



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

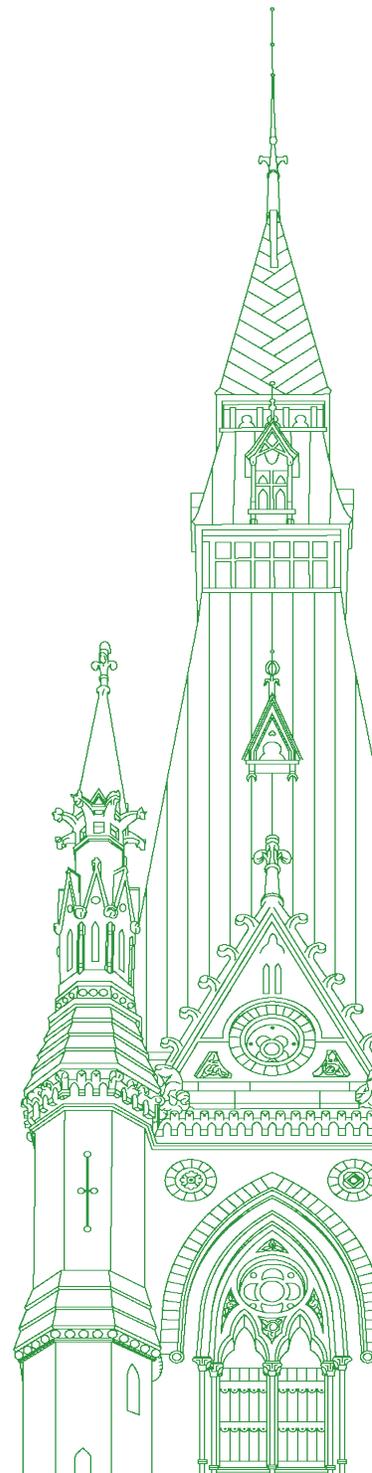
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House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 23, 2022

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: Before we start today, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay will lead us in the singing of the national anthem.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

LEBANESE INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening, full of pride for my homeland and the country I love, we gathered to mark the 79th anniversary of Lebanon's independence.

[*Translation*]

I want to sincerely thank all parliamentarians, senators, members of the diplomatic corps and everyone who came yesterday.

[*English*]

Lebanese people have contributed to the Canadian mosaic since the 1880s. I have heard from Canadians from across the country about their deep connections to the Lebanese communities in their regions since I introduced my private member's bill to designate November as Lebanese heritage month. In a few hours, I will appear before the social affairs committee in the other place and speak about the value of such a designation.

The special relationship between our nations is rooted in our shared democratic values, and Canada has always stepped up to help Lebanon in its time of need. In the face of hardship, now is such a time.

As I said yesterday, our faith is very strong that the sun will shine again, and our paradise Lebanon will be more beautiful than ever.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the years, I have had the opportunity to work with selfless, hard-working individuals representing 20 local councils in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, and this past municipal term was no exception. I thank current councillors who either decided to retire at the end of this term or were not successful. Politics is an unforgiving business, so cherish the honour.

I thank all who stepped up and put their names forth in this election. It is a big commitment, and their community thanks them for it. Individuals who ran and were unsuccessful should take this opportunity to serve their communities in other ways. The need is always there. For candidates who were successful, welcome to public office, and welcome back returning councillors.

New councillors are now being sworn in for the start of a new term in office and the task begins. As their federal representative for the valley, my door is always open. I look forward to working with all members of council.

Congratulations and good luck.

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POPPY CAMPAIGN IN ORLÉANS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 28, I had the honour to attend the official launch of the poppy campaign conducted by the Orléans Royal Canadian Legion Branch 632.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank Canadian Tire owner Claude L'Heureux for his welcome and for partnering with our legion.

[*English*]

Today, I am pleased to announce that our local Orléans poppy campaign has collected more than \$120,000. I would like to thank everyone who donated for their generosity.

[*Translation*]

All of the donations received during the campaign will go to supporting veterans and their families.

Statements by Members

[English]

I must recognize the immense dedication and work by volunteers who supported the different points of sale in our community, and I recognize our local businesses for their continuous efforts to ensure success by allowing the Legions to have a kiosk on site.

Leading up to Remembrance Day, poppies were seen in every corner across Canada. They show support and display remembrance, and they carry a wealth of history and meaning with them.

Lest we forget.

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[Translation]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INITIATIVE

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on October 31, students of the secondary school in Oka took action to raise awareness among their peers. During a spooky haunted mansion tour on Halloween, nine young girls in black capes held a tombstone with the names of Quebec's most recent femicide victims. At the end of the tour, there was a banner that read, "Were you afraid? We don't want to spend our whole lives being afraid". Eight hundred people signed the banner in a show of support.

On November 4, I met with these young 13- and 14-year-olds, who wanted to send a message to us, parliamentarians, because we have the power to change things.

Does it seem normal that, every day, in 2022, a woman wonders whether she will be next? That is absolutely unbelievable. I would like to invite members from all parties to join their voices to mine and to those of the students and staff members who supported their initiative.

Let us stand in solidarity against violence towards women. Not one more.

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● (1410)

NATIONAL ADDICTIONS AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is National Addictions Awareness Week. It is an opportunity for Canadians to learn more about addictions, to talk openly about prevention, treatment and recovery, and to reduce the stigma surrounding substance use.

This year's theme, "A Community of Caring", is very important. It highlights the community's efforts to reduce the stigma associated with addiction and to promote the idea that people with addictions should be treated with compassion, respect and empathy.

It is very disappointing to see that the Leader of the Opposition released a video this week in which he spreads misinformation. It is irresponsible and dangerous. Even Stephen Harper's former public safety advisor called the video a rehash of Conservative tropes from the discredited war on drugs, which was proven to be ineffective, as well as costly and deadly.

We cannot return to the failed Conservative ideology. It will cost lives.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the government of Bill C-215 on employment insurance, which seeks to increase from 15 to 52 the number of weeks of sickness benefits for cases of serious illness, such as cancer. I would also remind the government that just 15 weeks of assistance is no longer enough to give Canadians financial security. This bill was passed by the House and reflects its will to provide those additional weeks. It would resolve the problem of economic protection for generations.

I also want to point out that the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities voted unanimously in favour of allowing the bill to reach third reading stage. According to parliamentary procedure, we need a royal recommendation from the government to finalize passage of the bill.

Bill C-215 is an example what the Canadian Parliament and all parliamentarians can do by working together, in the best interests of all Canadians.

Let us be attentive and compassionate towards one another to build a better world here in Canada.

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[English]

HMCS OAKVILLE

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to take a moment to highlight Canada History Week and shine the spotlight on Lieutenant Sean Livingston. Sean is a history teacher, sea cadet instructor, Oakville naval reserve officer, naval historian and author of *Oakville's Flower: The History of HMCS Oakville*. His book and recently launched exhibit at Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre highlight the history of the HMCS *Oakville* and the heroic actions of its crew in the attempted capture and sinking of U-94 in the Caribbean on August 28, 1942.

Sean's story follows the HMCS *Oakville* through its rise and fall as a Canadian naval legend, to its revival in the town of Oakville. In recording Canada's naval history, Sean safeguards its legacy.

The exhibit in Oakville is open until September 17, 2023. Come visit to see first-hand some of Canada's naval history and an important part of Oakville's history.

*Statements by Members***POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week I had a chance to meet Mackenzy, Rose, Stevie and Rohin, who are part of a delegation of close to 100 students and representatives of CASA and the Quebec Student Union on Parliament Hill this week. They are meeting with MPs and ministers to advocate for students.

Their voices and hard work have been critical to the strong partnership with our federal government that is helping more students attend post-secondary education and helping more students fulfill their potential, whether through creating the Canada emergency student benefit, doubling Canada student grants, eliminating the interest on federal student loans or improving the repayment assistance plan.

More than direct student supports, the voice of CASA and QSU has been vital across all aspects of our government's work: creating \$10-a-day child care, passing dental and rental support, and making historic investment in public transit and affordable housing.

There is more work ahead, but our partnership with CASA and QSU will continue to deliver for all students everywhere.

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● (1415)

ATTACK IN JERUSALEM

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we learned about a cowardly, heinous terrorist attack in Jerusalem, where 19 innocent civilians were injured and a 16-year-old Canadian boy was murdered. His name was Aryeh Shchupak, and may his memory be a blessing.

Two coordinated terrorist bombings evoke painful memories of the deadly second intifada. It is chilling to think that there are terrorists celebrating this attack on civilians, casually chanting in the streets and online and calling for a third. Canadians should ask themselves why there are celebrations and treats being handed out in parts of the Gaza Strip when innocent civilians are murdered.

The government must take an unequivocal stand against terror everywhere and condemn this attack for what it is: hate-fuelled terror to kill Jews. They murdered a Canadian.

I hope that every member of the House will join me in condemning this attack and standing with Israel to protect our foundational principles, the ones we all hold dear.

* * *

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Mr. Adam van Koevreden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday was National Child Day, and I am proud to stand today to highlight and encourage youth engagement across our country.

Young people are not just the leaders of the future; they are leading conversations and advocacy today. Youth voices are pushing forward discussions on education, public safety, climate action, sport, physical activity, recreation and our health care systems. Whether those voices are from student school trustees, young people who join campaigns and knock on doors for candidates they be-

lieve in or young people who join advocacy days on the Hill or peacefully protest, youth voices matter.

The youth who fight for causes they believe in while rejecting political cynicism and apathy may not have a vote in our democratic system, but they do have voices, and strong ones. Their efforts are creating positive changes right across Canada. I am talking about the kids in Kat Putzig's civics class from CKSS in Milton, whom I visited two weeks back, and the kids from Hitherfield School in Campbellville and all the others across our nation. Keep it up.

I loved visiting schools when I was an athlete, and it continues to be an important part of my work as an MP. I am inspired by the activism of all young people and am encouraged by their dedication to making our communities and country stronger.

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FOOD SECURITY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fall harvest is in full swing in southwestern Ontario, and farmers are sharing with me their shocking natural gas and propane invoices.

Canadian farmers are faced with the financial burden of the carbon tax as they undertake necessary practices, such as drying grains, heating livestock barns and irrigating crops. One producer in my riding is paying over \$11,000 in carbon tax just in one month, in October, to dry corn on their home farm. These producers are asking where the federal government thinks Canadian farmers are going to recover these dollars.

Farmers are already facing a challenging year with a tariff on fertilizer, the increased cost of inputs and production and the increase of the carbon tax on April 1. Producing food in Canada is becoming unfeasible. The carbon tax is a threat to Canada's food security and will continue to raise the cost of food for all Canadians. The government needs to give farmers relief and suspend the carbon tax.

I implore the Liberals to listen to farmers, axe the carbon tax and make Canada's food security a priority.

*Statements by Members***INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA**

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Auditor General released a damning report on the complete failure at Indigenous Services Canada to provide the support first nations communities need to manage emergencies such as floods and wildfires.

This follows a warning from the Parliamentary Budget Officer just last May about the declining competency of ISC to manage budgets and actually meet goals. The report found that ISC provided money for coordinators without knowing what effect, if any, it would have. It spent three and a half times more responding and recovering from emergencies rather than approving some of the 112 indigenous-led projects that would help with mitigation and adaptation.

The department spent three years and \$790,000 with not one emergency management agreement in place, which means there is a risk some communities might not receive the help they need during a crisis.

The department is utterly failing indigenous communities and putting lives at risk. Conservatives are focused on ending this “Ottawa knows best” approach and bringing forward policies that help make real and measurable improvements to the lives of indigenous people.

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[Translation]

THE FRANCOPHONIE

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 18th Francophonie Summit in Djerba just wrapped up, but efforts to fight the decline of French here in Canada and around the world are more important than ever. Canada remains a major player and has reiterated its steadfast commitment to ongoing sustainable development in French-speaking areas. Both nationally, with Bill C-13, and internationally, our government is still a leader in that regard. There are currently 321 million French speakers around the world. It is the fifth most commonly spoken language in the world and the fourth most common language on the Internet.

I would like to conclude by congratulating Louise Mushikiwabo on being re-elected as head of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie and on all of the organization's hard work. We reaffirm our support for her and for the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

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● (1420)

SHEILA RISBUD

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, defending and promoting French in Alberta are vital to my province and to my riding, Edmonton Strathcona. Sheila Risbud announced last month that she would be stepping down as president of the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta. I want to thank Sheila for her wonderful leadership skills and her many years of commitment. She will be greatly missed. However, thanks to several brilliant and exceptional women, the defence and promotion of French are in good hands.

I want to extend a big thank you to Sheila and to all these amazing women for their hard work.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to recognize that the Quebec Student Union is on the Hill today. These students have come here to share their ideas on how we can help them deal with inflation and the challenges of the post-pandemic world. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to welcome them.

We hear a lot about how inflation is affecting people on fixed incomes, but graduate students, whose livelihoods depend on scholarships, are often overlooked. In 2023 it will be 20 years since graduate research fellowships were last indexed. As a result, Canada is the only G7 country that is losing researchers because of the financial insecurity they face. Boosting research fellowships is a worthwhile investment, since it supports these researchers in inflationary times, encourages innovation and curbs the brain drain.

Ottawa has not been there to support students, and it is turning its back on the next generation of Quebec scientists. Let us work together to change that.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day Canadians cannot help but feel like everything in this country is broken. Since the Liberals took office, we have witnessed a 32% increase in violent crime and a 92% increase in gang-related killings. Just in the last two years, hate crimes have gone up by 73%.

Not-for-profit organizations in my community are working overtime as the state of our country had 1.5 million Canadians going to a food bank. Not only has home ownership become unimaginable for many residents in my community and those across Canada, but rental costs are also soaring and are now averaging at least \$2,000 a month.

Over the last seven years, everything the Prime Minister has touched breaks. As Conservatives, we will pick up the pieces the government has left behind. On this side of the House we will focus on replacing suffering with opportunity, prioritizing common sense solutions, giving Canadians back control of their lives and turning hurt into hope.

CANADIAN MEN'S SOCCER TEAM

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a special and exciting day for Canada and Canadian soccer fans throughout our nation. Canada's men's national team is playing its first World Cup match today against Belgium. When it comes to supporting our teams on the world stage, no one does it better than we Canadians.

It has been 36 years since we as a country have been able to experience this amazing moment, and I can only imagine what this means for the players who have fought and worked so hard to earn their place in the World Cup.

I want to give a special shout-out to the seven outstanding Brampton soccer players on the team: Atiba Hutchinson, Jonathan Osorio, Cyle Larin, Tajon Buchanan, Junior Hoilett, Iké Ugbo and Liam Millar. Brampton is proud to have them on the roster, representing our nation. It must be true that there is something in that Brampton water.

I am sure my fellow colleagues would love to join me in wishing the Canadian men's national team the best of luck today and through all its World Cup matches. Go, Canada, go.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1425)

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said, “we're seeing that countries, state actors from around the world, whether it's China or others, are continuing to play aggressive games with our institutions, with our democracies”.

What aggressive games is he referring to?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it is Russian disinformation concerning its role in Ukraine, Chinese interference in communities, the diaspora and the media, or the Iranian government putting pressure on Iranian Canadians, we remain vigilant in order to protect Canadians from interference from countries around the world.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister met with the Chinese president, and his office said he “raised our serious concerns around interference activities in Canada.”

Was the Prime Minister ever briefed about any of these “interference activities” that the Prime Minister says went on in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am regularly briefed by intelligence officials and security experts on threats to Canada and Canadians.

Whether it be cyber-threats, whether it be interference with Canadian diaspora communities, whether it be the use of online misinformation or disinformation, there is a range of threats out

Oral Questions

there that Canadians and Canadian security agencies continue to be vigilant against.

We will always be there to protect Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what specific interference was the Prime Minister referring to when he raised his “serious concerns around interference” with the Chinese president?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have known for many years that there are consistent engagements by representatives of the Chinese government in Canadian communities and with local media, as well as reports of illicit Chinese police stations. These are all things that we continue to be concerned about, that our officials stay active on and that we will continue to be vigilant around to keep Canadians safe.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to ignore the crisis that Canadian households are about to face with the skyrocketing home heating bills. They are expected to double in many communities. Some households will be stuck paying \$5,000 to \$6,000 a year, yet he wants to not just maintain but triple his carbon tax on Canadians.

He might play a game of delaying the implementation in a few provinces, but why would he not take decisive action to reverse the damage he has caused to all Canadians and all of their homes, by reversing the carbon tax on home heating altogether?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the price on pollution returns more money to average families across the country than it costs them. It is a way of fighting climate change and putting more money in the pockets of Canadians.

That is what Canadians in Atlantic Canada and elsewhere across the country are going to be able to benefit from. As we step up in the fight against climate change, we will be putting more money back in the pockets of Canadians who need it.

Conservatives continue to spread misinformation and disinformation on that. We need to continue to be there for Canadians and we will.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our information comes from the man he appointed as the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That same official calculated that 60% of Canadians will pay more in carbon tax costs than they get back in any rebates. That is even higher in provinces where the federally imposed, but provincially administered, tax does not come with any rebate at all.

The Prime Minister wants to go further in increasing the cost to Canadians to drive, to eat and to heat themselves throughout the very cold winter that is just ahead.

Oral Questions

Will he show some common sense and stop attacking the people on the ground like his minister and reverse the tax?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast to coast, but particularly in Atlantic Canada, where they saw the devastating impact of hurricane Fiona, know that we have to continue stepping up in our fight against climate change. What we are doing and what we have been doing for years is ensuring that, while we fight climate change, we support families who actually need it.

That is why the carbon price actually returns more money to average families than they pay. That was something that was confirmed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. We will continue to be there to support Canadians while we fight climate change, instead of peddling disinformation like the Conservatives.

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[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we ask the Prime Minister about China's interference in 2019 election financing, all he does is bluster. He compares us to Donald Trump, who denies the U.S. presidential results. That is nonsense.

There is one person who spoke about the legitimacy of the 2019 federal election and that is the guy who won, the Prime Minister.

Chinese interference is a very serious matter. We need to know in order to prevent it from happening again.

The Prime Minister must stop posturing. He must tell us which candidates received Chinese funding and, above all, how China went about it.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the integrity of our elections has not been compromised.

In January 2019, we established a non-partisan committee to assess potential threats of election interference, and that committee clearly determined that the integrity of our elections was not compromised in 2019 or 2021.

In addition, the Chief Electoral Officer stated yesterday that there was no reason to believe that it was not a free and fair election.

Instead of making Canadians needlessly worry, we can all take comfort in the integrity of our electoral system.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to keep up with the Prime Minister's stance on Chinese interference.

In Parliament, he does not consider the issue important enough to give opposition parties serious answers, but at the G20, he was dashing through the halls to go talk to Chinese President Xi Jinping about it. Here in the House, he is not aware of anything, but at the G20, he was aware and concerned enough to discuss it with the Chinese President.

That raises a simple question.

Does the Prime Minister know all about Chinese interference and is he hiding that information from us, or did he accost Xi Jinping on the basis of a newspaper article alone?

Either the Prime Minister is not being straight with us or he is not very savvy. Which is it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member from the Bloc Québécois will say just about anything.

The reality is that we always take seriously the importance of protecting Canadians from existing interference by different countries. Everyone knows that.

However, we can also confirm that in all the security briefings I have had with our intelligence experts and those who monitor our elections, the integrity of our elections has never been an issue.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government and the Bank of Canada continue to attack high wages as a cause of inflation, when in reality real wages have actually fallen. In fact, workers' share of GDP has also fallen. Do members know what has not fallen? The profits of large corporations. In fact, big grocery stores have seen profits increase by 118.3% since 2019.

When will the Prime Minister tackle corporate greed and protect families?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, building an economy that works for all Canadians has always been at the heart of what we have done as a government. That is why we raised taxes on the 1%, so that we could lower them for the middle class. It is why we introduced the Canada child benefit, which stopped sending child benefit cheques to millionaires and instead sent more money to the families who actually need it.

It is also why budget 2022 included a temporary Canada recovery dividend and increased the corporate income tax rate on financial institutions permanently. We are making sure that corporations pay their fair share while we support Canadians.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister cannot even say the word "profit", let alone take on the corporate greed of rich corporations.

The response of the Bank of Canada so far has been to increase interest rates. That is having a real impact on families, like Lauren Gilbert's family from B.C.. She shares that her mortgage has gone up by \$1,000 a month. Many families like hers are hurting. We know the Bank of Canada sets the monetary policy, but the Government of Canada sets the fiscal policy.

When will the government tackle inflation so it does not hurt people?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have stepped up to support people who need it the most through the pressures we are facing because of inflation. We doubled the GST credit for six months, which put hundreds of dollars more into the pockets of 11 million households across the country. We are moving forward on a \$500 top-up to the Canada housing benefit to make sure that low-income families can pay rent. We are making sure that low-income and middle-income families who cannot afford it can send their kids to the dentist.

These are direct and concrete things that are helping Canadians get through these difficult times.

