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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 12, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC) moved that Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine) be concurred in.

The Speaker: 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.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, I request that it be carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Before the House proceeds to the debate at third reading, the Chair wishes to remind members that pursuant to the statement made on Tuesday, April 5, a royal recommendation is required for Bill C-215, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, illness, injury or quarantine, since the bill appropriates part of the public revenue.

[*Translation*]

Unless 24 hours' notice is given of such a royal recommendation at the conclusion of the debate on Bill C-215, the question on the motion for third reading of the bill will not be put.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to deliver this third reading speech on my private member's bill, Bill C-215, to amend the number of weeks of EI sickness benefits.

As lawmakers, the actions we take and the political decisions we make every day must be guided by practical and responsible ethics. Naturally, I wish to remind my Liberal colleagues and the Prime Minister of this duty, which is necessary to the well-being of our society, because Bill C-215 is still awaiting a royal recommendation.

Bill C-215 proposed to increase from 15 to 52 weeks the period for which Canadians eligible for EI sickness benefits are able to use extra weeks for their recovery or their convalescence, thereby providing a minimum amount of financial security in case of serious illness, such as cancer and other illnesses that require long recovery periods.

Since the latest reading, Bill C-215 has gone to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and all committee members voted in favour of the report on October 19.

Furthermore, all our hard work has resulted in a half win, given that, on November 25, the Liberal government announced a glimmer of hope for sick Canadians who can begin applying as of December 18, 2022.

They could receive up to 26 weeks of EI sickness benefits instead of 15. To say that 26 is better than 15 gives very little comfort to sick Canadians who are simply trying to survive, especially in these tough inflationary times. It is even worse when we consider that recovering from a serious illness takes about 38 to 40 weeks in many cases.

This is a good start, but it falls short. It does not do justice to the spirit of the outdated legislation, which is meant to respond to the real needs identified by experts. These experts wanted to see up to 52 weeks of benefits provided to sick people, who need almost a year for a full recovery.

Private Members' Business

As members know, this bill has been introduced many times to address the outdated legislation from 1971, and here we are with 2023 right around the corner. As I said earlier, this bill absolutely must have the support of the Liberal government to get royal recommendation and to proceed. So far, all signs point to the Liberal Party leaving 31,000 sick Canadians per year out in the cold, without a penny to recover and regain their health after the promised 26 weeks, as I would remind members.

I have to say that I am completely befuddled by the government's refusal to support this responsible and just bill for Canadians who do not have insurance.

However, the government has, to some degree, recognized this very serious need, and I am pleased with one thing: Increasing the maximum benefit to 26 weeks means that the bulk of the cost for this measure has been dealt with.

There are three key words associated with Bill C-215: affordable, reasonable and shared.

According to a 2019 study, this is an affordable bill with a reasonable cost, which is shared by Canadians and Canadian employers. The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed it in March 2022.

As I stated at second reading, the March 2022 study indicated that 151,000 Canadians a year need more than 15 weeks of sickness benefits for their convalescence. Should those 151,000 Canadians use all of their weeks, the cost would amount to \$1.6 billion a year on average for the next five years.

• (1110)

When I was a witness at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on October 17 and 19, I had the opportunity to present my bill and again demonstrate its merits, which are indisputable to all except my Liberal colleagues and the Prime Minister, of course. During these hours of study at committee, several witnesses were given the opportunity to speak and deliver a touching testimony; some even shared their medical or bureaucratic expertise.

On October 19, the committee questioned Benoit Cadieux, director of special benefits and employment insurance policy at the Skills and Employment Branch of the Department of Employment and Social Development. According to Mr. Cadieux, the estimated cost in the next budget for shifting from 15 weeks to 26 weeks is \$1 billion for the first year.

The legislative costing note for Bill C-215, prepared by the Parliamentary Budget Officer in March, shows that the bill, which seeks to increase the number of weeks of EI sickness benefits from 15 to 52, would cost \$1.92 billion in the first year. The additional cost of increasing EI sickness benefits from 26 to 52 weeks would therefore be \$92 million per year. Doing so would make it possible to help all those who need EI sickness benefits. That is a completely reasonable cost to protect the 31,000 Canadians who do not have insurance and who need more than 26 weeks to recover from a serious illness.

