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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman will lead us in the singing of the national anthem.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

UKRAINE

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fighting is raging across Ukraine from air, land and sea. Residents of Kyiv are being forced to seek safety in their homes, improvised bomb shelters and subways. Escalating violence in crowded cities is killing civilians, including children. The world wants an end to this terrible suffering. Europe could face its worst humanitarian and refugee crisis in decades with the numbers of refugees and internally displaced people multiplying quickly.

I rise today to add my voice to those of Canadians across this country and members of this House to condemn the illegal and unprovoked military aggression by Russia against the people, territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. Canadians are united in support of the brave people of Ukraine who are fighting for themselves, for democracy and for all of us. We must do everything possible to support them.

We stand united. We stand with Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

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VISA-FREE TRAVEL FOR UKRAINIANS

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I speak today with a sense of sadness but also with a sense of pride in my community. Last night, I hosted a round table with some Ukrainian Oshawa leaders, leaders who are united in their resolve to stand with friends, family and loved ones fighting for freedom from a tyrant.

Oshawa is proud of our heritage, a heritage that must pay tribute to the Ukrainians who helped build our city. Oshawa's own Conservative MP Michael Starr was Canada's first Ukrainian cabinet minister. Our heritage centres of LVIV, Odessa and previously Dnipro welcomed everyone. We dance, laugh, enjoy meals together and celebrate our shared heritage every year during Fiesta Week. We pray together for our friends, for our loved ones and for peace.

In Oshawa, we are ready, ready to raise funds and give refuge to those who need it. We just need Canada's door to be open. Let us open that door with visa-free travel today. We know Ukrainians do not want to be refugees. They just need a safe place to stay.

Slava Ukraini.

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• (1405)

BRAD JOYAL

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sadness that I share the news that we have lost a cherished member of our Kanata hockey community. Brad Joyal, loving husband to Victoria for 18 years and dad to Sydney, Ryder and Pyper, passed away suddenly on February 17 at the young age of 52.

Brad was a long-standing volunteer with the Kanata Girls Hockey Association and the Kanata Minor Hockey Association, having coached numerous teams over the years. He could always be counted on to brighten the rink with a big smile and a contagious laugh. His dad jokes kept the room light when needed and his metaphors gave the girls opportunity to reflect.

The best part of Brad was the pride he showed in seeing young hockey players try their best to accomplish their goals. He was not afraid to hide his emotions in letting his team and his players know how proud he was. The impact he had on his players and fellow coaches will inspire them for years to come.

My thoughts and prayers go to his wife Victoria and his children. He will be missed by many.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

MÉLODIE DAOUST

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, perseverance, personal achievement and commitment are precisely what Mélodie Daoust, one of the greatest hockey players of all time, inspires.

Passion can carry you far when you keep giving your best. Her recent third Olympic medal, her second gold, is a testament to her tireless work.

Mélodie Daoust gets involved to remind people that women's hockey deserves to be played, to be seen, and to grow. This athlete's mission is to share her work ethic and, more importantly, her love of the sport, to an entire generation of young players.

Mélodie Daoust is a loving mother to little Mathéo, who has for his role model a mother who sees her passions through, pushes her limits and never gives up, a woman who commits, shares and wins.

Mélodie Daoust is a great woman from our community, a true champion. I congratulate her.

I look forward to crossing paths with her at the Saint-Zotique skating rink.

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FRANCOPHONIE MONTH

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March is Francophonie Month.

Let us remember the dedication of our parents and grandparents, how they fought and sacrificed so we can continue to speak French.

I am a Franco-Ontarian MP. I owe this honour to the people of Nickel Belt and to Franco-Ontarian families bearing names like Lemieux, Gervais, Hurtubise, Forest, Riopel, Paiement and Ethier, and to my father, Gaetan Serré, who voted in favour of the Official Languages Act in 1969 here in the House of Commons.

I am proud that my government introduced a bill that does more. This is a historic announcement, one the community has been looking forward to for some time.

I would like to thank Collège Boréal, the West Nipissing Arts Council, the ACFO du grand Sudbury and all the national stakeholders.

I encourage all francophones and francophiles to support our friends and the Ukrainian people.

I invite everyone in the House and everyone in Canada to participate in Francophonie month and celebrate our language, our culture and our heritage.

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[English]

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, four months ago, devastating floods hit the

communities of Merritt and Princeton, among others, in my home province of British Columbia.

I gave full credit to the Prime Minister when he told these communities he would have their backs and that he would be there for them. However, that was four months ago, and today the bills are due. When Princeton Mayor Spencer Coyne called the dedicated phone number given to him by the Prime Minister's Office, the Prime Minister and his team would not take his call.

I ask all hon. members of the House how our small rural communities are expected to survive, to rebuild and to move forward when the help they were promised is not there for them. I do not mean this to be partisan. It is a serious question. If our federal government cannot deliver the assistance it promises in a timely manner to those who need it the most in rural areas of Canada, we are failing those Canadians.

I ask all hon. members of this place to join me in imploring the Prime Minister's Office to pick up the phone, call these communities and make good on the Prime Minister's commitments to them.

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● (1410)

UKRAINE

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I stand in this House of Commons in solidarity with Ukraine and Ukrainians to condemn the brutal and unprovoked attacks and acts of war perpetrated by Russia and Vladimir Putin.

Canada is proudly home to the largest Ukrainian diaspora outside of the region, over 1.3 million. Ukrainian Canadians have helped build this country that we all love and call home, and Canada stands with Ukraine. Militarily, financially, diplomatically and from a humanitarian perspective, we will continue to heed the call and support Ukraine's right to thrive as a peace-loving and independent sovereign nation.

This Russian attack is not only an attack on Ukraine. It is a grave threat to global peace, democracy and all that ensures our collective safety and security. The world is witnessing some of the bravest and most heart-wrenching acts of Ukrainian patriotism, from regular citizens to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, fighting for their lives and their nation. They are not only fighting for Ukraine. They fight for all of us.

We support them.

Slava Ukraini.

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LEADERSHIP

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these times have been unrelentingly anxious for Canadians, with the pandemic; the conflict in Ukraine and other places, too many other places; economic and social insecurity; and so many other issues.

Statements by Members

The impact of all of this is seen in our mental health crisis in Canada. In conversations and correspondence with our Fleetwood—Port Kells community, it is clear that our collective anxiety is being amplified greatly by misinformation, false news, anger and hate on the Internet.

We contribute to this too when partisan rhetoric in the goal of political advantage overrides the need of Canadians for our leadership, certainly through vigorous debate but focused on understanding and serving the common good. Each of us here must be prepared to step in, to correct the record on disinformation, to pop the bubble on conspiracy theories and to call out those who Gordon Lightfoot once described as “the wise and wicked ones who feed upon life’s sacred fire”.

We were elected to lead. This is the leadership that our country needs.

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UKRAINE

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to deliver a statement on behalf of a member of my staff, Mr. Michael Friesen:

In the 1940’s, my grandparents were Ukrainian Mennonites, pacifist farmers caught in a war between two world powers. As the Soviet Red Army swept through Ukraine, they ruthlessly attacked these peaceful people. My grandparents fled with their families as refugees, through Holland, into Paraguay, and eventually made their way to Canada. The trauma of these events left vivid and lasting memories their entire lives.

My heart is shattered as I watch history repeat itself 80 years later. Millions of Ukrainian families are facing the same fears my grandparents did, having their lives and families ripped apart.

I implore this government to do everything within its power to bring peace to Ukraine, and to never give up on the sovereignty of Ukraine or the democratic free will of the Ukrainian people.

And as Ukrainians flee for safety, I beg this country to open its arms to those refugees who want to rebuild their lives in a peaceful nation, just as my grandparents did.

God help us all.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2017, I visited Ukraine as part of my work on the foreign affairs committee with colleagues.

We spoke with Ukrainian members of Parliament, political leadership and civil society organizations about the challenges facing their democracy and their hopes for the future.

One theme was constant, the threat posed to Ukraine by Vladimir Putin and his regime. That worry was echoed in meetings we held in Latvia and Poland as well. The rise of a right-wing populism in the west that treats security co-operation with suspicion only contributed to those fears.

Citizens concerned about the future could be heartened, however, by the way that democracies have come together in response to the actions of Russia. Coordination and co-operation have defined the response. Let this be a moment where a new path is created, one where the complacency and self-confidence that years of stability

gave rise to in the west are replaced by a recognition that the ideals of democracy can easily be threatened when division reigns.

Slava Ukraini.

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● (1415)

FIREARMS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, responsible firearms ownership should be acknowledged as part of Canada’s cultural and sporting traditions. We know that firearms owners are among the least likely people in society to commit a criminal offence with a firearm. We have a robust system of checks and balances for law-abiding firearms owners in our country, yet the Prime Minister is still rolling ahead with the forced confiscation of Canadians’ sporting rifles under the guise of removing assault-style weapons.

It is no coincidence that the Liberal government is not sending AR-15s to Ukraine. They are not military-grade rifles. It is time for evidence-based policy when it comes to firearms, not an ideological crusade that will cost billions of dollars without increasing public safety.

We need to focus on combatting gang-related gun violence and ensure that the hard-working men and women of the CBSA have the resources they need to stop the illegal flow of firearms. It is time for the government to target criminals and not law-abiding Canadians who they simply disagree with.

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind everyone that there are Statements by Members and we all want to hear what the hon. members have to say.

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

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HEALTH

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for two years Canadians have been doing the hard work of getting themselves and each other through this pandemic. They followed public health advice. Many got vaccinated and everyone supported their communities. Now, we are seeing hope and renewal in the provinces and around the world as our allies lift restrictions and mandates and Canadian provinces begin to do the same.

Statements by Members

Saskatchewan and Alberta have dropped their mandates. Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces will all do the same this month. There will be no more vaccine passports and no more mask mandates. The provinces are showing Canadians respect and leadership by providing the framework to return to normal.

Canadians have made it clear that they want to rebuild what has been lost over the last two years. They want to come together. They want to make their families and communities whole again.

The government needs to step up and join our allies and the provinces. It needs to resist the politics of division. It needs to follow the science. Prime Minister, it is time to end the mandates.

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[Translation]

OLIVIER DUHAIME

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about my extraordinary former assistant, Olivier Duhaime. We met in the summer of 2015 while running in Gatineau Park. He became my first political aid on the Hill.

Olivier is an ultra-marathoner. For the 150th anniversary of Canada, he ran from Quebec City to Ottawa in five and a half days. He is extremely intelligent, which explains why he left me to join the team of the infrastructure minister at the time.

Nine months ago, Olivier and Justine became parents to a beautiful daughter named Léa. However, our dear Olivier is now facing his biggest challenge yet, a fight against cancer. I almost pity those cancer cells, because Olivier is a determined man. He will beat cancer the same way he tackles his 180-kilometre ultra-marathons: one step at a time.

I invite members to join me in showing love and support for Olivier with a big round of applause.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 8, we celebrate International Women's Day. It is a day when we honour the contributions of women and trans and non-binary individuals who have paved the way for fighting for gender equality as we strive to realize a world free of discrimination.

In Canada and around the world, we celebrate and honour those who advanced rights, changed systems and opened doors for individuals like me to be able to take our rightful places in institutions that have historically excluded us so that we, too, could lead and be in decision-making spaces.

Our struggle is not over. We must continue to fight for gender equality until all Black, indigenous, racialized and disabled women and trans and non-binary individuals can live and thrive without discrimination. I call on all members of Parliament to celebrate the contributions of women and trans and non-binary individuals, and join the movement to realize gender equality for all.

• (1420)

[Translation]

LAURENTIAN REGION SENIORS NETWORK

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Laurentian region FADOQ, a Quebec network of senior citizens, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. I think it is important to mark the occasion, because this organization makes a huge difference in the lives of seniors aged 50 and up in the region.

Unlike what some people might think, the FADOQ does not just host leisure activities for seniors. It also helps to combat isolation and improve the quality of life of our seniors, which is very important. It advocates for things like access to high-speed Internet and affordable housing in the region. Since 1972, the Laurentian region FADOQ has been creating a strong community of more than 43,000 members, volunteers and partners.

I commend the Laurentian region FADOQ for its work and wish it a happy 50th anniversary.

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[English]

UKRAINE

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past seven days, the world has seen a complete violation of international law and our collective humanity through Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Canada has already taken important steps to support Ukraine, but we must do more by declaring Russia's ambassador to Canada *persona non grata* and expelling him from the nation. He must know that he is no longer welcome here.

Canada expelled Russian diplomats in 2014 and again in 2018 for other deplorable actions. This is another vital measure the government must take to send a clear message to Moscow that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We have done this before and we must do this again. We must stand for Ukraine, stand for democracy and stand for world order, and not sit idly by while our allies perish.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand today with a heavy heart for the people of Ukraine, who continue to face the onslaught of an unprovoked and illegal invasion that has been launched under false pretenses and that is targeting civilians. My heart and prayers go out to all residents of Ukraine and to the Ukrainian diaspora.

To the families and parents in Surrey—Newton and throughout Canada, I encourage them to think about these circumstances as a teaching moment. We must talk to children and let them know about the value of life and liberty, the light of hope and courage, and the conviction of fighting for what is right.

May God help the people of Ukraine.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for seven long days, we have watched Putin's regime carry out an illegal invasion of Ukraine. Cities are being bombed relentlessly, civilians are being targeted and horrific war crimes are being perpetrated by Russian forces. If silence is complicity, the Russian ambassador's statement yesterday showed his full approval of these war crimes. There is no justification for Putin's crimes.

Will the Prime Minister expel the Russian ambassador to Canada, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning, we have been very clear in our condemnation of this illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine by Russia. We have also been clear about the actions we are taking with united countries around the world.

We will continue to examine all the various ways we can help the people of Ukraine. We will continue to draw on suggestions and recommendations to see what we can do to help the situation, to push back against Russia and to establish a better future for all Ukrainians.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Prime Minister sees the same images that we do. We are seeing the indiscriminate bombing of Kharkiv and Kyiv. From day one we have seen hundreds of civilians killed during the Russian invasion, while 900,000 people are fleeing. This is an attempt to destroy Ukraine and the Ukrainian way of life. There is no reason for the Putin regime's spokesperson to remain in Canada to spread disinformation.

I will ask him again: does the Prime Minister plan to call for the expulsion of the Russian Ambassador to Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, from day one of this illegal invasion, we have been doing everything we can to help and protect the Ukrainian people, to restore peace and security in the region, and to punish Russia for these unjustified and unjustifiable acts.

That is why we have imposed unprecedented sanctions. We have sent military aid, including weapons. We are there to work with the international community, and we are open to any suggestions to be there and to do the right things to help Ukrainians.

* * *

• (1425)

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow the Russian ambassador to spread disinformation right here in Canada.

Oral Questions

Almost all provinces are implementing their plan to end health measures. Public health officials have stated that it is time to learn to live with COVID-19. Canada has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, and we now have tools to fight COVID-19.

This Prime Minister insists on living in the past. The provinces are moving forward, but he would rather be right.

Will the Prime Minister listen to his own public health experts? When will he put an end to federal health measures?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we will continue to make decisions based on science and fact-based evidence.

Everyone is fed up with COVID-19 and the restrictions, but Canadians answered the call and have the highest rate of vaccination in the world. Vaccination is the best way to protect our economy, our health systems and people. It is the best tool we have, and we will continue to look at which measures can be lifted, such as those at the border that were lifted a few weeks ago.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has recalled Ambassador LeClaire from Moscow, which is one of the things we called for last week. The U.S. has expelled 12 Russian diplomats this week for espionage.

If the government will not expel the Russian ambassador and his disinformation, will it at the very least follow the lead of other allies of Canada and expel Russian diplomats engaged in subversive activities here in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his suggestion. The fact is that, since the beginning of this crisis, we have been listening to Ukrainians and to our partners around the world to see what we can do that will help in this situation: either punish Russia, move toward de-escalation or provide greater support for the people of Ukraine. We are looking at all different ways in which we can make positive impacts in the lives of Ukrainians, and in ending this, we will continue to draw on all sorts of suggestions from people of things we can do.

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NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that authoritarian states such as Russia and China are spreading disinformation. In the last election, China spread disinformation leading to the defeat of MPs in this very House. Right now, Russia is spreading disinformation through proxies such as Russia Today, RT.

Oral Questions

Will the government take seriously this threat, take immediate action under section 7 of the Broadcasting Act and order the CRTC to adopt a new policy of general application so that we can get these propaganda tools of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China off of Canadian airwaves?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we must defend Canadians from disinformation and propaganda. Just as he has been conducting warfare in Ukraine since 2014, Vladimir Putin has been conducting information warfare there and throughout the world.

As I said yesterday, we will be asking the CRTC to review Russia Today's presence on Canadian airwaves, but it is important that what separates us from countries like Russia is that this decision is in the hands of independent regulators, not in the hands of politicians.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are some matters on which we agree, such as co-operation with major international institutions and humanitarian assistance, which must be generous, and which is ultimately more important than military assistance. There are, however, some matters on which we do not quite agree.

I refuse to believe that the government would endorse the idea that we need to send western oil to help Ukraine, which does not even want it.

I thought that maybe there was just a misunderstanding or that yesterday's question was misinterpreted. I want to give the Prime Minister another chance.

Does the Prime Minister support the hare-brained idea that we should send oil from western Canada to Europe to support Ukraine?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will be there to help our friends in Europe and Ukraine in any way we can.

We know full well that our planet's future relies on decarbonization and decreased dependence on fossil fuels, but we also know that what Europe needs right now is assistance.

We will look at what we can do to help, but we completely agree that the path forward involves decarbonizing our energy sources.

• (1430)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, allow me to ask for a little more clarity, because as soon as Russian boots hit the ground in Kyiv, the Conservatives wanted to use it as an excuse to send oil.

The Conservatives also want a leader who was against energy east, but in favour of the carbon exchange.

I am a little confused. I get the impression that the Conservatives want a Liberal leader. Now, I ask the Liberal leader whether he agrees with the Conservatives, and he is more Conservative than Liberal. Is that really it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear.

We are a government that has done more to protect the environment than any other government in our country's history. We will continue to stand up for workers and jobs as we transform the way we deal with energy.

At the same time, we will be there to help our friends in Ukraine with the resources they need. We will look at what their requests will be. We have the capacity to help, and we will do so if necessary.

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[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing a humanitarian crisis unfold in Ukraine, and we need to do everything we can to help people who are trying to seek refuge from this crisis. We cannot allow the same failure in the evacuation plan of Afghanistan to be repeated.

Experts agree that we need visa-free travel for Ukrainians. I spoke with a previous minister, the Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, who also agrees. Why do the Liberals continue to refuse to put in place visa-free travel to help Ukrainians who are seeking refuge and solace from this crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not refusing in any way. We have demonstrated for the past many weeks that we are there to try to increase the ease with which Ukrainians seeking to flee temporarily or seeking to set up permanently in Canada are able to come to Canada. I can assure the member that our focus is on making sure that it is as rapid and seamless as possible for them to come, and we are looking at all different ways of doing it. We will be making announcements shortly about the best way to ensure that Ukrainians can come to Canada quickly and safely.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Ukraine is a devastating crisis.