The Speaker: Before we go on to the next question, it has been great today, but I hear the odd lone voice. I'm sure that lone voice, whoever it is, does not want me to recognize them and embarrass their riding.

The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister blew through a balanced budget left by the Conservatives, spending more than every prime minister before him combined. He is the architect of this inflationary mess. He made home heating bills almost double and is responsible for 1.5 million Canadians visiting food banks in a single month. He left billions of dollars of good energy projects in the ground and killed pipelines. He has missed every emissions reduction target and emissions went up. Whatever the Prime Minister touches he breaks.

Will he acknowledge his failed record and stop forcing his failed carbon tax on struggling Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by building an economy that works for all Canadians, we see not only millions of jobs created but also millions of Canadians lifted out of poverty over the past years. Because we stepped up to support small businesses, families, communities, workers, seniors and youth during the pandemic with historic supports, our economy actually bounced back faster than those of many of our allies. We recovered full employment six months before the U.S. did following the pandemic.

We are continuing to be able to support families with direct initiatives that the Conservatives are opposing, because that is what we are doing for Canadians.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is coming from Canada's most notorious high-carbon hypocrite. He calls seniors and people on fixed incomes polluters, while he jet-sets around the world, singing in luxurious hotels and embarrassing Canada on the world stage on the dime of Canadians. There was always a price on pollution. We all pay our gas and electricity bills. What the Prime Minister did was create a scheme to take money from seniors and the most vulnerable to fill up government coffers, all in the name of climate change. Emissions keep go-

ing up and the Prime Minister has not hit a single emissions reduction target.

I have a simple question. Why do Canadians have to pay for the Prime Minister to pollute?

The Speaker: Before the Prime Minister answers, I want to remind the hon. members that I know this is a passionate place, but to please use parliamentary language. Calling each other names is not a good practice to have if we want to have a civilized conversation and debate in the chamber.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, personal attacks seem to be all the Conservative Party can deliver right now, because it has no plan to fight climate change. Conservatives have no plan to reduce emissions. They have no plan to support Canadians who are struggling right now with the high cost of food, fuel and everything. They voted against our support for low-income families on rental. They voted against support for families to get their kids to the dentist.

We will continue to step up for Canadians. We will continue to return more money into their pockets as we fight climate change, because we cannot have a plan for the future of the economy if we do not have a plan to fight climate change.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are struggling because of the current Prime Minister's tax hikes.

Canadians are worried about how they are going to heat their home through the Canadian cold winter. The Liberals' response is that they are sick and tired of hearing people complain about the cold. The Minister of Labour said that yesterday. Instead of scrapping the carbon tax, which is making it more expensive for Canadians to eat, to drive and to heat themselves, they are tripling it. They could scrap the tax that has not reduced emissions, but instead they are imposing it on three more provinces that do not want it. Canadians are the ones who are sick and tired.

Will the Prime Minister scrap his plan on the carbon tax?

• (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservative politicians seem to be the only people in Canada who do not think it is important to fight climate change. We moved forward with a price on pollution, preventing pollution from being free anywhere in the country. At the same time we are returning more money to the families who need that support in the provinces where the federal backstop applies.

Oral Questions

This is an approach that has both fought climate change and supported families. We are pleased to see that positive impact extending to communities in Atlantic Canada as well.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal politicians are the only ones who seem to think that this is working. While the Prime Minister launches into his misleading defence of the punishing tax, Canadians know that the carbon tax these Liberals keep hiking is not an environment plan. He knows that the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who he appointed, told us that 60% of Canadians pay more than they will ever get back. His plan has not reduced emissions. He has not hit a single environmental target.

Instead of punishing Canadians by tripling the carbon tax, why does he not give Canadians a fighting chance this winter and scrap it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirms that eight out of 10 families receive more money back from this price on pollution than they pay into it.

At the same time, every time the Conservatives talk about removing our price on pollution, what they are talking about is taking money out of the pockets of hard-working Canadian families. The price on pollution puts more money in the pockets of average families across this country. That is how we fight climate change and support families that need it.

Speaking of support for families that need it, why are Conservatives opposed to dental and rental supports for Canadians? Why are they opposed to child care that saves thousands—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families are all facing the worst inflationary crisis in 40 years. It is directly impacting a basic necessity: food.

Butter is 20% more expensive, pasta is 27% more expensive, and lettuce is 30% more expensive. What is the Liberal government proposing? Believe it or not, it wants to increase, triple the Liberal carbon tax.

Seriously, could the Prime Minister stand up and admit that increasing taxes in a period of inflation is really bad for Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our price on pollution is putting more money back into the pockets of families who need it across the country. That is the reality the Conservatives are trying to avoid.

Yes, there are many families who are struggling to make ends meet because of inflation. That is why we are giving a GST/HST credit that has been doubled for six months and gives hundreds of dollars a month to 11 million households. That is also why we are giving families more money for rent and dental care, yet the Conservatives voted against both of those measures.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister said is not quite right. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

Since his return from COP27, the minister in 58th place keeps saying that the carbon tax helps Canadians, but that is not true. The minister in 58th place is forgetting that, under his administration, Canada ranked 58 out of 63 countries on climate change performance. That is the Liberal government's track record over the past seven years. That is how the Liberal carbon tax performed.

Seriously, can the Prime Minister stand up and admit that increasing taxes in a period of inflation is really bad for Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have one of the most comprehensive emissions reduction plans in the world. We have a clear plan to prevent emissions from increasing and we are going to reduce them. We are working hard to make our energy sources more sustainable than ever. We are investing in technologies that will help to reduce our emissions and create more good-paying jobs.

Climate change measures must include support for workers, and I hope to have the opposition member's support moving forward.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about solutions. Eleven candidates allegedly received funding from China in the 2019 election. This proves that we need to fight interference by foreign powers in our democracy. That works out well because, in this specific case, it is super easy. We simply need to go back to public funding of political parties. The parties need to be funded by Elections Canada based on the number of votes received instead of focusing everything on major donors. This can be resolved tomorrow morning.

Does the Prime Minister realize that, with foreign interference on the rise, public funding is becoming essential?

● (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously it is very important to all Canadians that our elections are run with integrity and are not compromised. That is why Canadians can take comfort in what the Chief Electoral Officer said when he confirmed yesterday that there is no reason to believe that it was not a free and fair election.

In January 2019, we formed a non-partisan committee to assess potential threats of electoral interference and the committee clearly established that the integrity of our election had not been compromised in 2019 nor in 2021. Canadians can have confidence.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, why make things simple when they can be overly complicated?

Oral Questions

It is impossible to wave a magic wand and eliminate all foreign interference in our democracy. Disinformation campaigns on social media, for example, are complicated, but illegal election financing can be eliminated tomorrow morning.

We already knew that political parties' dependency on private contributions made them susceptible to the influence of major donors. With the 2019 Chinese interference, we now know that we have the same problem with foreign powers. We can kill two birds with one stone.

Will the Prime Minister restore public financing of political parties?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is talking about interference in the 2019 election as though it were a fact. Canadians should not put too much stock in what he is saying because the Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that there was no reason to believe that it was not a free and fair election.

Our non-partisan committee, which is mandated to assess potential threats of electoral interference, found that the integrity of our elections in 2019 and 2021 was not compromised. We must not make Canadians fearful for nothing. We can reassure them and tell them that our institutions are strong.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 55 Canadians were murdered when the Iranian regime's IRGC shot down flight PS752. After that, the Iranian government bulldozed the site, destroyed the evidence, and threatened and harassed family members of victims. Now we have learned that Canada's spy agency is actively investigating credible death threats from this same regime against more Canadian citizens.

When is enough going to be enough for the government? When will Liberals finally use the Criminal Code, list the IRGC as a terrorist organization and shut down its operations in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians, we are appalled at the actions of the Iranian regime. We stand with the women of Iran. We are listing the Iranian regime under the most powerful provision of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. This measure has been used in only the most serious of circumstances, including against the Bosnian and Rwandan regimes. This punishes the top 50% of the entire regime, targeting those who are directly responsible for the heinous acts we are seeing and preventing them from ever being able to come to Canada. They are permanently barred from Canada. We will never be a safe haven for the Iranian regime's leadership or money.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "The allegations in the Globe story are false." That is what the Prime Minister's response was to the Globe report that he interfered in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin.

"I do not have any information, nor have I been briefed on any federal candidates receiving any money from China." That was the Prime Minister's response to the Global News report.

The Prime Minister sows doubt when these kinds of reports are published. The best way to protect the integrity of a democracy is transparency, so when will the Prime Minister be transparent about all the facts concerning the 2019 election funding of candidates?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in all the extensive security briefings I have received, there has never been any information on federal candidates receiving money from China. We established a non-partisan panel to evaluate any threats of election interference in January 2019, and the panel was clear that the integrity of our elections was not compromised in either 2019 or 2021. The Chief Electoral Officer said just yesterday that there is no reason to believe that it was not a free and fair election. Canadians can be reassured that our electoral integrity held.

● (1450)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after two weeks of suspicious silence, the Prime Minister now suddenly claims that he was never briefed about candidates receiving money from Beijing, yet Global News is reporting that last January the Prime Minister received intelligence memos that Beijing's Toronto consulate directed the funnelling of a large sum of money to 11 candidates in the 2019 election. Therefore, did the Prime Minister receive those intelligence memos? Yes or no.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): For the third time today, Mr. Speaker, in all the extensive security briefings I get, there was never any information given to me on candidates receiving money from China, so no. The reality is the integrity of our elections was not compromised. People do not have to take my word for it. They can look at the independent panel we appointed to look at just that, or the Elections Canada officer who said just yesterday that our elections were not compromised.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer also said yesterday that it was not his job to investigate and follow up on complaints.

Oral Questions

The Liberal members for Hull—Aylmer, Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Ottawa West—Nepean, Whitby, and Pickering—Uxbridge voted in favour of the Conservative motion to shed some light on the Global News report from November 7 regarding the briefing the Prime Minister received in January.

Who is telling the truth in all this? We have been listening to the Prime Minister since day one, and we have no idea what or who to believe.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer has said that there is no reason to believe that it was not a free and fair election. It is true that it is not his job to investigate such matters. That would be the responsibility of the non-partisan committee we created in 2019 to assess threats of electoral interference. That committee clearly established that the integrity of our elections was not compromised in 2019 or 2021. That is why I asked experts from our security intelligence services to appear before the committee and share any information they could regarding the elections.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canada ranks among the lowest when it comes to fighting climate change and among the highest when it comes to oil subsidies. Basically, this is bad news for the planet.

When will the government cancel oil subsidies, invest in renewable energy and do what needs to be done to protect the planet?

[English]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at COP27 our government fought hard so the world did not backslide on phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and coal. We reiterated our commitment to phase out fossil fuel subsidies within the next two years. We are taking real action to fight climate change, having already phased out eight tax breaks for the sector, and have committed over \$100 billion to climate action.

While Conservative politicians want to make polluting free again, we will keep pushing forward on our ambitious and achievable plan.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when a company goes bankrupt in this country, financiers are sure they are going to get paid. Big banks get paid, but who does not? Workers do not, because they see their wages, their severance, their benefits and their pensions stolen. The reason is that the laws of this land protect the super wealthy and hurt workers. Despite years and years of an opportunity to fix this, the Liberal government has refused to do so.

My question is very direct and very simple. When will the Prime Minister change the laws of this country so that if a bankruptcy happens, workers are protected?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always been there to protect pensioners and workers,

unlike Conservative politicians, who continue to push for CPP and EI cuts. We will support Bill C-228, but we will take no lessons from a Conservative Party that waged war on labour for a decade and has nothing to offer Canadians but Bitcoin and buzzwords.

* * *

● (1455)

FINANCE

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition leader's solution of investing in volatile cryptocurrency as a means to opt out of inflation is reckless. If Canadians had followed his advice, their life savings would now be decimated. The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan just said it will have to write off its \$95-million investment in FTX, the crypto exchange that collapsed last week.

Is the Prime Minister aware of any alternative, responsible policies to make life more affordable for Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a viable alternative to fighting inflation. Two specific responsible measures will be implemented, thanks to the recent passage of Bill C-31: help for Canadians to pay their rents and support for their children to be able to receive proper dental care.

While the Conservatives think Bitcoin and buzzwords will solve inflation, we on this side will always stand on the side of supporting the middle class.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has seen a 92% increase in gang-related homicides since the Liberal government took office. There were 124,000 more violent crimes last year than when the Prime Minister took office in 2015. Those are things like rape, assault and stabbings. Everything the Liberals have done for public safety has failed and made Canada a less safe place to live.

When will the Prime Minister finally step up and get tough on crime?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have frozen the market on handgun ownership. We are fighting gun smuggling and trafficking, and investing yet another \$137 million for CBSA in this year's fall economic statement. Our new legislation will also help revoke licences for people who have been charged with domestic violence or stalking. These are evidence-based measures that will save lives.

While we are fighting to make our communities safer, the Conservative Party is fighting to make assault weapons legal again.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's record speaks for itself. It is failing to keep Canadians safe.

Violent crime does not just happen; it is from failed Liberal policies. It is things like the Liberals' Bill C-5, which would end mandatory prison time for serious gun offences: things like robbery with a firearm, extortion with a firearm and firing a gun with the intent to hit someone with a bullet. No longer does a criminal have to do mandatory prison time under this Prime Minister. Now he can serve house arrest in the comfort of his home.

That is the Liberals' approach to solving violent crime in this country. It is ridiculous, and it is endangering Canadian lives. When are they going to smarten up, get tough on crime and clean up our streets?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have now passed legislation to address the overrepresentation of Black Canadians and indigenous people in the criminal justice system.

What Canadians deserve is legislation that goes after criminals while protecting our communities and that holds up in court, which is where the Conservative Party's tough-on-crime approach consistently failed to protect Canadians. If it is being struck down by the courts, it is not protecting communities.

We will not follow the Conservatives' failed approach, which does not protect Canadians and violates people's fundamental rights.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Laval is asking for help to fight violent crimes in his city. At the same time, Statistics Canada has confirmed that homicides in Canada and crimes related to street gangs have reached their highest levels since this Prime Minister came to power in 2015.

In the meantime, the Liberals, with the help of our Bloc Québécois and NDP friends, voted to eliminate, for example, minimum sentences for armed robbery.

Why does the Prime Minister prefer to leave criminals at large rather than protecting Canadians' safety and security?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have frozen the market for the acquisition of handguns. We are combatting gun smuggling and trafficking. This year's fall economic statement includes additional investments of \$137 million in the CBSA. Our new legislative measure will also make it easier to

revoke licences of individuals charged with domestic violence or harassment.

These are evidence-based measures that will save lives. We are seeking to make communities safer, while the Conservative Party is fighting to make assault weapons legal again.

• (1500)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are so many things being said in the House that are completely false. The fact remains that we are currently seeing a 32% rise in violent crime.

According to the Montreal police, there were 144 shootings in the streets last year. That is one shooting every two or three days. All of these shootings involved illegal weapons.

University of Quebec professor Marc Alain said that our border is literally full of holes and that it has never been easier to access weapons in Canada than it has been over the past four years. We are talking about illegal weapons.

This government is spending billions of dollars to harm honest citizens. Why not take care of criminals and gangs instead?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in Bill C-21 will set out an official definition of assault-style firearms. Thus, any new weapons that meet that definition will automatically be classified as such.

We are keeping our promise to tighten gun control by investing in Canadian communities, strengthening our borders and providing law enforcement with more tools to protect our communities. In fact, we seized twice as many illegal weapons at the border this year as we did the year before.

While Conservative politicians want to make assault weapons legal again, we are determined to keep our communities safe.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just got back from COP27 on climate change.

The Prime Minister's chief allies and counterparts, such as Joe Biden and Emmanuel Macron, were there. Over 100 heads of state were there. Everyone was there, except the Prime Minister of Canada. Where was he?

How is it possible that, between November 6 and 20, he could not even find half a day to show up and talk about climate change with the rest of the planet?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our greenhouse gas emissions reduction plan is one of the most comprehensive in the world. We have a clear plan to stop emissions from rising, and we will reduce them. We are working hard to make our energy supply more sustainable than ever. We are investing in technologies that will help us reduce our emissions and create more well-paid jobs.

We will continue our work. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change identified common threads during COP27 and wove them together into an approach that everyone can rally around.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the leader of a G7 country, the Prime Minister had a privileged platform at COP27 to talk about climate change. Not only did he pass up the opportunity, he handed it over to oil companies. He invited six oil sands operators to make their pitch at a climate summit. He even asked his Minister of Environment and Climate Change to defend these oil companies by preventing COP27 from stating in its final declaration that oil and gas must be phased out.

Did the Prime Minister ultimately boycott COP27 so he would not have to justify his record for the cameras?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is well aware, we were very well represented at COP27 by our Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who worked hard to bring the world together for ambitious progress.

At the same time, I myself was at the G20 summit and other important summits where, on a daily basis, I stressed the importance of leadership in the fight against climate change. We have demonstrated that Canada is there, not just at COP27, but in all major global forums, to be a leader in the fight against climate change.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Labour from Newfoundland and Labrador declared that he is “sick and tired of people talking about the cold winter”. The people he represents are sick and tired of trying to make ends meet as fuel costs skyrocket, yet the tone-deaf minister brags about the virtues of the failed Liberal carbon tax plan.

When will the Liberal government show some compassion and cancel its plan to put carbon tax on Atlantic Canadian home heating?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians need is a plan that puts more money in their pockets, and that is exactly what the price on pollution does. While Conservatives twist words and misrepresent what people say, we are going to stay focused on what Canadians are actually saying, which is that they need help.

That is why we are delivering help, with a price on pollution that puts more money in their pockets, and with support for dental and rental, which the Conservatives are voting against. We are going to

continue to be there to reduce child care costs. We are going to continue to be there to support Canadians, while Conservatives have nothing to say about fighting climate change and nothing to say about growing the economy and helping Canadians.

• (1505)

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member for Papeineau that he is a servant, not the master. Here is what the masters have to say: A VOCM poll out today asked, “With fuel costs already high, do you feel a federal carbon tax is necessary?” The result was that 91% said “no”.

In light of the opinions of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, will the minister apologize for yesterday's comments and plead with his Liberal colleagues to cancel their plan to push the carbon tax down the throats of Atlantic Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I stood in the street in Port aux Basques and held in my arms a woman—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am getting a look from the deputy whip, but he is not hearing the yelling that is going on right in front of me. I just want to hear the answer, and I am sure everyone else does as well.

The right hon. Prime Minister, from the top, please.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, a number of weeks ago I stood in the street in Port aux Basques and held in my arms a woman who had seen her house destroyed by hurricane Fiona. People in Newfoundland and Labrador and across Atlantic Canada know, unlike Conservative politicians, that climate change is real, and we need to do everything we can to fight against it while supporting hard-working families.

That is why, unlike what the Conservative politicians say, we are making sure pollution is not free anywhere across the country, and we are putting more money in the pockets of hard-working families in Newfoundland and Labrador and elsewhere.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will tell members what is real. The government has missed every climate change target it has set. Meanwhile, the Liberal minister from Newfoundland says it is good news that we have a carbon tax. The shameless Liberals think it is good news that gas will increase 14¢ a litre. They think it is good news that home heating will increase 17¢ a litre. Any more of this Liberal good news, and food bank usage will go up triple from now.

I ask all those silent Nova Scotia MPs if they will stand up and ask to scrap the failed carbon tax.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Atlantic Canadians know we need to fight climate change, so yes, it is good news that we have a strong price on pollution right across the country, and it is even better news that the price on pollution puts more money back in the pockets of hard-working families who need it, as we fight climate change. It is impossible to have a plan to grow the economy without having a plan to fight climate change, but all Conservative politicians are offering is a lot of hot air, a lot of criticism and a lot of misinformation, with no solutions to support families or fight climate change.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Indo-Pacific is of critical importance to Canada, including for economic growth and resiliency. Enhancing Canada's presence in the region means creating new economic opportunities and good jobs for Canadians.

For the benefit of the House and Canadians, can the Prime Minister elaborate on our government's historic investments to increase Canada's presence in the Indo-Pacific?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Laval—Les Îles for his question and his hard work.

Last week, we announced several investments, including \$750 million to put in place sustainable and quality infrastructure projects in developing countries and \$45 million to launch a series of Team Canada trade missions. We will also be launching our Indo-Pacific strategy in the next few weeks. We will continue to enhance our presence in the region and create good jobs on both sides of the Pacific.

* * *

● (1510)

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said tripling the carbon tax will do little to reduce emissions in agriculture. Why? It is because we are already among the most efficient in the world. What the carbon tax will do is punish farmers with more than \$1 billion in additional costs. Now the NDP-Liberal carbon tax coalition wants to expand that punishing tax to include Atlantic Canadian farmers.