Everyone here who is in good health is unbelievably lucky, and this good health is too often taken for granted. For many, cancer is

an experience they go through, but others are not lucky enough to recover quickly, especially if they have many other concerns on their plate. As we know, the medical aspect is just one part of living with cancer. Then there is life after treatment, which is a period of transition and adjustment that often brings challenges that are much more onerous than the patient was originally expecting.

Given the scope of the challenge facing Canadians and the tremendous resilience they have, we must absolutely support them through this experience, which involves precarious periods of great uncertainty. Many people have to rethink every aspect of their lives, and that takes a lot of courage. Many people have to rethink every aspect of their lives, and that takes a lot of courage.

Canadians need us. I hope that this third hour of debate will persuade the Liberal government to give them what they deserve, which is the right conditions for recovery while they await better financial support. Here in Canada, we are lucky to have a health care system that delivers hospital care to sick people for free. However, there can be many out-of-pocket and unforeseen expenses. As I have said in the House before, I had to deal with those challenges and unforeseen costs with my spouse. There is the travel to the treatment site, for example, along with parking, child care, nutritional supplements, vitamins and prescription drugs, as well as any equipment needed for recovery.

Even now, EI sickness benefits provide up to 15 weeks of financial support to individuals who cannot work for medical reasons, enabling them to collect 55% of their earnings. I think Canadians agree that even 26 weeks is not enough and that we can do better.

In closing, I will review all the reasons why my Bill C-215 is a good bill. All parties and experts in the field agree that we must increase the number of weeks of EI sickness benefits from 15 to 50. This bill proposes to extend benefits to 52 weeks.

• (1115)

It is our duty as legislators to ensure that we have an adequate safety net for the most vulnerable. This measure affects 55% of the population, namely those who do not have group insurance and work primarily in the goods and services sector.

Private Members' Business

The EI program has rigorous monitoring and annual audit mechanisms to prevent mistakes, fraud and abuse. The medical certificate attests to the number of weeks required for the recovery of an applicant through the healing process. This is a promise that was made by the Conservative Party of Canada during the 2021 election campaign. This measure was voted on by members of our party and presented in the Conservative Party of Canada platform. Employees who have a private health plan must use up their weeks of sick leave before applying for EI sickness benefits. This measure is affordable and reasonable when we consider the cost to small and medium-sized businesses of private insurance plans offering the same benefits.

On December 18, the Liberal government will increase employment insurance sickness benefits to 26 weeks. This means that the Parliamentary Budget Officer's cost estimate would be greatly reduced and represent an additional \$92 million a year for a maximum of 52 weeks of benefits. Our society can cover this. All we need is the political will on the Liberals' part. I sincerely hope, for all those who need it, that Bill C-215 will receive a royal recommendation from the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance and the support of all my colleagues in the House at third reading. This is a noble cause. It will make it possible for our loved ones to take care of themselves and to take the time they need to fully recover.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to wish you happy holidays. I also extend season's greetings to my colleagues and all Canadians, including the people living in the wonderful riding of Lévis—Lotbinière.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member so much for his advocacy. I enjoyed listening to testimony at the HUMA committee and appreciated the opportunity to have that testimony.

My question is about the comments the member made around retail workers. We know that right now, almost three million Canadians work in the retail and postal trades. I wonder if the member could expand a bit on why this bill is so important for those workers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very important question.

Unfortunately, retail workers are not lucky enough to have group insurance, to have insurance through their employer to cover a period after 15 weeks. These workers, who do not necessarily have the highest income in Canada, are hard hit when they get a serious illness and their 15 weeks run out. As of next year, they will have 26 weeks. They are not fortunate enough to have the income they need to fully convalesce and recover. That is really important, and it affects thousands of Canadians every year.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière for his speech.

My question is this. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. At the last meeting, for the

umpteenth time, we invited witnesses, such as Marie-Hélène Dubé, who in addition to battling her disease, is fighting to have the number of weeks of EI sickness benefits increased from 15 to 50. We also heard from Émilie Sansfaçon's father. Émilie had to battle against cancer, but she also struggled with financial issues because of the measly 15 weeks of EI sickness benefits. She was unable to continue fighting for either her life or the cause.