Canada must contribute to help the people. Experts agree that we need a visa-free process to help Ukrainians.

I spoke with former minister Lloyd Axworthy. He also agrees.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to set up the visa-free process to help Ukrainians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have been looking into for weeks now is the quickest and safest way to get Ukrainians into Canada as easily as possible, whether temporarily or more permanently.

We need to have the tools that will help us achieve these goals. That is exactly what we are focusing on, and we will be making announcements very soon about how we are going to quickly and safely help Ukrainians come to Canada.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time to take seriously Canada's Arctic security and sovereignty. Canada, like Ukraine, shares a border with Russia, which has laid claim to parts of our Arctic. We can no longer afford to take our peace and security for granted.

To better protect our airspace and that of our allies, will the government finally decide to replace our CF-18 fighter jets, and will it select the only true fifth-generation jet remaining in the competition, the F-35?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our policy of strong, secure and engaged will see our defence spending increase by 70%. We are seeing the results of our commitment to the Canadian Armed Forces, such as delivering the first Canadian-built ship in over 20 years. Our government will continue to be there for the Canadian Armed Forces in regard to the procurement of 88 new fighter jets. There is an independent, robust process ongoing that political interference, unlike with the Conservatives, has no part to play in.

• (1435)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Prime Minister suggests there is no political interference is a little hard to accept.

In any event, we are watching combat in the skies over Ukraine and on the ground in a modern war. Second best in the air and at sea gets people dead. The fighter program for this country has been studied to death. We already know all that we need to know: The competition is at an end, the assessment done and scored.

When will the government just make a decision on a fifth-generation fighter and will it be the F-35?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite was part of the government that botched the F-35 procurement program that was roundly panned by the PBO, by independent observers and by a wide range of people who look at it as a case study in how not to procure equipment for the military. We launched an independent, rigorous, expert-based process in which political preference has no role to play, and we look forward to the extraordinary hard work of those independent assessors to provide fruit very soon.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night I got a call from my friend Andrew Boitchenko. His cousin Natali and her seven kids have now managed to make it out of Ukraine. He has a safe home for them here in Canada. Natali and her family have left behind missile strikes,

bombings and soldiers in the street, and they are looking for safety, security and family. They have that here in Canada and the only thing standing in their way is the visa requirements imposed by the government.

Will the Liberal government allow visa-free travel for Natali and the thousands just like her?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to first of all commend Natali for having been able to get out safely with her family at the same time as we recognize the millions of Ukrainians who are doing a remarkable job of standing to defend their streets, their homes and their country. Canada not only salutes them, but wants to help everyone who is looking for safety, either temporarily or for the longer term. That is why we are looking very carefully at what measures can be brought in place for people not just to come over as quickly as possible, but to be able to work, study, contribute and have a path of permanent citizenship as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but over half a million innocent people have already had to leave everything they have ever known, many with just the shirts on their backs. What we are witnessing is a humanitarian crisis. Many are looking for temporary safety here in Canada, because ultimately Ukraine is home and when it is safe they will go back home.

Will the Prime Minister commit to providing funding and work with the provincial governments to quickly resettle Ukrainians seeking safety here?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how important it is to provide people fleeing from violence and harm safe places to stay, either temporarily or permanently. It is what we have done with Syrian refugees, it is what we have done and are continuing to do in Afghanistan and, yes, it is what we will do with Ukrainians. We are working with the provinces and territories, municipalities, community groups and leadership groups like the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to make sure that we are able to support as quickly, as safely and as well as possible people coming to Canada.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with strong ties to Canada, many displaced Ukrainians are looking to come to Canada for safe shelter. In their time of great need, Canada can extend help to them. As Canadian provinces welcome Ukrainians fleeing Russian aggression, supports and services are needed for their resettlement. To ensure that is speedy and successful, additional supports are needed now.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister step up and provide the provinces the additional funding they need now to support Ukrainians resettling in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will be there to support Ukrainians resettling in Canada, as we have been there to support Syrian refugees, as we have been there to support resettled Afghan interpreters and their families and as we will continue to be there to support people through this crisis of COVID-19.

In fact, with our supports to the provinces over the past two years of crises, we have actually invested eight dollars out of every \$10 of supports for COVID as the federal government. We will be there for supports on Ukraine like we have always been there for Canadians and people fleeing for safety.

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● (1440)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe I will get an answer to this question. Putin's unprovoked aggression and invasion of Ukraine is an attack on all western democracies and a threat to the very values that underpin our country. Putin is violating international law, and he is infringing on Ukrainian sovereignty and killing innocent civilians. In no uncertain terms, Russia's ambassador to Canada is complicit. He is affirming Putin's actions and spewing propaganda.

Why is the Prime Minister waiting to expel the Russian ambassador to Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the question the member opposite has put forward. The reality is that we have demonstrated and will continue to demonstrate that we are willing to do anything and everything to help this situation. Whether it is unprecedented sanctions, whether it is military assistance, including lethal aid, whether it is humanitarian assistance or whether it is diplomatic leadership, we have continued to do it. Everything is on the table. We will continue to do things that we think can help resolve this situation, condemn Vladimir Putin and support a free Ukraine.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the argument we hear in connection with fossil fuel issues is "energy security", but Canada's energy security is not at risk because Canada can meet its own fossil fuel needs. We do not need Russian oil. This sanction is meaningless.

Europe's energy security does not seem to be in jeopardy either because OPEC can boost production as needed and the United States can supply natural gas to Germany in particular.

Does the Prime Minister agree that the Conservative argument he seems to be backing is an excuse?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for many years now, we have been working hand in hand with

our European partners to decarbonize the global economy, put a price on pollution and implement better emissions standards. We will continue to lead the way on protecting the environment and fighting climate change hand in hand with our European friends. We will continue to help them with everything they need. We know they rely on Russia for their energy right now. That is unfortunate, and we are going to seek solutions with them.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, things are moving faster and faster, if not backwards, and Europe is no longer dependent on Russian energy. Ukraine's IPCC representative says that oil is not the solution. The UN says that oil is not the solution. I wonder what the Minister of Environment says about oil being the solution.

If the Prime Minister wants to switch to blue, can he choose the right blue?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am staying red, because we know that we must build a future to protect our environment, for Canadians, for our economy, and that we are working hand in hand with the world. We recognize the challenges facing our European friends, and we will work with them on hydrogen. We will work with them on decarbonization. We will work with them on alternatives to fossil fuels. That is what we have been doing for years, and that is what we will continue to do.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Vladimir Putin is causing and committing war crimes right across Ukraine, and Canada has yet to sanction some of his closest friends and advisors. Under parliamentary privilege, I am going to name a couple of them.

Russian oligarch and politician Konstantin Babkin, director of Buhler Industries in Manitoba, said in 2014 that Russia should not stop at Crimea, and last month, he supported Russia's current actions. Putin insider Roman Abramovich, owner of Evraz steel, which has operations in western Canada and is supplying steel to build Russian tanks.

When will the Prime Minister finally sanction Russian oligarchs for supporting Putin's war machine?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, something that people have seen all around the world that has, I think, surprised many, including Vladimir Putin, is the level of unity and alignment among western countries. We are moving forward with a comprehensive series of sanctions on many individuals, including Vladimir Putin himself, and top oligarchs to demonstrate that the west stands united against this illegal incursion into Ukraine.

We continue to look for more people to sanction. We continue to look for next steps. We will take more steps, but we will do it in a coordinated fashion together with all allies, because that is what makes the biggest impact.

* * *

• (1445)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sanctions against Russia are important. On Monday, I asked why the Liberals keep bringing in oil from dictatorships. The Minister of Natural Resources said I was incorrect and it was not happening, but that same day, the Prime Minister said he was going to ban oil imports from Russia. The next day, the Minister of Natural Resources said he was asking his department to design a ban.

They went from importing oil from Russia to not importing it, and from banning it to designing a ban. When will the Liberals get their story straight?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past couple of years, Canada has imported no gas and no oil from Russia. Over previous years, there were negligible amounts. The year 2012, actually, was the one in which we imported significant amounts of Russian crude, but we will still move forward in banning any further and future imports of Russian crude.

This is important as a symbol, but it is also important to demonstrate that we are comprehensive in our approach on condemning Russia.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister needs to realize is that one of the most effective tools against Russia right now would be to stop importing their unethical oil, which many of our allies are relying on. If only there were somewhere else in the world with abundant reserves of oil and natural gas that could replace it, somewhere that produces energy in an environmentally responsible way, in a way that respects human rights, and protects the world's peace and security.

Canada can and should be the solution to the world's energy needs.

Instead of leaving it to places like Russia and Saudi Arabia, will he finally step up and advocate for Canadian oil?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even as we are now seized with this crisis in Ukraine, this unjustified and illegal invasion by Russia, we continue to be seized with other crises, including the crisis of climate change.

Unless we continue to be thoughtful about moving forward toward renewable energies and toward non-emitting sources of energy, we will be faced with crisis upon crisis such as those faced, unfortunately, by our friends in B.C. previously this year. We are going to continue to move forward on fighting climate change, despite Conservative politicians' resistance to do anything to fight climate change.

Oral Questions

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like many Canadians, I have family in Ukraine. They have fled Kyiv, but they are not fully out of danger yet. Their future remains uncertain. Canada's government has expressed support for the Ukrainian people, but actions are more important than words. The Liberal government waits for sanctions to have an impact, but refugees cannot wait.

My constituents feel helpless and want to bring their fleeing family members to Canada.

We will ask it again: When will Canada make visa-free travel possible for Ukrainians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past many weeks, we have been working with our immigration department to ensure that we accelerate and simplify all the different processes to ensure that if there were, as there unfortunately looks like there is now, a refugee crisis, we would be able to help.

We have put in place and are putting in place measures that will make it as quick as possible, and as seamless and as safe as possible and that will ensure, as Ukrainians arrive in Canada, they are able to work, to study and to get the kinds of supports to contribute to their families back home who are fighting an extraordinary fight against the Russians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada has announced an increase in interest rates to deal with inflation. That is not going to help people who are struggling to buy groceries or help families who are struggling to find a home to call their own.

When will the Prime Minister put forward a plan to help families who are struggling with the rising costs of living and to help families who are struggling to find a home or put food on the table?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, inflation caused by this pandemic is happening around the world, but just like we did through this pandemic, we will keep having Canadians' backs. We have and we will continue to make life more affordable for families, seniors and the middle class with increases to the Canada child benefit that match the cost of living; with \$10-a-day child care for families, which Conservative politicians voted against; with boosts to the GIS for vulnerable seniors; with more supports for students; and with investments in affordable housing. These are the things that we will continue to do to have Canadians' backs.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada announced an interest rate hike to address inflation, but this will not help families who are struggling to make ends meet or families who are struggling to find affordable housing. Will the Prime Minister present a real plan to help families who are struggling to make ends meet?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a promise to be there for Canadians, and that is exactly what we are doing and what we have done.

We have done this by increasing the Canada child benefit in line with the cost of living, creating \$10-a-day child care across the country, increasing the guaranteed income supplement for the most vulnerable seniors and providing more assistance to students through affordable housing.

We also made a commitment to reduce cellphone bills by 25%, and we have done that. We committed to working with the provinces and territories to reduce child care costs, and we are doing that. We committed to increasing the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and the list goes on. We will continue to be there for families.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Ukraine is alarming and heartbreaking. This illegal attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine has caused thousands of Ukrainian families to flee their homes in fear of Russian missile attacks.

Could the Prime Minister tell us more about Canada's efforts to support innocent bystanders and victims of this unprovoked invasion?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore for his hard work. Yesterday, our government announced an additional \$100 million in funding for humanitarian assistance for the people of Ukraine and for those who have been forced to flee the country. This funding will help provide emergency health services, including trauma care, support to displaced populations and essential, life-saving services such as shelter, water, sanitation and food. We will always be there for our Ukrainian friends and continue to work with partners to see what more we can do to help those impacted by this conflict.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have had much debate on the government's use of the Emergencies Act. The story of the illegal blockades is one of the failure of leaders to acknowledge and respond to the frustrations of the public. It is also a policing failure and a desire to weaponize critical issues for political gain. We are now left with a weary public who are weary with Canada's institutions and its politicians.

What is the Prime Minister's plan to lower the temperature in political rhetoric and restore faith in democratic institutions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been a long two years. People are exhausted by COVID, and people are exhausted by what is happening in international events. It is really important that we look back over these two years and remember what was best about Canadians.

Canadians stepped up for each other during those darkest times. We were there to support each other. We were there to believe in each other. We actually got vaccinated to a higher degree than just about any other country in the world, all the while supporting our frontline health workers and others. Canadians showed what they are made of during this pandemic. We are going to continue to demonstrate that we remain there for each other.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is also about taking personal responsibility, and the Prime Minister needs to do that. Democracy and the freedoms we enjoy in Canada as a result of concepts like rule of law and bipartisanship are fragile. What concerns me about the government's use of the Emergencies Act during a time of heightened political rhetoric and lack of trust from the public is that it is an admission of failure of our institution's ability to respond to the pressure of the times we are living in. We all need to do better.

What is the Prime Minister's personal commitment to restore confidence in Canada's democratic institutions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these blockades were hurting our communities, our economy and our trust in our institutions. We needed to create new tools to bring them to an end. Canadians were tired. Canadians were rattled, not just by COVID, but by the intensity of the occupations, which were hurting their jobs, their communities and their neighbours. We demonstrated an ability to stand together, follow the rule of law and uphold the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to restore order so people can continue to protest peacefully and express their opinions. That is the foundation of this country.

* * *

● (1455)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives strongly support every effort to aid Ukraine in its battle against the Russian invasion. That being said, Putin has warned those who defend Ukraine, saying, "Whoever would try to stop us...should know that Russia's response will be immediate and lead you to such consequences [as] you have never faced in your history."

Is Canada prepared if Putin follows through on his threat?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Vladimir Putin obviously vastly underestimated the resilience and the resolve of the Ukrainian people. He also underestimated the resolve and unity of countries standing together to uphold the rule of law, to uphold the international order that has caused unprecedented peace and stability through the past 75-plus years and has delivered prosperity and growth for all of our countries. We will continue to demonstrate that someone such as Vladimir Putin, who breaks the rules-based order, does not get to profit from the economic benefits that come from it.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked about Canada's emergency preparedness. This is a very serious matter. Putin has publicly directed an alert of Russia's nuclear forces. Canada's national security and public safety must be the paramount priority for the Prime Minister. Canadians have every right to know what our emergency preparedness plan is should Russia launch, for example, a major cyber-attack or move in on our Arctic territory or, God forbid, launch a military response on Canada.

Are we prepared?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as one of the founding members of NATO, as a strong partner in North American continental defence, Canada is prepared for any and all eventualities. However, the best way is not to hunker down and wait for it. The best way is to be leaning forward, as we are with all of our NATO allies, reinforcing the eastern flank of NATO and being present with troops and investments that demonstrate that the world stands together, that NATO stands together, and we will not tolerate this kind of Russian aggression.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the solution to Ukraine and Europe's energy dependence on Russia is not Canadian fossil fuels, but the green transition. That is what Ukraine and the UN are saying.

However, in Canada, we might say that depends a bit on who is talking. Yesterday, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change said, "we have to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels...to reduce our dependence on countries like Russia".

Today, the Prime Minister is doing everything in his power not to close the door on the idea of sending resources to Europe, but he has to make a choice. Is he right, or is his minister right?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said very clearly, we know that we must reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. We will always work to protect the environment and transform our economy and our energy sources.

On the other hand, I am sure that the hon. member is not suggesting that we should not help our friends in Ukraine and our friends in Europe because we want to be greener than green.

We will be there to give them what they need, because they are in need and are in a terrible situation because of Russia. We will be

there to help them, and we will also be there for the green transition.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just this week, despite everything it is going through, Ukraine stated that the world must not give up the fight against climate change. We are going to help continue the fight.

The UN is asking Canada to accelerate the energy transition, and the IPCC is telling us that the world is on fire and that half the world's population will suffer as a result.

In this context, let us be very specific. The Prime Minister must make a decision on the Bay du Nord project and the 300 million or so barrels of additional oil involved. Will the Prime Minister approve Bay du Nord, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada is conducting an assessment of the Bay du Nord project.

It is an important decision, and we will deal with it accordingly. These assessments are done at arm's length from the government and are science based. Once the assessment has been completed, the Minister of the Environment will make a decision and announce it.

* * *

● (1500)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Bank of Canada began to raise interest rates. I know the Prime Minister might be surprised, because it was he who famously once said that he does not think about monetary policy.

Millions of Canadians will begin to see their mortgage and credit card interest rates go up, making life even more unaffordable for them. With inflation rising and interest rates going up, what is the Prime Minister's plan to address this inflation and affordability crisis in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been focused on having Canadians' backs for many years now. During this inflation crisis, which is caused by the pandemic and present all around the world, we are doing exactly that.

Oral Questions

We committed to lowering Canadians' cellphone bills by 25%. We did that. We committed to working with provinces and territories to cut child care fees in half this year. Families are already seeing real savings as a result. We committed to raising the federal minimum wage. It is now \$15 an hour. By delivering on an enhanced Canada worker benefit, more families will benefit from that support. These are real supports that support Canadians. We will continue to deliver.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I just want to pause the hon. member for Abbotsford for a second.

We were doing so well, but things started to get rowdy again. I just want to pause and let everybody take a deep breath.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the Prime Minister still is not interested in monetary policy, but he has a keen interest in spending taxpayers' dollars. His out-of-control borrowing has left future generations with a massive debt, raging inflation and rising interest rates. Canadian families with mortgages and credit card bills are being left behind as life becomes more unaffordable.

When will this Prime Minister take an interest in monetary policy, and when will he finally turn his mind to solving Canada's affordability crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are once again caught in a terrible contradiction. They deplore the fact that the cost of living is going up for Canadians because of this global inflation crisis, yet they want us to do even less to help them out. We will choose to have Canadians' backs. We will choose to invest in child care. We will choose to invest in workers. We will choose to invest in supporting Canadians, because we know, as we saw through this pandemic, that the right kinds of investments in families now leave them better off years into the future.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just my point. This Prime Minister has spent more and achieved less than any prime minister in our history. He has forced our central bank to jack up interest rates and created a cost-of-living crisis that has put unbelievable pressure on Canadians. With skyrocketing house prices and rising interest rates, the dream of home ownership has become a pipe dream for Canadians. Inflation is rising, the cost of everything has gone through the roof, and now interest rates are on their way up.

When will the Prime Minister take this crisis seriously and begin to take an interest in monetary policy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for almost 10 years under the previous Conservative government, there was no interest in investing in housing or in dealing with the challenges that people were facing in terms of housing. We changed that in 2017 with a national housing strategy, and we are continuing to invest to counter this crisis.

We are putting forward strong programs, and I will take no lessons from Conservative politicians on housing when their plan in the last election on housing was to give tax breaks to the wealthiest landlords to help them sell their buildings. That does not help families get into homes.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, along with many of my constituents in Pontiac, care deeply about our two official languages. Our government remains firmly committed to protecting the French language in Quebec, of course, and across Canada.