Emissions from agriculture in Canada are 70% lower than the global average, so why is the Prime Minister punishing Canadian farmers for that incredible achievement, instead of praising them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 80% of families in areas where the federal carbon price backstop applies get more money from the price on pollution. That is true for Atlantic Canada. That is true right across the country. On top of it, rural and remote Canadians, like farmers, are able to benefit from a 10% top-up to the climate action incentive that comes to them four times a year. These are the things that make sure we can both fight climate change by ensuring pollution is no longer free anywhere in

the country, and directly support the hard-working families who need that support.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should read his own legislation. The farm tax rebate, through Bill C-8, gives farmers pennies on the dollar back on what they spend on the carbon tax. The result of that is Saskatchewan farmers just had the most expensive harvest in their history. Their on-farm costs exceeded \$11 billion, the highest year-over-year increase since 2012. On-farm fuel has more than doubled, and the cost of fertilizer is up 110%. The carbon tax is pounding farmers to the ground and putting our food security at risk.

What will it take for the Prime Minister to cancel his plan to triple the tax on food, fuel and farmers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the supply chain disruptions of the pandemic to the war on Ukraine, there have been global disruptions that have impacted Canadians, including Canadian farm families. At the same time, however, putting a price on pollution not only prepares and ensures we are ready to be competitive in a lower-carbon world in the coming decades, but also puts more money back in the pockets of hard-working families who need it, every single year. This is the approach that fights climate change to ensure a better future for our kids and grandkids while at the same time supporting families right now. We will continue to be there for families.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister has no problem spending \$6,000 of taxpayer money on a single hotel night, Canadians are struggling just to feed their families. Thanks to the Liberals, everything in this country is broken. There are 1.5 million Canadians who accessed a food bank in a single month; inflation is at a 40-year high, and over half of all Canadians are living paycheque to paycheque, finding it difficult to make ends meet.

The question is simple. When will the Liberals stop making life difficult for Canadians and actually give them control of their lives?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about the dental and rental supports that will make a real difference in Canadian families' lives immediately, which the Conservatives voted against, but I have not spoken yet today about the child care initiatives that we put forward. Reducing child care to \$10 a day and cutting child care fees in half for Canadian families right across the country this year is saving them thousands of dollars at a time when indeed pennies are tight for everyone.

Unfortunately, the Conservative Party continues to oppose child care and continues to oppose rental and dental supports. We are going to be there for Canadians while they leave people behind.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that harsh, ineffective policies from the previous Conservative government did not succeed in making our communities safer. They also contributed to the over-representation of indigenous people and racialized and marginalized Canadians in our justice system.

Can the Prime Minister inform the chamber of the concrete steps we are taking to move past those policies and adopt a better working approach to making our justice system accessible, efficient and fair?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge for the hard work he does for his constituents.

I am proud that Bill C-5 has now received royal assent. It is a long-overdue and essential step for our criminal justice system. It will give judges the flexibility to impose sentences that fit the crime and contribute to addressing the overincarceration of indigenous, Black and racialized people. We believe in a justice system that is tough when it needs to be tough, but is always fair.

* * *

● (1515)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the genocide against indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people is ongoing and only getting worse as violence increases. Despite their promises, the government has not taken action. The last budget has no investments to help indigenous women and girls, and funds meant to build shelters have been left unused. The Prime Minister must show leadership to keep his government's promises. What is the Prime Minister going to do to accelerate the implementation of all the calls for justice?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years we have invested historic amounts in supporting the fight against gender-based violence across this country, in support of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and in support of indigenous housing and indigenous-led solutions.

We know there is always much more to do, but this government will continue to be a partner on the road to reconciliation, showing

up with real investments, showing up with capacity building, and showing up to keep indigenous people safe and looking toward a brighter future.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, francophones across the country are unanimous when it comes to Bill C-13. Coordination of the implementation of the Official Languages Act needs to be entrusted to a single entity, the Treasury Board.

The Liberal government came to the same conclusion in its white paper in 2021. Unfortunately, in the current bill, that is not the case.

My question for the Prime Minister is this: Can he confirm to the entire Canadian Francophonie that this essential aspect will be included in the bill as requested by every francophone organization in Canada, across the country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I share his concern about protecting our official languages.

Bill C-13 strengthens the Treasury Board's powers with respect to official languages. This bill is the result of a long process that began in 2018, during which consultations were held with Canadians across the country. Bill C-13 is currently being studied in committee where, unfortunately, the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois are filibustering.

We hope that they will stop playing politics and start considering very important amendments to protect French from coast to coast.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Tammy Scott-Wallace, Minister responsible for Women's Equality and Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture for the Province of New Brunswick.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Shefford on a point of order.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That this House call on the government to urgently establish an independent commission of inquiry into the toxic culture in Canadian sport organizations.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from November 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (child sexual abuse material), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:18 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-291 under Private Members' Business.

Call in the members.

• (1530)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 221*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Caputo	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Cormier	Coteau

Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duguid
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Ferreri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Gaheer
Gallant	Garneau
Garon	Garrison
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hajdu	Hallan
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Johns	Joly
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Maloney	Martel
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Menicino	Miao
Miller	Moore
Morantz	Morrice

Private Members' Business

Private Members' Business

Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Muys	Naqvi
Nater	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poilievre	Qualtrough
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Ruff
Sahota	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seeback	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Sorbara
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Virani
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi — 318

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Calkins	Champagne
Ellis	Jones
Lemire	Ng
Powlowski	Sajjan
Savard-Tremblay	Vis— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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

ENCOURAGING THE GROWTH OF THE CRYPTOASSET SECTOR ACT

The House resumed from November 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-249, An Act respecting the encouragement of the growth of the cryptoasset sector, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-249 under Private Members' Business.

● (1545)

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

(Division No. 222)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Arya
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferri	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shipley
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart

Private Members' Business

Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer — 119

Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Fergus
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau
Garrison
Gerretsen
Gould
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lattanzio
LeBlanc

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bittle
Blair
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chabot
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Gaheer
Garon
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier

Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Normandin
Oliphant
Paupé
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saks
Sarai
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koevreden
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi — 199

Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

PAIRED

Members

Calkins
Ellis
Lemire
Powlowski
Savard-Tremblay
Champagne
Jones
Ng
Sajjan
Vis — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Is the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands standing on a point of order on technical reasons?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it would be technical, because technically on the website it says that the Leader of the Opposition voted for this, but he—

The Speaker: That is debate. We are going to drop that one right away.

Order. I just want to remind the hon. members before proceeding that unless it is a technical issue, like the translation is not working or something that prevents members from voting, there are no points of order during the voting session.

*Private Members' Business***PENSION PROTECTION ACT**

The House resumed from November 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-228, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-228 under Private Members' Business.

● (1555)

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

(Division No. 223)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison	Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Albas	Aldag	Fergus	Ferreri
Alghabra	Ali	Fillmore	Findlay
Allison	Anand	Fisher	Fonseca
Anandasangaree	Angus	Fortier	Fortin
Arnold	Arseneault	Fragiskatos	Fraser
Arya	Ashton	Freeland	Gaheer
Atwin	Bachrach	Gallant	Garneau
Badawey	Bains	Garon	Garrison
Baker	Baldinelli	Gazan	Généreux
Barlow	Barrett	Genuis	Gerretsen
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Gill	Gladu
Battiste	Beaulieu	Godin	Goodridge
Beech	Bendayan	Gould	Gourde
Bennett	Benzen	Gray	Green
Bergen	Bergeron	Hajdu	Hallan
Berthold	Bérubé	Hanley	Hardie
Bezan	Bibeau	Hepfner	Hoback
Bittle	Blaikie	Holland	Housefather
Blair	Blanchette-Joncas	Hughes	Hussen
Blaney	Block	Hutchings	Iacono
Blois	Boissonnault	Idlout	Jen
Boulerice	Bradford	Jaczek	Jeneroux
Bragdon	Brassard	Johns	Joly
Brière	Brock	Jowhari	Julian
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings	Kayabaga	Kelloway
Caputo	Carr	Kelly	Khalid
Carrie	Casey	Khera	Kitchen
Chabot	Chagger	Kmicc	Koutrakis
Chahal	Champoux	Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Chatel	Chen	Kurek	Kusie
Chiang	Chong	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)	Lake	Lalonde
Cooper	Cormier	Lambropoulos	Lametti
Coteau	Dabrusin	Lamoureux	Lantsman
Dalton	Damoff	Lapointe	Larouche
Dancho	Davidson	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Davies	DeBellefeuille	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Deltell	d'Entremont	Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Desbiens	Desilets	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Lightbound	Lloyd
Dhillon	Diab	Lobb	Long
Doherty	Dong	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Dowdall	Dreeshen	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Drouin	Dubourg	MacGregor	MacKenzie
Duclos	Duguid	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Maloney	Martel
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	Martinez Ferrada	Masse
El-Khoury	Epp	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
		McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
		McGuinty	McKay
		McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
		McLeod	McPherson
		Melillo	Mendès
		Mencicino	Miao
		Miller	Moore
		Morantz	Morrice
		Morrison	Morrissey
		Motz	Murray
		Muys	Naqvi
		Nater	Noormohamed
		Normandin	O'Connell
		Oliphant	O'Regan
		O'Toole	Patzé
		Paul-Hus	Pauzé
		Perkins	Perron
		Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
		Poilievre	Qualtrough
		Rayes	Redekopp
		Reid	Rempel Garner
		Richards	Roberts
		Robillard	Rodriguez

Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Ruff
Sahota	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seeback	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Sorbara
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Virani
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi — 318

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Calkins	Champagne
Ellis	Jones
Lemire	Ng
Powlowski	Sajjan
Savard-Tremblay	Vis— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Would members wishing to have conversations please do so in the lobby?

I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 39 minutes.

[*English*]

We have a point of order from the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I want to start by apologizing. I was under the impression that it was okay to ask for a point of order between two votes. I will do that now, if that is okay.

It is unclear to me and to those who were watching exactly what transpired during the vote we had. I am seeking clarification from

Points of Order

the Speaker as to whether or not it is necessary for a member to stand to cast their vote. The Leader of the Opposition did not stand, and it is unclear how he voted.

The Deputy Speaker: The House leader for the official opposition has a comment on this as well.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we trust our excellent table officers. We have clerks at the table, vote-callers and the Speaker in the chair observing things.

As much as the help from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands may be appreciated by members on the other side of House, we do not believe that anybody at the table in the House of Commons needs help from him.

The Deputy Speaker: What I will say is that the Table did acknowledge him and the vote was counted.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think the point of order is worthy enough to get clarification.

We all know the process for voting virtually, but just for clarification, when we have a recorded vote on the floor of the House of Commons, the expectation is that a member must rise and acknowledge their name when it is stated. My understanding has always been that if that does not occur, the vote does not count.

That is all I am asking about. I do not want you to reflect on past votes. I just want you to provide clarification for members going forward. They have to stand and acknowledge the Clerk, and if they do not do that, their vote does not count. That is my understanding.

The Deputy Speaker: After further consultation with the Table, it is clear the member was indicating to vote in the positive for the bill. The Chair felt that he stood sufficiently for his vote to be recorded.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DIVISION OF BILL C-27 FOR THE PURPOSE OF VOTING

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to respond to the point of order raised by the House leader of the NDP and the Conservative Party respecting the application of Standing Order 69.1 to Bill C-27, the digital charter implementation act, 2022.

Routine Proceedings

I submit that the protection of privacy rights is a unifying theme that links all parts of Bill C-27. This bill is a key pillar in the government's implementation of a digital charter. The three parts of the bill work together to provide a comprehensive framework to build Canadians' confidence in how their personal information is being used, including with regard to the unique risks posed by artificial intelligence systems, and they need to be considered together given their complementary relationship.

Part 1 of the bill, the consumer privacy protection act, aims to modernize the privacy law that applies to commercial activities to assure Canadians that their personal information is being protected in the digital economy. Artificial intelligence represents one of the most significant sources of innovation and is a key emerging risk in the use of personal information.

We heard, in consultations around the former privacy reform bill, that Canadians are concerned about the use of their personal information by artificial intelligence systems and the potential for bias or harm that may result from the irresponsible use of these systems. Part 1 of Bill C-27 addresses Canadians' rights regarding the use of their personal information in the automated decision system, but there are limits to how privacy law can address concerns about the use of AI systems.

The government developed part 3 of the bill, the artificial intelligence and data act, to protect against the systemic impacts of artificial intelligence systems. It would regulate artificial intelligence systems that process personal information and other data about human activities to ensure that risks, such as bias based on race or gender, are addressed from the design stage all the way to deployment.

If Parliament considers part 1 and part 2 of the bill without taking into account the full impacts of artificial intelligence systems on Canadians, it will have an incomplete picture of the use of personal information in the digital economy and the steps needed to build the trust of Canadians.

This is the first time that the government is seeking to regulate artificial intelligence to govern the use of Canadians' personal information. I have no doubt that members will want to study this part of the bill in depth, and I welcome that. I wanted to give the House the government's perspective on why we think the three parts of the bill are interrelated to the protection of Canadians' personal information. I contend that all parts of the bill are interconnected and should be voted on as one item.

● (1605)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for his intervention. The Chair will be coming back with a decision as soon as possible.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

LIAISON

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 107(3), I have the honour to

present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Liaison Committee, entitled "Committee Activities and Expenditures: April 1, 2022 - August 31, 2022". This report highlights the work and accomplishments of each committee of the House, as well as detailing the budgets that fund the activities approved by committee members.

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in relation to Bill C-234, an act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

[*English*]

I want to take this opportunity to thank the witnesses, those who were involved and, of course, our clerk and analysts for their wonderful work in sending this bill back to the House with amendments.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled "Device Investigative Tools Used By The Royal Canadian Mounted Police And Related Issues".

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

While I am standing, I would like to thank all the witnesses and committee members who participated, as well as the clerk and analysts. In particular, I want to thank the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, who chaired the majority of this report.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[*English*]

The committee advises that pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the order for the second reading of private members' public bills originating in the Senate and recommended that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today from Canadians across the country who are concerned about the Liberal Party's platform in the last election. They are concerned about the politicization of charitable status. They are concerned that the values test the Liberals put on the Canada summer jobs program, or a "values test 2.0", will be placed on charitable status. They are also concerned that churches, food kitchens, summer camps and these kinds of organizations could have their charitable status jeopardized by the Liberals' activism.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to prevent the politicization of charitable status and to ensure that Canadians have the right to free expression and the right to free assembly.

The second petition I have is from Canadians across the country who are similarly concerned about the Liberals' platform promise to go after charitable organizations they deem to be dishonest. This could affect houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do not agree with the Liberals on this matter of conscience. Many Canadians depend on benefits from the charitable work done by these organizations.

The petitioners point out that the Liberal government imposed a values test that discriminated against worthy applicants to the Canada summer jobs program and denied funding to organizations that were not willing to check a box that endorsed the political position of the governing party. Charities and other non-profit organizations should be free from discrimination on the basis of their political or religious views and should not be subject to a politicized values test.

Therefore, the Canadians who have signed this petition are calling on the Government of Canada to ensure that our charitable status rules remain politically and ideologically neutral, without discrimination or interference from the ruling political party.

HEALTH

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this petition is one from many residents of the communities within Saanich—Gulf Islands, but particularly in the Victoria and Sidney areas. Petitioners cite Statistics Canada, noting that approximately 4.8 million Canadians, which is an astonishing figure, do not have a family doctor. Despite the number of physicians in Canada growing, the number of Canadians without a regular doctor is remaining stable.

Petitioners note that, within our own community, in Victoria and Sidney average wait times for a walk-in clinic are 92 minutes and 180 minutes respectively. I know I am only supposed to summarize the petition, but neither my husband nor I have a family doctor. This petition is personal. Petitioners call on the government to work

Government Orders

with provinces and territories to come to a holistic and fair solution to Canada's family doctor shortage.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers also be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1615)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.) moved that Bill S-4, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Identification of Criminals Act and to make related amendments to other Acts (COVID-19 response and other measures), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak today to Bill S-4, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Identification of Criminals Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, COVID-19 response and other measures.

I will begin by acknowledging that we are gathered here on the traditional, unceded lands of the Algonquin people.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the criminal justice system, like many institutions in our country, faced significant and unprecedented challenges in continuing its operations while respecting the necessary public health and safety requirements imposed by all jurisdictions. The criminal courts and court users adopted quickly and admirably to the realities of the pandemic, finding innovative ways to provide essential justice services to the public safely and effectively.

Government Orders

Bill S-4 would reform the Criminal Code and other related legislation to respond to some of the practical challenges identified during or exacerbated by the pandemic. These reforms would modernize and enhance the flexibility and efficiency of the criminal justice system moving forward.

Members might be wondering whether the changes proposed in Bill S-4 are still needed, given we are now well into living with COVID-19, and the fact that the courts have adapted their practices during this period. These changes remain critically important and will help address the ongoing pressures on the criminal courts brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the backlog of cases.

I would note that this bill is the product of significant consultations with the provinces and is supported by provincial premiers of all stripes. I understand that last month, at the federal, provincial, territorial meeting of ministers of justice and public safety, all justice ministers reiterated their support for seeing this legislation advance to help improve court operations in their provinces and territories.

The pandemic seriously affected court operations, and we have heard from lawyers and judges alike that changes are needed so that the court system does not fall further behind. Canadians need to have confidence in our justice system, and a court system that does not keep up with the times will not provide that confidence. For instance, virtual hearings and remote services have been an important aspect of ensuring access to justice for court users while coping with pandemic-related issues. This bill would enhance and clarify rules on the use of technological means in the criminal justice system.

Before I delve into the details of Bill S-4, I would like to thank hon. Senator Pierre Dalphond for his sponsorship of the bill and leadership in working with all senators in the other place to get this bill to us.

I would also like to acknowledge the diligent work of the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in studying Bill S-4 and thank those witnesses who shared their views on the bill. The committee's study and consideration of witness testimony resulted in two amendments to this bill, new clauses 78.1 and 78.2, which would mandate reviews of the use of remote proceedings in criminal justice matters.

I will now turn to the changes in the bill and explain how they would address issues identified during the pandemic and seek to ensure greater efficiencies and access to justice for accused persons, victims and other criminal justice system participants.

The bill would, one, enhance and clarify the rules for remote appearances in criminal proceedings; two, revise the telewarrant process so that a wider variety of search warrants and other investigative orders may be obtained by means of telecommunication; three, allow fingerprinting of accused persons or offenders to occur at a later time than what is currently permitted and; four, improve judicial case management rules.

On remote appearances, Bill S-4 builds upon a former bill, Bill C-75, which introduced a new general part on remote appearances in the Criminal Code, which is part XXII.01, and expanded the

availability of remote appearances for accused persons, participants and judges. Notably, those amendments were developed in a pre-pandemic era and did not anticipate the exponential reliance on technological solutions that followed.

● (1620)

This bill would expand and clarify the process allowing accused persons to appear by video conference during preliminary inquiries and trials, for both summary and indictable offences, even when witness evidence is being heard, except in circumstances where evidence is before a jury. The bill would also expressly enable an accused person to appear remotely when making a plea, either by video or audio conference, depending on the circumstances. Further, the bill would clearly permit an offender to appear remotely for sentencing purposes.

The new measures addressing remote appearances include a consent requirement, so an accused person or offender and the Crown prosecutor would need to give their consent to appear in this way. In addition, all decisions to proceed virtually would be at the discretion of the court based on a number of factors the court would be required to consider. For example, courts would need to consider the right of accused persons or offenders to a fair and public hearing and the suitability of the location from which they would be appearing before allowing it.

I would also emphasize that the bill does not make virtual court hearings mandatory or change the general principle that all those who participate in criminal proceedings must physically be present in court unless otherwise authorized. Bill S-4 does not seek to replace in-person proceedings, which remain important, but instead offers alternative ways of proceeding where the technological means exist and when considered appropriate.

Bill S-4 would also enact clear safeguards to virtual appearances, some of which I have mentioned, such as ensuring judicial approval and consent of all the parties. In addition, the bill would require that accused persons or offenders who are represented by counsel and appearing remotely are given the opportunity to consult privately with their counsel. Moreover, courts need to be satisfied that an accused person or offender who does not have access to legal advice would be able to understand the proceedings and that any decisions made by them during the proceedings will be voluntary.

Government Orders

Given that the jury selection process can involve hundreds of people summoned to appear at the same location, many jury selections for criminal trials were postponed or delayed during the pandemic. Some jurisdictions are concerned about the delays in conducting jury trials. Bill S-4 would give courts the option to hold a jury selection process by video when both parties consent and appropriate safeguards are in place, such as ensuring the courts approve the use of a location where the technological infrastructure would be available for prospective jurists to participate in the process.

[*Translation*]

Since May 2020, the Minister of Justice has been co-chairing the Action Committee on Court Operations in Response to COVID-19 with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, the Right Hon. Richard Wagner.

[*English*]

The minister shared with me that, in this capacity, he has continued to learn how the pandemic has affected court operations, as well as exacerbated pre-existing issues, such as the growing backlog of cases and access to justice challenges. We are confident that Bill S-4 would contribute to efforts to address these issues by facilitating an increased use of technology in the criminal justice system.

I am aware that, during the Senate committee study of Bill S-4, some witnesses expressed concern about the lack of technological capabilities in courthouses and correctional facilities and the inability of persons who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged to access technology, either entirely or in a private manner. I acknowledge these concerns, and the government is committed to addressing them.