What does the member think it would take to really convince the Liberal government to take action so that, once and for all, we ensure accountability and justice for all those people who, like Ms. Dubé and Ms. Sansfaçon, are fighting to recover in dignity?

• (1125)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question. As legislators in the House, we have all heard about Canadians in our respective ridings who needed more weeks of employment insurance sickness benefits.

That being said, there is one important thing that might convince the Liberal government. At the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, a senior official from the department told us that it would cost \$1 billion to shift to 26 weeks of benefits. According to the parliamentary budget officer, to see this through, an additional \$92 million would be needed for the first year, for a total of \$1,092,000,000.

This is a small bridge to gap to be able to provide financial security to all Canadians who are sick. Without these 52 weeks, every year we are denying 31,000 Canadians the extra weeks of benefits that they need. It is worth the Liberal Party, the party in power, taking that into consideration.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague and thank him for introducing this very important bill.

My colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière had a life-changing experience in his day. I wonder if he could briefly share with us what this kind of support would have meant to him when he was facing a similar situation to the one that many other Canadians are currently going through.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. He knows me well and he knows my story. In all humility, I can say that I might not be where I am today if my wife had not experienced what she did. I am here because society, our family and our friends gave us a lot. We did not receive any government support, but we had a lot of support from our loved ones to get through this major ordeal.

Private Members' Business

This is a way that I can, for the rest of my life, give back to society what it has given me. I know that this bill will help hundreds of thousands of families for generations to come. Modernizing sickness benefits in the Employment Insurance Act will have taken 50 years. We should not miss the boat for the next 50 years.

[English]

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate on Bill C-215, sponsored by the member for Lévis—Lotbinière. The bill is about amending the Employment Insurance Act in the areas of illness, injury and quarantine. This bill would modify existing legislation to extend EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 52 weeks.

I want to be clear from the outset: The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion opposes this bill, and the Government of Canada opposes this bill. I also want to be clear that Parliament has already approved an extension of EI sickness benefits to 26 weeks. These changes are being implemented as we speak, and as recently announced, they will be up and running beginning December 18. Additionally, the legislative changes related to this extension have already received royal assent. Therefore, I will be using my time today to explain our position and outline how our changes to Canada's EI program will help support Canadian workers.

Let there be no doubt that we recognize the financial challenges that Canadians suffering from long-term illness or injury and their families face. We know that EI sickness benefits are an important support for Canadians who need temporary leave from their job due to illness, injury or quarantine. These benefits allow individuals to take the time they need to rest and restore their health without having to worry about their financial situation.

While the current 15 weeks of entitlement are sufficient for most claimants to recover and return to work, approximately one-third of claimants exhaust the maximum entitlement of 15 weeks of benefits. This is why we are permanently extending the maximum duration of EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks. This extension will provide an additional support to approximately 169,000 Canadian workers every year who require additional time to regain their health before returning to work.

In contrast, an extension of EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 52 weeks, as proposed in Bill C-215, would undermine the spirit and intent of the EI program, which is to keep workers connected to the labour force. Bill C-215 would incur an estimated incremental cost of over \$2 billion per year, which would cost \$1 billion more per year than the approved extension to 26 weeks.

I would like to turn to the issue of EI reform.

The current extension of sickness benefits is part of our broader strategy to modernize the EI program. The pandemic laid bare a number of faults with the EI program. It made us recognize that the current EI program needs to evolve so that it can better respond to changing labour markets and workforce needs. Canada needs a modern EI program that better meets the needs of workers and employers. The plan to modernize EI must take into account the realities of those who use it. That is why we have been consulting with

Canadians on how to build a simpler, fairer and more flexible program.

In 2021, we embarked on a two-year consultation process on EI modernization. The consultation, which took place over two phases, is now complete. We are currently analyzing the input received from the various participants. Their insights are helping to guide us in designing a program that is more modern, resilient, accessible, adequate and financially viable.

Among other things, we heard that there is a need to reform the EI program to make it simpler, more responsive and more inclusive. The program must evolve to support all types of workers, including freelance and self-employed workers. With budget 2022, we confirmed our commitment to establishing an EI program with simpler and fairer rules for both workers and employers. Modernizing a program that serves millions of Canadians is a serious task, and we are taking the time to get it right.