Could the Prime Minister tell us what our government is doing to protect our two official languages?

• (1505)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Pontiac for her hard work and her advocacy for our two official languages.

Yesterday was a historic day for the advancement of these two official languages. We are taking responsibility and taking action within our jurisdictions to do more to protect and promote the French language, while defending our official language minority communities. We committed to proceeding even more quickly with the modernization of the Official Languages Act, and this ambitious reform is concrete evidence of that commitment.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tourism industry is still being affected by public health measures, and even replacing PCR tests with antigen tests will cost a lot of money for nothing because the tests still have to be certified by a health care professional.

Canadians are not even taking short trips to the United States because they are worried about being exiled from their own country for 10 days or facing fines of up to \$5,000.

When will the government eliminate testing at the border?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were very pleased we were able to relax the rules at the border a few weeks ago based on science and public health recommendations. We know how much Canadians want to travel and to be done with the COVID-19 pandemic.

To put the pandemic behind us, we need to remain vigilant. That is why an antigen test to return to Canada is an easy and much less onerous approach that will make it easier for Canadians to travel in the coming months.

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, provinces are moving away from testing individuals for COVID-19. There is almost no contact tracing at all. Canadians without symptoms must use rapid antigen tests with a very high false negative rate. Given that we have minimal domestic testing and tracing, Canadians returning home are being unfairly penalized.

The science is clear. On what date will the government end land border mandates for Canadians exercising their charter right to return home to Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have since the very beginning, we will continue to ensure that we are doing everything necessary to keep Canadians safe. That is what has guided us throughout this pandemic, and that has actually led to far better health outcomes and economic outcomes than most, if not all, of our peer countries.

We will continue to do what is necessary to keep Canadians safe at the borders. Of course, provinces and territories will continue to make decisions in their jurisdictions. Our job, as a federal government, is to give them the tools they need, from vaccines to rapid tests to treatments, and to keep people safe. That is what we will continue to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of the provinces in Canada have announced their plan to reduce and eliminate public health measures across the country. Meanwhile, in Ottawa, we are still waiting for the Prime Minister to have the courage to present his end-of-pandemic plan with regard to mandatory vaccination.

Canadians are fed up with Liberal incompetence. When will the Prime Minister finally inform Canadians in a clear and transparent way, without mocking them, about the government's intentions—

The Speaker: Order. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians stepped up in large numbers to get vaccinated, and it is, in large part, due to those efforts that we can adapt our measures at the border so that Canadians can travel and people can visit Canadians more easily.

As we have done every step of the way, we will continue to follow the science and evidence to protect Canadians. That is what we will continue to do.

* * *

[English]

YOUTH

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Cloverdale—Langley City is the third-youngest riding in British Columbia. Our government has always stood up for young Canadians and their futures through systems of programs and support.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House how youth programs will help to enrich the lives of young people both in Cloverdale—Langley City and across Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Cloverdale—Langley City for his question and his extraordinary dedication to young people.

We know that the future of our country rests with our youth. During the pandemic, young Canadians experienced more job losses than any other demographic. For many young people, this caused worry about things like building their savings and paying for school.

Budget 2021 invested \$5.7 billion to help young Canadians pursue their education, to provide relief from student loan debt and to create 215,000 new work opportunities. We will continue to work hard to support our young Canadians and make sure their voices are heard.

* * *

● (1510)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities in northern Alberta are reeling from the potential discovery of another 169 indigenous children in unmarked graves. This is a horror we cannot look away from. This is a horror that we cannot get used to, and we have to heed the calls from indigenous communities for justice.

When will the Prime Minister appoint a special prosecutor to prosecute those responsible for these horrific crimes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are profoundly saddened by the findings in Kapawe'no. Our thoughts are with the first nation and with all indigenous communities across Canada.

Our government remains committed to supporting families, survivors and communities in commemorating those who never made it home. We will continue to provide support as the needs arise and work with indigenous communities to undertake this work while respecting the wishes of communities and of the families that are grieving.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament, Lenore Zann, former member for Cumberland—Colchester, introduced a landmark bill, Bill C-230, to develop a federal strategy for environmental racism and a move toward environmental justice.

Business of Supply

The environment committee, after widespread support in this place, studied the bill and made amendments. I recently had the honour to reintroduce it as Bill C-226 in order to work toward getting the bill passed.

I ask this: Will parliamentarians in the House work together to ensure passage of this important bill, and will the government support the bill once again?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question and want to also thank Lenore Zann, the former member for Cumberland—Colchester, for her important work on this bill in the previous Parliament. We know that the impacts of climate change are felt more acutely by marginalized and minority groups and that the bill would ensure that environmental racism was addressed and prevented.

I have mandated the Minister of Environment to develop an environmental justice strategy. Our support for the bill is part of our plan to seriously address this issue.

The Speaker: I am afraid that is all the time we have for today.

I want to address something before we get to the points of order.

The hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington yesterday brought up that the member for Miramichi—Grand Lake shouted out some words. I was not quite sure, so I looked it up and I got, “yesterday, the Public Safety Minister even said that protesters were rapists”. That is what the hon. member said. I thought that was kind of severe, so what I did is I went back and I saw what the hon. Minister of Public Safety said. He said: “Secondly, respectfully, there were Ottawans who were subjected to intimidation, harassment, threats of rape and those were all supported by” and it went on like that.

I do not want to belabour this, but I do want to bring everyone's attention to when debate is happening in the House. Please pay attention to what is being said in the House so that we cannot be accused of misinterpreting what one has said or another. To all of you, I want you to pay attention, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the House to adopt the following motion: That the House oppose any federal electoral redistribution scenario that would cause Quebec or any other province or territory to lose one or more electoral districts in the future, and that the House call on the government to act accordingly.

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

An hon. member: Nay.

[*English*]

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

On Monday I asked a question of the Minister of Natural Resources about oil that is being imported to Canada from Russia. He responded that crude was no longer being imported to Canada since 2019. I would like to table, with unanimous consent, documents from Statistics Canada that show in 2021 almost \$400 million of oil was imported from Russia into Canada.

• (1515)

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

BOOK OF SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE

The Speaker: Parliamentarians wishing to convey a message of support for Ukrainian members of parliament and to the Ukrainian people are invited to sign the book of solidarity created for that purpose.

[*Translation*]

Messages can be inscribed in a book in the House of Commons lobbies through Monday, March 14. Messages can also be submitted online.

[*English*]

A memo will be going out to all MPs today with a link to the virtual book. The signed book will be sent to Ruslan Stefanchuk, chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, the parliament of Ukraine.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—REPRESENTATION OF QUEBEC IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS**

The House resumed from March 1 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:18 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the opposition motion regarding the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1530)

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

(*Division No. 33*)

YEAS**Members**

Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet

Business of Supply

Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Miller	Morrice
Blois	Boissonnault	Morrissey	Murray
Boulerice	Bradford	Muys	Naqvi
Bragdon	Brassard	Nater	Ng
Brière	Brock	Noormohamed	Normandin
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings	O'Connell	Oliphant
Caputo	Carr	O'Regan	O'Toole
Carrie	Casey	Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Chabot	Chagger	Perkins	Perron
Chahal	Chambers	Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Champagne	Champoux	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Chatel	Chen	Rayes	Reid
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Roberts	Robillard
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier	Rodriguez	Rogers
Coteau	Dabrusin	Romanado	Ruff
Dalton	Damoff	Sahota	Sajjan
Dancho	Davidson	Saks	Samson
Davies	DeBellefeuille	Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Deltell	d'Entremont	Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Desbiens	Desilets	Seeback	Serré
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Shanahan	Sheehan
Dhillon	Diab	Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Dong	Dreeshen	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Drouin	Dubourg	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Duclos	Duguid	Small	Sorbara
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz	Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	St-Onge	Sudds
Ellis	Erskine-Smith	Tassi	Taylor Roy
Fast	Fergus	Thériault	Therrien
Ferreri	Fillmore	Thompson	Trudeau
Fisher	Fonseca	Trudel	Turnbull
Fortier	Fortin	Valdez	Van Bynen
Fragiskatos	Fraser	van Koeverden	Vandal
Freeland	Fry	Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Gaheer	Gallant	Vien	Vignola
Garneau	Garon	Villemure	Virani
Garrison	Gaudreau	Vuong	Wagantall
Gazan	Généreux	Weiler	Wilkinson
Gerretsen	Gill	Williams	Williamson
Godin	Gould	Yip	Zahid
Gourde	Green	Zarrillo	Zimmer
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Zuberi— 261	
Hanley	Hardie		
Hepfner	Holland		
Housefather	Hughes		
Hussen	Hutchings		
Iacono	Idlout	Aboutaif	Aitchison
Ien	Jaczek	Arnold	Baldinelli
Johns	Jones	Barlow	Benzen
Jowhari	Julian	Bezan	Block
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Calkins	Chong
Khera	Koutrakis	Cooper	Doherty
Kramp-Neuman	Kusmierczyk	Dowdall	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Kwan	Lalonde	Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Falk (Provencher)	Findlay
Lamoureux	Lantsman	Genuis	Gladu
Lapointe	Larouche	Goodridge	Gray
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Hallan	Hoback
Lawrence	LeBlanc	Jeneroux	Kelly
Lebouthillier	Lehoux	Kitchen	Kram
Lemire	Lightbound	Kurek	Kusie
Lobb	Long	Lake	Lewis (Essex)
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Lloyd	Mazier
MacGregor	MacKenzie	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McKay
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire	McLean	Melillo
Maloney	Martel	Moore	Morantz
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Morrison	Motz
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Patzer	Redekopp
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)	Rempel Garner	Richards
McGuinty	McLeod	Rood	Schmale
Mendès	Mendicino	Shields	Soroka
Miao	Michaud	Steinley	Strahl

NAYS

Members

Aitchison
Baldinelli
Benzen
Block
Chong
Doherty
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Findlay
Gladu
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kram
Kusie
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Mazier
McKay
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Redekopp
Richards
Schmale
Soroka
Strahl

Routine Proceedings

Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vidal	Viersen
Vis	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber— 66

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.*[English]*

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 14 minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and in accordance with the transparency requirements set out in the policy on tabling of treaties in Parliament, I am pleased to present to the House of Commons the Government of Canada's negotiating objectives for negotiations toward a free trade agreement between Canada and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Government of Canada intends to commence negotiations by holding a first round of negotiations with ASEAN as soon as practicable, but in accordance with the policy, the first round will take place no earlier than 30 days from today.

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

The Speaker: 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.

The hon. opposition House leader.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, we would like a recorded division.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1615)

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

(Division No. 34)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan

Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gameau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sara
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Serré	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
Sorbara	Spengemann
St-Onge	Sudds

Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Vuong
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi — 182

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Desilets
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Larouche
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bergen
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desbiens
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genius
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Martel
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Nater
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley

Simard
Small
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Vignola
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Villemure
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer — 150

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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO THE EMERGENCIES ACT

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 9, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[*Translation*]

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or use the “raise hand” function so that the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

● (1620)

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 41 years ago in October, Ronald Reagan famously turned to then-president Jimmy Carter and said, “There you go again.”

Well, here we go again.

On the 39th sitting day of this Parliament, this is the fifth time the government has invoked closure on debate, on something as important as an oversight committee. The government decided to take extraordinary powers by invoking the Emergencies Act. The least they should expect is extraordinary scrutiny and oversight.

Conservatives proposed a purpose-built committee to look after the legislative mandate of what the committee was required to do, and yet the government has turned this into a fiasco. What they are proposing in this motion is absurd.

We came back with an amendment, and yet still the hammer falls.

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Canada's Conservatives will do everything we can to get to the bottom of this, including the purpose for the invocation of this act, what led up to it and why the government decided to do it.

Why is the government covering this up? Why does the government not want to get to the bottom of this by having a committee that is structured similarly to other oversight committees in Parliament?

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I was in opposition when former prime minister Harper used closure all the time, so the hon. member's indignation is a bit surprising. It was used over 100 times, so I suppose he has now had a change of heart on its use.

That notwithstanding, in this particular case the hon. member knows how important it is that we move to have this oversight body put into place as quickly as can be done.

The hon. member knows as well that it was his party, unfortunately, that took the position of cheerleading the illegal activities that took place outside and demonstrated no impartiality with respect to this matter. Therefore, we thought it was appropriate, not that we would chair the committee and not that the official opposition would—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Mark Holland: They are very excited about this. It is hard to hear myself think. I am not sure why they are yelling. They are going to get an opportunity for questions. Perhaps they could wait to propose their questions.

The Deputy Speaker: I will try to help the hon. member out with this one. There are 27 minutes left to ask questions and make comments. The quicker we ask questions, the quicker we get the answers, and we will get as many people in as we possibly can.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am here for 30 minutes, so they have lots of opportunity to ask questions when they stand.

One of the things I would say that I think is unique and positive about this proposal is that it does put two opposition parties in the chair, one that was for the act and one that was against the act, and it allows the Senate to appropriately choose its co-chair. The Conservatives on this committee actually have the same number of caucus members as the government. They have three caucus members and we have three caucus members. I see this as a pre-eminently fair, reasonable proposal.

It is time to get on with it. In fact, this committee has to report back within seven sitting days. We do not have a lot of time to waste.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised to see the Conservatives raising closure, having lived through the Harper government that imposed closure nearly 200 times. It is a bit rich for them to be concerned about it now.

The problem is this. We have agreement from three parties in the House of Commons and we have agreement from the majority of the Senate groups. This measure should have come to the House on Monday. This oversight committee should already be at work, because this work is vitally important, but one party seems to be sys-

tematically refusing to actually put the parliamentary review committee in place. I can only speculate as to why that party is so reluctant to have parliamentary oversight. If we do not get it done this week, we would be waiting another three weeks before the House would be able to actually put this oversight committee in place.

I want to ask the government House leader why he thinks Conservatives are ragging the puck and refusing to get this parliamentary review committee in place. Why are they delaying it? What are they afraid of with this parliamentary review?

● (1625)

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I have some of the same reflections. It is confusing to hear the official opposition demand on the one hand that the process get started and on the other hand obfuscate and delay the process from starting.

I would hope the hon. members across have not just adopted a position that they want and are not listening to anybody else. They got to do that when they had a majority with Stephen Harper, but they do not get to do that now. They need to listen to other parties. We have a proposal that is supported not only by two other parties in this House but also by the independent Senate group, the progressive Senate group and, we hope, by the Canada Senate group as well.

We have worked on a proposal whereby we all compromise and we all got together so that we could move forward with this oversight. The Conservatives are saying they want oversight, and yet they are delaying the said oversight. It makes one wonder why they do not want to have this oversight move forward.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I feel like what we are currently listening to is not a debate, but rather a squabble between two parties that are unable to reach an agreement on such an important issue.

The Bloc Québécois believes that it is important that the chair of this committee be as non-partisan as possible and that both sides be represented, that is, those who voted in favour and those who voted against. We have therefore made some proposals.

We do not understand why the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the House leader of the official opposition cannot agree on a solution. This committee, which will sit in camera, must be non-partisan and must follow a rigorous process.

What we are seeing right now is that we are falling prey to partisanship, with the complicity of the NDP, rather than focusing on the objective at hand, which is to find out what happened during these events.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to tell my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois how great she is. I often had the opportunity to work with her when I was the whip for my party, and it was clear to me that she is very reasonable.

I was hoping that the same could be said for the Conservative Party, but unfortunately not. For over a week, I tried to come to an agreement with that party, but it stuck to its guns.

The Conservative Party was hoping to get two of the co-chair positions for this committee, one from the Senate and one from the House of Commons. It was proposing that it have one MP on the committee and that the government have only one seat. That was unreasonable, so it is an awkward situation.

Unfortunately, a solution had to be found with all the other parties to foster the most neutral situation possible. That is why it has been proposed that one of the co-chairs come from a party that supported the emergency measures and that the other come from a party that did not. That is reasonable.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have before us is a very good proposal that allows both the party that put forward the utilization of this measure, that being the government, and the party that was most drastically opposed to it to not be involved in the chairship. We have actually assigned the chairship to two other parties: the Bloc and the NDP.

I am curious if the government House leader can try to provide some insight as to why he thinks Conservatives are just hell-bent on chairing the committee. What kind of power are they looking for—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite was using language that is unparliamentary and should apologize.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, is “hell-bent” not parliamentary?

I will let the Speaker rule.

The Deputy Speaker: I did not hear it, so must apologize for that.

Maybe what I can do is let the member rephrase it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I will get the member a dictionary afterward so he can look up these words himself.

My question for the House leader is this: Why does he think it is that the Conservative Party is so adamant on getting a position of being a chair on this committee? Why is it so important to be a chair on this committee?

• (1630)

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, the impasse seems to be on that very point. My hon. colleague is correct that the impasse is on the Conservatives' insistence on chairing a process when they had taken such a clear side. One of their members called it “Canada Day times a thousand”.

They are yelling across the aisle because I understand they do not want to wait for their questions. Neither do we, and that is why we are not chairing. Perhaps the hon. member will understand that we have given up the chair and that they have taken a strident position of being in favour of the illegal activities and cheerleading

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those activities and that therefore they would be inappropriate to be the chair. That is why we have moved this reasonable proposal.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today's debate is a very serious one. Canadians want to shed light on the events that took place in February after the government did nothing for three weeks.

This committee will shed light on this matter. This is supposed to be a non-partisan parliamentary committee. What is unfortunate is that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons came out swinging in his speech, accusing the Conservatives of partisanship, when that could not be farther from the truth. We must conduct a neutral and objective review of the events that took place.

Why is the government taking such a partisan stance on a matter that demands non-partisanship?

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, there will be a parliamentary committee, and it will be responsible for reviewing the use of the Emergencies Act.

I am certain that the process will be fair. The proposal is so fair and reasonable that we reduced the number of members from the governing party. There are three members from the Liberal Party, three from the Conservative Party, one from the Bloc Québécois, one from the NDP, and one from each group in the Senate.

That is more reasonable that the normal makeup of committees, on which there are more government members. The only question remaining has to do with the role of chair. I do not understand why this position is causing such a big problem, especially when the solution is obvious, namely that the committee should be co-chaired by one member from a party that supported the declaration of a public order emergency and one from a party that was against it.

This is not about pitting the government against the official opposition. I think my colleague across the way and former counterpart is a very reasonable person. I have a lot of respect for him, and I am sure he understands what I am saying.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I find this debate really difficult and quite lamentable, because I completely agree there is an urgency here, as the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît pointed out a moment ago. There is urgency, but again this is the first time such a committee is being formed because it is the first time the Emergencies Act has been used.

It will be a closed-door session and only with security clearance, so I just want to put on the floor now, as I may not get another chance, that the Green Party had one member vote no and one member vote yes. In a normal committee, we would be able to sit in, even though we would not be voting and not participating in other ways. I would like to request that we have security clearance to participate as observers, because this process is so very important.

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Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the member on the importance of not only parliamentary oversight, but, of course, an independent inquiry, which will be conducted. As part of the provisions of the act, it must report back within 365 days.