Indeed, the government has made a commitment to bring our court system into the 21st century and to work with the provinces and territories in doing so. In the 2020-21 economic statement, the government announced approximately \$40 million in technology investments for courts across Canada. The government has also committed to connect 98% of Canadians by 2026, and 100% by 2030.

I am equally aware that many witnesses who appeared before the Senate committee on Bill S-4 voiced their support for the reforms and considered the increased use of technology by courts and participants as beneficial and a tremendous opportunity for access to justice.

In sum, Bill S-4 strikes an appropriate balance by not making remote appearances mandatory, but rather by enabling courts to hold proceedings in a flexible way, and provide for the consent of both parties and judicial discretion. It would also ensure the consideration of the technological resources available to the courts and users. Bill S-4 would also help ensure that virtual court proceedings are held in a manner that respects the charter rights of accused persons and offenders.

• (1625)

I would now like to turn to the amendments to the telewarrant process provided in the Criminal Code, which currently allows a

peace officer to apply for certain specific warrants by technological means when certain prerequisites are met.

Bill S-4 streamlines the telewarrant process and expands its application, including by making it available to a wider range of investigative warrants and orders, such as warrants to seize weapons, tracking warrants, and production orders for documents and financial records.

Under this more streamlined process, it will be possible for a police officer to submit a search warrant application by means of a telecommunication in writing, such as by email, without meeting the current prerequisite that requires a peace officer to show that it is impracticable to appear in person to present an application.

Police may continue to apply for a warrant by means of telecommunication that does not produce a writing, for example, by telephone. However, in this situation, the judge or justice to whom the search warrant application is presented would have to be satisfied that it is impracticable for the applicant to present the application by means of telecommunication that produces a writing, such as an email.

The revised telewarrant process would also be expanded to apply more broadly in two ways.

First, the process would now apply to the investigation of all offences, rather than indictable offences.

Second, the process would be accessible to law enforcement officials other than peace officers, notably public officers.

This would include, for example, Canada Revenue Agency officials responsible for investigating tax-related offences, who may currently apply for search warrants, and other judicial orders by personal attendants.

Similarly, the process would now be available to any justice or judge who issues a warrant, order or authorization, thereby removing the current requirement that only specifically designated justices may issue telewarrants.

[*Translation*]

Bill S-4 also harmonizes the rules regarding the execution of telewarrants and warrants obtained in person and the report required following the seizure of assets.

[*English*]

In particular, Bill S-4 adds an obligation for the police executing a search warrant to provide the occupant of the place searched with a copy of the warrant, as well as a new notice. This notice would contain essential information about where to obtain a copy of the report of the person's seized property and the location where such property is detained.

I note, however, that these requirements would not apply in relation to warrants authorizing a search of a property that has already been seized and is in the lawful possession of the police. This would make it clear that the officer is not required to provide the notice and a copy of the warrant to the person in charge of a police evidence locker.

Government Orders

The bill also makes changes to the fingerprinting process. The pandemic disrupted the ability of police to obtain the fingerprints of accused persons and offenders because of physical distancing requirements, which led to significant operational challenges for the criminal courts.

Currently, individuals charged with an offence can be ordered by police or a judge to attend at a specific time and place for the purpose of identification.

However, in most cases, if something prevents a police officer from taking fingerprints at the specified time, there is no mechanism that allows a police officer to require an individual to come back at another time. The bill addresses this and allows fingerprints to be taken at other times, where earlier attempts to do so were not possible due to exceptional circumstances like those posed by COVID-19.

The bill would not change the rules in terms of who may be subject to fingerprinting.

Further, Bill S-4 addresses judicial case management by allowing courts to make rules permitting court personnel to deal with administrative matters related to proceedings out of court, including for unrepresented accused persons.

• (1630)

The Criminal Code currently allows courts to make rules only for situations in which accused persons are represented by counsel. Judicial case management improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. By expanding the court's ability to make such rules for unrepresented accused, Bill S-4 will assist in reducing unnecessary court appearances of those who are self-represented.

[*Translation*]

I know that the Minister of Justice is committed to modernizing the criminal justice system and supporting the courts' technological achievements during the pandemic. I support those objectives, and we should continue to adopt technological solutions when available and appropriate.

[*English*]

Many of our partners and stakeholders and, in particular, our provincial partners, continue to stress urgently that these amendments are needed. I am eager to see the bill enacted in the future, and I look forward to working with our friends in all parties to get this important bill through.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was a very comprehensive review of Bill S-4. My question relates to timing.

During the pandemic we worked very quickly in this House to allow the use of technology to try to compensate for the restrictions from the pandemic, yet this bill was prepared and on the Order Paper in the last Parliament. This is identical; it is the same bill in this Parliament, yet it took the government almost a year to get it back in front of us.

I just want to ask the parliamentary secretary why there has been a long delay, when we all know this is something that will help alleviate court delays?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I can assure my friend opposite that the government has been working very hard on a number of very important criminal justice matters, including with my friend from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. We look forward to working with him on the passage of Bill S-4.

This is something that has already passed the Senate, so in many ways we are working on the bill backwards. The Senate has passed it. Now it is in the House, and it is up to us to get it passed as soon as we can.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. From what I can see, the bill addresses a number of outdated inquiries. It obviously would have been best if some of these matters could have been addressed, as my colleague from the NDP mentioned, somewhat earlier.

One question I have, which I may touch on a little later, relates to preliminary inquiries and whether the member has any opinion as to whether preliminary inquiries and the eligibility for preliminary inquiries should be modified, given the strains our current system is under.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, the bill allows for the accused to appear virtually in respect of preliminary inquiries, provided all the parties agree to it.

As to his question about possibly changing the routines for inquiries, I look forward to having a conversation with him, as we all often do, and to having a broader discussion on how that could be incorporated in our criminal justice system. That is something we will definitely be open to discussion on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports this bill to modernize the system.

The Barreau du Québec made a series of recommendations, especially with respect to testimonial evidence being given in person.

Can my colleague tell us whether this recommendation will be fully implemented? What is the advantage and the essential nature of this Barreau du Québec recommendation that all evidence be given in person? Is that possible?

Government Orders

• (1635)

[English]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, the bill has gone through the Senate. It was introduced by Senator Dalphond, who is an eminent jurist in his own right and has a great deal of experience in the court system. As Bill S-4 moves to committee, we definitely look forward to working with my friend opposite on amendments potentially proposed by the Quebec bar association and others. This is the second reading of this bill, and as it goes to committee we will engage and work with all parties to get this done.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will ask a question with regard to the technology that is being used, and the intersection of that and accessibility.

There is a saying where I come from that says we do not put the cart before the horse. That does not mean we do not support this, but we have to make sure the communities that need the support most actually get it. We know that rural, remote and first nations communities currently have bad connectivity.

What do we tell those communities to ensure we maintain accessibility for first nations people, when right now they do not have that?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I addressed most of my friend's concerns in my speech. First and foremost, we are investing in technology. We have invested \$40 million in the criminal justice system to modernize this technology. We have also committed to ensuring that there is rural connectivity across Canada.

What is important for colleagues to understand is that Bill S-4 would allow for virtual hearings where appropriate, where it is not impeded by Internet access or technological limitations, and it is really subject to the consent of the parties involved, including both the accused and counsel, as well as the Crown.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill S-4 is yet another piece of legislation that the Department of Justice is looking at. I know the member has been a very strong advocate for Bill C-5 and has a few thoughts on it that would be of benefit in terms of reinforcement. We recognize that when it comes to Bill S-4, the modernization is an absolute. It is relatively non-controversial and should pass. There has been time on it in the Senate already.

I know the member has some very strong thoughts on Bill C-5, and I would ask him to maybe provide a different perspective on another piece of legislation that he is bringing through.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, it is a very relevant observation, because what we are trying to do is modernize our court system and our justice system. With Bill C-5, it is the first time in Canadian history. The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada is the first attorney general to repeal many mandatory minimum penalties that were seen to be harmful to indigenous, Black and other racialized communities. It was not based on a focus of keeping people safe, but putting away people who ought to have off-ramps in the criminal justice system.

Bill C-5 is very similar to Bill S-4 in the sense that we are modernizing. We are looking at the 21st century, the science and the

technology available and moving forward on very important reforms that will help make sure our justice and court systems are modernized.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary spoke about efficiency. Where we probably see the greatest inefficiency is when it comes to bail. In my province of British Columbia, people have termed it “catch and release”. These are people who are not necessarily going to be law, order and justice types of people, but business owners and constituents are repeatedly telling me that this has become a significant problem.

Why, then, is there nothing about bail in the bill?

• (1640)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, Bill S-4 looks to modernize the court system. My friend is talking about very specific changes to the release conditions. Again, as I indicated earlier, I would be glad to sit down and talk to him about his ideas on this. We may disagree fundamentally on what they look like, but certainly we are able to have that conversation.

With respect to Bill S-4, it is critical in many ways that the accused have their constitutional rights protected with respect to appearances and being there. Virtual appearances just add another element of access in some cases, where appropriate. In some cases it may not be appropriate, and in those cases they will not be able to have virtual appearances.

The Deputy Speaker: Before going to the next interventions, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver East, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, Public Safety; and the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock, Passports.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I am mindful of the fact that I cannot point out people in the gallery, even if three of them 11 and under bear a striking resemblance to me.

Today we are discussing Bill S-4. Bill S-4 is an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Identification of Criminals Act and to make related amendments to other acts, COVID-19 response and other measures.

Government Orders

Before I begin, and this is somewhat related to what we discussed, I want to note the pleasure I have here that I just voted for Bill C-291, and the House unanimously, as I understand it, voted to bring Bill C-291 to committee. That bill will hopefully change the name of child pornography to “child sexual abuse material” to reflect the fact that sexual abuse of children is not pornographic but is abuse, and we should call it what it is. Words do matter. When I stood on doorsteps prior to my election, this is something I said I wanted to come to Parliament to do.

I am very happy and pleased to have partnered with my colleague and friend from North Okanagan—Shuswap to have addressed this problem at second reading. I look forward to our having a strong bipartisan effort at committee in hopes of having this bill passed by Christmas.

Bill S-4 relates to the efficiency of the criminal justice system. When we talk about efficiency in the justice system, we are often talking about inefficiency in the justice system. In fact, prior to my being elected, I contemplated doing some academic writing in law that talked about inefficiencies in the justice system and how we might address them. I am going to talk about some of those here today, some of those things that are, in fact, missing.

We cannot forget that there are people within the justice system who make it go around who really do not get the recognition they deserve. Sheriffs in British Columbia, for instance, are tasked with courtroom security. Frankly, they are underpaid for what they do. They escort people into custody. They are dealing with people on the front line, often who have just been arrested, who are coming down off of drugs, and they put their personal health, well-being and safety on the line in order to protect other criminal justice system practitioners. I thank them for it.

I thank our clerks, our judicial case managers, who keep our courtrooms running. I thank our judges, who often leave lucrative careers behind to serve the public good for the benefit of the rule of law.

When we talk about the justice system, we have to remember something, which is that times change and the law should change as well. This is most notable when we look at a section that is not contemplated here. That is section 525 of the Criminal Code. Section 525 of the Criminal Code deals with bail reviews.

I am not sure exactly when section 525 of the code was passed, but if we were to look I am sure we would see it was passed at a time when people went to trial much more quickly than they do today. Section 525 says, and I am simplifying this, that if somebody is detained on bail, they are entitled to a bail review at 90 days. How often has a trial date even been set in that time? That in itself is a bit of an issue, but sometimes it has not even been set within that time.

That was a different time. I remember looking at a homicide file from 1984 when I was practising law as a prosecutor. Around that time, a trial date would be set within two months, or three months perhaps, and somebody would go to trial often within six, seven or eight months. Times have changed. The system is backlogged. The evidence is different.

I looked at that file, which I believe was from 1984, and it looks like a file that would now be reflected with a “theft under” file, as in a shoplifting file. That was the thickness. There were a few photos of the alleged homicide and a few statements maybe a couple of pages long, and that was it.

• (1645)

Times have changed. Now the system is dealing with section 525, which says that somebody should not languish in custody. The reality is that a person now does not go to trial so quickly. That is the type of thing I would have liked to see addressed in Bill S-4.

I note, as has been noted by others, that Bill S-4 is essentially the same as Bill C-23. What changes is when the bill will come into force. I believe there is a 30-day lag period in order to allow courts to prepare. This legislation also identifies the Identification of Criminals Act.

As a bit of a sidebar, a local lawyer in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Jay Michi, has frequently told me, or at least he has told me once or maybe twice about the Identification of Criminals Act. His point has always been that it should not be called the Identification of Criminals Act, because a person is not yet convicted. Mr. Michi is now in Hansard, and his point has been made in the House of Commons.

Believe it or not, the Identification of Criminals Act could actually, as I recall, be the basis for a failure to appear in court, which could relate to detention on a primary ground of bail. It could also cause a number of issues.

When it comes to the importance of fingerprinting, a lot of people do not know this, but that is how criminal records are generally kept across Canada, through fingerprints. An FPS number is a fingerprint serial number. Somebody has their fingerprint taken, and that is how, on a CPIC record, it is called, a criminal record can be identified for somebody who has a conviction in Nova Scotia, where most good Speakers come from, or from British Columbia, where most good lawyers come from. I guess a few good lawyers have attended the University of Alberta, but we will put that aside for the time being.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: What about Quebec?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, Quebec has some good lawyers as well. There are good lawyers everywhere. We will just leave that aside for now.

The importance of fingerprinting is not actually that well known, but it is very important. This is something that must be modernized.

Moving to the substance of the act, judicial systems have massive backlogs. I believe a few years ago the maximum time to lay a summary conviction offence expanded from six months to one year. I was happy to see that, but we still have a massive backlog. Trials are just not getting on.

Government Orders

Members may have heard the saying, “Justice delayed is justice denied.” This is problematic. A right to a fair trial is embraced within the charter text, obviously. We have often thought about an accused person's right to a fair trial that has a speedy element required, constitutionally obviously, but what about a victim's right to a fair trial? With time, memory fades. It is a proven fact. I do not know anybody who says that their memory is better a year and a half later than it was two weeks after an incident or even six months after an incident. A backlog in the justice system actually contributes to a less efficient system.

At the end of the day the court should exist to get to the truth in a just manner. If getting to the truth is not necessarily a memory contest, then we have a problem when there is a massive backlog. I remember a victim saying that to me one time early on in my career. I said the trial had been adjourned, and he asked about his right. I had to tell him that, as a victim, he did not have a right.

A lot of victims often come to the courts and say they just figured it would be adjourned. I have actually seen instances when courts generally sit for about five hours a day, if we were to compress all of the time together, and up to 12 to 15 hours of court time is crunched into that five hours. That is how much of a backlog there is. This could result in people being released back into the community who should not be released into the community.

• (1650)

One thing we do not generally talk about here is delay, and that delay has been discussed by the Supreme Court of Canada in a case called *Jordan*. The *Jordan* decision talked about the right to trial within a reasonable time, the constitutional right to be tried, which is within 18 months, or a year and a half, if the matter is preceded by summarily, which is considered a less serious type of offence, or 30 months, or two and a half years, by indictment.

The greater the strain on resources, the longer it takes for a trial to occur. More cases mean a greater backlog and a greater backlog means even longer, and this affects bail. The problem we have is the following. With the *Jordan* principle, the clock, and what I mean by clock is the time, the two and a half years, starts ticking the moment a charge is laid.

There have been expansive requirements for disclosure since the *Stinchcombe* decision in, I think, 1988. There have been massive changes in disclosure, to the point where disclosure is probably one of the single biggest reasons we have delays. It is one of them. We, as Parliament, have not addressed that issue. One might be asking why disclosure matters. It matters because it takes months, sometimes years, to get disclosure together on major cases. If someone, a police officer or a prosecutor, has a case, that case may have literally 30,000 pages of documents.

Because of the *Jordan* decision, there is a hesitation to lay a charge, because it may take a year to a year and a half, maybe two years, to get those documents together. This might include people who are dangerous, a person who, at this point in time, should not be roaming freely and should at least have conditions on bail or be detained pending their trial.

However, because of the *Jordan* decision, those people will often be free for the duration, so a year and a half to two years, without

any conditions and without any detention. Frequently, these are the most serious cases, because the most serious cases generate the most paperwork, and the most paperwork generates the most disclosure. These are frequently homicides, so we are not talking about cases that are not serious. In fact we are talking about cases that are the most serious in nature.

I will give another example. Members have heard me talk frequently in the House about sexual offences. This is how the *Jordan* issue affects these offences and why we need to address the streamlining of these cases, especially for sexual offences.

I am being hypothetical here. A person has child sexual abuse material, which is what we voted on today in Bill C-291, and has that material found on their computer. In order to prove that case beyond a reasonable doubt, a prosecutor needs to prove who owns that computer, who possessed that computer and who accessed those materials. That is typically done by an expert. Right now there are not a lot of experts out there, and it takes time to go into a hard drive. These are the same people who go into hard drives often for terrorism-related offences or for homicides, or who are looking at text messages or messages that were sent digitally.

There is a strain on resources when it comes to these sorts of things. Therefore, a person who is alleged to have committed a sexual offence against a child, like possession, production or distribution of child sexual abuse material or Internet luring, some of the most serious cases against children, will have their computer seized, and it will be 12 months or more before that computer can be analyzed. For 12 months that person is roaming the community without conditions. We are not even talking out on bail. They have no conditions at all because of the *Jordan* decision.

The question is this. How should Parliament respond? This is not a question of admonishing the rule of law; it is a question of how we should respond to these obviously prominent issues that are before the House in Bill S-4. How do we respond? While Bill S-4 would make some changes, we have so much further to go.

• (1655)

I had 14 pages of notes and I am on page 3. I may have to cut out a bit.

An hon. member: Unlimited speech.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the member for Winnipeg North and the member for Kingston and the Islands would love to hear me speak more about this.

An hon. member: More.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if “more” is being picked up in Hansard, but I do appreciate that exhortation to speak more about this.

Government Orders

We, as Conservatives, will always fight for a just and appropriate system, not a legal system but a justice system. I hope every single person in the House wants a system that is just and appropriate. I am mindful of the fact that we may disagree on some points, but there are issues that we should be able to come together on. To me, sexual offences against children and bail reform are those types of issues.

This legislation amends the process for peace officers to apply for and obtain a warrant using telecommunications rather than appearing in person. The process for obtaining a warrant is rather cumbersome. An affidavit has to be sworn and that takes time. The affidavit has to be drafted and usually fact-checked. That takes time. The affidavit has to be sworn, and then it has to be submitted or brought to a justice or a judge. Times change, and this bill allows for that electronic submission.

Fingerprinting, as I touched upon, being conducted at a later date is something that a judge will now be able to determine whether it is necessary in the circumstances.

The accused and offenders appearing remotely by audio and video conference is interesting. At this point, I believe there is a provision in the Criminal Code that an accused person can be excused. This will bring a measure of efficiency, but it might not necessarily bring the efficiency we are looking for.

I am going to speak to preliminary inquiries. The issue with preliminary inquiries is due especially to disclosure being so comprehensive. It is based on incremental decisions that have expanded disclosure since the Stinchcombe decision. Disclosure is expansive.

While some lawyers may have used preliminary inquiries in the past to determine the strength of the Crown's case, they have often become, in non-serious cases, a perfunctory exercise to simply dig a bit more. That is my view of it. Preliminary inquiries were eliminated by the House, I believe, for offences with penalties of 10 years and under a few years ago.

Here is the thing: A sexual assault has a 10-year maximum so there is no preliminary inquiry. However, sexual interference, which involves a child, does. If someone sexually interferes with a child or commits an Internet-luring offence against a child, that child has to potentially testify twice.

There are some shortcuts within the Criminal Code, but I think we can talk about victimization and secondary victimization in the House, and it is time that we talk about the trauma that goes with it. Children who suffer from these types of offences are often subjected to a psychological life in prison of their own.

It is time that the system addresses this. I call on the House to remove preliminary inquiries for sexual offences, or at least streamline the process, for all victims so that they are only testifying one time so that we consider this from a trauma-informed practice.

Somebody very close to me has done a great deal of work and continues to do a great deal of academic work on the issue of access to Internet for remote proceedings. The Liberal government has repeatedly promised that we are going to see more rural Internet. For people in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo and for people in rural Canada, they cannot access these provisions because they

do not have access to adequate Internet. There are people who need to appear remotely because they are three hours from the courthouse, but appearing remotely is not available because they do not have access to the Internet.

I want to tell the government to fix this, not only for the benefit of all involved from a quality-of-life perspective but also from a justice perspective.

• (1700)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I really took note of the part of the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo's discussion where he was talking about the realities of the delays and what they are actually creating in terms of when prosecution decides to lay a charge and what is involved after that. Indeed he has talked about disclosure and everything that is added and compounded onto that.