I would like to thank the public servants who have worked tirelessly to provide Canadians with the benefits and services essential to their well-being. Increasing the maximum duration of these benefits and services from 15 weeks to 26 weeks will allow Canadians to focus on what is essential: their health.

We have a plan that promotes a healthy, resilient and inclusive labour market and that includes, of course, EI reform. Today, let us take note that every year, roughly 169,000 Canadians will benefit from the extension of EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks.

● (1130)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged once again to reiterate the importance of extending special EI sickness benefits to 52 weeks, as proposed in my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière's Bill C-215. I salute the Conservative Party for taking this stand.

This bill is the eleventh such bill introduced in the House in over a decade. The Bloc Québécois alone has introduced three of them, the most recent one being my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît's Bill C-265, the *Émilie Sansfaçon* act.

I do not know what it will take to convince the Liberal government to really hear the unanimous voices of those who have stood up to say that sickness benefits must be increased to 50 weeks. When the party currently in power was on the opposition benches, it was in favour of the 50-weeks idea.

Perhaps it is time for that party to spend a little time on the other side. Perhaps that would serve as a salutary reminder that, back when the Liberal Party was an opposition party, Denis Coderre, the member for Bourassa at the time, introduced Bill C-291, which would have increased sickness benefits to 50 weeks. The current Prime Minister was a strong advocate of the idea. How crazy is that? It boggles the mind.

However, research and studies on gravely ill workers should easily persuade us of the need for action, and non-partisan action. Sick workers have been waiting for 50 years to get an adequate number of weeks. It is about time this issue was addressed once and for all.

This was done and continues to be done in the case of the dying with dignity legislation. We should be guided in much the same way and be equally motivated when it comes to sick workers, so they can care for themselves with dignity.

There is only one thing left for the government to do today, and that is to give royal recommendation to this bill. It can and must do so. It has the power to improve things for all those workers whose only insurance is the EI system, an outdated system that requires urgent reform, despite the many broken promises.

I heard my colleague say in his 10-minute speech that this was part of an EI strategy. That is nonsense. What strategy? The system has not been reformed for 15 years. The Liberals promised to do so in 2019, in 2021 and again now, but nothing has been done.

Coluche said, “The doors of the future are open to those who know how to push them.” It is true that it takes courage, and although all too often this government has shown the opposite, let us hope that, in this case, reason and ambition will be able to convince it.

Let us remember that we have a minority government and that the opposition parties voted unanimously several times in favour of 50 weeks of sickness benefits. In 2019, the following Bloc Québécois motion was passed by a majority:

That the House call on the government to increase the special Employment Insurance sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 50 weeks in the upcoming budget in order to support people with serious illnesses, such as cancer.

In 2020, the Bloc Québécois introduced Bill C-265, known as the *Émilie Sansfaçon* act. On June 15, 2021, Bill C-265 was referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which adopted it unanimously on June 17, 2021, and reported it back to the House. We should note that, in committee, Liberal MPs voted in favour of this bill. Unfortunately, it died on the Order Paper when an election was called.

On December 15, 2021, Bill C-215 was introduced. On October 17, 2022, it was referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This bill was once again adopted unanimously by the committee members on October 19, 2022.

• (1135)

Notably, all parties voted unanimously in favour of these motions. We are now at report stage. Parliamentary democracy demands that we act accordingly and consider the views of members.

Private Members' Business

Hiding behind the fact that these are private member's bills that require a royal recommendation would indisputably be a power play by the government that is disrespectful and abusive of the will of the majority of elected members of the House who, on behalf of the people they represent, want this change. It would be undemocratic and cowardly. As my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière said, let us hope that the Liberals do not hide behind the need for a royal recommendation.

The government will surely argue that it heard the request, which it did when it quietly announced on a Friday afternoon, away from the bright lights of the TV cameras, that the number of weeks of EI sickness benefits would be increased to 26 as of December 18, and only for new claimants. This announcement shows that the government did not listen. That is not what anyone has been asking for. The inter-union alliance made up of the FTQ, the CSN, the CSD and the CSQ, which represents over two million workers in Quebec, the *Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi*, the *Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses*, the *Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail*, Unifor and the Canadian Labour Congress were all calling for 50 weeks.