I have heard the reasonable proposition of the member opposite, and I will certainly take that under due consideration and have conversations with the other parties about the possibility of it. I understand her interest and the interest of all members in ensuring that this process is conducted fully, fairly and independently.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, it is important that this work begin as soon as possible. It should have begun on Monday. There were discussions, and three of the recognized parties in the House of Commons reached a consensus, as did the majority of the Senate groups.

What is being proposed is very logical. One of the co-chairs will represent the members who voted in favour of the Emergencies Act, while the member from the Bloc Québécois will represent the members who voted against it. This ensures balance in the chairmanship of this committee. The composition of the committee would also be balanced, with three representatives from the government and three from the official opposition.

This consensus seems extremely reasonable to everyone except for one party, which wants to prolong the deliberations for a few weeks.

I have a big question for my colleague, the government House leader. Is it important for this committee to begin its work this week so that we can shed light on the events that led to the invocation of the Emergencies Act?

• (1635)

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way is absolutely right. It is important to create the committee as soon as possible. It is discouraging that the Conservative Party continues to block its creation when the committee is receiving a lot of support from the other parties, not just here in the House of Commons, but also in the Senate.

The second point I want to raise is the process in the Senate, the other place. The Senate also needs to start its work, but it is waiting for us to adopt our motion to create the committee. The longer the House of Commons waits, the longer the Senate also has to wait.

It is time to start our work because this is so important. There is a very reasonable proposal on the table, and now it is time to create the committee.

[*English*]

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important piece of legislation. We did not see any legal interpretation when the government invoked the act. We still have not heard that, and we have asked many questions on where the legal interpretation was that it met the threshold.

If we read this act, it clearly states that a member of the official opposition or of the opposition, and we are recognized as being the official opposition, should be chairing this committee. It is normal

practice that any committee that oversees and scrutinizes the government is chaired by an official opposition member.

I am just wondering if you had a legal opinion to interpret the act in the way you are interpreting it, because you are saying it should be co-chaired by two members of different parties, not by the official opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind the member to ask the questions through the Chair. I cannot answer on behalf of the government, but I will let him answer now.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, here is the thing that I find concerning. We had, for three weeks, the city of Ottawa besieged by an occupation. I had an opportunity to talk with business owners and residents who had their lives ripped apart by what had occurred, yet the question we are being asked again and again is this: “Why can’t I get the chair of the committee?” The concern from the Conservatives seems to be an obsession with whether they get the chair and have a member who gets to say they are the chair, when the city of Ottawa went through an absolute nightmare.

I cannot imagine, if I were a resident or an owner of a business in the red zone, hearing the Conservatives spending all their time myopically asking about whether they can get a chair, instead of telling us to look at what happened here and to make sure that it never happens again, given these poor people in Ottawa, the blockades, the businesses that were impacted and the billions of dollars that were lost. How can we make sure that we do not have members of Parliament supporting those kinds of activities and make sure that we do not have these issues in the future?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up with a question based on the answer the government House leader provided. I think of the RCMP commissioner, the interim chief of the Ottawa Police Service and, in my home province, the Premier of Manitoba, who three days prior was virtually demanding, asking and begging for Ottawa to take action in relation to our international borders given the importance of trade.

The government House leader talked about the siege in downtown Ottawa. My question for him is this. From his perspective, on the issue of accountability, how important is it for this committee to be put in place and for our focus to be on ensuring we get witnesses to come before the committee to provide comfort to Canadians regarding its justification?

• (1640)

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I think the question from my hon. colleague is about taking a look at exactly how these measures were used. Let us remember that before the act was invoked, we were in a situation where border crossings were closed, the city of Ottawa was besieged and there did not seem to be an end in sight. The Emergencies Act was put into place, as it was contemplated in 1988, to deal with emergency situations, and we now see a flow of goods and services and a return to normalcy here in the city of Ottawa.

The important work that needs to be done is not about dealing with the debate on who chairs the committee, particularly when we have so much agreement on how that process should take place. Instead, it is about looking to make sure the powers that were used were used judiciously, appropriately and in a limited fashion in terms of both geography and time. I would think that all members would want to get on with that process as quickly as possible, so I am frustrated that, because of the Conservatives' desire to have chairmanship, we continue to have to wait and grind this out. This should have started on Monday. We should not be here today continuing to deal with this.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious conversation about how we can move forward to see if the emergency measures act was correctly implemented. I feel sorry for the government House leader. I believe he has short-term amnesia about what actually happened. In his answer, he said that we needed the Emergencies Act because there were blockades across our borders. That is not true. It is a lie. It is an absolute untruth and it did not happen. The blockades were gone—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, we would all know, based on the parliamentary procedures we have in the House, that we cannot call another member in the House a liar. I ask you to ask the member to withdraw that comment.

The Deputy Speaker: I will save us all on this one. I would ask the member to back up, retract the word in question and go forward from there.

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I misspoke. I wanted to say that some things have happened that are not relevant to the history of the Emergencies Act. The member said that the Emergencies Act had to be invoked to clear the blockades, but that did not happen. The blockades were removed before the Emergencies Act was used.

I would like to get back to the point of the question. The fact the Liberals keep telling a story that is fictional is something that really affects my constituents in Regina—Lewvan. Did they reach the criteria to invoke the Emergencies Act? That is the question the committee wants to have answered and why—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, there is a very quick way to get that answer, and it is to support this motion to create the committee. If the Conservatives are interested in those answers, I am a little confused as to why they are blocking them.

I appreciate that the member across is concerned for my well-being. That is kind of him. As I age, sometimes I forget the details of movies and different things that I used to remember. However, I will tell members what I do not forget: trying to come to work through an occupation. What I do not forget is talking with the residents of Ottawa, who were completely besieged day and night, their lives utterly turned upside down. What I do not forget is the conversations I had with businesses that had their livelihoods horri-

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cally upended as a result of these protests. What I do not forget is members opposite appearing in the illegal protests taking photographs, giving coffee and tweeting their support. I do not forget those things. They are burned indelibly into my memory because they were so disappointing.

What we need to remember now is that before the act was put into place, this was the reality outside of these doors. That occupation was occurring. It was not until the Emergencies Act was put into place that we began to see action to see it lifted and to see us move forward. If the Conservatives are interested in the type of oversight they are talking about, there is a simple solution: Stop obfuscating and vote for this.

• (1645)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, one has to ask why the Conservatives want to delay this for three weeks. They do not want the oversight committee in place, this parliamentary review committee. That is my question to my colleague.

However, I need to preface it by noting the incredible impacts that the occupation had on the people of Ottawa. Any of us who walked through those neighbourhoods and talked to those residents know first-hand that people with disabilities and seniors were cut off from essential services. Families were subject to huge levels of noise and the highest level of pollution in the country. Thousands of jobs were lost and hundreds of businesses were closed. We saw and heard about the assaults. We heard about the vandalism. We heard about a wide range of abuses that the people of Ottawa had to endure, yet at this point, I have not heard one Conservative MP say they talked to the people of Ottawa, found out what was happening and now understand what they were enduring.

The Conservatives seem to want to delay this for three weeks, but at the same time, they never spoke to the residents of Ottawa. Why did they not speak to the residents of Ottawa and why are they trying to delay the oversight committee by three weeks?

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely correct. We are going to back to our constituencies for two weeks, so if we do not deal with this today, the matter would be put off for three weeks. It is very confusing to see the Conservatives stand up and demand that there be oversight and accountability, but also demand that we not set up the process that would do the thing they say they want. They are speaking in contradictions.

Because I suspect one of the next questions will be from the members opposite, I would invite them to talk to us about the conversations they have had with business owners inside the red zone and about how they were affected. They should talk about the residents who were affected, about why they were outside supporting the protest and about why they would be demanding to chair a process to overlook the thing they were supporting. It is an untenable, illogical position. There is a very simple solution. It is to vote right now to create this committee, get to work right now and get this done.

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Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the Friday Parliament was cancelled, I actually was talking to the residents of Ottawa. I talked to a lady who said she was one of the biggest supporters of the Prime Minister until a couple of months ago, when the Prime Minister insulted, belittled and continued to be disrespectful to people who have a different opinion than his. She had finally gotten to the point where she could no longer support the Prime Minister. She wanted to see what was going on, felt extremely safe and had no concerns.

There was also a chef who worked for a restaurant that was closed because of the fearmongering by the government, which said there were dangerous people out on the streets. That was a blatant untruth. Many people were out of work simply because of the fearmongering that has happened in this place.

In Parliament, we go on precedent. We quite often go on the customs and traditions of this place. I am wondering if something has happened historically that would give the member reason to believe we should give the chairmanship to a second and third opposition party, when the letter of the act specifically speaks to giving the chair to the official opposition. What is the precedent he is using to make this decision?

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise as the government House leader to respond to the question that was posed to me.

The member says that he has talked to business owners who said their businesses were affected by the Prime Minister's objection to the illegal blockades. I would ask him what he thought happened when this city was completely shut down and businesses could not open their doors. I was talking to business owners who watched people defecate in front of their properties, who watched them stare in their windows and intimidate them, who watched them bang on their windows. Countless business owners said it was the worst thing they had endured in 30 years of business.

The member found one person who was not negatively affected by it and is an ardent partisan of the Conservatives. I congratulate the member on his ability to find that person, because things would have been very difficult for anybody living in the red zone.

This was a situation without precedent. Our city was occupied. There were unbelievable things happening outside these doors and the official opposition was cheerleading them. The member is right that this is without precedent, and we have to respond accordingly.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if this was not such a serious issue, I would almost be amused by the childishness of the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Personally, I find it doubly important that the membership of the committee be unanimous, because we need this committee to be as legitimate as possible given the context.

Another reason why I think that is important is that a precedent has already been set in this case. The Liberals, along with their Siamese twins the NDP, imposed the emergency measures in a seemingly partisan context, and I would find it extremely frustrat-

ing if the membership of this committee was shoved down the House's throat with a gag order.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

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 will invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, we want a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1735)

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

(*Division No. 35*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Garneau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfiner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono

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Idlout
Jaczek
Jones
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendicino
Miller
Murray
Ng
O’Connell
O’Regan
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Spengemann
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Vuong
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 181

Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Miao
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petipas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Martel
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Small
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
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Villemure
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 151

Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Larouche
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrice
Motz
Nater
O’Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Shiplely
Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desbiens
Doherty
Dreeshen

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d’Entremont
Desilets
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, on behalf of 90 departments and agencies, the departmental plans for 2022-23.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 9—PARLIAMENTARY
REVIEW COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO THE
EMERGENCIES ACT**

The House resumed from February 28 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that there has been a change of plans, but if I understand correctly, I will have nine minutes before Private Members' Business and the consideration of the bill introduced by my dear colleague, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni. Do I have nine minutes?

After Private Members' Business, I will have five more minutes.

Do I have that right?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will proceed with orders of the day until 5:44 p.m. We will then interrupt the proceedings and move to private members' bills. We will resume debate at 6:44 p.m., and the hon. member will be able to continue his speech at that time. The hon. member has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I knew there would be an interruption, and I wanted to confirm that. All of us, not just in the House of Commons but across Canada, are looking forward to hearing about the bill brought forward by my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni. This is a very worthwhile bill that will make a difference for so many Canadians. We look forward to it.

I gave the first part of my speech on Monday, and I spoke at length about the situation of Ottawa residents. Today, I will give the second part, and as was just confirmed, I will give the third part after private members' business. Here is the second part of my speech.

[English]

Members will recall that in the first part of my speech I talked about the profound impacts of the occupation on the residents of Ottawa. During the blockades many thousands of jobs were lost. The people of Ottawa suffered incredibly during this three-week period due to government inaction and due to a lack of action taken to protect them.

We saw people with disabilities and seniors denied essential services. We saw cases of vandalism and assault. We certainly saw the highest noise levels, those normally seen in airports, going on 24-7 in downtown Ottawa. We saw toxic pollution from the diesel engines running 24-hour a day, which had profound impacts on children in downtown Ottawa. We also saw the loss of thousands of jobs and the closure of hundreds of businesses.

The first part of my speech was to address the profound hardship that the people of Ottawa endured during that period. That is why it is so vitally important now, having thankfully come to a peaceful resolution, and some members of Parliament would say that is despite the Emergencies Act and others would say that it is because of the Emergencies Act, to move immediately to putting in place a parliamentary review. That is what Canadians want to see. They want to see answers to those questions. They believe we need to move with alacrity.

We had an opportunity on Monday for the official opposition to join all the other recognized parties in the House of Commons and the parliamentary groups in the Senate to put this motion in place by unanimous consent. We saw this, thankfully, with the ban on conversion therapy. The Conservatives stepped up, and we had a unanimous adoption of that important legislation in the House of Commons. We could have and should have done the same thing on Monday.

Now we have the opportunity to have a vote tonight. If we had not taken the step we just took, the Conservatives would have delayed, for another three weeks, the putting into place of this vitally important parliamentary review. It is an absolutely essential parliamentary review.

I am speaking in favour of this motion because what it does, and why it has such broad support within the House of Commons and within the Senate, is it accomplishes a number of things in a very important way to set up a structure that would allow for a thorough and impartial review of what transpired, not only with the Emergencies Act, but also in the three weeks prior.

We have two chairs in place from the House of Commons, representing both sides of the debate, an NDP co-chair and a Bloc co-chair, the NDP having voted in favour and the Bloc having voted against. We have that impartiality, in the chairs, that is so vitally important. We have a fair representation from all parties and all of the four Senate groups. With the changes in the Senate, the idea that we could only have one Conservative senator and nobody else made no sense at all.

Here we have fair representation from the Senate groups and fair representation from the House of Commons. The Conservatives certainly cannot complain. They have three members, and if we include the ex-Conservatives in the Canadian Senate group, four members, which is more than any other party in this parliamentary review committee. The Conservatives have three or four, depending on how we want to count ex-Conservatives. The Liberals have three. The NDP has one. The Bloc has one. The Independent Senate group has one. The Progressive Senate group has one, and the Conservative senators have one.

It is a fair division of the membership of a committee that is so essential to moving forward immediately. We have a fair division of the chair roles. We have a fair division in terms of the party membership and the Senate group membership. With that on the table, we should have been able to move forward with this on Monday. The Conservatives should have said, "Yes, this is important. We believe we need to move ahead rapidly." Instead, they have delayed and continue to want to delay. Next week and the following week are constituency weeks. Obviously, they wanted to delay this for another three weeks.

Ottawa cannot wait. Canadians cannot wait. We have to move ahead with this parliamentary review. That is why it is so important that we have the vote tonight. I am thankful, of course, that three of the four recognized parties in this House of Commons will be voting yes on this motion and that the Senate groups have said that they will be voting in support of this motion to put in place a parliamentary review. The NDP thinks it is absolutely essential. It has to happen now. We could get to work tomorrow.

• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have about eight minutes when we resume debate on the motion.

[*Translation*]

It being 5:44 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1745)

[*English*]

HEALTH-BASED APPROACH TO SUBSTANCE USE ACT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP) moved that Bill C-216, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to enact the Expungement of Certain Drug-related Convictions Act and the National Strategy on Substance Use Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is a huge honour to draw third in the order of precedence this Parliament to be able to move such an important piece of legislation. It is emotional for me because this is such an important bill. It is Bill C-216, a health-based approach to substance use act.

I want to thank my deputy House critic for the NDP from Port Moody—Coquitlam for seconding the bill. The bill is not new. It was originally moved by the member for Vancouver Kingsway in the 43rd Parliament, but it died on the Order Paper because of an unnecessary election.

Its time has come, and we cannot delay any more. We are using this as the third bill to debate in the House because lives are at stake. We know this from the same public health experts who asked us to follow the science at the beginning of the pandemic. We know this from provincial coroners' reports, which tell the story with statistical evidence of record-breaking numbers of overdose deaths in our cities, our towns and our rural communities.

We know the time has come to debate these measures when Canada's police chiefs and the municipal governments of our largest cities are supporting the decriminalization of the possession of illicit drugs for personal use and the provision of access to a safe, regulated supply of drugs for users.

We know the time has come from the families and loved ones of so many victims of drug poisoning and from the heartbreaking stories the media reports about their pain. Each of us in the House, every one of us, knows all too well the time has come for common

Private Members' Business

sense reforms of Canada's drug laws because of the phone calls we receive from our constituents, from moms and dads, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours, about overdose deaths caused by drug poisoning. They tell us the time has come to act on the decriminalization of simple possession and for the provision of a safe, regulated supply of substances. They are all asking us to save lives.

As the former provincial medical health officer from my home province of British Columbia, Dr. Perry Kendall, said recently, the latest figures are “unconscionable” and “it is past time for an adult discussion about drug policy.” The bill is the healthiest approach to substance use, and the debate is about having that adult discussion, which has not taken place in the history of this House.

We know from the evidence that the so-called war on drugs has not worked over the past many decades. As the frontline workers fighting to save lives on the streets of our towns and cities remind us, it has not been so much a war on drugs, but it has been and continues to be a war on drug users.

The fact is that because a son, daughter, friend or neighbour is addicted to drugs, or is just a weekend user, should not be a death sentence, because too often it is. They are sentenced to death by drugs poisoned with fentanyl and other dangerous substances by organized crime seeking to maximize profits. In fact, fentanyl is 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin. Its orders of magnitude show it is cheaper to traffic than other drugs, which creates a huge economic incentive, at the cost of lives. A few grains of fentanyl can cause overdose and death.

I know there is support in this Parliament for the measures proposed in the bill from many members and from many parties, and I am grateful for that support. I am especially grateful for that of my own party, which has been behind this the whole way. We may not all agree on the same specific actions required, but we all want to stop the harm.

In 2020, Health Canada asked 18 experts in the field of substance use and addictions to come together as an expert task force on substance use and consider alternatives to criminal penalties for the simple possession of illicit drugs. The government promised it would be informed by this task force in its policy making going forward. In fact, it became a campaign promise. The expert task force was mindful of five core issues: stigma, disproportionate harms to populations experiencing structural inequity, harms from the illicit drug market, the financial burden on the health and criminal justice systems, and unaddressed underlying conditions.

Private Members' Business

● (1750)

In May 2021, we heard from these experts and were informed by their near-unanimous recommendations. Not surprisingly, their recommendations mirror the measures proposed in this bill today for a truly health-based approach to substance use. In the same way that we listen to the advice of public health professionals in dealing with COVID-19 and the pandemic, we must listen to these experts about the overdose crisis, which is killing increasing numbers of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

First, “the Task Force found that the criminalization of simple possession causes harms to Canadians and needs to end.” These are not my words. They come from this body of esteemed experts gathered together by the government to guide the actions intended to save lives. I am going to repeat that: “The Task Force found that criminalization of simple possession causes harms to Canadians and needs to end.” This is a human rights issue.

It has been more than 10 months, and hundreds and hundreds of deaths, since the City of Vancouver applied for section 56 decriminalization exemption with the support of its medical health officer and its chief of police. This is the exact same process Vancouver used to get the first supervised consumption site almost 20 years ago. The federal government of the day backed the City against provincial opposition, as the need was so dire. This took courage and political will. The need is more dire today. We all know this. However, for whatever reason, the Vancouver application, now joined by applications from British Columbia and the City of Toronto, sits on the minister's desk.