Given his experience of being a prosecutor, I wonder if he can share some insight into how he thinks this bill could help to address that. If it does not go far enough, where else could we improve upon that?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, this is an important question. With all candour, disclosure needs to be started from the bottom up. This bill is very discrete in what it would deal with, whether it be video appearances or things like that, but let us just take the impaired driving end of things. There is so much paperwork that could be generated on just an impaired driving charge. It would almost be inappropriate for me to say this bill has to go further in this one discrete way, because we need to start building disclosure from the ground up.

Sometimes on some homicide cases one is going to see a thousand photographs, because that threshold for disclosure of what may be relevant is so high. I feel that we need to hear from subject matter experts and have a bill just dedicated to disclosure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo on his very eloquent speech. He said that he had 15 pages to read.

The member raised a major issue with the justice system, namely its efficiency, as well as another directly related issue, access to justice. Would the member agree with me that Bill S-4 could improve the justice system in terms of accessibility and efficiency? Could he continue his speech by telling us more about what should be added to Bill S-4 to make it even more effective in terms of access to justice? Maybe he covers that in the other 15 pages of his speech.

Government Orders

• (1705)

[English]

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, one thing that I really noticed when we spoke about access to justice is video conferencing. The fact is that there are provisions for a child who has been victimized to appear by video. There is this idea, and it is propagated and in my view has no merit, that a trial judge cannot evaluate credibility when a person is appearing by video. It is often said that a person cannot appear by video because credibility is an issue, yet we have all sorts of sections in the Criminal Code that say that.

I have seen all sorts of applications made. If a person lives in Newfoundland, and while they were visiting British Columbia they were a victim of a hit and run, all they are going to say is that they were in their vehicle, someone hit them and they suffered a broken leg as a result. That is going to be the extent of their evidence, and somebody will oppose it, because if that person does not come then the Crown's case falls apart.

If I was to go one step further, as my colleague asked me to expand, I would probably expand it on the availability of victim or witness testimony by video. Right now the test can go either way. In my view the test should be much more lenient to say video testimony is preferred.

Why are we flying a person across the country to give evidence? They can give evidence, as we do every day via Zoom. We do not necessarily give evidence, but do things right here and right now in hybrid Parliament. They could give their evidence over Zoom. It costs thousands of dollars, and that person has to take a day off work. When it comes to police officers, they could be investigating other crimes, but they have to go across the country. It takes three or four days that could be 30 hours of lost work, plus overtime, plus the price of flights. It often costs \$10,000 just to testify in one case.

That is what I would change.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always listen with interest to the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for his innovative ideas. I must say that the last suggestion he made on witness testimony is an important one for us to think about in the future.

This bill deals peripherally with the selection of jurors and allowing some of that participation to be virtual. I wonder if the member agrees with me that there is much more we need to do to facilitate the participation of jurors with things like the compensation of jurors for time lost at work or sometimes for travel costs or meals. We do not do a very good job right now of making sure that participating in a jury does not really cost individuals. I wonder if he would agree with me that there is more work to be done there.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague in the House, and on the justice committee, from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for his question.

I do not know if it is set provincially or nationally, but I think it is two figures that a juror gets paid for the day. In my experience, the desire to serve on a jury is directly related to an occupation, and that is why we see so many people who are retired on juries. Let us face it. A lot of people, apart from my mother, do not want to serve

on a jury. I just got a jury summons in the mail, and I obviously had to tick-off that I could not attend.

The member has keyed in on something very important. Unless people have work that compensates them for jury duty, which some people do, the vast majority, particularly people who are self-employed, do not want to serve on a jury. I have heard innovative excuses from people who did not want to serve on a jury.

It is not only a person's civic duty, but it has to be that a person is capable of doing it and is devoted fully to their jury service. I would certainly be open to talking with my colleague and having a greater discussion in the House as to how we can make jury service all the more palatable. Let us face it. Sitting on a jury, for most people, is not something they look forward to.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for a great speech.

He talked about the backlog in the justice system, especially when considering the massive rise, a 32% increase, in violent crime in Canada since the Liberals formed the government.

First, how important is this legislation to addressing that backlog? Second, can he comment on the hypocrisy of the government waiting so long to bring this bill forward compared to its bringing Bill C-5 forward to eliminate the mandatory minimums for violent crime in Canada?

• (1710)

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound raises a point that really should be prominent and is salient in this discussion.

The efficiency of the justice system should be sacrosanct, because, in my view, we should have been making the mandatory minimums that have been struck down constitutionally compliant. On the one hand, we may have people who say that we need a lot more mandatory minimums. On the other hand, we will have people, generally across the aisle, who would say that we do not need any mandatory minimums.

My view is that we should have a middle ground where we have mandatory minimums that have room for exceptional circumstances so that they do not apply, because it is the outlier cases that result in mandatory minimums getting struck down. Why do we not address that in legislation?

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I do not think anybody in the House would say we do not want to go after gangsters, so why are we having Bill C-5 at the beginning of this Parliament, as my colleague pointed out, and Bill S-4 at this point? In fact, we should be changing it and flipping the script to bring back legislation that focuses on these mandatory minimums when gun crimes have consistently gone up.

Community-based sentences for discharging a firearm with intent, I believe, was a constitutionally upheld mandatory minimum in a case called *Oud* from the B.C. Court of Appeal. I believe in that case it was five years. That mandatory minimum was upheld by the B.C. Court of Appeal, and now a person can get a conditional sentence order for it. I do not understand how that is possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to express the Bloc Québécois' support for Bill S-4, formerly Bill C-23. Bill S-4 was requested by many provinces and justice system stakeholders seeking to benefit from the lessons learned during the pandemic.

Bill S-4 seeks to amend the Criminal Code by introducing provisions to make the system more effective. The pandemic was disastrous on many levels. We all agree on that. We certainly hope never to see it again; that goes without saying.

We also all learned from this crisis, and we can certainly try to benefit from the lessons learned. We worked virtually over the past two years like we never have before. This way of doing things certainly has some disadvantages. I will come back to that. However, there were some benefits that we cannot ignore. Our justice system could most definitely be improved through the use of this little-known or often misused tool. Bill S-4 proposes instructions to ensure that the proceedings that can be carried out remotely are managed and used effectively.

This bill proposes to allow for the use of electronic or other automated means for the purposes of the jury selection process. It also proposes to expand, for the accused and offenders, the availability of remote appearances by audioconference and videoconference in certain circumstances and to provide for the participation of prospective jurors in the jury selection process by videoconference in certain circumstances.

The bill would expand the power of courts to make case management rules permitting court personnel to deal with administrative matters for accused not represented by counsel and it would permit courts to order fingerprinting at the interim release stage and at any other stage of the criminal justice process if fingerprints could not previously have been taken for exceptional reasons.

Finally, it would replace the existing telewarrant provisions with a process that permits a wide variety of search warrants, authorizations and orders to be applied for and issued by a means of telecommunication.

Bill S-4 also makes amendments to the Criminal Code and the Identification of Criminals Act to correct minor technical errors and includes transitional provisions on the application of the amendments.

Finally, Bill S-4 makes related amendments to other acts and also provides for independent reviews on the use of remote proceedings in criminal justice matters.

It also provides for a parliamentary review of the provisions enacted or amended by this act, and of the use of remote proceedings in criminal justice matters, to begin at the start of the fifth year after it receives royal assent. There is a review of the whole process after five years. I think that is very wise, given that many of the provisions in Bill S-4 are new.

Bill S-4 is basically a tool. As we have seen here in the House and elsewhere, working remotely definitely has its advantages, but it also has significant drawbacks. Like any tool, it must be used judiciously. It has limitations that must be considered. When the time comes to assess a witness's credibility, body language is an important element that the judge wants to take into account. In remote proceedings, that type of language is redacted, so to speak. In my opinion, it is an important element that could, in some cases, radically change the outcome of a trial, particularly when the evidence consists of contradictory testimony.

Once again, like any tool, it must be used with discernment. A screwdriver is very useful; so is a hammer. However, if we use a hammer to drive in a screw we will have a problem. If we use a screwdriver to pound a nail, we will have another problem. In each case, we must determine what is appropriate. This is not a cure-all. In that regard, the Quebec bar association urges us to be cautious with certain provisions. I will come back to that.

● (1715)

However, proceeding remotely in some cases will accelerate the judicial process. It will minimize time wasted and postponements. We often see courtrooms packed with people in the morning waiting to appear, and then half the cases may be postponed for various reasons. If the proceedings are held remotely, delays due to postponements will be reduced, and the same applies for administrative matters, which do not require lawyers to appear in person. That already exists and is already being used to manage cases where parties are represented by lawyers. Under Bill S-4, this could also apply when the parties are unrepresented. We will have to examine how to proceed, because this does pose certain challenges.

I think it is a useful measure that will reduce travel, inconvenience and often the frustration of people facing a judicial system that is manifestly too slow and opaque and that imposes costs and travel that could well be avoided. It is therefore a good thing if, I repeat, it is used with discernment.

I mentioned the drawbacks, including issues around witness and juror credibility. In a jury trial, the lawyers selecting jurors have to evaluate the candidates based on factors that are not always technical. Lawyers listen to them, ask them questions, consider their answers and also take into account their body language and the way they answer. In many cases, that is how they decide whether to accept or reject a potential juror.

The same goes for witnesses. There have been many trials in which key evidence consists of contradictory testimony. How are judges to decide whether one witness is telling the truth and the other is lying? Judges will use the witnesses' answers, certainly, as well as their body language. They will consider how witnesses react. They get a sense of people's credibility based on many criteria that are not necessarily explicitly stated in written procedures. It is important for judges and lawyers working on a trial to have face-to-face access to witnesses and potential jurors.

Could they not in some cases be heard virtually? I think so. Could jurors not in some cases appear virtually? I think so, but that has to be determined with the consent of the parties and not systematically imposed in every trial.

There is also talk of the problem of hacking. We know that we are constantly having to deal with hackers. We all receive unsolicited emails and proposals. I often receive messages warning that I have been summoned for a trial at a certain location and that I have to click on a link or the world will come to an end. All sorts of things like that happen, so our computer systems are not always as safe as we might think. Even banks get hacked. We saw that roughly two years ago when Desjardins suffered a data breach. Holding trials virtually is one thing, and we need to be careful, but Bill S-4 also talks about telewarrants, meaning a warrant to conduct a search of someone's home.

If we computerize all telewarrants, warrants obtained virtually, and if we proceed based on a virtual model, are we not exposing ourselves to piracy and perhaps searches or actions of a legal nature that would be contrary to the interests of litigants, contrary to what we are trying to achieve in the administration of justice? I think we need to ask the question. I do not want to be an alarmist. Once again, I see Bill S-4 as a positive thing, but I am just saying that we do need to ask some questions. It is not a panacea. It must not be applied without careful consideration.

There is the issue of regional disparities. As we saw during the pandemic, not everyone in Quebec, nor elsewhere in Canada, has equal access to computer systems. It is rather lacking in some regions.

● (1720)

Some people are able to work at home all day with two people on computers and hold meetings with multiple people without any issues. Others have a hard time making a phone call without being interrupted. That also has to be taken into consideration.

It is also the mandate of our federal government to ensure that everyone in Quebec and Canada has proper Internet coverage, but we are not there yet. Admittedly, the government is working on it, but there is still a long way to go. That has to be taken into account

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if we want to computerize the justice system, so how can we do that?

Once again, I think that, before we impose virtual proceedings, we need to make sure that we have the consent of the parties. If someone says, "Just a second. Where I live, we do not have very good coverage and I will not be able to follow along", then perhaps the proceedings need to be held in person.

There is a process, and adjustments will have to be made. We need to take that into account, even though I think that Bill S-4 is an important step forward for the administration of justice.

Speaking of compromises, the Barreau du Québec submitted a brief in April that set out four recommendations. I want to read them because I think they are sensible.

The first recommendation from the Barreau du Québec is:

Exclude testimonial evidence from the new videoconferencing system. Testimonial evidence must be heard with all parties present.

As I was saying earlier, for the purpose of observing body language alone, I think it is important to see people.

The second recommendation is:

Carry out an in-depth study on the potential impact of making measures developed in a pandemic context, namely, those relating to technology and the automation of procedures, permanent in the *Criminal Code*. Carry out an in-depth study on the impact of videoconferencing on:

The attorney-client relationship...

It is a matter of professional responsibility for the attorney to properly represent the client and to ensure that he or she fully understands the brief and explains to the client what he or she believes is in the client's interest.

... and confidentiality.

Again, we know that the Internet and computers are not 100% secure, and this could lead to unwanted challenges and drawbacks.

Open court (*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*).

This is set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and we have to take that into account. I will come back to that.

The right to a fair trial (*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*).

Quality and consistency of justice (regional disparities in resources, Indigenous realities, self-representation).

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Regional disparities in resources also affect the right to a fair trial and the quality and consistency of justice. What about indigenous realities? Are indigenous communities equipped to hold trials remotely? Can they do that? It is hard to be sure, but probably not all of them can. For people who self-represent, it is one thing for a lawyer at home or participating remotely to handle case management, but it can be problematic for a self-represented individual to deal with one, two or three lawyers in addition to a judge and a clerk, all participating remotely. At the very least, it can weigh down the process instead of streamlining it. We have to give that some serious thought.

The Barreau du Québec's third recommendation is as follows:

Delete new proposed section 715.241 of the *Criminal Code*, which allows the court to "require an accused who is in custody and who has access to legal advice to appear by videoconference in any proceeding referred to in those sections, other than a part in which the evidence of a witness is taken."

I said it earlier. I think that, as long as everyone agrees, it is perfect. Going virtual is the appropriate tool. If all the parties agree and the judge agrees, that is what should happen. However, there is an issue if not everyone agrees. The proposed section 715.241 allows the court to require the accused to appear by video conference. This seems to me to be a potential problem, and I believe that the Barreau du Québec is right to warn us about this aspect.

The fourth recommendation of the Barreau du Québec reads as follows:

Clarify the distinction in Bill S-4 between an accused who has "access to legal advice" and one who is "represented by counsel" in a context where only accused persons with representation can communicate with counsel.

Having access to legal advice is a vague concept. Access when and on what subject? What exactly are we talking about? Does having had access to a lawyer yesterday to discuss a number of issues mean that the individual is prepared to deal with any and all situations that may arise during a trial? That is not a given. This will have to be clarified, as Bill S-4 is not very clear in this regard.

• (1725)

An accused who is represented by counsel and an accused who has access to legal advice seem to be given the same credit or treatment. I think we will have to take a closer look at that.

As I stated, the Bloc Québécois will support the bill and probably move amendments in committee. We shall see, but I think that this bill should be referred to a committee.

Having said that, I would be remiss if, in the last five minutes at my disposal, I did not bring to the attention of the House other major problems that need to be addressed to achieve sound and efficient administration of justice. We must not forget about them. Bill S-4 is not a cure-all. I have spoken at length about the issue of connectivity in all regions, so I will not say any more about it. Still, it is an important aspect and is one of the things we must work on if we want to have an efficient virtual legal system.

There is also the question of judicial vacancies. Several positions are still vacant. I was speaking with a Quebec Superior Court judge two or three weeks ago who told me that there are about 15 vacancies in Quebec. I do not know what our government is waiting for to fill those judicial vacancies. It seems absurd to me. It is not even

the federal government that pays those judges, it is Quebec. I should say, rather, the federal government does pay them, but it does not pay for the infrastructure, the clerks and the courtrooms. All associated costs are assumed by Quebec. There are vacancies, and our government has failed to fill them. It is a serious problem. A sound administration of justice requires sufficient resources on the ground, and judges are the primary resource we need.

We have spent a lot of time talking about the issue of appointing judges based on the "Liberalist", and we will come back to that again. It does not make sense that, to this day, the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister are still trying to reassure me that the "Liberalist" is used only after receiving applications that are deemed suitable. I personally believe that it should never be used, because partisan appointments, or appointments tainted by partisanship, are unacceptable in our society.

Finally, we recently talked again about the matter of secret trials, and that issue was in the news again yesterday. The Minister of Justice says he cannot tell us how many secret trials there are. He cannot even tell us whether there are any. I can understand that things need to be done differently than the charter dictates in some cases to keep witnesses safe, but it is certainly not acceptable for things to be done in a secret, non-transparent way like they are now. These trials need to be governed by the provisions of the charter. As members know, there can be a departure from the charter in exceptional circumstances that can be justified in a free and democratic society. I can accept that, but it cannot be done just any which way. When the Minister of Justice says that he cannot tell us how many of these trials are happening or even whether any such trials are happening or how the process works, that is a problem. This is not the wild west. Things need to be organized better. It is unacceptable for the government to operate like that.

• (1730)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that we have the Bloc supporting government legislation, which I think will have an impact. In the little time I have had to go over the legislation and listen to some of the comments, what I see is legislation that recognizes that things have changed. There is a technology out there and ways in which we can make our system that much more effective and efficient to provide that quality justice that Canadians expect of our judicial system. I think it is quite encouraging.

The member made reference to his waiting for it to go to committee. Does he have any specific amendments that he would already suggest, or is he more content with seeing it go to committee and then have that debate?

[Translation]

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

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Obviously, we will develop our proposed amendments when the time comes, but evidently, the four Barreau du Québec recommendations that I just mentioned will be central to our proposed amendments. They must be taken into consideration.

Again, I am one of those who think it would be a little obtuse not to adapt to the new reality, not to use the tools that are available to us. I am also of the opinion that we must use them with discernment. If I may circle back to the example of the screwdriver and the hammer, they are both very useful tools, but they are not used in the same situations.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really liked what my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord had to say, as well as what we heard from the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, who spoke before him and is a member of our party.

The member's comments were based on his experience. We all had lives before politics and we all want lives after politics. When we speak from our experience and when lawyers talk about justice when we are studying a bill about justice, that tends to be very interesting, as we saw today.

When I talk to lawyers in my riding, their main concern is delays in the justice system and the fact that no judges are available to hold trials. These delays cause people to lose confidence in the justice system.

Based on his own experience, can the member tell us whether Bill S-4 will speed up access to justice and restore people's confidence in the justice system? Some people think that new technology can speed things up.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I hope that he and I both enjoy our lives after our time serving here in Parliament. I am sure we will.

I agree with my colleague. The bill could indeed speed up the process. As a lawyer, there were times when I had to wait all morning in a courtroom because of various procedures that unnecessarily had to be done in person. Some of these procedures could easily have been done remotely, virtually or in writing.

These days, the courts are constantly working to improve the flow of the legal system. I think the proposals in Bill S-4 are a step in that direction. As I said earlier, people are travelling unnecessarily. When we know that a hearing postponement is going to be requested in a case and that the lawyers all agree on this request for postponement, is it really necessary for everyone to travel there, to clog up the court and to take up five, 10 or 15 minutes of the court's time just to hear everyone tell the judge that they all agree?

I think this could all be done remotely and efficiently as long as everyone agrees. If a litigant is at home and cannot follow the proceedings in an efficient and intelligible way, then that would be counterproductive and would create unwanted frustration.

Yes, remote proceedings, like all the provisions set out in Bill S-4, will be a useful tool if used with the consent of the parties and with discernment.

• (1735)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are always learning in our careers as politicians. A couple of the things my staff have learned are to log death threats and harassment, and how to deal with police.

I am looking at this bill about updating the courts, and I actually had to go to court to deal with a serial stalker, a harasser. It was at the height of COVID, and we did it through video conferencing. To me it was a real eye-opener because I thought of the women who have to deal with threats and male violence, and who have to be in the courtroom with their accuser.

I had to go deal with the guy who was being threatening and abusive. I found that the system that had been set up for video conferencing was a very good system. I thought that, for people who have less privilege than me and less power in society, it could be a very good way of levelling the playing field for survivors who come forward.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what he thinks about the provisions for using technologies, such as video conferencing, to help ensure there is fairness when survivors have to confront people who are threatening or violent?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I would like to once again thank my colleague opposite.

I share his opinion on that. I too believe that victims of domestic violence, harassment or sex crimes, among others, would fully agree most of the time or be enthusiastic about proceeding remotely.

However, in committee, I realized to my great surprise that that is not always the case. Some victims want to confront their attacker. That is a good example showing that choice is important. Some victims do not want their attackers to hide; they want to see their faces when they tell them what they have to say. They want to see how they will react when they are told they are guilty and what they did is unacceptable. For those men and women, it is important to be there in person. That also happens to men occasionally. For some litigants, it is important to be there in person.

Others found their experience so troubling that they never again want to have anything to do with their attackers. They do not want to see them.

Yes, my colleague is quite right, and I have a lot of empathy for the victims and the litigants. I believe we must respect their choice with regard to the judicial process.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my colleague's considerable expertise; he has a lot of experience in this area. It is a great honour for the Bloc Québécois to have a resource like my colleague speak to this bill.

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I would like to share a personal anecdote. My husband had a career with the Sûreté du Québec. I cannot remember how many times he was called to court. He often went in on overtime, because it was not part of his regular schedule, only to be told, upon arrival, that the hearing had been postponed. When he came home, he told me how ridiculous it all was. It had cost the government a lot of money to have all those people show up and then go home because the hearing had been postponed for whatever reason.