Nobody asked the government to stop halfway. This is a half-measure that solves nothing for seriously ill workers. With it, the government is abandoning thousands of them who will not be able to take the time they need to recover without worrying about their finances and hoping to be able to return to work. It shows a complete lack of compassion and humanity.

Are half-measures what the government is striving for in its social approach to illness? I hope not.

To save a few dollars in the short term, the government is prepared to let thousands of families slide into poverty, which will cost the community much more in the long run. Is that the government's economic approach? I should hope not.

Sick workers who pay into EI have a fair right to a maximum of 50 or 52 weeks of special sickness benefits. Remember, workers are the ones paying into EI. I just want to reiterate that employment insurance, in its current form, is not like winning the jackpot. It takes 600 hours to qualify, and eligible workers get only 55% of their earned income.

Currently, studies show that it can take up to 41 weeks for seriously ill workers to recover. The number of weeks of EI sickness benefits has been stuck at 15 for 50 years. It will increase to 26 weeks as of December 18, but that will not be enough. Given today's labour shortage, what workers want most is to have the time and means to get well and return to work. The current 15 weeks was not nearly enough, and the planned 26 weeks will not allow for that either.

Private Members' Business

Our society wants a strong social safety net and believes in its workers, so the Liberal government should logically give this bill a royal recommendation. It takes heart. Above all, it takes vision.

• (1140)

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance program is antiquated and needs reform. So much has changed in the five decades since EI was imagined. For example, when EI was first brought into this country, it was built to support men as the breadwinner, a discriminatory concept that has perpetuated gender discrimination and the gender wage gap in the workforce since its inception.

Here are the stats. From 1972, when EI was first brought in, to the present, the labour force participation rate for women has almost doubled, rising from only 45% in 1972 to 85% today. This compares to a slight decline for men, from 95% participation rate to 92% now. The EI system is just another example of the systems in this country that were not built for equity and inclusion.

During the recent HUMA testimony around this bill, we heard from Madame Marie-Hélène Dubé, who has been running the “15 weeks is not enough” campaign for years. She battled cancer three times between 2003 and 2008, receiving only 15 weeks of benefits per year. This year, she went through the same nightmare yet again, still receiving only 15 weeks of support in a year when costs have skyrocketed. I raise my hands to Madame Dubé, who has continued to fight for better even during the most difficult of times. As Marie-Hélène testified, setting the benefit period of EI sickness benefit at 26 weeks would let down the people who need it the most.

That is exactly what the government did. It let people down and it needs to be corrected. Extending the benefit period from 26 weeks to 52 weeks would change everything when it comes to treatment and recovery from illness or injury, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer has demonstrated that it is a viable change. We can pay for this, and Canadians agree it is a socially acceptable measure. It is shameful that, despite support from Canadians, the government has failed to extend EI sickness benefits beyond 26 weeks.

Opposition parties, along with the NDP, must continue to advocate for Canadians who suffer from an illness or injury. That should not have to happen. We need to make sure they have access to necessary employment insurance during their time of need. The NDP supports Bill C-215 as it strives toward giving Canadians more protection when accessing these essential benefits. The NDP has tabled similar private member's bills in previous Parliaments, including in February 2020 when my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona tabled Bill C-212.

The NDP is focused on making sure that people can receive much-needed income while they are recovering from an injury or illness, and Bill C-215 provides more protection than what exists today. It allows workers the time they need to recover, something that is absolutely necessary, postpandemic specifically, as labour shortages in health care have delayed and prolonged access, diagnoses and treatments, and as the realities of long COVID are becoming better understood.

I want to go back to the failings of only having 26 weeks of sickness benefits for women and diverse genders. The need for greater EI benefits disproportionately affects them, whether it is in their capacity as single parents or the fact that there is a gender wage gap in this country that does not afford them the opportunity to save at the same rates.

In addition, I know personally that it is more difficult for women to get private sickness insurance because of the rates of breast cancer in this country. If there is a history of cancer in one's family, that risk profile is a consideration in the insurance company's assessment of allowing benefits. With one in eight women in this country being attacked by breast cancer, the chances of having no family history of it are decreasing by the day. This leaves women uninsured and unprotected from financial risks of an illness they have no control over, which is just another reason why gender inequities in the EI system need to be fixed. There are so many examples of where women were left out of the initial EI design.