Second, the government was informed by its own expert task force that it recommends:

As part of decriminalization...criminal records from previous offenses related to simple possession be fully expunged. This should be complete deletion, automatic, and cost-free.

It is right in the report. This bill calls for full expungement of conviction for simple possession. It is time to relieve Canadians of this unnecessary burden. Why? Because those Canadians who are burdened with records of criminal conviction for simple possession of illicit substances face often insurmountable barriers to employment, housing, child custody and travel.

Third, this bill calls for a national plan: a strategy to expand access to harm reduction, treatment and recovery services across Canada. Importantly, this must include ensuring access to a regulated safe supply for users. Instead of leaving the drug supply to gangs driven to maximize profits at the expense of lives, we must support the domestic production and regulation of a safer supply that is readily available and accessible to users.

It has been almost two decades since the first sanctioned supervised consumption site opened. It has been another decade since the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that it must remain open, yet there are still only a few dozen in the entire country. Why are there so few? Why is there such limited access for those who need the service? I submit that it is because of a continued stigma against and criminalization of drug users.

Unfortunately, as these common-sense reforms are advanced on a daily basis by public health professionals, law enforcement, the

media, frontline workers, and substance users and their families, they have been given very little attention by the current government. It has been six years. The overdose crisis is not even mentioned in the Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Health, and is given a low priority in his letter to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. It was not even in the Speech from the Throne.

This crisis must be treated with urgency. It is a health emergency. Slow-walking essential reforms through a protracted political and bureaucratic deliberation, or worse, ignoring them altogether, will only result in more preventable deaths. We all want lives to be saved, so let us take the politics out of the overdose and toxic drug-supply crisis.

Indigenous people are disproportionately affected, and we must work with them in partnership on the implementation of a health-based approach. Frontline workers struggling day in and day out to save lives must also be partners in implementing a health-based approach. Public health professionals and law enforcement must be engaged along with territorial, provincial and municipal governments.

● (1755)

In summary, I ask that consideration be made of the three essential measures proposed in this bill.

First, that the stigma of substance use be addressed by repealing the provision in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act that makes it an offence to personally possess certain substances.

Second, that barriers to employment, housing and other essentials of life be removed for Canadians with certain drug-related convictions through the destruction or removal of the judicial records of those convictions that are in federal systems.

Third, and finally, that a health-based approach to substance use be created through a national strategy on substance use act, which would require the Minister of Health to address the harm caused by problematic substance use. A national strategy should include, but not be limited by, access to a safe, regulated supply of substances for users, universal access to recovery, trauma-based treatment, harm reduction services, prevention programs, outreach and public awareness programs.

None of the above should cause this government to delay further the approval of applications by British Columbia, and the cities of Vancouver and Toronto, for section 56 decriminalization exemptions. Unfortunately, ministers and their officials continue to hem and haw about the differences between the applications as they pertain to the threshold of quantities that are possessed. This should not be an excuse for delaying our movement as a nation towards decriminalization.

Similarly, with the expansion of safe injection sites and the provision of safe drugs under existing laws, we cannot let this debate and the legislative and regulatory actions that must follow delay or defer providing access to a safe supply. Evidence shows that users are not dying from overdoses at safe injection sites, where they exist. In fact, there has not been a single overdose death in any of the safe injection sites in this country. Not one. There has not been a single overdose death. We learn from this that a regulated safer supply will save lives. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, this bill, which is a health-based approach to substance use, aims to save lives.

The Public Health Agency of Canada projects that we will lose at least another 3,000 Canadians just in the first half of this year alone. This is not just a statistic. It is a tragedy, this enormous loss of life. Of course, in the stories of the families who have just lost loved ones to illicit drug poisoning, we know from the evidence and from the advice of public health experts that these deaths could have been prevented.

Who are they? Seventy-five per cent of the deaths are men, with the majority of people between the ages of 20 and 49. Indigenous people are especially at high risk in our country. In B.C., my own province, first nations people died of an overdose at a rate 5.3 times that of other residents in 2020. Most are economically vulnerable. Only a quarter of the men, and a third of the women, had some level of employment. For those who were employed, most were concentrated in the trades and other physically demanding occupations that are also more prone to high rates of injury and unmanaged pain. These people are dying alone. In Ontario, 75% of fatal overdoses in 2021 occurred when no one was present to intervene. In B.C., 83% of overdose deaths occurred inside, and more than half were in private residences.

We know from the Public Health Agency of Canada that, without significant interventions, the rate of deaths and harms will worsen and altering the course of the overdose crisis will become even more challenging. Over the past six years, we have lost over 25,000 lives and Canada still does not have a strategy. We know from coroners' reports, frontline workers and users that people are dying from drugs that are, for the most part, poisoned with fentanyl and other chemicals to maximize the profits of organized crime.

Some people are addicted to illicit drugs, and many are not. They are occasional users seeking relief from the pain of past trauma or the challenges of everyday life. I know that some members will say the emphasis of our approach should be limited to providing treatment for addiction. While trauma-based treatment leading to recovery from an addiction is an important component of a health-based approach to substance use, we must stop the harm first. As the member for Vancouver East told the House last month, dead people don't need treatment.

Private Members' Business

My thanks to all of my colleagues in the House for their consideration of this very important bill. I look forward to their comments, their ideas and their questions.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for his speech.

Clearly, this crisis has already taken too many lives. We understand that action is urgently needed, and that is why we made it a priority.

[*English*]

I would like to ask the member this. Does he agree that moving in this direction requires addressing fundamental issues, including working with partners to establish appropriate thresholds to define possession and ensure other supports are in place?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I do believe we need to work together, and I look forward to working with my colleague.

When we talk about thresholds, the concern is that if they are too low they exclude people. They also incentivize people who use drugs to use them more. Typically, thresholds exclude the people who use drugs the most. That is a concern, of course.

When I think about the quantity of substances, I try to relate it to quantities of lives, because the lower the threshold, the fewer lives we save. The higher the threshold, the more lives we save. In Canadian case law right now, the way the laws are enforced is not based on thresholds. It is about action.

It is something we need to talk about and look at. Again, my colleague and members should consider that the lower the threshold, the fewer people's lives we save. We are here to save lives. We are here to protect Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his bill.

It is important that we take a health-based approach. That is obviously the Quebec government's approach. However, we know very well that this approach cannot be funded through good intentions alone.

I would like to know exactly which section of the bill proposes to increase unconditional health transfers to the provinces so that the Canada health transfer covers 35% of provincial system costs.

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[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for always pushing really hard to increase health transfers to provinces, which is so important because we know the system is underfunded. People need immediate access to treatment. They cannot get that right now. Regarding the amount of money that has been spent, when we compare COVID-19 with the overdose crisis, the stigma is there. It is pretty clear.

It requires significant investment, but a strategy is critical to ensuring provincial and territorial governments are part of that conversation and are partners in delivering the protection needed to stop the deaths of people due to a poisoned drug supply. Absolutely, it needs robust investment, but it needs to also be treated fairly. There have been 25,000 people who have died from a poisoned drug supply in six years. The stigma is clear in the amount of money the government has invested in this crisis and health emergency.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for his leadership with this bill. I want him to know the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and I will both be supporting this for the simple reason that this bill, if passed, would save lives.

In the Waterloo region alone, there were 155 preventable deaths last year. This bill follows the recommendations we already have from the expert task force on substance use. This bill follows through on the talk in this House recognizing that the poisoning crisis is not a criminal justice issue but one of public health.

I would like to ask him about the importance of low-barrier access to safe supply, which is part of the national strategy called for in this bill.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for supporting this bill. I am disappointed I am not getting a question from the Conservative Party today on such a critical issue, because people are dying. If we do not take action and we continue on the path we are going down, it is a death sentence for drug users.

I have to say that the status quo is not working. Ideology cannot get in the way of expert and professional advice and evidence-based decision-making. This bill is based on that.

In terms of a safe supply, right now we know that 69% of drugs on the street are actually tainted with fentanyl. That has gone up from 29% just five years ago. We need to tackle this issue. People who use drugs need a safe supply. It should not be a death sentence when they use drugs.

• (1805)

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening to speak in support of this bill presented by my colleague, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

I thank the member for his dedication and leadership on this issue. While we have recently met, I know he has long been an advocate for individuals struggling with mental health and addictions. I would very much like to take a moment to thank him.

These are issues very important to me as well. In our own way, each of us has worked for a number of years, raising awareness and striving to address the toxic drug crisis, he in the chamber and me

in my former role as chief medical officer of health for Yukon. I was serving as Yukon's CMOH back in 2016 when the first fentanyl fatality occurred in the territory. Since then, Canada has lost more than 26,000 people to overdoses. Untold numbers of Canadians have had their lives dramatically changed forever due to the untimely and preventable loss of loved ones.

My territory of the Yukon currently has the highest per capita mortality rate for toxic drug overdoses among the provinces and territories. I cannot overstate how this has affected every single member of my riding, but we know this is a problem that belongs to all of Canada.

As CMOH of Yukon, I worked with the Yukon government, first nations and community partners to introduce improvements in prevention, clinical care, access to treatment, education and harm reduction. I am pleased that the Liberal government, of which I am a proud member, has stepped up to address this toxic drug crisis. I know that without the multiple arrays of federal supports, we would not have had the successes in Yukon that we have had to date.

The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has already demonstrated strong leadership in this new ministry. The government already recognizes that problematic substance use is, first and foremost, a public health issue. We are working to divert people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system and toward supportive and trusted relationships.

We have a multi-faceted approach building on previous action, including investments of over \$700 million in community-led harm reduction, treatment and prevention projects, which are so important. Importantly, we have also received section 56 exemption requests from B.C., Vancouver and Toronto Public Health, and they are being reviewed on an urgent basis. The government has invested over \$60 million to expand access to a safe supply of prescription opioids and increase access to life-saving naloxone across the county, including in remote and isolated indigenous communities.

Since 2017, supervised consumption sites in Canada have received more than 2.9 million visits and have reversed almost 27,000 overdoses without a single death at a site. We are investing \$425 million annually for community-based services to address the mental wellness needs of first nations and Inuit peoples. Our government is clear that we will use every tool at our disposal to end this national public health crisis.

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Whether in Yukon or in any other location in Canada, though, there is more we can do. There is more that we should do.

Part of this is expanding and building on what we are already achieving across the country. Currently, there are effective practices in place that can be scaled up and shared.

In addition, it is time that we formally consider decriminalization as a national policy. Decriminalization, simply put, means that we would no longer be considering simple possession of narcotic drugs and other controlled substances to be a criminal act. Rather, such possession speaks to a health issue that must be treated as a health issue.

It is important to say what this is not. Those who commit serious offences, including trafficking, will continue to receive serious sentences.

This bill would amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to repeal a provision that makes it an offence to possess certain substances and make consequential amendments to other acts. In addition, it would enact the expungement of certain drug-related convictions act, which establishes a procedure for expunging certain drug-related convictions and provides for the destruction or removal of the judicial records of those convictions that are in federal repositories and systems. Finally, it would enact the national strategy on substance use act, which would require the Minister of Health to develop a national strategy to address the harm caused by problematic substance use.

The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addictions was correct when she said that decriminalization on its own, with a toxic drug supply, will not save the lives that we need to. The key words here are “on its own”. The important step of decriminalization must be in step with all the other components, building on the work done over the previous years by all levels of government on safe supply, on education and reducing stigmatization, on access to treatment and on better clinical management.

• (1810)

We need to provide better training for frontline workers responding to these crises and perhaps need to consider education and training for other community members, particularly for isolated communities. Safe supply, supervised consumption, better access to treatment, effective prevention and decriminalization are all approaches that, combined, can help prevent more deaths.

As we know, B.C., Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto are all calling for the decriminalization of the possession of small amounts of illicit drugs. The country’s largest mental health teaching hospital, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, is also pressing for it, and we know it is a position shared by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. It is also the position of the Canadian Medical Association and, in my riding, the Yukon Medical Association.

In addition to all that the government has done to address this crisis in recent years, we need an approach that will consider a broader approach to the issue, including decriminalization. These are critical discussions we must have, which is why I am happy to speak to my colleague’s bill, support it and help it get to committee.

It is the direction we need to move in, and I look forward to working on it with members of the House.

To move forward, we need to speak passionately, show compassion and make sure we are doing all we can to get the evidence across as clearly as possible. Our decisions in this House should always put doing what is right for Canadians first by following the evidence and facts, medical or otherwise. People are dying. We must act.

This bill must be carefully and critically considered, and I am very pleased that my colleague brought this forward. I very much look forward to working with the hon. member opposite on this critical issue, as well as any other measures to address this opioid crisis.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for his passionate work on this file. We share an idea of seeing a world free from addiction.

I would also like to thank two very dear friends of mine, Eric and Sheldon, for their assistance with this speech today, especially for sharing their experience, strength and hope with those suffering from addiction and helping them find a path toward recovery.

Addiction is an indiscriminate disease that is ravaging Canadian communities with horrifying momentum. It steals the lives of so many Canadians each and every day. The deadliest year on record for opioid-related overdoses was 2021. Statistics Canada has said that 2022 is on track to be another record-setting year.

Conservatives believe that addiction is a health issue and must be treated as such. We believe there needs to be an increase in resources for treatment and a shift in our focus towards recovery. Conservatives put forward a recovery-focused approach, one that puts focus on treating addictions as a health condition, directly into our recent election platform. Had we formed government, we wanted to revise the federal government substance abuse policy framework to make recovery an overarching goal. We would have reoriented the Canadian drug and substance strategy towards ensuring that everyone suffering from addictions had an opportunity to recover and lead a drug-free life, and that all policies that would fall under this strategy would have reduction of harm and promotion of recovery as their objectives.

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We proposed concrete and detailed examples of how we would realize these goals, such as making a number of investments to create residential drug treatment beds and build recovery centres, including land-based treatment programs developed and managed by indigenous communities. Canada currently has a serious lack of addiction treatment space. There are often long wait-lists and many barriers that prevent Canadians with addictions from receiving the support they need.

I want to paint a picture of what I mean by pointing to some amazing work that is being done in my home province of Alberta, where there has been a marked change in approach over the last few years when it comes to addiction. Alberta has become focused on building a recovery-oriented system of care, one that helps people move from a life of addiction into a life of recovery. Over the last three years, it has made key investments to achieve the goal of recovery.

It created 8,000 treatment spaces, meaning that over 8,000 Albertans can access detox, treatment and recovery services every single year. Importantly, all of these new spaces are at no cost to Albertans since Alberta is the first province in Canada to completely eliminate user fees for publicly funded addictions treatment. It has made gold standard opioid-treatment drugs available on demand through the virtual opioid dependency program so that any Albertan can access evidence-based medications from anywhere in the province. It is building five new recovery communities that will add an additional 400 beds to our provincial treatment capacity.

While I do not believe that jail is the best place to address addiction, I think we really need to think carefully about how we proceed, and I have some concerns about the approach put forward by the member for Courtenay—Alberni. In fact, the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police has been clear that it does not support decriminalization without first having necessary prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery supports in place. Decriminalizing without having the appropriate access to treatment and supports in place is akin to putting the cart before the horse.

People often like to point to jurisdictions such as Portugal when they talk about decriminalization, but what is often failed to be realized is that in Portugal drugs remain illegal and people who are in possession of deadly and dangerous drugs still face administrative penalties while they are being offered treatment. Portugal also took the time to transition carefully to a recovery model so as not to leave addicts stuck in limbo at the risk of overdose. The Portugal model is effectively a diversionary tool to assertively help people access treatment and recovery. Most importantly, Portugal has a freely and rapidly accessible treatment system.

We cannot simply take away penalties and expect things to get better. We need a comprehensive recovery-oriented system of care in place before we can even start to talk about decriminalization. The problem at the moment is that the system of care across Canada is simply not adequate to be able to handle the number of people who would be diverted into treatment if this approach were to be adopted.

• (1815)

We can point to Oregon as an example of where decriminalization was brought forward without adequate capacity in place. Un-

fortunately, it is not going very well. Its model was marketed as a tool to help people access treatment and recovery, but it did not focus on building health care capacity. What we now see in Oregon is a dysfunctional and underfunded system that lacks adequate space for treatment and recovery. Essentially, its health care system was not prepared for it and does not have the resources available to implement it properly. Canada needs a government that will invest in offering recovery and healing with a substance abuse policy framework that makes recovery from substance dependency its primary purpose.

It is worth pointing out that the Government of Alberta is currently undertaking an evidence-based study through Alberta's Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply. In this study, members are hearing testimony from a number of witnesses. I want to point to one particular witness, Dr. Keith Humphreys. He is currently the chair of the Stanford-Lancet commission and was the White House drug policy adviser to former president Obama. In his policy assertion, he states that safe supply is not based in evidence, and I think it is really important to make sure we are keeping that in mind. I want to remind the House that OxyContin, the very drug that is responsible for so much of the opioid dependency issues we have today, was billed as safe supply when it was originally brought forward. It is effectively a marketing tool, rather than a medical term.

There is not going to be a one-size-fits-all solution to recovery and addiction. We need a suite of programs and initiatives to address this crisis. However, the most important thing is that we need to expand access to a range of treatments right now. These services have to be provided in a manner that is fair to the community, assertive in dealing with the illness of addiction and compassionate to the person who is struggling. Recovery must always be recognized as an achievable goal, and patients need to be assertively encouraged to pursue it. This means innovative treatment and recovery healing modalities that are not band-aid solutions that manage addiction but neglect root causes. Until recovery is as easy to access as drugs, we should not even think about moving in this direction.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-216 from the member for Courtenay—Alberni, whom I like very much and have known since 2015. He is a noble-hearted man. I am confident that he brings his bill to us today, at the passage-in-principle stage, because he hopes to address this acutely alarming issue.

I will read out the summary because the bill has three parts. I would have thought the government would want to put these eggs in its Bill C-5 basket, but apparently not. I am just thinking out loud, but the fact remains that the Bloc Québécois falls somewhere in between. I will explain its position.

First, this enactment amends the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to repeal a provision that makes it an offence to possess certain substances. It also makes consequential amendments to other acts.

Second, it enacts the Expungement of Certain Drug-related Convictions Act. We debated this and talked about how someone who gets stopped for simple possession is in trouble not only on human level, because they have substance abuse issues, but also because they are left with a criminal record and all the associated stigma.

The third part is important in my opinion. Substance use is a complex problem and phenomenon, and a national strategy on substance use is important, but what I find most intriguing is that the bill requires the Minister of Health to develop a national strategy to address the harm caused by problematic substance use.

The thing is, in the bill itself, it says this whole strategy, including the decriminalization of simple possession, will be implemented the year after the act comes into force. For now, I need to think about this because it raises some issues.

I am going to do something I have never done in the House. Medical assistance in dying is another difficult issue, but I have never shared a personal experience. I want people to understand that things have evolved. There is a thing called sociology of law. We have come a long way, and it is great to hear all members of the House because nowadays, in 2022, we no longer see problems associated with drug use as a crime issue; we see them as a public health issue, a socioeconomic issue and, sometimes, a mental health issue.