I wanted to add to my colleague's comments that, in some circumstances, it is really effective to have a bill like S-4, but not in all cases. I think he is right. I want to commend his position of taking into account the legal context and of not passing this legislation as a whole, but making amendments. I think that will happen in committee. I hope so. With my colleague there, we will be very well equipped.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I want to say what we often hear in question period, that I thank my colleague and commend her for her excellent work. What a great question.

All joking aside, I completely agree with my colleague. She raised an important point. Her husband is a police officer. He experiences these types of situations. I experienced them myself as a lawyer. Many of us have, in various capacities, regardless of our respective careers, or as litigants. I know how frustrating it can be for an officer of the court, a police officer or anyone else to see how much money is being needlessly wasted the morning of a hearing. I can guarantee that it is just as bad for the litigants in the room, who may have travelled in a snowstorm, and who are told that the hearing they prepared for is being postponed. They also often have to pay their lawyer who prepared for the hearing the evening before and who showed up at the courthouse in the morning. If such situations can be avoided, then everyone will be happy about Bill S-4 being passed.

● (1740)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill S-4, although I have to place it in the category of “better late than never”. This legislation responds primarily to what we learned as a result of court delays during the pandemic. How quickly we forget that the court system in Canada essentially shut down completely, sometimes for weeks and sometimes for months in different parts of the country, as a result of widespread illness and the fear of illness. Essentially, we had a collapse of the court system looming.

Therefore, in this Parliament, through all-party agreement, we enacted quickly some measures that allowed the courts to keep functioning during the pandemic. Most of those measures are now appearing here to become permanent, because they were adopted on a temporary basis. They would now be made permanent in Bill S-4.

We also tend to forget that this bill was on the Order Paper before the unnecessary election. Most of my constituents have completely forgotten we had a 2021 election. People talk to me about the last election as though it were 2019. However, this bill was one of the casualties of the Liberals' calling that election during the pandemic, and it died on the Order Paper.

Therefore, I am glad to be back here today talking about Bill S-4 and how to address delays in the court system.

It is very clear that we already had delays before the pandemic. In the period between the Supreme Court decision called “Askov” in 1990 and the decision called the “Jordan decision” in 2016, we had more than 50,000 criminal cases dismissed in the province of Ontario alone because of delays of the court system. This included literally hundreds of cases of sexual assault that were dismissed because of court delays.

Therefore, it is important that we tackle this in the long run and not find ourselves back in that situation where delays deny justice to the victims of what are quite serious and horrendous crimes, in many cases.

With the Jordan decision, the Supreme Court specified that depending on the seriousness of the case involved, a reasonable time to get to court is something between 18 months and 30 months. That is a deadline that we face in our court system. If we do not have the system functioning for that, we will see dismissals of cases again. We have large backlogs in the system as a result of the pandemic, and we are in danger of seeing more dismissals of cases again in the future if we do not get moving. That is why Bill S-4, which would improve the efficiency of the court system, is really important.

The other thing about delays is that they affect public confidence in the justice system, both for those who have been accused, who would like to see their case dealt with in a reasonable time and who have a right to that under our Constitution, and also for victims of crime, who do not want to see cases drawn out for months and years. Victims of crime do not want to have this necessity of reliving the trauma and having what happened to them come back again and again over long periods of time, so we have this important task in front of us to try to reduce those delays.

There are some obvious obstacles that would cause delays in court. I will give credit to the government that it has tried to tackle one of those obstacles, which is filling vacancies on the bench. In doing so, the government has paid a lot of attention to making the judiciary look a lot more like Canadians as a whole, and that is a good thing.

However, there is another way of reducing delays that the government would not take up the NDP proposal on, which would be reducing the number of things that we consider criminal offences. One of the things we did was put forward the proposal that we decriminalize the personal possession of drugs. This would have taken literally hundreds of cases out of our court system in which there is no victim to the crime. Also, for cases in which we are talking about the use of very serious drugs, it would help get them into the health care system instead of the criminal justice system. Therefore, the government has not always taken our advice on the best way to reduce delays, but we are glad to see the changes that are coming forward here.

I want to talk quickly about two major changes and then two other changes in this bill.

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Probably the change that is most important for the elimination of delays is the change with respect to remote appearances. Previously, there was no provision in our system for the accused to appear by video in preliminary inquiries, in trials, for lodging pleas or for sentencing, so a lot of time was spent moving accused individuals around, back and forth to the courts, so they could appear in person.

• (1745)

The changes here will remove the necessity that was there to make sure someone was always in person for what was sometimes two minutes of a routine proceeding, for things like lodging a plea. It will also make a change to allow those who have been selected for possible jury duty to make their appearances by video or remotely and reduce the inconvenience to members of the public who might be called to jury duty.

That is an important section of the bill, to allow the greater use of technology and remote appearances.

The second part, probably not so publicly visible but related to efficiencies in the court and policing system, is the provision for updating telewarrants. Our law before the pandemic envisioned that for a narrow range of criminal cases only, a judge could be called by phone. What we found during the pandemic was that we could use remote technologies to expand the range of cases in which a warrant could be obtained through remote methods.

Again, the bill provides for a wider variety of cases where a wider variety of technologies can be used in order to get warrants. This will save the time of both judges and police in our system.

I have a couple of things I want to mention quickly. One is the changes in case management rules for the unrepresented. One of the problems we have in our court system is that while people have the right to appear in court unrepresented, a lot of people are not exercising some kind of right. Rather, they cannot afford a lawyer to assist them in their case because they do not qualify for legal aid. Perhaps they earn just enough money to be out of the range of legal aid programs.

I think it is a significant improvement, both in terms of case delays but also in terms of justice for ordinary Canadians, who cannot always afford to get a lawyer. This would allow court administrators to provide a lot more assistance to the unrepresented.

The justification is often the court delays, but I think there is a second justification that is important there, and that is improving access to justice for those who are unrepresented.

There is obviously a better solution, and that would be to expand legal aid, so that people do not end up appearing in court on serious matters unrepresented. Again, though, that takes a lot of federal-provincial co-operation, something that is sometimes in short supply in our legal system.

The fourth thing I want to talk about, and I mentioned it briefly, is the provisions that make it easier for the public who are called for jury duty to participate remotely. Here is an area in which I think we have a lot more to do. We need to make sure jurors are not in fact penalized by serving on a jury. In our federal system, most of the rules about compensating jurors are in provincial jurisdic-

tions, even though they are sitting on cases under the federal Criminal Code.

We need national standards on how we compensate jurors and what kinds of things they are compensated for. When we look at how people are compensated for jury duty right now, it ranges usually between \$40 and \$100 a day. Very few people have compensation in terms of getting paid leave from their employers. It increases people's resistance to serving on juries. There are lots of other expenses that are covered in various ways in various provinces. Are meals covered? Is parking covered? The one that is most important to me, which is rarely covered, is child care.

The Province of Quebec allows compensation for child care on a case-by-case basis. I think it is on the basis of application. That is also true in Nunavut. I believe that is the only other place where there is compensation for child care. If we really want to make sure juries represent the breadth of Canada and the face of Canada, then parents quite often are going to be very reluctant to serve if they do not have compensation for the child care that is going to be required.

Some people might say they would already be going to work so they would have child care, but we have a lot of parents who make choices about who is going to stay home and do child care. If that person is summoned for jury duty, that is a big expense.

• (1750)

That is something that is not in the bill, but I look forward to our taking this spirit of co-operation we have on this bill and maybe making some progress on what I would call a national standard of how jurors are compensated for serving in this country.

I want to say again that we have broad agreement on the bill. That is a good thing. It took a long time to get it here, but maybe now that we are in gear it will not take so long to get it out of here and into committee, and maybe it will not take so long in committee to get it back to the House. I share the optimistic suggestion of my Conservative colleague, who wanted to see us get this done by Christmas. I think that would be a good thing, and I think we can all work toward that.

We do not always co-operate well in the House. Sometimes our divisions keep us from dealing expeditiously with things that are real problems. I think delays in the court system are a real problem, and I am very happy all parties have come together to try to address this in Bill S-4.

Government Orders

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for his learned presentation. I think there are some very important elements there. I wanted to just pick up on the issue of access to justice and how this bill would expand that. I know it has been one of those challenging issues that, across provincial jurisdictions, we have had to deal with.

Can he maybe talk about his province of British Columbia and how it has been able to adopt this, how that has impacted access to justice and how that has informed Bill S-4?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I am going to have to say that I cannot speak extensively on that. I know that certainly the previous provincial attorney general, David Eby, and the current Attorney General in British Columbia have both had access to justice front and centre, and I know they have expanded access to legal aid as one of the main concerns about people having to go to court unrepresented.

Also, it is not just in criminal law, but also in family law, where we have a large problem in all provinces. Quite often one partner of a dispute, and it is usually the husband, has access to much greater legal resources than their partner in those kinds of cases. I know British Columbia has been both trying to encourage mediation processes in family law to tackle that problem and trying to right that balance between parties in those difficult cases.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think one thing we all agree on across all party lines is the need for justice reform. Sometimes we may disagree on where that reform should be, but we need a system that protects the rights of victims and survivors, and also makes sure those who are being accused have access to justice and justice in a fair manner. However, one of the issues that comes up again and again in Canadian society is overrepresentation of racialized communities, and particularly indigenous communities.

The courts are being used to handle situations that could be handled better within community and other alternate structures, so that we are not creating a class of criminals, but actually pulling people out of some very sometimes toxic relationships or sometimes bad behaviour. The community can actually help restore and bring people back within their communities.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague, from his extensive work, about the steps he thinks we need to take to start looking at the powers we can put in place to make sure those who should not be in jail can be taken out of that system and put on a better track.

• (1755)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I think the first thing we need to address is that many first nations have their own ways of dealing with things we tend to send to court and prison that are much more effective than the methods we use. The problem is that those traditional communities and traditional systems are under-resourced, so we need to make resources available to first nations that wish to pursue their own justice initiatives, which in the end would be far more effective than the adversarial and correctional system we tend to support as a whole.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague gave a well-researched and well-delivered speech. I would agree with him on one thing and that is that access to justice in Canada is getting harder and harder.

In my opinion, and in my experience as well, access to justice depends more and more upon accessing a system through money. When he talks about people not being able to access that justice system and the requirement for lawyers, he is hitting the nail right on the head. I want to congratulate him for that.

Does he see that the system itself has gained so much weight in the middle that it is just being run by the people who are making money from the system? Is there a way through this that does not mean that one can only get there through lawyers, a more streamlined system of solving our disputes in Canada, so we do not have as much strain on our legal system?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his compliments. I do not think I share the same view of the system. I do not think there are a lot of people within the system who are there just to make money.

In my experience with the legal community, certainly in my own community, there are some who make more than a good living out of the legal system, but most people are there because of their commitment to justice, whether they are working as prosecutors or as defence attorneys.

However, I do agree with the hon. member that, as I just said about first nations, there are alternative methods to the traditional arrest, send to court and send to prison process that we have tended to overly rely on in Canada. That is appropriate for some people. That is the only way to deal with some criminals in our system, but for most people, that is not the underlying problem and not the real solution. I agree with him that we need to look at alternative methods of dealing with things such as drug addiction and poverty, which cause a lot of people to end up in the court system.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague could provide his thoughts on how the legislation would ultimately provide more flexibility, and how, by providing that additional flexibility, it would make the system more just, more efficient and more effective at delivering justice. Could he provide his thoughts on that specifically?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I think the question brings up an important point. In this bill, we are looking to adopt a broader use of technology, not just for the sake of a broader use of technology, but to provide greater access to justice, as part of this, and that flexibility.

Government Orders

I think we had the important suggestion made by the member for Timmins—James Bay about how sometimes using technology allows victims to participate more freely in these kinds of systems than if they have to appear in front of someone who has caused them great harm in person.

I think that there are lots of advantages, in addition to the efficiency advantages, in Bill S-4.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to an important piece of legislation. I had the opportunity to ask a couple of questions of a number of members on Bill S-4. It is a piece of legislation that was in the House previously, but in a different form. It originated in the House of Commons, where there was a great deal of discussion about it, and it has been reintroduced to the House in the form of a Senate bill, with very few substantial changes.

Having said that, I look at the legislation as a form of modernization. I do not say that lightly. I recall a couple of instances from years ago when I was a justice critic in the Manitoba legislature. There was a great deal of talk about how we could utilize technology to ensure that our judicial system was more effective.

One thing that used to really frustrate me was, when I would drive to the Manitoba legislature from home, I would pass the courts and see all the police cars parked there due to police waiting for trial, many of whom would never even get to testify on that particular day and would be called upon to come back another day, or I would be at another facility where there was serious police traffic, all court related. I remember talking to law enforcement officers who indicated it would be far better to capitalize on some of the technology, such as video conferencing, and the positive impact that would have. I believe it would be quite effective.

When I heard about the legislation coming from the Senate, legislation that originated in the House and was then reintroduced through the Senate, I looked at it from the perspective that, at the end of day, Canadians want a system that will be there in an independent fashion, independent of politics. We very much believe in the rule of law and judicial independence, but there is still a role for legislators and parliamentarians to look at ways to improve the system. That is what we are seeing here. This legislation that the government brought forward would ensure better accessibility. It would make the system more efficient and, ultimately, more effective.

As was cited earlier, we hear a great deal about the importance of getting justice as quickly as possible. There are certain things we have learned from the pandemic. We often heard, when the pandemic was at its peak, that we should look for ways to learn from the pandemic to improve our systems. The technology can easily be brought into our judicial system. We should at least provide the opportunity for its usage. I like to think that providing that opportunity would make a difference.

Bill S-4 proposes a range of reforms that would make court proceedings more flexible while protecting the rights of all participants. The reforms would flow from important work that was done and conducted by the Action Committee on Court Operations in Response to COVID-19, co-chaired by the Minister of Justice and Chief Justice Richard Wagner.

• (1800)

When we look at the tangible things coming out of the legislation, we see one would allow an accused person to appear by video conference at a preliminary inquiry, on consent of the parties and where the court considers it appropriate, including when evidence is actually being presented. In addition, it would allow an accused person to appear by video conference for trial for a summary conviction offence, on consent and where the court considers it appropriate, including when evidence is being presented.

Another important point to recognize in the legislation is that it would allow an accused person to appear via video conference for a trial for an indictable offence on the consent of parties and where the court considers it appropriate, including when evidence is being presented, except in the case of evidence before a jury.

I have two more points to highlight. It would allow an accused person to appear by video conference and audio conference for making a plea on consent of the parties and, where the court considers it appropriate, a plea by audio conference. This would only occur when the court was satisfied that video conferencing was not readily available, and the court could still inquire about the conditions of accepting a guilty plea under subsection 606(1.1), despite not being able to see the accused person, which was proposed in clause 715.234.

The last point I would make to Bill S-4 is that it would allow the offender to appear by video conference or audio conference for sentencing purposes, on the consent of the parties and where a court considers it appropriate. Sentencing by audio conference would only occur when the court was satisfied that video conferencing was not readily available, as proposed in clause 715.235.

I do appreciate the importance of video conferencing. My New Democratic friend from James Bay—

• (1805)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, if the member is going to say something nice about me, he needs to say, “the member for Timmins—James Bay, who has brought such wisdom to the House?”. It is a simple thing. I do not know why we have been—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows very well that is not a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in fairness, I had made a note, and the member for Timmins—James Bay does on occasion say something interesting when he rises. On this occasion, he recognized the important role that video conferencing can play for victims.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I was the only one who thought of that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, yes, he was one of the only individuals who mentioned it today. In the past, I, and others, have had the opportunity to recognize the importance of victims and how we can be there to support victims. I appreciated the member's comments.

We are taking a look at ways we can use technology, and this would not only make our courts more efficient, but it would also assist victims who have been put in difficult positions. If we can make it easier by working through the courts and getting that consensus to ensure that person can appear via video conference, then we should take advantage of that situation.

I was quite encouraged by what appears to be unanimous consent to go forward with the legislation. That is very encouraging. When the legislation comes before us next, I will continue on that point, recognizing that we do have an opportunity to hopefully get Bill S-4 to committee.

I respect what the members from the Bloc were saying, that the Quebec legal bar association is looking at ways it can enhance or improve the legislation. I suspect there could be some amendments coming forward. I look forward to its ultimately passage, and I will conclude my remarks the next time this comes before the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

The House resumed from October 31 consideration of the motion that Bill C-288, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act (transparent and accurate broadband services information), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening to speak at second reading of Bill C-288, and I will take this opportunity to make references to what I experience in Laurentides—Labelle.

This bill will, I am sure, have an impact on Quebeckers, including people in my riding, Laurentides—Labelle. The riding that I have the honour to represent is vast and rural. Anyone who knows our region knows that accessing high-quality, reliable and stable Internet service is a challenge that affects a good number of my constituents.

The Bloc Québécois's work on the issue of Internet service is based on three levels of intervention. The first is providing access to as many people as possible. We are almost there. There have been a lot of initiatives in our ridings, and I commend some of the small municipalities, such as Labelle, where my sister lives, which

has had broadband for several years now. The second level is ensuring high-quality service throughout our territory. Access is one thing, but there is also quality. The third level is to encourage competition among the various Internet service providers.

In recent years, I have worked to substantially increase and improve Internet availability in my riding, enhancing speed and expanding coverage. In this day and age, we all agree that the Internet should be available everywhere. I am very proud to say that, in my riding, our elected representatives, our 43 mayors, took action and signed a letter calling out the lack of access. That sped up the process. We have seen numerous undertakings, including a new telecommunications co-operative that made it possible for my own home to connect to broadband a few months ago. I am very proud of that.

As I said, the Internet is an essential service, now more than ever. Unfortunately, there are still lots of places that lack quality service. I find that hard to believe. Anyone who travels abroad and compares our service quality and access to what is available elsewhere knows that we have a long way to go.

It is a question of security, development, economic vitality, geographic equality, social cohesion, quality of life and I could go on. Now is the time to expand access, and Bill C-288 allows us to do just that.

Unfortunately, as we see day in and day out, inflation is dragging on. That is why it is so important to facilitate competition in the very closed and monopolized world of Internet service providers. It is a matter of offering a breath of fresh air to Quebec families, who greatly need it. As legislators, we need to ensure that the information on connection speeds is exactly what is advertised by the large media conglomerates, that is, our Internet providers. If consumers are told that they will get a certain speed to ensure capacity, that information must be consistent and transparent. Consumers should not be fooled by claims of maximum download speeds that are ultimately very theoretical. It fails to tell the whole story about the service that people are paying for.

Workers have been teleworking on a permanent basis for several months now throughout Quebec, including Laurentides—Labelle.

• (1815)

The pandemic has not been easy for employers, who had to implement teleworking for their employees as quickly and efficiently as possible. However, employers are now demanding quality from their teleworking employees, and this is non-negotiable. This means that download speeds need to be optimal.

Private Members' Business

I want to talk about Simon, a constituent of mine. He made arrangements to work from home during the pandemic. He did what many people did and managed to create an extraordinary quality of life. These days, in 2022, he should be able to work from home. Internet providers told him that he had everything he needed to do his job in the video game industry, so he settled in during the pandemic, only to find out shortly afterwards that the megabits that he was expecting from the Internet providers did not pan out, and this had a negative impact on his work.

I experienced that too during the pandemic. We know it when it happens to us: When everyone wants to use the service at the same time, we have to choose who gets the connection, even at home. That is behind us now, because we are back in the House.

How can we trust what we are being sold when there is still talk of theoretical speed, but not the real speed, meaning the 80% of speed we actually get when browsing online? This can have a direct impact on employment and quality of life, which goes back to what I was saying about Simon.

Let us get back to the content of the bill. Thanks to the establishment of a comparable, standardized format, these guidelines would help see the real speed but would also allow the providers to adjust. This is a prime example of needing to walk the talk.

In their advertising, Internet service providers claim that they are the best, the fastest and the top-performing. That may be, but when I use the Internet, the upload and download speeds may not be exactly as advertised. It is very important that there be transparency in that regard.

Increased competition among the big players would directly and inevitably reduce prices. I am not making this up. None other than Joseph Stiglitz, a U.S. economist who received a Nobel Prize in economics, stated in 2011 that a competitive telecommunications sector opens up a whole world of possibilities.

Competition can reduce prices, increasing access to the Internet for the least well-off. Many of us are also victims. Do my colleagues agree with me that lower prices would be most welcome for a good number of Quebeckers and for every person living in Canada? We must work together to ensure that there is real competition. We see it in other countries, and we must take action so that consumers have a range of providers to choose from.

As consumers, how can we really believe these businesses? Requiring them to be transparent will increase competition. I hope that we will have a consensus so that we can do more to address quality and access across the country.

• (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, It is a pleasure to participate in today's debate on this item of private members' business, Bill C-288, an act to amend the Telecommunications Act (transparent and accurate broadband services information).