Before I go on, this inspired me to go and take a look at the employment numbers from 1972 to 2022. While data from 1972 was not available on the Statistics Canada's website, data from 1976 was. I can tell members that women have driven the growth of this economy over the last 50 years.

• (1145)

We have had an increase of almost 10 million employees since 1972, the majority of them women, the participation rate going from 44% to 88%. The majority of new workers in our economy are women.

I want to point out, by how we classify workers, that the health care and social science assistance category has increased by 1.8 million, almost two million workers. It is shameful that it is one of the largest-growing areas of our economy and we waited this long for child care.

I will go back to Mouvement Action-Chômage de Montréal, which invited legislators to correct the inequity of the act toward women who had received maternity, or parental benefits or their equivalent from a provincial parental insurance plan, and the current ruling around injustices for six women who lost their jobs while on, or just after, parental leave and had their EI claims rejected because they had not worked the minimum number of hours needed to qualify for benefits.

Private Members' Business

To add insult to injury, the government continues to fight the Social Security Tribunal ruling that sections of the Employment Insurance Act violated women's constitutional rights to equality under the law. Standing here, I do not know how the government can argue that. Why do women continually have to fight the government for equity injustice?

I asked in committee about gender inequities and if the gender lens was being applied in the current budgeting considerations for the government's movement to expand from 15 weeks. This is what came back, "Regarding the PBO's \$1.9 billion estimated ongoing cost of an extension to EI sickness benefits from 15 to 52 weeks, the PBO's formula and budgeting did not segment potential beneficiaries by gender." The discriminatory analysis continues.

In addition, a set of data that came back from the 2021 "Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report" showed that a gender difference continued to exist between men and women in relation to EI sickness benefits, yet when analyzing that data for post-claim follow-up, this was the disclaimer on the data that came back, "A breakdown of the findings above by gender is not available." That is unacceptable. We exist, we are here and we are at work.

The New Democrats acknowledge that the 26 weeks is a step in the right direction, but it does not go far enough. Extending the framework from 26 weeks to 52 weeks is what is needed to accurately capture the needs of all people, allowing them to receive the necessary benefits during the recovery period. The government needs to do the right thing and do better for Canadians.

• (1150)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure and privilege of rising today to speak to Bill C-215, which was introduced by my very good friend and colleague, the member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

I want to start by thanking him for introducing this very important bill. He has shown a lot of initiative in continuing to exert pressure to get this bill passed. This bill is completely non-partisan, and I think that all members should support it in order to improve the lives of many Canadians across the country.

We have all heard so many stories about people in our ridings and especially in our personal lives who have been diagnosed with cancer or who have been seriously injured. These people do not have it easy. They are facing some very serious challenges. That is why it is so important to pass a bill like this one to help our most vulnerable constituents.

Take, for example, a roofer who breaks his back on the job and is unable to return to work for months, only to then be diagnosed with cancer. After his surgery, he cannot return to work for a long time. According to the current wording of the act, he is entitled to only 15 weeks of EI sickness benefits. If a person in such a situation is not yet ready to go back to work after 15 weeks and has not been authorized to do so by their doctor, they can end up in a very precarious situation.

I hardly need to remind my colleagues that not everyone has family members to share their financial burden, nor can everyone live off their savings for more than 15 weeks.

According to a study, this kind of problem affects over 151,000 people in Canada every year. That works out to about 450 people in every riding in this country, so it is a big problem. That is a staggering number. These people are our neighbours, our friends, even our family members. We live in a country with a great EI system, but the government has not yet taken steps to extend benefit periods for these kinds of serious and rare cases.

In our country, many vulnerable Canadians may one day fall ill. We need a compassionate system that allows for all possible situations. We need to create a real safety net that will make Canadians feel safe and, most importantly, let them know they have the time they need to get better and will not be forced to go back to work before they are fully healed.