I had the privilege of having an experience in my life that made me grow. It was in 1998, 24 years ago. After that, I could never again look at a homeless person with multiple addictions in the same way when I saw them on the street. Why?

I had some communications students come to me and ask me for some ethical guidance. They told me about a place called Chez ma cousine Evelyn, which served as a kind of buffer zone. Speaking of diversion, there was a pilot project at the time. In order to get a bed, a place, a room in that house—and there were not many beds—you had to be homeless, an addict, and HIV positive. You had to have all three of those problems.

• (1825)

We set out looking for people like that downtown, and we identified a huge number of young people under 35 who met those criteria. Unfortunately, there were no resources.

We approached these people and got them to speak with us. They could be anyone, including me or anyone here, a grandson, my daughter or a neighbour's daughter. These people had a life story that had nothing to do with their current state. Some were remarkable. I remember one person who had studied at Oxford. We would have coffee very early in the morning and she would teach me

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about philosophy, even though she was at the point where she did not care about anything other than her substance use.

These people were well known to the local police and therefore could go to sleep at Chez ma cousine Evelyn, consume substances there and be supervised by workers who helped manage their consumption. What is interesting, they told us, is that the first few times they injected, they would hide in the bedroom to do it, even though they were allowed to do it there without any problem. If the police saw them on the street late at night, needing a ride, the police would bring them back to Chez ma cousine Evelyn.

To make a long story short, we worked with them for three months and only then, and not before, were we able to turn on the cameras. When they talked to us, it was as though the cameras were not there. We learned a lot during that time. Chez ma cousine Evelyn was able to take them in when they had hit rock bottom, felt defeated and had a millstone around their necks. Some people believe that all it takes is resolve and keeping one's head above water, but these people kept going under right away.

Seeing this reality was quite the experience for me. When these people hit bottom, there is no one there for them. They themselves acknowledge that they have alienated everyone. In some cases, we were able to ensure that the individual could die at Chez ma cousine Evelyn surrounded by family members, with whom they had managed to reconnect. Those were intensely human moments.

Because of this experience, I am saying yes to decriminalization. However, we need a way to achieve that. A very interesting report by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction points out that legislative intervention, meaning decriminalization, is ultimately only one of the pillars of a comprehensive approach, which takes time and effort to implement. Portugal, for example, scaled up prevention, treatment and harm reduction services two years prior to decriminalization.

Implementation of a pan-Canadian strategy should therefore precede decriminalization to ensure that the federal government or other levels of government do not shirk their responsibility by arguing that those people are no longer in the legal system.

• (1830)

That is the main problem we see in this bill. It is also the reason we would like to improve it. We will reflect on this.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am deeply honoured to rise today to speak to Bill C-216, the health-based approach to the substance use act.

I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, for introducing this legislation and for his tireless efforts to advance compassionate and evidenced-based drug policy in this country.

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In the shadow of COVID-19, the overdose epidemic has rapidly worsened across Canada, and it is hard to believe that could have happened. In British Columbia, 2,224 died from overdoses in 2021 alone. This represents the deadliest year on record in Canadian history, and a 26% increase from 2020. December 2021 was also the deadliest month on record in British Columbia, with 215 people losing their lives that month alone from an opioid-poisoned drug death. That is the equivalent of about seven deaths per day. Across Canada, over 25,000 Canadians have lost their lives to the overdose epidemic in the last six years alone.

Although COVID-19 has fuelled this crisis, it did not create it. Decades of criminalization; a toxic, poisoned, illicit supply; and a lack of timely access to harm reduction, treatment and recovery services have caused this ongoing catastrophe.

The Liberal government claims that its response to COVID-19 has been evidenced-based and informed by science and the advice of public health experts. It is time to apply that approach to Canada's other epidemic. It is time to treat substance use addictions as the health issues they truly are. The legislation before the House today would do exactly that.

The health-based approach to the substance use act would comprehensively address Canada's overdose epidemic as follows: It would decriminalize personal drug possession; it would provide for record expungement; it would ensure a low-barrier access to a regulated, safe supply; and it would expand access to harm reduction, treatment and recovery services across Canada while also focusing on prevention and education.

Decriminalization is one of those issues on which I believe voters are far ahead of politicians. It is a policy area where public opinion more accurately reflects the empirical data than our laws do. That is because not a single community across Canada is untouched by addiction. Everyone has a mother, father, sister, brother, uncle, aunt, cousin, grandparent, partner, friend, neighbour, coworker, child who has struggled with problematic substance use or substance use disorder, or maybe it is even they themselves. Indeed, Canadians understand intuitively something that is critically important to acknowledge in the House tonight: Those who are suffering are not criminals. Rather, they are vulnerable people experiencing tremendous pain.

In his years working in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Dr. Gabor Maté, whom I consider to be an expert of global stature and a great Canadian, has found that childhood trauma and emotional pain lie at the root of addiction. Dr. Maté said, "This is not a war on drugs. This is a war on drug addicts."

Addiction can never be understood if looked at through the lens of moralism and judgment. It is time, as a society, that we ask not why the addiction but instead why the pain. Indeed, if we accept that pain and trauma are at the root of addiction, then criminalization can only be seen as cruel and counterproductive, because it compounds the very problem it seeks to correct. Stigma, shame and abuse are the core emotional issues for those suffering from substance disorder, and criminalizing their behaviour exacerbates and deepens that shame and stigma. This is obvious.

• (1835)

Criminal sanctions are society's way of imposing maximum trauma on individuals. They get harassed by the police; they go through the indignity of arrest; they go into the very serious, intimidating context of a court; they go through a trial; they go to jail. This system is designed to impose the most serious pressure society can possibly impose. In other words, when we criminalize substance use, we retraumatize people who are already struggling to cope with trauma.

Moreover, decades of evidence have demonstrated that criminalization serves to keep people who use drugs away from prevention and early treatment health services due to fear of being arrested, labelled or outed. Criminalization also pushes people who use drugs to rely on an illicit and obviously toxic drug supply.

If criminalizing drug use worked, we would have eliminated it years ago, but instead we have spent billions of dollars, harmed millions of people, torn families and communities apart, ruined individuals' lives and achieved nothing. It is said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result. If that is the case, decades of lawmakers in the House have been and are insane.

Part 1 of this legislation would end Canada's war on drugs once and for all by striking the prohibition against personal possession from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. It would end the insanity of the war on drugs.

Furthermore, criminal records amplify the harms of criminalization by exposing people who use drugs to ongoing discrimination and create barriers to housing, gainful employment, travel and community involvement. This in turn leads to further stigmatization and marginalization.

The disproportionate impact of criminal records on racialized and indigenous communities has also been well documented. That is why part 2 of this legislation is so essential to a health-based approach to drug use. It would ensure that criminal records from previous offences related to personal possession would be fully expunged, so that someone does not carry stigmatization for the rest of their lives. Unlike the current Liberal government's failed policy on cannabis pardons, the process outlined in this bill would provide for an automatic, cost-free and complete deletion of records.

Finally, part 3 of this legislation would require the development and implementation of a comprehensive national strategy to address the harm caused by problematic substance use. It would get at the real cause of the deaths. This strategy would be developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, including advocacy organizations, frontline health care providers; and, importantly, individuals with lived experience. It would address the root causes of problematic substance use; ensure access to a safe, regulated supply; provide universal access to recovery, treatment and harm reduction services; and reduce the stigma associated with substance use. There is an urgent need for low-barrier access to a safe supply of pharmaceutical-grade alternatives to illegal street drugs of all types for everyone now. Given that the main driver of the overdose crisis is the fact that the illicit, poisoned drug supply is toxic and unpredictable, experts have been clear that the death toll cannot be abated without this evidence-based measure.

Although limited access to safe supply has been provided in some jurisdictions, existing programs do not come anywhere even close to meeting demand across the country. To emphasize, it is the toxic, poisoned street supply of drugs run by criminalized manufacturers with no regulation that is killing Canadians by the thousands. Any law that does not address this reality is not health-based; it is contributing to fatalities.

Some in the current government say they believe in treating addiction as a health issue and not a criminal one. I have heard three consecutive Liberal health ministers and a Liberal Prime Minister say this many times, but they refuse to act on this claim. The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act is the law that criminalizes drug use and addiction, and it is a federal law.

I am calling out every member of the House, especially Liberals, on that contradiction tonight, because this is a contradiction that kills. They cannot say they treat drug use and addiction as a health issue and leave it criminalized on the federal books to continue to kill people.

• (1840)

I hope all parliamentarians stop the insanity. Let us start treating drug use and addiction as the health issue that it really is.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has four minutes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in reflection, whether it is the Prime Minister, as the member just pointed out, or ministers of health of this government, members of the Liberal caucus, my colleague from the north, members from British Columbia or members from the province of Quebec, it is safe to say that in all regions of our country we have recognized that this is a national public health crisis that we are talking about.

At the same time, we recognize that it is a public health issue. We have consistently said that through the years. I can remember being in the opposition benches when I talked about the importance of supervised safe injection sites, citing Vancouver as an example. We saw different levels of government, first responders and many different advocates dealing with the types of issues that we are talk-

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ing about coming together and ultimately setting the stage to say that it is a health issue and that we need to work collectively together in order to be able to take on that issue.

We have seen great success. It has already been referenced today that no one has actually died of an overdose at one of these supervised safe injection sites. We are talking about well over two million visits in a year.

We have to be aware that we are not talking about the odd person who has an addiction. There are people with serious addictions living in all of our communities, and that is why we talk about it being a public health crisis. It is a health issue, and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member still has seven and a half minutes to pursue his speech on the matter when the bill next comes to the House.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1845)

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 9—PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO THE EMERGENCIES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the third episode of this 20-minute speech.

In the first episode on Monday, I talked about the impacts of the occupation on the people of Ottawa. Other members have spoken to this as well, telling profoundly disturbing stories from the people of Ottawa as the occupation, in so many cases, wrecked their quality of life. Particularly poignant were the stories of seniors and people with disabilities who were unable to get essential services and unable to get groceries delivered, things that should not be treated lightly at all. Plus there were the thousands of jobs lost, the hundreds of businesses that had to close, the assaults and the vandalism. All of that took place in a general condition of lawlessness that many members of Parliament witnessed first hand, as I did, being in Ottawa for the entire three weeks of the occupation.

We know of course that the blockades across the country were causing similar hardships. Of course, in the case of Coutts, Alberta, that blockade has led to criminal charges, one of which is conspiracy to commit murder, one of the most serious charges that one can imagine. There were four charges laid of conspiracy to commit murder against police officers, which is so very, very serious.

That was the first part of my speech.

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The second part of my speech, which took place earlier this afternoon, was about the importance of getting the parliamentary review committee immediately in place. The balance of the committee is highly appropriate. There is the fact that there would be co-chairs, both of whom are members of Parliament. There would one who was in support of and one who was in opposition to the Emergencies Act in the vote. The balance there is highly appropriate, as is the composition of the committee itself, as it makes sure that all of the four Senate groups are represented and the House of Commons. The Conservatives, if we actually include ex-Conservatives, have higher representation than any other party. It is important to get this immediately into place so that the parliamentary review can begin.

I still wonder why we are in a situation where Conservatives are trying to hold this up and not trying to get to the point where we can have this committee in place tomorrow and starting to work tomorrow. It should have been yesterday. It should have been Monday. However, we can move now. We need to move now on this parliamentary review.

Of course within that parliamentary review the statutes are clear that we need to be looking at the Emergencies Act, how it was applied and how it may have helped. Detractors might say how it might have hindered, but we need to make sure that we are aware. That parliamentary review committee needs to be put in place immediately to take every aspect and look at the measures and their effectiveness. We also believe that this parliamentary review committee must be doing a number of other things. With the imposition of the Emergencies Act, it also needs to look at what transpired in the three weeks prior.

There are questions that Canadians want answers to, the first being how the convoy was able to establish itself and cut off downtown Ottawa, cut off thousands of residents from essential services, close businesses and throw thousands of people out of work. How was that able to happen? What were the policing measures that were not taken that allowed this occupation to occur with the incredible hardship that so many people in Ottawa lived through and the constant threat of violence. As colleagues know, there were assaults. There were a number of cases of businesses being vandalized. The threat of violence was something that was over the city for the entire period. How did policing apply in those cases?

Of course we are all thankful that the provisions of the Emergencies Act, I would submit, made sure that there was a peaceful resolution a week and a half ago. It ensured that the occupation was brought to an end. I would submit that the designated areas allowed that peaceful resolution. When the noted racist Pat King called for immediate reinforcements of thousands of people to come to Parliament Hill, the fact that the Emergencies Act provisions were in place stopped those thousands of reinforcements from actually coming to the Hill. It protected demonstrators, protesters and police, and it led to the peaceful resolution we saw.

• (1850)

There is the aspect of essential services. Tow truck drivers who had been intimidated and threatened were, through the provisions of the Emergencies Act, able to do their job without that threat hanging over their heads. They were allowed to tow the trucks away that had stopped activity in Ottawa for weeks.

The financial provisions were used in a few dozen cases, for 200 accounts in total, but the flow of money from foreign sources was cut off. We need to be very conscious of the foreign interference that created such appalling conditions in the city of Ottawa.

We need to ensure that policing is evaluated not only on the basis of the success, but also of comparing it to policing that does not use the same measures. We have seen in cases of indigenous and racialized peoples, there is very clearly a double standard in policing. This needs to be looked at, and we need to learn from this to ensure that the peaceful end to the occupation, which finally occurred through effective policing, also applies in other cases, particularly for indigenous peoples. There is no doubt that interactions with police officers have so often led to tragedy.

Then there is the aspect of this particular convoy and its leaders' messages. The leaders of the convoy extolled unadulterated racism with no compunction at all. They simply blurted it out. At the same time, as we are well aware, their so-called manifesto sought an end to the constitutional and democratically elected government in Canada. We cannot push that under the rug.

We cannot delay this. Some people seem to want to delay consideration of the parliamentary review. This needs to be taken absolutely seriously. For so many Canadians, this poses a clear and direct threat to our democracy, so we have to make sure that the parliamentary review also includes the clear statements of intent from the leaders of this convoy and their despicable, often racist, comments. The elements of why the federal government did not act immediately are profoundly important, as are the provisions of the Emergencies Act itself, how they were applied, what lessons we can learn and what we can bring forward in the future.

The NDP's position is very clear. We need to move quickly. We should have been putting this in place on Monday. It is now Wednesday night. Let us get this vote through. Let us establish the committee and let the committee start its work tomorrow, so we can get to the bottom of all of the important questions Canadians are asking from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with the member on how urgently we need to move on this and get this work started, so we can fully understand exactly what happened for all of the reasons he said.

One of the reasons we are having this debate today is because the Conservatives are unwilling to accept the fact that they will not have a chair position on this committee. The government took the position, or at least this side of the House took the position, that it was probably in the best interest that a member of the governing party not be chair on the committee, nor should the party that seemed to support the occupiers be chair. Instead, we would give that responsibility to the Bloc, the NDP and the Senate to make it as non-partisan as possible.

I would ask the member to reflect on whether he thinks that is a good set-up and scenario, given the circumstances of what has happened over the last number of weeks.

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Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with the member. The consideration of having both sides represented as co-chairs is fundamentally important. We would not have supported having a government chair, as that is not appropriate for a parliamentary review.

I had understood the Conservative position as being similar, but the Conservatives have tragically changed their position so many times over the past few days that I am not even sure where they are at now. In each change of position, there seems to be a willingness to delay. Knowing that there are two constituency weeks, knowing that the decision had to be made this week if we were to get the committee up and running and working promptly this week, so we could start to get answers in the coming weeks, it seems strange to me that a party that said it wanted accountability would want to delay to such an unacceptable extent. It just does not make sense.

I know it would be unparliamentary for me to note that there is not a single Conservative actually debating this motion in the House tonight, so I will not mention that. Very clearly, the Conservatives have not been responsible or appropriate. The other three parties who are recognized in the House of Commons have agreement. The Senate groups have agreement. Let us get on with it, and let us get this committee started.

● (1855)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby and I share a border and the constituents in our ridings have a lot of similar sentiments. I know that, in the riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra, many people were anxious and scared. They were feeling very uncomfortable with some of the symbols they were seeing, and they were worried about how this was going to potentially infect other communities in Canada and other trade corridors. I know that in B.C., we did experience shutdowns to our borders and trade corridors, all of it very, very difficult for folks to understand. That is why this committee is so important.

One of the things that has come up a lot in the last three weeks is the different treatment of indigenous land defenders and environmental activists who are actively trying to protect their land. There is such a difference in the treatment from law enforcement agencies. I wonder if the member could let people in my community know if they will get answers to that disparity.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam is an extraordinarily strong member of Parliament. She does a great service to the people of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Belcarra and Anmore. These are the kinds of questions she asks that are so effective in the House of Commons.

She is absolutely right. We have seen different treatment of indigenous land defenders, different treatment of environmental activists and different treatment of racialized people. We need to get to the bottom of the differing treatment and ensure that there is a similar high standard of treatment that all Canadians can expect from policing.

It is fair to say that the peaceful resolution of the occupation in many ways could be seen as a model. There were no serious injuries. There was an effective use of policing under the powers of

the Emergencies Act to bring a peaceful end. Thank goodness it happened that way.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that it was some of the most amazing police work, certainly that we see in the world, when one considers how our police and the RCMP, by the time the operation went forward, removed so many people and vehicles and did so professionally and with such restraint.

How does my hon. friend from New Westminster—Burnaby think it is possible that so many citizens have completely different views of what transpired? Russia Today, for instance, reported massive police brutality. Rebel News reported police brutality, yet those of us who were present in the city and close to what happened, and from talking to RCMP and police, have a completely different understanding of what took place. I ask the hon. member if he does not think this committee can make progress in getting to what we might call an agreed set of facts.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, we are seeing the radicalization of an increasing number of Canadians, and what they are often getting through social media and through so-called news outlets like Fox News is a very distorted picture of reality. There is no doubt of that. Fox News reported that people were being killed in Ottawa. This is incredibly false information. Some of these other so-called media outlets are pushing propaganda rather than showing the tight journalistic standards that so many Canadian journalists uphold.

I have to pay tribute to what we all saw. Student journalists were often under pressure. Journalists were being attacked, sometimes physically assaulted, spat upon, heckled and harangued. However, they continued to provide the news, despite the threats of violence that so often happened online but also happened physically when they travelled through the occupation.

We need to make sure that we have strong journalistic standards, and we need to make sure that Canadians are getting facts, not propaganda. This is part of the reflection that needs to happen, not just within Parliament but right across the country. We cannot keep having people be radicalized by false information. It is destructive to our democracy and destructive to our country.

● (1900)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Conservatives for not asking a question so that I could ask another one. My question has to do with the level of policing that was involved in this. I genuinely think that when we reflect back and when the committee reflects back on what we saw in terms of the work the police were doing out there, we will determine that this was nothing short of the gold standard in how these operations are supposed to be executed.