I want to start by congratulating and thanking the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa for his initiative. It is a good example of a member using wisely their private member's slot, be-

cause the bill comes from work that I was fortunately part of at the industry committee, where all parties supported a recommendation. I want to congratulate the member for finding a piece of legislation that, on the surface, not only would help protect consumers but is very important for our economy. I will get into more of that later. It would create more competition accountability, which is necessary in this industry, and it would drive our economy in a significant way.

I want to start by reading one of the recommendations we had from 2021 at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. We had a report called "Affordability and Accessibility of Telecommunications Services in Canada: Encouraging Competition to (Finally) Bridge the Digital Divide", and this was our recommendation:

That the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission require Internet service providers to make information available to consumers on the usual download and upload speeds they can expect during peak periods so they can make more informed purchasing decisions based on accurate and transparent information, thereby improving the industry's competitiveness overall.

The member was really wise, in my opinion, to table this type of bill in the House of Commons, because we did get a response from the government saying that it agreed with our all-party recommendation. However, we have not seen any activity on it. It is one of those things that I think we can find some consensus on in the House. Given the fact that we have had some recent issues with regard to our telecommunications industry and the practices that we need to catch up on regarding consumer rights, it is very timely.

In general, Canada is basically treated as a colony when it comes to consumer rights, often from international firms and organizations that are doing business here. A quick example is the auto industry and the recalls in the Toyota file and others. Consumers in the United States got preferential treatment. They got hundreds of millions of dollars in investment because of terms and conditions when consumers were abused, whereas Canada did not get any of that. This came about from a number of different problems, but it is a good example showing that many times we are behind on common products that are sold across the border.

This brings me to the thrust of our Canadian industries. There have been significant challenges to get competition running in the system. We should take note, as the member has, that other countries have advanced legislation on this. Australia has a very keen interest in this and has developed a very influential pattern that can be followed. The United States has more information. The United Kingdom and the European Union also have better performance standards in terms of reporting.

Private Members' Business

Let us go to the surface of where this comes from at a base level with regard to letting consumers decide. It is fair to respond that if we look at some of the consumer products that are most frustrating and confusing for consumers to purchase, we would probably put in that category everything from insurance to purchasing a car to picking out which data plan a person and their family should have. Then there are all the promises, the subsets of conditions, the changing factors and the confusion. All of that is necessary to consider as people become experts, basically, to try to protect their consumer interests, with quite significant consequences.

This is very important, because we cannot see it through the lens of basically accepting that we cannot download a movie quicker. The reality is that what we have seen over the pandemic and even prior to that, as the New Democrats have argued for over a decade now, is that Internet service reliability, access in rural and urban areas and affordability are actually essential. Our strategy, which I will touch on later in terms of the Canadian market economy, has been a poor one. However, the reality is that as people make these decisions, they do not have a chance to advocate for themselves and their family as consumers, and there is a consequence. With children going online, with people working at home going online and with a series of different types of interpersonal connections in business, in education and on social platforms, this has significant consequences.

• (1825)

What the member is asking for is a regular reporting system that would actually allow consumers to have greater accountability. When we look at the different plans that are out there, it can be quite confusing, and the time frames of when the plans are accessed when using the product, being Internet access and the downloading speed, can vary significantly.

We should have the right to choose the advantage of either putting more money towards a service that might be more reliable, versus that of an advertiser that does not have the same type of follow-through, and then have a consequence later on. This is significant, because we are spending hundreds of dollars per family for this type of service. As was mentioned before, it is essential because it affects everything going on in our lives.

As New Democrats, we applaud this piece of legislation, because we feel it is going to also be significant for the economy. What I mean by that, which I do not think gets a lot of attention, is that coming out of the pandemic, Canada actually has an advantage with our network reliability. If there is more competition and lower pricing, if we change our spectrum auction to be more general in terms of access to the market and also a lower price threshold, we are going to take an advantage.

For example, what is taking place now is that many people are getting jobs in Canada to work internationally without even going over to those countries. They can work from home, and they can do a number of occupations now while maybe visiting once in a while, or predominately working in their homes. That brings a significant income stream into the Canadian economy. It brings us innovation and skilled labour that is domestically developed.

We should be looking at our network systems at the highest potential possible, which is why I want to touch on how bad our sys-

tem has become with regard to the previous and current governments' use of the spectrum auction.

Usually, people's eyes roll back when we talk about the spectrum auction and what it is, but we need to think about it as a pure asset we have that does not have any type of encumbrance on public cost.

The spectrum auction is where we sell off the air rights. Consider it the same as water and land; it is completely open for development. What Canada has chosen to do is set up a spectrum auction, getting as much money back to the government as possible. The problem with that strategy has been that the companies, the traditional ones and the start-ups, have had to borrow a lot of money, encumbering them with the costs, which they pass on to Canadian consumers. However, other countries would have used the spectrum auction to facilitate higher-speed Internet service and development and lower costs, which is where New Democrats believe we should be going.

The government, right now, has raked in over \$30 billion with regard to the cost it has brought back in, and that has been passed on to consumers. We have to get that under control. We need to have greater access and lower costs, which means there has to be give and take in that relationship.

When we look at a bill like this, it would also provide some extra competition from a number of different sector proponents and also straighten out some of the myths behind some of the costing platforms. It would show some of the vulnerabilities in the systems we have that I think we need to address, which I really think might be one of the more underrated aspects of the bill. It might be less about the fact that one wants to pay and get what one deserves, which is critical and should be a basic right no matter what.

Second to that, it could be really helpful to know where our weaknesses are in rural, remote and even urban settings, which are underperforming and which are actually declared and supposed to have certain service requirements. That actually affects economic development, education and social integration. For all those elements, we will have to look at shoring up or seeing where the real problems are, and having the CRTC and the capabilities of that reporting made public is critical.

I will conclude by thanking the member for bringing forward a very thoughtful bill during a minority Parliament where we want to get things done. I think all members should rally around this, because at the basic level it is for consumer protection, and beyond that for economic development, which is necessary, as well as for social integration and social justice for inclusion.

• (1830)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise once again in the House and to be able to speak to what I think is a fantastic bill by my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepeawa in Manitoba. As a result, we are continuing the conversation about reliable Internet access.

There have been many speeches and questions in the House on this issue, and there are many members from different parties all across the country who care about the issue. The government has made announcements and promises over the years, but progress has been slow.

Bill C-288, however, is doing something more than talking about a problem; it is taking some practical steps forward that will make a real difference for Canadians.

To begin this debate at second reading, the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa did a great job of laying out the three pillars of this legislation.

The first is a requirement for Internet service providers to provide Canadians the typical download and upload speeds they offer, not just the maximum theoretical speeds.

The second is a requirement to provide Canadians with the quality metrics they can expect during the peak periods, when people are most likely to use the service. For people at home who wonder why that is so important, the first reason in particular is that it deals with mostly what people would think of with their cellphone. A lot of the cellphone companies will talk about how their LTE speed on their cellphone could be up to 80 megabytes per second, or it could be 100 megabytes per second. The reality is that people are going to realize those speeds only if they are standing within 100 metres of the tower, with nobody else connected to the tower. That is the only time they are going to theoretically get that 100 megabyte speed. As technology has advanced and moved along, we are slowly getting to the point at which more people might be able to realize speeds closer to that, but it does not change the fact that for years people have been told that they could theoretically get that, without ever actually coming close to getting it.

The second metric that I mentioned is especially important when we think about companies that are providing service via satellite, or maybe via a wireless-to-the-home connection. They are told they are going to get x amount of speed, but the reality is that as more users are utilizing the system, it is going to drag that speed down to a point at which it almost becomes unusable. As we all saw over the last couple of years with people doing school from home and people working from home, it has become almost impossible for a lot of people, particularly people in rural Canada, to be able to participate in the economy and to be able to participate in school. That is why I think these are a really good first couple of steps with this bill.

The third pillar is to begin a consultation process with the CRTC and develop a framework that can work in the public's best interest.

These are three simple things that are meant to work together so customers can have accurate and transparent information about the services they are paying for. It sounds like this should be something basic to the experience of buying anything, but in this case it is not, and certainly not for millions of Canadians.

I want to make sure everyone understands the situation with Internet service in our country, which this bill is trying to improve. Let us start with some data that will help to put it in perspective.

Private Members' Business

Last year, the Canadian Internet Registration Authority, or CIRA, released a report called "Canadians Deserve a Better Internet". Here is what it had to say about the performance of quality experienced by customers. It states:

ISPs market their service tiers as "up to" certain speeds, but when asked how often they feel they receive those speeds, only one-third of Canadians said it was most of the time or all of the time.

If only one-third consistently reach those advertised speeds, what does that say about the remaining two-thirds of Canadians? That would make for a strong majority of customers who do not believe they receive the quality of service they are paying for. With a number like that, it is clear something is not working for members of the public, and this creates a lack of trust, which weakens the industry itself. This is the problem Bill C-288 has in mind. A key part of the solution is transparency and, more importantly, accuracy. That is exactly what the first two points of this legislation would provide.

As the report noted, Internet providers market their service packages in a given area by saying they go "up to" a certain speed. This is called the maximum theoretical speed. It is a positive spin that sounds good to the potential customer and helps with making sales, but many do not realize the actual speed they are going to get does not match up with what they were told.

For some people, it is obviously annoying and inconvenient, but they can still get by, and that is bad enough, because they still feel like they are not getting what they paid for. For others, however, depending on where they live, it could make a more significant difference. They might be paying for Internet in theory, but it almost does not exist in practice. That is something that is a common occurrence in rural areas and that many members of this House have brought up, either in this debate or in other debates when we talk about broadband access. Either way, those people are likely to get a different impression as a customer if they are told about the typical speed on average and what the speed is during peak periods. It is a better reflection of the quality they will get when they are using the Internet, and it could affect the decision they might otherwise make when purchasing the product. Without having this information for more context, it is misleading in too many cases.

● (1835)

I proudly represent a rural riding myself. Over the years, I have heard from many people who have this problem with their Internet, and I actually saw it first-hand in my career prior to being a parliamentarian, when I worked as an Internet service provider technician. It was my job to not only install but also repair and fix people's Internet services.

As someone who had to deal with people who were told that they were getting one thing, but the reality was that they could only possibly get a fraction of that, I saw that it caused a lot of confusion and headache. I can tell members that, for an installer, this legislation would make life a lot simpler, knowing that customers have the accurate and appropriate information prior to either signing a contract for service or purchasing equipment for their services.

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For a lot of these paying customers, as well as for those of us working in the field, but especially for those customers, it would have been easier for everyone involved if there had been realistic information from the start, which, again, is what this bill would be doing. Bill C-288 would require that to be made available to Canadian consumers.

This is in line with what the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology recommended in a report last year. I know that the member who spoke before me already mentioned this recommendation, but I am going to say it again for the context of my speech. It recommends:

That the [CRTC] require Internet service providers to make information available to consumers on the usual download and upload speeds they can expect during peak periods so they can make more informed purchasing decisions based on accurate and transparent information, thereby improving the industry's competitiveness overall.

It would be simple enough to do it, and I think all parties can see the benefit. After this recommendation was put forward, the government side has tried to say that it announced a proposed policy directive to the CRTC earlier this year. In reality, it is not the same thing. Its proposal is vague, and it does not mention the issue with typical speeds or peak periods.

That is what we need to see happen, and the sooner, the better. We do not need to wait around for the lagging speed of government to catch up. It is good to see the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa bring forward a bill trying to get it done. We need to act on this like it is a real priority.

As of last week, we have seen progress from the FCC in the United States. It will require broadband providers to display easy-to-understand labels with key information. This will include typical upload and download speeds, as well as typical latency.

For years now, Australia has had standards for advertising for typical speeds during peak periods. As a result, going back to 2018, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has found benefits for consumers. It has also improved the industry by strengthening market competition. We can learn from them and do the same thing. We can encourage more innovation.

This is something that will benefit all Canadians, not just those in rural areas. I want to make sure that this point is clear to everyone. Part of the problem we sometimes have in this place is that there are different ideas of what “rural” actually means.

For one of the government's programs for rural connectivity, I once asked for a definition, and I was told that communities of 30,000 people or less were eligible. The largest community in my riding, for example, is only 18,000, so it is interesting to see how that fits in. We are dealing with the population of a city, at least, as I have mentioned to members, it is where I am from.

Another example we had was that the definition of “rural” could be described as any community that uses oil and gas or agriculture as its main economic driver. I think of some of the cities that we have out west, such as Edmonton and Calgary, which would be more than happy to say that those are some of the driving forces of their economies. I think that we would also agree that Calgary and Edmonton are not rural communities.

When it comes to Internet access, there was a recent news article published online with this headline: “Internet services in rural GTA ‘like living in the dark ages’: Oshawa residents”. People who live near urban areas of the GTA are describing problems similar to what I hear from my constituents back in rural Saskatchewan. One of the residents said, “We are within minutes of a shopping center and yet no internet”. That does not sound like someone living in the middle of nowhere.

Another person spoke about paying “an exorbitant amount of money for service that is less than adequate.” She continued, “We’ve tried almost every service provider available, and the end result is the same – spotty at best internet connection.”

My plea would be for everyone to consider supporting Bill C-288 because it would get the job done for getting accurate reporting for Canadians.

• (1840)

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to talk about the importance of Internet services and the need for consumer protection in the telecommunications industry.

The Government of Canada knows that now more than ever Canadians rely on telecom services for work, school, finances, health care and just staying connected to one another. All too often I hear Canadians' frustrations regarding their telecom services. I will continue to hold Canada's telecom service providers accountable and keep Canadians updated on the work our government is doing to strengthen the reliability of our networks as well as increase affordability, competition and consumer protection in this sector.

We are here today to discuss private member's bill, Bill C-288, an act to amend the Telecommunications Act regarding transparent and accurate broadband services information. I support the intent of the bill and agree that consumers need access to clear information about how broadband services are performing, so they can be confident that what they are paying for is what they are actually getting.

In fact, consumers also need more information about the cellular coverage provided by mobile services. Our government is already taking action. We will work to ensure the actions we have already taken to address this topic work in tandem with this legislation to improve outcomes for Canadians and can be implemented quickly.

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In May our government tabled in both Houses of Parliament a draft policy direction to the CRTC on a renewed approach to telecommunications policy. The proposed policy direction is legally binding and directs the CRTC on a range of issues. These include putting in place new rules to improve competition, enhancing the rights of consumers and their access to information, speeding up the deployment of high-quality broadband networks, and promoting lower prices and better telecom services for Canadian consumers.

[Translation]

The policy direction also asks service providers to collect, publicly report and make available to consumers information on the services they offer. It also requires them to test the technologies that are used the most in rural regions, such as fixed wireless. What is more, we are asking the CRTC to develop and implement a standardized and robust approach for reporting mobile wireless coverage.

[English]

Another key part of the proposed policy direction would require the CRTC to take measures to promote clarity and transparency of pricing information and service plan characteristics in marketing materials. This will allow consumers to better understand their choices in the Internet market.

[Translation]

The CRTC has worked on that. For example, it introduced a program called measuring broadband Canada, which involved testing a number of broadband performance metrics, such as download and upload speeds, the impact of peak periods and latency for Internet service providers that offer the highest subscription fees.

The program was flawed, however. Participation was voluntary, and the study did not take into account the reality of rural regions. Internet services using fixed wireless technology were not included in the tests, which left many Canadians, especially those in rural and remote regions, without any information on the performance of their Internet service.

• (1845)

[English]

Our government understands that the CRTC needs to ensure that it is not only testing broadband performance generally, but addressing the gaps in the previous tests. We have measures under way to make sure this happens. We are in agreement that the CRTC needed additional direction to ensure consumers are fully protected, and the binding policy direction will achieve that in parallel with the new legislation.

[Translation]

The proposed direction was tabled in both chambers of Parliament on May 30, 2022, for a minimum of 40 sitting days and has been the subject of extensive public consultation. I will soon present the final version, which takes into account what we heard from the Governor in Council. It will then be published in the form of a decree that will be legally binding for the CRTC.

[English]

The policy direction requires that testing be done on a regular basis and clarifies that participation is mandatory for ISPs. It also captures more technologies by including mobile wireless in addition to broadband Internet.

[Translation]

The direction will soon be finalized and the government will be able to easily update it as the market and technologies evolve. If new technologies emerge, we can ask the CRTC to take measures to test them. I think that everyone here recognizes that this is a very important issue. We want to show Canadians that we are working with our colleagues to improve the telecommunications sector's response to consumers' needs.

[English]

For these reasons, I am also supporting adjustments to the proposed policy direction text so that it takes into account language from this bill and makes clear that we recognize the importance of regular, mandatory broadband performance testing. This approach will demonstrate that Parliament is working together to progress diligently toward important goals for the telecom sector.

[Translation]

The direction contains many other important initiatives that will encourage competition and benefit consumers. For example, it will eliminate regulatory uncertainty for small competing service providers and strengthen their business case so that they can offer more services on the market. It will also order the CRTC to improve access to telephone poles and similar infrastructure, which we know is important for the construction of new broadband networks.

[English]

The policy direction also instructs the CRTC to increase the public's awareness of the telecommunications complaints organization so that consumers have recourse if they are treated unfairly by a telecom provider. It will require the CRTC to proactively and systematically improve the accessibility of telecommunications services for Canadians with disabilities.

I am pleased that the policy direction can work together with the proposed legislation to make progress in this area for Canadians.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): I have a great audience tonight, Madam Speaker. I hope I will be able to concentrate.

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Stephen Hawking once said, “We are all now connected by the Internet, like neurons in a giant brain.” In this giant brain, good Internet is equivalent to a high IQ. It lets us go further in life. The issues in the Internet service market involve both the providers themselves and the legal framework in which they operate, and can be summed up in two points that are intrinsically linked. The first is the inadequate service quality and download speeds, and the second is the exorbitant rates that Quebecers and Canadians pay for their telecommunications services.

This bill seeks, among other things, to give consumers the ability to make an informed decision when choosing an Internet service provider. In other words, Internet providers will no longer have the right to advertise the highest theoretical speed possible, but will have to indicate the average speed, especially during peak periods. That is a good start.

We should note right from the outset that the proposed measures apply only to fixed broadband service and not mobile phones, even though everyone knows that cell phone rates in Canada are much higher than elsewhere in the world, but let us move on.

This bill will contribute to improving the situation, but other actions will have to be taken. As I will explain, there needs to be a discussion on competition and the market power of the telecommunications giants.

I would like to begin with the importance of having access to high-quality Internet. This service is beyond essential. The quality and affordability of Internet services are closely linked to the economic performance of Quebec and Canada.

Let me share a quick story. In my former life as a consultant, I had a contract in the Republic of Palau. It is a small island paradise in the middle of the Pacific, and I was able to help its finance department improve their environmental, social and accounting standards so they could receive money from foreign funds. The Island of Palau does not really have Internet. My stay went very well with a bit of an Internet connection, and therefore less work, potentially, but ultimately, we can see that Palau's economic development has suffered a great deal due to this. I experienced that.

The trend has been moving towards digitizing the economy for several years now, and the pandemic only accelerated this. The massive shift to telework and people's ability to work remotely should encourage the development of the regions of Quebec and Canada. Unfortunately, the Liberal government is struggling to keep up with technological developments and the digitization of the economy. Its outdated policies mean that Canada often lags behind on telecommunications affordability.

We cannot talk about economic development without considering the quality of Internet access. It is as important to economic development as the power grid was in Quebec in the 1960s.

The Quebec government is working hard to improve Internet access, particularly in remote areas. High-speed Internet access for all eligible households in Quebec is a priority for the Quebec government. Furthermore, it has invested huge amounts of money in this area. To date, the Quebec government has budgeted \$1.3 billion to get households connected faster to high-speed Internet. In comparison, the Government of Canada has invested \$1 billion this year,

bringing its total investment to \$2.75 billion. In Quebec, the amount is about \$150 per person. In Canada, it is half that, or only about \$75 per person.

Now let us look at what is happening internationally. Every year, The Economist compiles data on Internet services in about 100 countries. Although Canada scores well for quality of infrastructure and literacy, which is Canadians' understanding of and ability to use Internet services, its rank is rapidly declining because of its competition and affordability scores.

If the government really wants to bring telecommunications costs down and improve service quality, it has to use the Competition Act. Canada has a frustrating tendency to tolerate and sometimes even encourage monopolistic practices. In many of the country's markets, including telecommunications, a handful of companies dominate the entire market. The upshot is that providers have a lot more leeway when it comes to deciding how much to charge.

• (1850)

Time for a quick economics refresher. In an ideal market, the price of a service is equivalent to the marginal cost, that is, the cost that the supplier pays to provide the service. It is quite easy to demonstrate, and this has been studied by economists, that in Quebec and in Canada, we pay a price that is much higher than the marginal cost. There are people who agree. For example, Bell, Rogers, Shaw and Telus collectively account for 71.7% of Internet service revenues. That is what we call an oligopoly, a market dominated by a small number of suppliers. For cellphone services, it is even worse. Three companies, Bell, Rogers and Telus, hold nearly 91% of the market.