At some point or other, 55% of Canadians will need EI. It is unavoidable, and that is the reason we need to review legislation such as the Employment Insurance Act and try to find ways to enhance it. Experts say that this law needs to be amended to change the current maximum of 15 weeks. We must listen to the experts and work with them to make these changes correctly. All parties need to be heard, and all options need to be considered.

Some members may be concerned about the possibility of fraud or abuse if we increase the number of weeks of sickness benefits. I want to assure my colleagues that this legislation is solid and includes many protection measures to avoid these types of problems. The EI system is extremely well monitored and audited as a whole to catch potential fraudsters. A doctor's note or certificate is still needed to receive EI payments. The timeline is recommended by health care professionals.

I firmly believe that we must trust our health care providers, who do such important work day after day, to diagnose illnesses and suggest an amount of sick leave for each individual that is fair and based on science. We need to trust our health care system to do things properly.

• (1155)

I would like to remind all members that one of the promises the Conservatives made in 2021 was to increase the EI sickness benefit limit beyond 15 weeks, and we plan to keep that promise with this bill.

Private Members' Business

The same bill was introduced in the past, but unfortunately it never received royal assent. I clearly remember that the Bloc Québécois and the NDP both supported our bill the last time it was introduced, and I sincerely hope that we can count on that support again this time. I sincerely hope that the NDP-Liberal coalition will see that this bill is a really good law and that it will help all Canadians.

I know that some members will still have doubts or questions about the bill. Are we going too far? What about Canadians who have private insurance?

Rest assured that there is nothing to be concerned about. First, Canadians do not want to be ill or to be confined to their homes. We know that, in most cases, they return to work as soon as they can.

Also, anyone who has private insurance must use up their weeks of private sick leave before applying for the federal program. In most cases, they will be able to return to work without ever having to use Service Canada's EI system. This bill will have no impact on our SMEs' private insurance systems. The federal program will simply be there as a safety net in certain extenuating circumstances.

This measure is affordable for the government and it is an entirely reasonable thing to do. Not only is it reasonable, but it is the fairest thing to do. Many Canadians pay into EI for their entire lives and never have to use it. Other Canadians are not so lucky and have to use this safety net to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table during one of the most difficult times in their lives.

I believe that our constituents, who have paid taxes and contributed to social programs their entire lives, deserve to be looked after when a crisis hits their families. They deserve to feel protected by the government and respected for all they have done for society.

As inflation and high interest rates continue to hit Canadians hard, we need to assure them that we are there for them when they really need us.

In closing, this bill seeks to give Canadians the dignity they deserve and the help they need when they need it most. As I mentioned earlier in my speech, we are talking about our neighbours, friends and sometimes even our family members. Misfortune or illness can befall anyone at any time. Long-term illnesses and major accidents can happen in the blink of an eye. All elected officials have a duty to amend any law that they think is inadequate. I think that is what this bill does.

I want to wish all of my constituents and all Canadians good luck, health and happiness this Christmas season. If anything bad does happen in their lives, I want them to know that the Conservative Party will support them by passing Bill C-215.

I am very proud to have had the opportunity to speak to this bill today. I would like to once again thank the member for Lévis—Lotbinière for his hard work on this file and for defending the interests of vulnerable Canadians across the country.

I truly hope that we can unanimously pass this bill quickly here in the House so that it can receive a royal recommendation. It is a bill that we can all be very proud of.

• (1200)

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start by thanking the member for Lévis—Lotbinière for his work on Bill C-215.

As the member of Parliament for the riding of Waterloo, I hear from many constituents when it comes to programs within our country, including unemployment insurance. It is a program that has been there to support workers when they are recovering from illness or injury, and it is important that they feel confident that they are supported.

It is nice to see that there is a Conservative member recognizing the importance of that system and strengthening that system. Oftentimes in this place, when we are voting or the government is advancing programs, that support is not always there from the official opposition. However, in this private member's bill, we have the ability to at least hear from a private member from the Conservative benches on his support to strengthen unemployment insurance.

As I was saying, when Canadians are recovering from illness or injury, they deserve to feel confident that they are supported and that their jobs are protected. That is why the government is taking action to improve employment insurance sickness benefits.

Just a few weeks ago, the hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion announced that, as of December 18, we are permanently extending EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks. This extension will provide approximately 169,000 Canadians per year with additional time and flexibility to recover so they can return to work after an illness, injury or quarantine.