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Notwithstanding the fact that we are certainly interested in hearing about a lot of the negatives, I think this committee has the opportunity to highlight the positives and what went right. In my opinion, one of those things is the incredible police work that was done. I wonder if the member can comment on that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, yes, that was my point. There was a methodical, careful use of policing powers over the course of the Friday and Saturday. We all saw it. We were here on the Hill. There were no serious injuries. There was a deliberate attempt to ensure that the law was upheld but in a way that did not cause, in any way, any serious injuries at all. I think we would all like to see that same treatment when it comes to indigenous land defenders, environmental activists and racialized Canadians. We would want to see that high standard become a part of Canadian policing, and hopefully we can see, through this parliamentary review, a way of achieving that.

I will note that in my area in British Columbia, as my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam mentioned, the Pacific Highway crossing was shut down, and prior to the Emergencies Act being put in place, a tank truck busted through a blockade and put RCMP officers in serious danger. The Emergencies Act helped to end that blockade, which also featured journalists being spat upon and assaulted.

This is all part of what this committee needs to start doing as soon as tomorrow, and I certainly call upon my Conservative colleagues to rally to the consensus of all the other parties, put this into place and get to work.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion to create the parliamentary review committee per subsection 62(1) of the Emergencies Act.

For three weeks, blockades illegally disrupted our daily lives here in Ottawa and across the country. They harmed our economy and endangered our public safety. In my riding of Vancouver Granville, health care workers, moms and seniors were worried and afraid as the convoy came through and there were threats of further protests. We saw displays of anti-indigenous racism, of anti-Semitism and of misogyny. We saw vandalism, harassment and expressions of hate and violence. We saw abuse of the press. We saw the vile misuse of the Canadian flag and indeed of the word “freedom” itself.

For three weeks, we heard from residents of Ottawa who were afraid to leave their homes and were held hostage, and from businesses that had to stay closed to keep themselves and their employees safe. For three weeks, day after day we heard about and saw members of the Conservative Party meeting with the occupiers, taking them coffee, eating meals with them and celebrating what they stood for and what they were doing. They celebrated the actions of those blockaders, many of whom are now charged with crimes ranging from mischief to conspiracy to commit murder.

This is no joke. Our democracy should not be treated as an opportunity by the opposition to build mistrust or to peddle misinfor-

mation. The very same party that sought to deceive Canadians as to what was actually happening here in Ottawa and across the country now wants to control the very review of the action taken to stop the illegal occupation of Ottawa.

The Conservative Party has chosen to peddle untruths to Canadians. The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said in a video, “The fact is, RCMP have an ongoing investigation into Trudeau’s obstruction of justice.”

● (1905)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member cannot use names.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, I apologize.

This is simply not true. No such investigation exists. The interim Leader of the Opposition, instead of seeking a solution to the problem, said, “I don’t think we should be asking them to go home...we need to turn this into the [Prime Minister’s] problem.” With this type of rhetoric, a willingness to mislead Canadians and a willingness to support an ongoing occupation of our capital to serve political goals, how can they reasonably be trusted to chair a committee reviewing the very action taken?

We invoked the Emergencies Act to supplement provincial and territorial authorities to address the blockades and occupation to keep Canadians safe. We did this at the behest of the provinces and we did this to support others across the country who needed our help. It allowed our government to mobilize essential services, allowed the RCMP to swiftly enforce local laws and provided enhanced power to stop the flow of money. These measures were targeted, temporary and proportionate. We invoked them only after exhausting other measures, and they were the result of close consultation with the provinces and territories.

To be clear, the Emergencies Act is expressly governed by the rights and freedoms set out in the charter and no one should tell us otherwise. The specific measures provided by the Emergencies Act were limited and subject to numerous checks and safeguards. One such safeguard is the requirement for a parliamentary review committee to be established, which is what we are discussing today.

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We have had productive discussions with other parties in the House about how to structure the membership of this joint review committee in a manner that is reasonable, fair and appropriate. Now is the time for reckoning and to review and understand the circumstances of what brought us to this point and how it was handled. We have proposed a reasonable approach to this review and to this committee's structure. Unfortunately, after supporting the illegal blockades and occupations, the Conservative Party is now refusing to do what it should, which is to support the timely creation of a fair structure for this committee to do its work. What Canadians need now from their Parliament is an honest, efficient and thoughtful review of the invocation of the act, its implementation and its outcomes.

We have seen the spread of lies and misinformation and we do not need that when it comes to something as fundamental as this. We are talking about trust in our institutions and in our democracy. We are talking about ensuring there is public trust in our processes and indeed in our Parliament. We must not trifle with this. It is an opportunity for all parliamentarians to do what is right and allow a review to look at things honestly. Surely, if everyone in the House has acted in good faith throughout this occupation and acted in the best interests of Canadians, no one should have anything to worry about in terms of what comes out of this review. It should be easy for the opposition to accept the proposal we have made.

Under this proposal, as everybody knows, the committee would have 11 members. It would mean three Liberals, two Conservatives, one Bloc, one member of the NDP and four senators representing all groups in the Senate. The committee would be chaired by three co-chairs: a Bloc MP, an NDP MP and one senator. That is pretty balanced, in my view. The chair would not be a Liberal, whose government invoked the Emergencies Act, or a Conservative, whose party, as we heard before, led the way in supporting protesters and the protests.

The Conservatives inexplicably refuse to support this balanced proposal. They have insisted from the start that they co-chair and are now demanding that both co-chairs be Conservative. Their bias in cheering on the illegal occupation cannot, should not and must not extend to chairing the committee. Canadians are going to judge us long after we are gone from this place. If the government is prepared to cede the chair of this committee to the Bloc and the NDP without fear or favour, what is stopping the Conservatives from doing exactly the same thing?

Were they here, I would appeal to my colleagues from across the floor, those who are uncomfortable with misinformation, with harmful rhetoric and with pandering to PPC voters, to vote in favour of this motion to show Canadians that the institution of Parliament and the review of the Emergencies Act and the actions taken come above petty partisanship.

• (1910)

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to comment on a quote my colleague noted and make a correction. On February 10, our leader stated that she understood and was passionate about the convoy. However, she did make a statement that the blockades had to leave and that we would continue the fight for their freedoms.

I do not know where the member was going with that statement, so I would like some clarification. We did call for the blockades to come down, we did call for the convoy to end and we said that we would take on their fight here in the House. Could he comment on that, please?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, I would be glad to respond.

If I understand correctly, there was an email sent by the interim Leader of the Opposition in which she said she thought this should be made the Prime Minister's problem and that they should not be encouraging these individuals to leave Ottawa. Unless the email was a fabrication, unless the email was a lie or unless she changed her mind, that is on the record as something the interim leader of the Conservative Party said.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member for Vancouver Granville could help me out, because I am having trouble understanding what the Conservatives are actually doing in delaying this committee. It does not make much sense to me. I am sure it is not just about being the chair and the perks that might come with that, so it must be about something else. Is it about delaying so we forget what has happened here in Ottawa and so that the role of the Conservatives in supporting the blockade becomes a distant memory, or is it about becoming chair so that they can somehow limit the inquiry so we do not look at those questions?

I am having trouble understanding, and I wonder if the member has seen any indication from the Conservatives of why they are taking this tactic in the House.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It is a question that has plagued me for the last couple of days as well, and I am led to wonder the very same things.

Could it be that there is something that the Conservative Party does not wish to have revealed during the course of the review? Could it be that there are deep concerns about it possibly alienating the potential voters they seek to curry favour with? Could it be something else? I do not know the answer to the question, but it is my hope that this process and the committee itself will unearth the very answers that we seek.

Therefore, like the hon. member, I too am perplexed as to why a party that is so keen for accountability is so desperate to delay the very thing that will give us the accountability that this House deserves.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier I was sure I was lost. I walked into the House and then turned around and left because I was sure I had walked into a day care centre. I did come back eventually, though.

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We in the Bloc Québécois do not care who the chair is. The important thing is that the work begins, but especially that there is a consensus on the formation of the committee. That is the most important thing. Getting the committee off the ground may be the only part of the Emergencies Act that will be used properly. In terms of inspiring confidence in Quebeckers and Canadians, we are off to a very poor start.

We need to have the least partisan committee possible. Nothing I am hearing from either the Conservative side or the Liberal side is inspiring confidence at this point.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments.

The reality is that the Conservative Party has decided to politicize the situation that we went through here in Ottawa. The way we can act now is to have a committee that will look at the situation with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP co-chairing the committee. We can work together to find the answers.

The member is right: The people of Canada are looking for answers to important questions, like what happened here in Ottawa, but also across the country where the convoys had repercussions.

We have to get going and find answers as soon as possible for Canadians.

• (1915)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the last couple of years, the issue that I think would have been a wonderful thing to talk about is the heroes of the pandemic and how Canadians stepped up to the plate when we really needed to take on the coronavirus. We are not necessarily focusing on that issue, but rather on a short period of time when people, due to the illegal blockades, caused far too many discussions and debates taking place here in Ottawa. I heard previously of the real heroes and issues of the pandemic. It has been a long, hard two-plus years, and there are so many wonderful things we could be saying about those Canadians and residents who really stepped up to get us through to this point.

Getting back on topic, a couple of days before the government instituted the Emergencies Act there was a letter that was sent to the Prime Minister. I caught wind of it not through the PMO or anything of that nature, but through a Winnipeg Free Press article. I would like to quote the article. It states:

Premier Heather Stefanson pleaded in a private letter to [the Prime Minister] to intervene at the Emerson border blockade just days before she publicly opposed his decision....

In a Feb. 11 letter obtained by the Free Press, Stefanson asked [the Prime Minister] to take “immediate and effective” action as she pleaded for “national leadership that only you and the federal government can provide.”

It goes on:

[The premier's] letter said the situation was urgent and blockades that disrupt “this critical corridor—even temporarily—create potential dangers, impose severe hardships on all Manitobans and cause severe economic loss and damage to Manitoba and Canadian businesses.”

That was just a couple of days before the Emergencies Act. On the Sunday, the fact that the federal government was looking at enacting the legislation was already being talked about through some media outlets, and on Monday it was enacted. I do not think it was of any great surprise.

We saw the City of Ottawa declare an emergency. The Province of Ontario declared an emergency. We had letters such as I just cited from Manitoba. We had a letter a week or so prior to that from the Province of Alberta asking the federal government to get engaged. The need to engage the Emergencies Act was very real, tangible and the right thing to do.

I will go to what we heard from some of the law enforcement agencies. Steve Bell, the interim chief of the Ottawa Police Service, stated: “All of those pieces of legislation and supports we've got from different levels of government have directly and actively contributed to our ability to ultimately say we are in a position to move forward and look to end the demonstration,” meaning the lockdown here in Ottawa.

In another news article, the commissioner of the RCMP stated that the powers given to her officers through the Emergencies Act served as a big deterrent in policing the anti-vaccine mandate protests that occupied the streets of downtown Ottawa for nearly a month. She stated:

We don't have anything in laws that prevent people from coming to protests and we can't turn them away. So for us, operationally, it was all about reducing that footprint in Ottawa and the only way to do that was to stop people from coming in or incentivizing them to leave.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Prime Minister, the cabinet and in fact not just Liberal members of Parliament but New Democrats, one Green member of the House, which was the former leader of the Green Party, and even the Bloc supported the Emergencies Act. We recognized there was a need for it.

• (1920)

At the end of the day, if we take a look at the Conservatives, it is very difficult to see where they actually were. Many members talked about Conservatives walking out and getting those snapshots onto social media. In fact, I saw one picture of the interim leader at a dinner table with some of the protesters. It was quite amazing to see that.

Some say maybe we should have gone out there and talked to them. I want to give a quote. This is the Conservative guru from the Prairies. The Conservative Party members know him as Jason Kenney, the premier. This is what the premier had to say about negotiating with protesters. The premier was asked specifically about one of the leadership candidates, and I cannot say his name, and whether his comments compromised conduct. The premier stated, “I will never praise people who are out there breaking the law, creating public safety hazards, and I don't think anybody in elected office should do that.” The articles says, “He also said he does not believe anyone from the federal or provincial governments should be meeting with the participants.”

Stick with the facts. That is what I want the committee to be able to do, and hopefully it will be able to do it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is not often that I agree with the member for Winnipeg North almost entirely. I would like him to spend a minute or two expanding on why we need to move forward quickly with this.

All of us here have been swamped with phone calls and emails from people concerned about the use of the Emergencies Act. One of the good things about the Emergencies Act is that it has this committee embedded in it. We need to move forward quickly with this, and we need to move forward fairly. This proposal we have before us has a chair from the NDP and a chair from the Bloc, two parties on opposite sides of the debate, plus a member from the Independent Senators Group.

Can the member comment on the need to move forward quickly and fairly so Canadians can have these answers?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no reason whatsoever that we could not have activated that committee back on Monday. We recognize and appreciate that with the Bloc and the New Democrats, one party did oppose it and the NDP supported it. We have both sides co-chairing and then there will be a chair from the Senate.

Given the biases from the Conservatives and how they were tainted, I believe it was the responsible thing to do. It is in the legislation. We know a committee had to be struck. There no doubt could be things that have taken place that we can learn from and improve the legislation going forward. We know the Conservative Party. It does not matter what happens, but I can almost guarantee there will be a minority report coming from the Conservative Party condemning the government. That is an absolute almost given.

The Conservatives are the party that has turned this thing into a circus at times because they are flip-flopping all over the place on the issue. They say one thing in here, and then they go and say something else outside the chamber. To see that we can follow the social media comments coming from the Conservative Party of Canada.

That is why it is unfortunate. The committee could be dealing with this. Hopefully, eventually, we will see the Conservatives come onsite and look at ways in which we might be able to improve the legislation and the use of it in the future.

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North knows how much I appreciate him, and I know he feels the same way.

I can understand why he was confused about the Bloc Québécois's support for the emergency measures. We supported the idea of taking the appropriate measures at the right time and in accordance with provincial and federal jurisdictions. For more than three weeks, we were suggesting solutions and asking questions in the House. The members on the other side of the House did not

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seem to hear us, however. That explains why my colleague is confused.

As I was listening to his speech, I was trying to think of a suggestion, a step forward, some small way to get this committee off on a less partisan foot. I struggled to think of anything, though, so I figured that I would give my colleague an opportunity to tell us what the government could do to get this committee off on the right foot.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it will, in fact, be the membership of the committee that will ultimately determine how effective the committee wants to be. If there is a highly politically charged agenda going into the committee, there is very little that the committee can do outside of trying to steer it.

I served on legislative committees in the past at the provincial level. They operated on a consensus basis. To see a consensus report come out of this committee, I would give full marks and credit to every single member. It would be a challenge to do that, but it would be a wonderful thing to see: an actual report based on consensus where there are no minority reports. This would not be a consensus and then a minority report, but an absolute, true consensus report on ways in which we could improve the legislation.

I do not believe that the legislation is totally perfect. Let us see if there are ways in which we can improve it.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to the observations that have been made on the hate symbols and extremist, ideologically motivated displays of racism and intimidation, in person and online, that were part of this illegal occupation. There have also been comments about the wilful blindness of the Conservatives to these displays of hate, in spite of them being reported by journalists and organizations that monitor hate speech in this country.

Does the member think that it should be an important aspect of the review to understand how dangerous online spaces influenced those who participated in the clear hate messaging by the organizers? Does it not require a balanced and careful review by the committee?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, given the cost and social consequences of the illegal blockades, whether it was the seizure of downtown Ottawa or at the international borders, which cost billions of dollars a day, and factoring in the extreme right and many of the racial attitudes expressed in places outside of Ottawa, I would like to think the committee would ultimately make its decision in terms of the scope of it. I am hoping, and will try to be optimistic, that we will see that consensus. I will cross my fingers, but I guess we will have to wait and see.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague for Calgary Shepard.

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It is an honour to rise today to discuss this extremely serious matter. The unprecedented use of the Emergencies Act requires the utmost scrutiny, and the committee that will be struck is obviously going to play an essential role. The government's attempt to strong-arm the opposition and rig the committee to deliver a favourable outcome is not shocking given the history of the current government; nonetheless, it is unacceptable.

I want to start today by reminding Canadians how we got into this situation in the first place. When we take a step back to consider the actions taken by the Prime Minister and the Liberal government, the need for strong opposition oversight becomes even clearer.

In the early days of the pandemic, the Prime Minister acknowledged that mandating vaccinations would be a deeply divisive and socially harmful policy. That was about 13 months ago. He then saw an opening to try to move from a minority government to a majority, and decided that dividing Canadians and threatening the social fabric of our country would be worthwhile if it gave him a blank cheque for another four years.

While the Prime Minister has always been keen to divide Canadians and others who do not agree with him, recent months have seen him take it to a whole new level, charging those people who do not like his policies as racists or misogynists, or as holding unacceptable views and taking up space. He has taken to suggesting that hon. members of Parliament, even descendants of Holocaust survivors, are standing with Nazis.

What we are seeing is an increasingly tired, scandal-plagued Prime Minister clinging to the reins of power by stoking fear and division. Common-sense Canadians can see right through this. That is why thousands of Canadians from coast to coast left their homes to protest the Prime Minister's divisive policies and his decision to double down on vaccine mandates and restrictions when many provinces and countries around the world were lifting them.

The protesters came with a very simple message for the Prime Minister: Canadians want their rights and freedoms back, and it is time to allow Canadians to manage their risk tolerance for COVID-19 themselves, just as friends and family in other countries have been doing for months. Instead of speaking with them, understanding their concerns and trying to assuage their fears, the government continued to override Canadians' freedoms with no end in sight, and the Prime Minister resorted again to more name-calling.

Then, in a move I cannot fathom, the government and the NDP refused to support our Conservative motion asking for a plan to lift the mandate restrictions. Two years in, the Prime Minister does not believe that Canadians can be trusted with the metrics the government is using to justify public health measures. This is far from the commitment that the Liberal government made: In an open and accountable government, government data and information should be open by default. I wonder if the Liberals remember that pledge.

We cannot accept illegal activity at our borders or on our streets. Infringing on the rights and freedoms of fellow citizens while protesting the government cannot be accepted as the norm, but neither should we as Canadians accept dangerous and divisive rhetoric from the executive branch of our government meant to incite Cana-

dians who disagree with it. It is clear that the Prime Minister no longer shares the guiding philosophy of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's sunny ways, but instead is relying on the winds of bluster.

This is in large part the backdrop against which the Emergencies Act was invoked. After years of insulting, shaming and marginalizing Canadians who disagreed with the Prime Minister, those Canadians rose up in opposition. The use of the Emergencies Act does appear to have been wholly inappropriate in this matter. Conservatives are extremely concerned that in striking the committee as the Liberals are proposing, they intend to simply stack the deck to skirt over the great many concerns that Canadians rightly have.

It is important to note that the existence of an emergency does not mean that the Emergencies Act is the proper tool to be used. I know that many Canadians impacted by the blockades felt that this was an emergency that required extraordinary intervention, but that is not the threshold for using it. In order to use this legislation, the predecessor of which was the War Measures Act, there can be no other options in our federal or provincial laws. We must not lose sight of this fact.