As a general rule, increasing the number of companies in a market does two things that benefit consumers and are ultimately good for the economy. Healthy competition in a market tends to lower the prices paid by consumers. In addition, companies often improve the quality of their services to attract and retain customers. While this rule is not absolute, it applies particularly well to telecommunications markets. Let us look again at what is done in other countries. Telecommunications prices are much lower in Europe, where there are a large number of telecommunications service providers. In The Economist's list, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Sweden all rank higher than Canada on the Internet affordability index.

This summer, the Liberal government passed a competition reform that does not do enough to result in real change. The Liberal government's competition policies are outdated and not very well suited to the reality of the digital economy in Quebec and Canada. In practical terms, some sections of the Competition Act, which dates back to the 1980s, are obsolete and due for a serious update. It is not just the Bloc Québécois that is saying that. The competition commissioner is, too. In fact, in January, he published a list of recommendations to modernize the Competition Act. One of them involves removing the provision on the efficiency gains argument, which allows one company to merge with another on the pretext that it will be more efficient. Let us acknowledge right off the bat that this provision is an anomaly. It does not exist in the rest of the world. It exists in Canada and it is putting many consumers at a real disadvantage, so it should be removed from the act.

This very argument could be made in the transaction between Shaw and Rogers, which is currently before the court. Let us recall that two out of the four companies that make up the oligopoly on Internet telecommunications want to merge their services. When this provision is invoked, the Competition Bureau cannot block the transaction, even if it is anti-competitive. In a market that is already perceived to be run by an oligopoly, this transaction should not go through. Speaking before the Competition Tribunal quite recently, an economist from Dalhousie University, Mr. Osberg, said that low-income Canadians who are already dealing with inflationary pressures would be the most affected if the cost of telecommunications increases in the wake of the merger. The last thing we need right now is to further reduce competition and guarantee that prices increase even more.

The other thing the commissioner recommended as an important change to the Competition Act is related to the fact that the Competition Bureau does not have the final say on a transaction. A minister, an elected official, someone who is anything but neutral, can make a decision that goes against the bureau's recommendation. That is what happens. In the case of the Shaw-Rogers merger, the Minister of Industry intervened to defend the transaction. Yes, he is defending the deal, suggesting that part of Shaw be acquired by one of the other four providers instead. Guess what the bureau's response was. It said no, that is not a good enough solution. Unfortunately, it is not up to the bureau to make that decision. The minister will have the final say.

In closing, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of Bill C-288, because it will allow consumers to make more informed choices about Internet packages. Consumers need to be able to see the actual download speeds they will be getting, rather than the theoretical highest speed. Since speeds are lower at peak hours, it is important that consumers get accurate information about the service they will receive at those times.

In short, the bill is a step in the right direction, but it clearly does not go far enough. As my leader likes to say, the Bloc Québécois is never against apple pie. However, I know that apple pie alone does not make a nutritious dinner. We need more.

• (1855)

I hope that I demonstrated, in a short amount of time, the importance of in-depth reform of the Competition Bureau, real reform

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that will stop the telecommunications giants' lobbyists from abusing their position of power and ensure that consumers, honest citizens, are finally protected.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa for his right of reply.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will begin by thanking my colleagues who have spoken in support of my bill.

It is humbling to see a piece of legislation with one's name on it move through the parliamentary process. It is also a reminder of why we were sent to the House of Commons and of our duty to represent the Canadians who put their trust in us.

I also thank our Conservative leader for appointing me as the shadow minister responsible for connectivity. Since I was first elected, I have strived to improve connectivity in Canada. I could have introduced legislation that scored political points and did not have a chance to pass, but I wanted to make a difference on the issue of connectivity.

When I began developing Bill C-288, I approached it from a non-partisan, pro-consumer point of view. I was privileged to work with industry experts, researchers, academics, advocacy groups and members from across the political spectrum to get where we are today, and here we are. In the coming days, Parliament will vote on Bill C-288, a truly non-partisan, pro-consumer bill.

Since Bill C-288 was introduced, a few things have come to light. One thing is an argument that the government's proposed policy directive to the CRTC would address the content of my bill. I want to make two points on this argument. The first is that nowhere in the government's policy directive are there details of what information Internet companies must provide consumers with. There is no mention of peak periods. There is no mention of typical speeds. There is no mention of public hearings.

The second is the notion that these important decisions should be left entirely to the CRTC, instead of being made by parliamentarians. Connectivity issues are too important to always be pushed into policy directives. Members of the House should make these decisions on behalf of the Canadians we represent and not leave everything up to the CRTC. Nowhere in the Telecommunications Act is there a public interest objective focused on ensuring that the economic and social interests of Canadians are at the centre of the system.

Bill C-288 strikes a balance between empowering parliamentarians and a regulatory body. While some may argue that this bill does not go far enough, I think it is an important step forward.

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The other matter that has emerged since my bill was introduced is that the United States Federal Communications Commission announced that they will mandate a broadband service label. This was a direct result of the legislated Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. It will ensure consumers have a better understanding of what Internet services they are paying for. This significant announcement reflects the content of Bill C-288.

A statement from the FCC commissioner, Geoffrey Starks, on this announcement read:

Instead of legalese, consumers will have clear, straightforward information about a provider's service offerings....

He went on to state:

I fully expect that this transparency will increase competition and hopefully result in lower prices for consumers.

What a significant statement. Too many Canadians purchase Internet services at sky-high prices only to realize that the quality and speed they expected to receive are nowhere near what they actually receive.

As I have said, Canadians do not believe they are receiving the Internet service they are paying for. Connectivity is no longer a luxury. Connectivity is essential to the safety of our communities, to the economic growth of rural regions and to the accessibility of services like education and health care. Canadians should know what they are paying for before they purchase an Internet service, not after.

I encourage all parliamentarians to support Bill C-288.

• (1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

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

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

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, I ask that it carry on division, please.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 30, at the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1905)

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, on September 27, I asked the Minister of Housing if he would ensure that there are meaningful investments in a for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy in budget 2023. When the minister heard the story of a young indigenous woman in Ottawa who was murdered because she lacked access to safe and affordable housing, he said, "words fail me".

The missing murdered and indigenous women's inquiry's final report cites housing 299 times, yet the empty words of the government continue to fail indigenous people. UNDRIP is clear that all indigenous people, including those living away from their home communities, have a right to safe and adequate housing. The government has a legal obligation to implement this basic human right, but in budget 2022, the Liberal government allocated just \$300 million over five years to establish a for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy. This amount is woefully inadequate. The NDP has consistently called on the Liberals to invest sufficient funds to meet the need.

To be clear, \$300 million is not even enough to address the housing needs of indigenous people living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, but the Liberals were content to spend this money over five years for research and administrative purposes. This is a cruel joke. As a result of the supply and confidence agreement, the NDP is forcing the Liberals to accelerate the timeline to roll out funding over two years and ensure that the money is used for an interim emergency fund for urgent unmet needs, which is work now being undertaken by Indigenous Services Canada.

It is shocking, however, that the government continues to insist on the need for more data and research. If the dire housing crisis facing indigenous people was not bad enough, the government is placing further burden on them by forcing them to prove their level of need. The government has more than enough data to justify the needed investments.

In May 2021, a report from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities recommended sufficient and long-term funding to be allocated to support a for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy. Here are some of the numbers detailed in the report.

Indigenous households are 1.2 times more likely to live in inadequate and/or unsuitable housing than non-indigenous households and are disproportionately unhoused. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, 124,000 indigenous off-reserve households were in housing need in 2020, while 9,000 households in Winnipeg and 8,000 households in Vancouver alone were in housing need. About 50% of the 700 indigenous youth who will age out of foster care in Vancouver each year will end up on the streets.

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According to the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 73,000 units are needed in urban, rural and northern indigenous communities to meet the housing shortfall. CHRA has called for an investment of \$25 billion over 10 years, while \$1.89 billion is needed to build 3,000 housing units in Nunavut alone. However, the government believes \$300 million is a record investment. It is unbelievable.

Indigenous, Métis and Inuit people living away from their home communities have the right to housing. It is clearly outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is time for real action.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government recognizes that indigenous people, regardless of where they live, face unique barriers to finding housing that they can afford and that meets their needs.

We know that decent housing is essential to improving social and health outcomes and providing a dignified future for indigenous communities and children. To get it right, we know that the solutions we develop must be “for indigenous people, by indigenous people”. That is why our most recent budget reiterated our commitment to working with indigenous communities to jointly develop and launch a housing strategy for indigenous people in urban, rural and northern communities.

This is just one element of the most recent budget that addresses indigenous housing. It is in addition to the \$4-billion investment over seven years to Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to accelerate work to close the housing gap for indigenous people.

Our rapid housing initiative, created to respond to urgent housing needs during the pandemic, was extremely successful with indigenous groups. During the first two phases, indigenous peoples represented over 40% of recipients. Budget 2022 allocated an additional \$1.5 billion to the rapid housing initiative. This funding will provide even more support for building and improving housing for indigenous people.

During a committee meeting, Vice-Chief Richard Derocher of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council expressed appreciation for the CMHC's work to make housing available on reserve, especially housing for people with low incomes. He said he hoped to see more of it.

There is still a lot of work to do to improve indigenous housing conditions, just as there is still a lot of work to do to advance reconciliation in this country. That is why we will keep working with first nations, Inuit and Métis organizations to jointly develop tailored housing strategies that meet their communities' unique needs and are based on the principle of self-determination.

● (1910)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary should know that distinctions-based housing is not dedicated for a for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern indigenous

housing strategy, nor is the funding from the RHI dedicated for indigenous people specifically. The parliamentary secretary should know that and the government should know that.

That is why the NDP is forcing the government to take action with the interim funding and the \$300 million, but that is not enough. What we want to see, and what we must see, is real investment to meet need in budget 2023. If the government is serious about reconciliation, honouring indigenous people and abiding by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it must take real action and invest to meet need, not just talk.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that indigenous people are disproportionately affected by the housing supply problem in Canada. That is why first nations communities and also Métis and Inuit communities have been made a priority in our housing initiatives to date, and will continue to be a priority.

In our 2022 budget, we committed to investing billions of dollars to expedite the work of addressing the housing shortage for indigenous peoples. As a result of the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy proposed in the budget, future housing activities will be inclusive and appropriate.

This strategy must meet the needs of indigenous communities as defined by the communities themselves and result in a dignified future for indigenous communities.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, over the last number of months, we have heard serious allegations of political interference in the RCMP investigation in Nova Scotia. I am a member of the public safety committee, and those allegations actually prompted the committee to have the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and the RCMP commissioner appear before the committee twice, once in the summer and once more recently, so they could answer questions about these allegations.

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The second meeting was held after the recording was made public and the committee had a transcript of the words that were said in that call. While I am now satisfied that we do not have enough evidence to substantiate those claims, throughout this process I have always been curious about how we can fix this problem and prevent it from happening again in the future. What I have discovered is that a large part of the problem lies in how the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act is written.

Currently, subsection 5(1) states:

The Governor in Council may appoint an officer, to be known as the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to hold office during pleasure, who, under the direction of the Minister, has the control and management of the Force and all matters connected with the Force.

The term “under the direction of the Minister” is so sufficiently vague that we could drive a truck through it. It is open to interpretation and has led to problems.

That is why last week, after having introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-303, to tackle this and firm up the language, I asked a question on whether I could get the government's support on this bill. What my bill seeks to do is specifically add clarity, that dividing line between what the Minister of Public Safety can do, the kinds of directions they can give and what is reasonably expected to maintain independence from our national police force.

In my bill, I took the time to state that the minister would not be able to issue any directions in “operational decisions”, when it comes to “matters respecting law enforcement decisions in specific cases, such as those relating to investigations, arrests and prosecutions”, or “any matter that would interfere with the Commissioner’s powers or authority” in managing the force. It would put that legislative thick line between what the minister can and cannot do and also the powers of the commissioner.

The bill is a good idea, and I would really encourage the government to look at it seriously. In fact, I would even welcome the government presenting its own bill on this. I think it would find a lot of support in the House because, again, the problems have been so very clearly demonstrated.

Members should not just take it from me because Commissioner Lucki was on the stand at the inquiry last week and directly referenced my bill. She said, “I think it's time that we put something to writing that outlines...what you can and cannot do from both the Commissioner's perspective and the politicians”. She later said, “in the last six months I've had to respond to it on several occasions, and so...my hope is that my replacement won't have to.” Those are quotes from the commissioner of the RCMP, who herself acknowledges that this is a problem and that my bill would fix this issue.

Therefore, given all of this information, will the parliamentary secretary now commit to supporting this bill so that, going forward, we do not have to worry about this issue any further?

● (1915)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his continued good work on the public safety committee, his keen interest in the issue of police accountability and oversight, and his pragmatic, pro-

gressive leadership on a number of issues for which we share a passion.

The hon. member knows that the independence of law enforcement is vital to our democracy. Good governance is essential to good policing. I look forward to reviewing the legislation he has brought forward, and I will continue to work with all members of the House in support of the continued independence of the RCMP.

I would also add that police operational independence is a key principle that underpins the rule of law. Our government has always respected the independence of the police, so that they can never be subject to political interference. This is imperative so that the public trusts that the police will follow the rule of law and, as such, that the police will act in the public interest.

As well, I trust that members will agree when I say that it is the government's duty and responsibility to the Canadian public to ask questions about how police can best serve our communities. I will continue to push the RCMP to meet the needs of the communities it serves and transform its culture into one in which accountability, equity, diversity and inclusion are foundational tenets.

Police services in Canada are entrusted with a broad mandate and significant powers to enforce the law, keep the peace and maintain public safety. Maintaining the trust of the public through accountable, transparent policing is crucial to effective policing in a democratic society.

The government is committed to improving civilian oversight of the RCMP. We are advancing accountability in several areas, including our commitment to enhance and strengthen the role of the management advisory board, an independent body that provides advice and expertise to the commissioner.

The government has also introduced Bill C-20, which would establish a new public complaints and review commission for the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency. The bill is a pivotal step forward in ensuring the transparency and accountability of these organizations, and it represents a commitment to Canadians that they can expect consistent, fair and equitable treatment when interacting with these organizations. I know the hon. member shares my hope that this legislation will pass quickly, so that we can raise the bar on transparency and accountability and increase the confidence of Canadians in their law enforcement institutions while respecting the operational independence of policing institutions in Canada.

● (1920)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's assurances, but assurances are not a substitute for solid legislation, and I think there is an argument to be made for my bill.

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Previous governments have gotten into trouble. The Chrétien government got into trouble in the 1990s with the APEC summit, and the Diefenbaker government got into trouble in the 1950s. Both involved political interference with the RCMP, so there are precedents here.

We need to look at The Police Services Act of Manitoba, the Ontario police act, and abroad to the state of South Australia. These are all examples of where this type of specificity in the legislation is already in operation, so I would encourage the parliamentary secretary to not only look at precedents, but to also look at existing examples.

Again, I put it to her that I hope the government will entertain this legislation as a serious initiative to prevent our successors from ever encountering this problem.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I assure the hon. member that he is heard. I reiterate that good policing requires good governance, and I look forward to working with him and all members of the House on the continued independence of the RCMP.

PASSPORTS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak about the urgency of protecting children from predators and sexual abuse. This is an issue I have raised many times in this place, and I have often confronted the government for what seems to be a lack of concern and lack of action.

In June, I asked the government to inform the House of the number of passports it had given to child sex offenders over the past seven years, and the minister did not answer that question. The Harper Conservatives left the Liberal government with an important tool to protect kids abroad from sexual exploitation. Far too often, Canadians travel abroad to countries to pay to sexually exploit and rape children. Common destinations around the world are countries in Southeast Asia such as Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines, and countries south of Canada such as Mexico, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.

Just before the 2015 election, the former Conservative government changed the passport order to allow the minister of citizenship and immigration to revoke the passports of Canadians who are likely to go abroad to exploit children. However, the Liberals have not been making use of this particular tool to help protect children. Between 2015, when they came to power, and mid-2021, the Liberal government only revoked 13 passports from child predators and only refused eight passports.

Canada has 60,000 registered sex offenders, and 72% of them are child predators. That is over 42,000 child predators in Canada. Between 2,500 and 3,500 new names are added to this registry every year. However, after six years in power, the Liberal government has only refused eight passports to child predators. It is horrifying, it is unconscionable and it is immoral. It is almost as if the government has been doing as little as possible to protect children. It has a track record of being soft on criminals and putting the rights of predators first, and this is another example of that.

The United States is also a key destination for Canadian child predators, and since 2016, the U.S. government has been pleading

with Canada to share information when a convicted Canadian child sex offender is travelling abroad or travelling to the U.S. The Liberals' response is no and that we must respect the privacy rights of these child predators. It was only last month, after *The Globe and Mail* continued to shed light on this, first in February and again a few weeks ago, that under public exposure, the Liberals finally agreed to this request from the United States.

Consider that in the first half of 2022, the United States provided Canada with details of over 165 Americans convicted of child sexual abuse who were coming into Canada, and we were able to deny 112 of them access to Canada. During that same time, Canada only gave the United States a heads-up once. I guarantee it was only because of the first *Globe and Mail* article. I do not know that for sure, but it is my suspicion.

Through organizations that work to rescue and restore children who have been exploited, we know that Canadian child sex offenders who have been convicted of horrific crimes against children are travelling back overseas. The Liberal government knows they are travelling. How? It gave them passports. The Liberals also know that these predators have to notify the government every time they travel, yet the Liberals do everything they can to protect the privacy of these predators.

I expect the hon. parliamentary secretary to tell us how they plan to introduce a bill to make sharing the information of child predators easier and put more restrictions on these predators. The reality is that nobody trusts the government when it is not even using the tools it has.

Once again, can the minister tell us—

• (1925)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his questions, but before starting to answer the questions, let me give a bit of background information to make sure everyone understands the process.

Adjournment Proceedings

The passport entitlement and investigations division, known as PEID, renders entitlement decisions. Those decisions include approvals, cancellations, refusals and revocations. It can also impose periods of refusal of services when a situation merits many administrative sanctions. The division conducts administrative investigations into cases of possible entitlement fraud, identity fraud and passport misuse. It does so in accordance with the Canadian passport order and the principles of natural justice, determining eligibility for and entitlement to passport services for individuals who may be subject to judicial or criminal issues in Canada or abroad.

In 2015, the Canadian passport order was amended, as mentioned, to include section 9(2). This section allows IRCC to cancel passports when there are reasonable grounds to suspect and refuse to reissue or revoke passports where there are reasonable grounds to believe that such action is necessary to prevent the commission of a sexual offence against a child in Canada or abroad.

About today's questions, I can assure my colleagues that Canada's passport programs work closely with the criminal justice community to obtain information on individuals who may be subjected to passport restrictions.

I can also assure my colleagues that whenever information is shared by partnering agencies, IRCC will conduct an administrative investigation to determine if action is merited pursuant to the order.

Let me explain how it works. In order for information to be actionable, it needs to be indicative of the potential for the activity occurring in the future. If information is not sufficient at the time of review to refuse issuance or revoke a passport, the individual will remain on the passport program system lookout watch-list. This is for monitoring purposes for a future review of their entitlement for passport services. Here it is important to note that other sections of the order allow for action when charges or judicial restrictions exist in these situations.

All we know is there are far more law-abiding Canadians who are deserving of a passport, and we want to serve them well while protecting children from sex offenders. Having worked as a social worker and an advocate for children's rights, I too am concerned about the safety and security of our kids and grandkids. However, their safety remains paramount. The government will never compromise that.

Every passport application is scrutinized and assessed on its own merits while balancing service standards with safety. That is why security and integrity have always remained top of list over the past year as we put measures in place to respond to the increasing demands for passports.

The service offered at Service Canada centres continues to improve, but always in compliance with security and integrity. For example, one of those improvements is increasing the number of sites offering 10 business day passport pickup service to 13, including in my home community of Orleans. It also allows applicants to keep their personal documents and not have to mail them in.

Across the country we are continuing to improve services, and we are continuing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I still do not have an answer to my question. The question was this: How many passports has the Liberal government given to convicted child sex offenders?

I noted off the top that there are 72,000 Canadians on the sex offender list, of whom 42,000 are child sex offenders. We know through Order Paper questions that the government has refused a passport to only about a handful, fewer than 20, of the cases. The question is, how many has it granted? That is the question I am trying to get at.

I know about the review body. I know about all these things. My question is this: Why are child sex offenders getting passports? I hear from civil society groups that monitor these things that they know what particular individuals are doing and where they are going. They are asking why those individuals are getting a passport.

• (1930)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, this is an attitude of all hands on deck to make sure that individuals who do not deserve a passport do not get one.

Canada's passport program is working hand in hand with partners such as Correctional Services Canada, the RCMP, police services and partnering agencies to make sure that sex offenders do not get a passport. We are doing so while making sure that all other Canadians who do deserve a passport will get one in due time.

We may have implemented many well-thought-out, reality-based solutions to speed up the process to get a passport this year, but one thing we did not do is compromise the integrity of the passport rights. At all costs, we must protect our children, and that is exactly what we are going to continue to do.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:31 p.m.)

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