a positive impact on ecosystems, including in old growth forests, and will help Canada to reach its climate goals.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last fall I asked the Minister of Environment about the critical state of the population of spotted owls in British Columbia. There was once over 1,000 spotted owls in Canada, all of them found in the forests of southwestern British Columbia. By 1986, that number had dwindled to 200 as critical old-growth forest habitat disappeared, and the species was assessed as endangered in Canada.

Over the next decade, the population declined to 100 birds, and now there are only three spotted owls left in the wild in Canada. Two of those owls are a mated pair living in the old-growth forest of Spuzzum Creek in the rugged country along the Fraser Canyon. Many people, including me, were surprised to hear that logging was being carried out in that watershed. We were surprised because the primary cause of the decline of the spotted owl population is the continued loss and fragmentation of old-growth forests in southern B.C.

Adjournment Proceedings

Before I switched to politics six years ago, I was a biologist, and a lot of my work concerned the conservation biology of owls. I have been following this situation for many years, and indeed I took part in the first organized surveys for spotted owls in British Columbia back in the 1980s. I therefore have a lot of concern about recovery efforts for spotted owls in Canada, and it is clear that the efforts made so far have been largely ineffective.

After the federal Species at Risk Act came into effect in 2003, the government was required to develop recovery plans so that the populations of endangered species could at least stabilize and hopefully increase to become “not at risk”. That certainly has not worked out well for spotted owls.

The provincial government in B.C. has been carrying out a captive breeding program for spotted owls, and I think there are 28 owls in that program right now. Some of those birds will be released for the first time this spring. What is important for captive breeding programs is that there is enough suitable habitat to release birds into, and for spotted owls that means old-growth forests.

I am happy to hear that the Government of B.C. has recently released a plan to preserve old-growth forests. This initiative is long overdue. However, much of the remaining old growth lies outside the range of spotted owls, which is not found in the interior, on the north coast or even on Vancouver Island.

I spoke to the federal minister about this situation last fall and urged him to engage with the province to develop a more rigorous recovery strategy for spotted owls. I also talked to the B.C. minister and her staff about their plans, and I was happy to get briefings on the size, number and location of wildlife habitat areas that provide some refuge for this endangered species.

I was very happy to hear recently that both ministers are in the process of creating a new recovery strategy for the spotted owl. I hope it produces a more realistic chance for recovery, through increases in the size and number of wildlife habitat areas and other measures. I will be watching closely as these plans roll out later this year and in coming years.

● (1955)

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.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for his advocacy. I want to assure him, as a fellow biologist, that spotted owl conservation is a concern of mine and the minister's, and we take that concern very seriously.

Now more than ever, Canadians know the value of nature and wild spaces. It is vital that we take action locally, regionally and nationally to recover Canada's species at risk and restore their habitat.

In October of last year, the minister received requests from environmental and indigenous partners to give immediate attention to the last remaining wild spotted owls in B.C., acknowledging that successful species conservation depends on the commitment and co-operation of many jurisdictions.

On February 25, the governments of Canada and B.C. announced the development of a bilateral nature agreement that will enhance our mutual engagement on species and habitat conservation while enabling immediate action to support spotted owl recovery. In particular, as part of the agreement, federal officials will complete updating the spotted owl recovery strategy, and provincial counterparts will launch a strategy of the reintroduction of captive spotted owls to the wild. The province also announced that timber harvesting will be deferred in the Spuzzum Creek and Utzlius Creek watersheds, where the last spotted owls known to be breeding in the wild are found, while the agreement is being negotiated.

Beyond spotted owls, the nature agreement will support the way the governments of Canada and B.C. engage on habitat conservation and species more broadly, helping us move away from single-species conservation to ecosystem-wide conservation action.

The Government of Canada is committed to both conserving and protecting Canada's biodiversity, wildlife and associated habitats, and to meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples.

Indeed, we understand these two priorities go hand in hand, and we will continue to actively engage with first nations to chart out a conservation plan that is consistent with the significance of the species to those communities and our commitments to reconciliation.

Finally, we all depend on nature and want to support the incredible diversity of Canada's wildlife. Now is the time for action to protect natural ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss.

● (2000)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for those reassurances. I am happy to hear both governments are talking about this. I am certainly happy to hear that logging in the Spuzzum and Utzlius creeks has been deferred for a year while a new recovery plan can be drawn up.

We need quick action, or we will lose this species in Canada. Spotted owls are just one of the species that need old-growth forests in Canada. As the parliamentary secretary said, we need to look at a multi-species approach, but we need a recovery plan that works for all these species. We have frittered away years, decades, with little or no effective action, and we are really standing at the edge. The longer we wait, the more dire the situation will get and the more it will cost in money, time and effort to recover this species and the old-growth forests they rely on.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue the department and provincial partners have been seized with for many years. Recent announcements build upon ongoing work by various jurisdictions. This includes Environment and Climate Change Canada's work on a new recovery strategy for the spotted owl, which will help outline concrete conservation and recovery activities to support the species and identify critical habitat. At the provincial level, it includes the province of B.C.'s investments in captive breeding, competitor control and habitat conservation.

In conclusion, I share the hon. member's passion and commitment to preserving endangered species. There is more work to do.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 8:02 p.m.)

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