I have listened carefully to experts, including to police officers who were tasked with cleaning up the mess that the Prime Minister instigated. It is clear that the powers under the Emergencies Act were helpful in clearing the blockades, but again, whether they were used or were helpful is not the test for whether the act should have been invoked. It is whether the situation could have been dealt with in any other way through existing authorities. So far, I have seen no compelling evidence that it could not have been.

We know that the police can compel reasonable assistance from others at any point in time. This authority is laid out in the Criminal Code, and that would include calling tow-truck drivers.

● (1930)

We know that if police see a crime in progress, they are able to act on it even if they are outside their regular jurisdiction. Further, there is a process to deputize police from other departments or areas to act. This was done in Ottawa prior to the Emergencies Act being invoked, and it worked.

The Emergencies Act may have been more convenient, but it was not necessary. Convenience is not the test in the legislation. The increased offences that were granted under the Emergencies Act were not necessary, because there are already viable offences and authorities in the Criminal Code. The border blockades were coming down before the invocation of the Emergencies Act, so clearly it was not necessary in those instances. The financial measures were not necessary to bring down the blockades at our international borders, and we were already seeing crowdfunding platforms that were voluntarily cutting off funds without the need of this legislation. They also do not appear to have been charter-compliant, as individuals were assumed guilty and sanctioned by their banks without any due process.

These are all things that the committee needs to consider, and that we cannot simply allow to be swept under the rug by a committee designed to exonerate the Liberals' actions and justify the NDP's backing of them in an attempt to wipe the egg off their face from when they voted to affirm the act's use, only to have it withdrawn 36 hours later.

The government's proposal for the structure of the committee is totally inadequate. As I have outlined, this committee has a very serious task ahead of it, and it ought to be credible. I appreciate that the views I have laid out, and that I have heard from my constituents, are likely not going to be universally accepted in this Chamber. However, they are valid views and deserve to be heard and considered.

A strong and represented opposition is essential for the functioning of our democracy. Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition is beholden to the people of Canada, not to the cabinet, to members of the governing party or to their coalition partners. To try to minimize our role because they do not like what we might say or what we might have said in the past flies in the face of our parliamentary system.

While the Liberals have proved to be too comfortable in criticizing Canadians who disagree with them as holding unacceptable views, and it is their right to say so, no matter how arrogant it makes them sound, they are not the arbiters of acceptability for our parliamentary system. That is a role that is reserved for Canadians at the ballot box, not for the government House leader and the caucus that sits behind him.

While he may have threatened an election over the Emergencies Act, it did not happen and our voices are just as valid in this place, or at committee, as his or any other member's on the government benches.

To quote Sir Wilfred Laurier, a Prime Minister greatly admired by Liberals:

...it is indeed essential for the country that the shades of opinion which are represented on both sides of this House should be placed as far as possible on a footing of equality and that we should have a strong opposition to voice the views of those who do not think with the majority.

I ask the government to take that advice now.

While the government may be inclined to disavow its claimed beliefs for the sake of politics and retaining power, my colleagues in opposition should not have the same concerns. While I have spoken at length about the government's attempt to vilify Canadians

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who disagree with it, it is important to remind hon. members that the government has also attempted to curtail the powers of the opposition on multiple occasions. The fact that it is now trying to marginalize the official opposition's role in the committee because it knows we disagree with it is another link in a concerning pattern by the government to use policy and now procedure to punish those who disagree with it.

We should remember Motion 6, which attempted to marginalize the role of opposition back in 2016 and give the government broad sweeping powers here in Parliament. We should recall the attempts by the government in 2017 to change the Standing Orders so that the opposition would lose numerous tools to hold the government to account. In the early days of the pandemic, the Liberal government tried to give itself the authority, unilaterally and without parliamentary oversight, to raise or lower taxes as it saw fit for up to two years.

When these things happened, opposition parties banded together to say no and oppose the government. The ideological and policy differences that existed then still exist now, but that was not the point. We knew that for our democracy to function effectively, there must be a strong and capable opposition, even if we did not necessarily like what the other parties had to say. It is in that spirit that we should come together now.

In the absence of consensus, the Emergencies Act provides a formula that can be used for striking this committee. While I understand the frustration that some Liberal MPs may have, given that they do not have a Senate caucus, despite the independence of senators appointed by the Prime Minister being questionable, that frustration lies at their feet and at the feet of their Prime Minister who made that decision. They had every ability to harmonize the Emergencies Act with the current structure of the Senate over the past six years, and they did not do so.

● (1935)

Unfortunately, with a closure motion being forced on us to stifle debate, a decision must be made, and I would suggest that adhering to the formula set out in the Emergencies Act will help to ensure a fair and impartial assessment of this incident.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here today because the Conservative Party was not willing to accept that they should not have a leadership role as a chair on this committee.

If we need evidence to support the fact that they should not, we need not go any further than the member's speech. He even talked in his very own speech about the reasons he does not believe that the government should have used the Emergencies Act. He is drawing the conclusion of the work that the committee should do before the committee has even been struck.

Does he not appreciate the fact that a party that has such an entrenched position probably should not be exercising the role of chair in that committee?

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Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, this is a completely asinine argument. The job of the official opposition is to hold the government to account and to make sure through robust debate and robust challenging of their decisions and of the policies they implement that the best thing happens for Canadians.

Suggesting that the opposition should not do its role and should align itself with an NDP chair who is complicit in implementing the act in the first place is not actually putting an opposition MP in the chair. It is putting a coalition MP in the chair. This is bypassing the actual adversarial effect of what our democracy is supposed to do when we challenge each other to get the best results for Canadians. I simply do not understand why the Liberals want an audience instead of an opposition.

• (1940)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate my colleague's comment, but only up to a point.

The Bloc Québécois wants this committee to be created, and it wants to get an explanation for the government's choice to invoke the Emergencies Act. The Bloc's own analysis shows that the criteria for invoking the act were not met.

I would like the committee to reflect on what the inappropriate use of this act means for the future. Does this mean that future governments will be able to use the act anytime they run up against any kind of difficult situation?

At some point, there will be a real emergency, the government will invoke the act, and people will think it is just some minor thing like the last time. That is what worries me because people will not get the right message.

Can my colleague tell me if he thinks the committee's findings will enable the public to better evaluate the use of this act in the future?

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, what do we have here? We have a Liberal government that through its members' rhetoric and tone and the way they talk to Canadians, does an amazing job of sticking up for, and rightly so, the rights and freedoms and the jobs of the people here in Ottawa who were impacted, but with no consideration for the jobs that were lost by everybody who came here to protest.

The situation we end up with is that the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, according to the Liberals, are going to co-chair this committee. The Liberals would not even have been able to do this if it were not for the support of the NDP. Now the Liberals and their NDP coalition partners, who have been propping them up all along, are going to basically decide who gets called as witnesses, who gets to speak at the committee and whose testimony they are going to adopt at the committee as the basis of the report.

Any other political entity in this Parliament that supports this motion will be complicit in that. It is a dangerous precedent, because bypassing the official opposition and the role that it has here in Parliament is a dangerous precedent to set.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to follow the whip of one's own party when joining debate on this issue. I do not want to re-thread the same ground that he has already covered. I have already basically chopped off half of what I wanted to cover, but I want to specifically focus now on the actual parliamentary review committee.

I have heard all types of things being debated in this House on what will actually be done by this committee. I want to go back to what the law says and what the motion actually says, because I want my constituents back home, the residents of my riding, to understand exactly what it is that we are debating.

The House has already weighed in on the subject, on the wisdom of using the Emergencies Act. We had a vote on it and we are on the record. The Bloc and the Conservative Party are on the record, and so are the Liberals, the Greens and the New Democrats, so our parties have already kind of determined for ourselves, and each individual MP has, whether it was wise to use it or not. The act is very specific. Part 6 of the act is the parliamentary supervision section of the Emergencies Act. It says the following in subsection 62(1):

The exercise of powers and the performance of duties and functions pursuant to a declaration of emergency shall be reviewed by a committee of both Houses of Parliament designated or established for that purpose.

I have heard members in this chamber say that it would be a discussion about the protest, the blockades at the border, how it happened, the use of racist language and the grievances of the protesters, but what we are talking about here is not about keeping citizens accountable: We are talking about keeping government accountable.

The Liberal government has a record of not being willing to be kept accountable by Parliament, by citizens or by anybody. It has repeatedly done this before. In the past six and a half years I have been here, there have been motions pushed forward by government House leaders to try to restrict the ability of members to do their work both in the House and in committees, and beyond. I remember a sitting on a Saturday. We had to sit on Easter Saturday to prevent the government from obtaining almost absolute powers to tax and spend.

This is the same government. It tried to force through Standing Order changes as well. These are the same people who are now trying to jury-rig or jerry-rig this committee in order to have the outcome they want, and it is a predetermined outcome, I believe.

I also want to draw the attention of my constituents back home to the fact that this committee's meetings will be held in private. The law requires it under subsection 62(4):

Every meeting of the Parliamentary Review Committee held to consider an order or regulation referred to it pursuant to subsection 61(2) shall be held in private.

That is the most interesting part of this committee's work. It will be to review all of the internal documentation. I truly hope it will include the opinion of the Department of Justice of Canada on whether the threshold was met in enacting the Emergencies Act for its usage.

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Every single one of those meetings will be held in private. Furthermore, even the motion reiterates that an oath of secrecy will be required of every single member of the committee, all the members who are elected or Senate members, and every single staff member or witness who will be participating in the dissemination of this information at the committee. It would be incredibly difficult thereafter to produce a report on the government's conduct—not the citizens' conduct, but the government's conduct—in calling for this Emergencies Act.

I also want to draw to the attention of my constituents and the House that it is this motion, motion No. 9, that specifies February 14 and February 23. Those are the actions that will be reviewed by the committee members.

Many members have heard the issues that we on the Conservative side have with the way the chairmanship of this committee will be structured. I want to draw the attention of people to the fact that the co-chairs of this committee will be voting chairs. They will be able to move motions at committee. I have been at my share of parliamentary committees, including a joint committee with the Senate. I have never seen a meeting function well when a chair is able to move motions and is able to vote. In this Parliament I was briefly able to chair the public accounts committee, which I think is considered by all accounts to be one of the most neutral committees in this Parliament. As chair of that committee, I tried to bring absolute neutrality to the task in ensuring that we left our partisanship at the door. Both sides, both opposition members and government caucus members, had one goal in mind, which was the proper administration of government and the proper administration of funds. While we had maybe differing interests, the end goal was exactly the same, which was to ensure that taxpayers' money was properly stewarded. It would have been totally impossible to function properly had I, as chair then, been able to move motions myself and to vote on matters. It strikes me as odd that this is something that would be done in this particular situation.

● (1945)

Members have cast aspersions on whether a member of the Conservative Party or a member of the Liberal Party should be chair or not be chair. I think the members who are elected to be chairs of these committees will leave their partisanship at the door. I truly hope that, especially on something as important as this. There was a Bloc member who mentioned the fact that future generations and parliamentarians will look back to this committee and this particular instance and will determine whether this was a wise use of the Emergencies Act and whether the threshold had been met. One would hope that whatever report comes out of this will set the standard for when the government can and cannot, or should or should not, use the Emergencies Act.

I want to draw the attention again of constituents and members of the House to the inquiry section of the Emergencies Act. A lot of what members have been talking about so far is actually covered by the inquiry that must, under section 63 of the act, be called by the government 60 days after an emergency ends. That is the situation where we will see every act, every decision and every protest and blockade that happened in this country in the lead-up to the government's claiming it needed to use the Emergencies Act. The inquiry is the situation where we will also be able to judge the wisdom of

what various citizens were doing all across our country, and I am sure there will be criminal court proceedings that will be partially completed by then, or well under way by then, that will be used by the inquiry judiciously in the determination of fault where there may be fault and in finding whether the government wisely used its power and whether the threshold had been met.

Again, that is for the inquiry. What we are talking about with the parliamentary review committee here is judging whether the government was wise to do it.

These are the things I felt needed to be said: This would not be a balanced committee. This would not be a committee that is going to ensure accountability. I have sat at those House leader meetings. I heard the member for Vancouver Granville say they were productive discussions. They were not productive. They were not productive in any way. If they were, we would not have debated briefly a motion from the government side to stop and shut down debate.

It is the government's responsibility to run the calendar of the House of Commons. The Liberals are in charge. They are the ones who determine how many hours of debate everything receives. It is not the responsibility of the official opposition or any of the opposition parties to ensure the government's agenda gets through. I have a great deal of respect for the colleagues in the other opposition parties, but they do not need to help the government push this through. We are here to keep the government accountable, specifically the cabinet, and the government caucus members can take up that responsibility as well.

What we are seeing here is an attempt by the government to engineer a preferred outcome. That is what its members would like to see, and I have tried to stick specifically to my concerns around the motion and what the Emergencies Act says must happen, because that is what my constituents want to hear. This is not about litigating what happened before February 14. This is about litigating what happened between February 14 and February 23, and I think we owe that to people in my riding.

There is a Yiddish proverb that applies here, and I want to make sure I get it in. Members know my great love for everything Yiddish and Hebrew, and for proverbs as well. It says, "When you sweep the house, you find everything." I think by sweeping through legislation and the actual content of the motion, my constituents back home in Calgary Shepard will see this is an attempt by the government to set a predestined final destination for the report, one that will absolve them of any sins.

● (1950)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated very much the proverb, particularly that when we start to sweep, we start to find things.

Given that the opposition is actually supposed to be Her Majesty's loyal opposition, surely there would be an interest in getting to the business of sweeping to find out what actually went wrong quickly. Why is there this need to hold back the committee from actually starting the important work, recognizing the government will not have any of the chairs?

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Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I am going to remind the member for Vancouver Granville that it is the government's responsibility to set the hours of debate on the motion. It could have done this last week. It could have done this Monday. It could have had evening sittings on the motion in order to ensure that it passed. When we do bad-faith negotiations, like I believe the government House leader has done, this is the result.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Calgary Shepard for his remarks, because I think he once again has betrayed some of the contradictory positions the Conservatives are taking here.

The member professed to believe in the importance of accountability under an act that was passed by a Conservative government, yet the Conservatives have been standing in the way of the committee getting under way because they are saying they should be chair. Then he said he does not want a predetermined outcome, but in his speech he said this committee should not look at anything that happened before the Emergencies Act was implemented. Once again, the member is showing the contradictions in the Conservatives' position.

Would the Conservatives not agree that if accountability is so important, we just need to get on with the business of getting this committee going?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I am not the one who is saying we should not look at anything that happened before. It is clear in the act and the motion what is supposed to happen. The motion specifically refers to February 14 to February 23, and in the act in section 62, and I invite the member to read the sections of the Emergencies Act I am referring to, it says:

62(1) The exercise of powers and the performance of duties and functions pursuant to a declaration of emergency shall be reviewed by a committee of both Houses of Parliament designated or established for that purpose.

The act, the law, tells us what to do, and the motion is specific only to those dates. That is what I am reading. That is what we are voting on here.

• (1955)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, another Yiddish proverb comes to mind: The best way to know a man is to watch him when he is angry. We have seen far too many angry people in this place as we discuss the Emergencies Act.

I would put to the member the statute again, because he seemed to infer in his remarks that Canadians should be suspicious about a committee that has to meet in secret. I draw his attention to the definition of “threats to the security of Canada” within the act. It is a defined term found in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, and it is all about things that would be regarded as secret, such as espionage and sabotage. The one that I think applies here says:

foreign influenced activities within or relating to Canada that are detrimental to the interests of Canada and are clandestine or deceptive

It is very likely that if we look at the real threat to the security of Canada, the manifestation of a deep unpleasantness for the people of Ottawa is one aspect. However, the aspect that drew me to decide to vote yes was the disinformation that came from foreign sources. Looking into that is inherently going to require security clearance, and it is required as well by the act for this committee.

I would love to ask the member for Calgary Shepard if he recognizes that the committee is required by the act to meet in secret and that it makes sense given the security implications of the definition of a public order emergency found in the act.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct in her reading of the act. It is actually the same reading that I have, and I referred to “Meetings in private”, which is in subsection 62(4) of the act.

What I was basically implying, and will say now, is that the best portion of the committee, the one I think the public will be most interested in, will be the discussion of the orders and regulations internally that the government was using, passing and referring to. That is the thing the public wants to know about the most, and that is the thing that will be kept secret and will be private.

The next part is that I do not know how the committee will be able to report on it in an actual, physical report. It may be able to make allusions to it and infer certain things, but it will not be able to specifically say and construct an image of what happened between February 14 and February 23.

The Speaker: We will resume debate. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has 20 minutes coming to him, but it is three minutes to eight o'clock, so whenever he stops, we shall stop. I thought I would point that out.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there will be 337 people mad at me if I choose to take that full 20 minutes, so I assure you, I will not.

I do want to say I hope people who are watching this can appreciate and understand what is really going on here. Normally, establishing a committee like this is something that can be done through a unanimous consent motion that takes no more than 30 seconds of House time.

Instead, we are now on the second day. This would have been a full day of parliamentary business, and it has essentially been wasted on the fact that the Conservatives really want to have a chair on this committee. They want to hold one of the roles of chair.

It has been said in this House, and I certainly agree, that it does not make sense that the Conservatives would hold a chair position given the fact that they were so adamantly in favour of what was going on out there. That is not just through the actions and the posts we saw on social media, but also through documents that have come forward, which the member for Vancouver Granville and others referenced earlier.

We know that they had a vested interest in this. Certainly, the governing side was the side that actually implemented the act and used the tools within it, so it goes to say that the governing side should not have a chair on this committee either. I cannot understand, for the life of me, why Conservatives are so interested in ensuring that they have this position.

If Conservatives are just as interested in letting things come to light, I would assume that somebody who is innocent would think, “Well, I do not want to be perceived as being in the middle of the decision-making in how the committee operates because I want to come out of this looking as clean as possible.” However, that is not what we have seen.

I am very much interested in learning what happens in the committee and in understanding what it discovers. How did this movement start? Who fuelled it? Who funded it? I am not going to lie, I would love to know how many Conservatives donated to this particular GoFundMe or the GiveSendGo. Maybe that will come out in the committee. I do not know.

Maybe that is the reason the Conservatives are holding this up and dragging it through Parliament, so we do not get to the point of actually establishing this committee. I do not know. I would like to think that is not the case, but I cannot understand why they would be putting up such a roadblock to something that is otherwise treated in such a simple manner to establish the committee.

I know we are now at eight o'clock. I want to make sure we can get to voting on time. I am very much looking forward to the work this committee will do, getting it established and seeing the results that come out. I have total confidence in the NDP, who voted in favour of using the measures, and the Bloc, who voted against using the measures, along with the one representative from the Senate. I have total confidence in their ability to properly manage and exercise their roles of joint chair on that committee, and I know they will ensure that a proper report is produced for this House to consider.

● (2000)

The Speaker: It being 8:01 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 9, and of the amendment, now before the House.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we would request a recorded vote.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (2050)

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

(Division No. 36)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon

Aitchison
Allison
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Seeback
Shiplely
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The Speaker: It being 9:03 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:03 p.m.)

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