Right now, more than ever, it really is important for programs such as unemployment insurance, which workers pay into and then receive the benefit, that people know the program is there for them. That is why the extension of EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks is not the only improvement taking effect on December 18.

I am pleased to say we are also increasing the maximum length of unpaid medical leave available to federally regulated private sector workers from 17 weeks to 27 weeks. This change will ensure that workers in federally regulated industries have the right to take unpaid job-protected leave while receiving the extended EI sickness benefit.

We have seen very uncertain and challenging times. We know that, more than ever, we need to ensure there is a government that is not only listening and engaging but also responding to the very real needs of Canadians.

We saw the world go through a global health crisis. In Canada, it was important to have the government of the day respond to those needs. When individuals were worried about paying rent, buying food, etc., because the country, the world, was shut down, it was the government of the day that brought out the Canada emergency response benefit. We made sure that Canadians could have access to that benefit rather quickly. We knew they were anxious. It was a tough time, and they deserved a government that would be there for them.

What did the government do? Our government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, stepped up. We also heard from businesses and the list goes on. Part of that conversation really was on unemployment insurance.

Small business owners or job creators are often not the ones who are paying into EI, because they are worried about their workers and the people they create jobs for. Therefore, when they needed access to that program, they were not eligible for it because they had not paid into it. However, our government listened. We made sure that we would find ways so that more people could benefit from this very important program that exists in Canada.

I should also mention in passing that, as of December 1, 2022, federally regulated private sector workers will also begin accumulating up to 10 days of paid sick leave per year. This is something we have been hearing for a long time. In the riding of Waterloo, many constituents contact me with a diversity of perspectives and opinions. This step was really important and one that I heard often.

We also extended working while on claim to include EI sickness and EI maternity benefits. That gives people more flexibility, so they can keep more of their benefits if they choose to gradually return to work. It is important to recognize that we do have a changing environment, and we do have opportunities. We need to ensure that there is some flexibility there.

As part of that flexibility, for members of Parliament, who have always needed to take their seats to ensure we continue to do the important work of the House, we have brought out a hybrid model. Members of Parliament are able to be in their ridings as well as do the work of the House of Commons and represent their constituents.

● (1205)

It is important that we adjust and improve the way benefits are delivered so that more people can benefit from them. These improvements are part of a broader plan to modernize Canada's EI system. Technically, we should be looking at all of our systems.

Our overarching goal is to build an EI program that is more fair, more flexible and more responsive to the needs of workers. To achieve that goal, we also asked for Canadians to help. In August 2021, we began a two-year consultation on EI reform to build an EI program that is more flexible, more fair and better suited to the needs of today's workers.

The best way to respond to what Canadians are asking for is to bring them into the conversation. That is something that has often been lacking. Members of Parliament will rise in this place, as it is really an honour and privilege to be here, and say they have the so-

lution, but they have never spoken to constituents across the country. It is important that this consultation process is one that Canadians participate in. I am pleased to see we are doing it.

It is unfortunate that I have run out of time. I look forward to this conversation continuing. I hope to see more members recognize the importance of improving our systems and strengthening programs, such as employment insurance.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.) moved that Bill S-8, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, for almost 10 months, Canadians have watched in shock and horror at Russia's unjust, abhorrent and illegal invasion of Ukraine. On February 24, 2022, without provocation, Russian forces initiated this egregious step, which is a blatant violation of international law, the charter of the United Nations and the rules-based international order.

[*Translation*]

The attacks have caused widespread devastation of Ukrainian infrastructure and property, as well as unnecessary deaths of Ukrainians, including civilians.

[*English*]

These actions are a continuation and acceleration of the violent steps taken by Russia since early 2014 to undermine Ukrainian security, sovereignty and independence. The Government of Canada is committed to supporting those fleeing the destruction and devastation in Ukraine and to providing a safe haven for those fleeing their war-torn home country.

As we said since the beginning, whether it is military, political or economic support, Canada will continue to be there for Ukraine and hold Russia accountable. In the face of such brazen disregard for the international order, the Government of Canada has responded to the Russian invasion of Ukraine through the use of economic measures, including sanctions, to send a clear and unequivocal message that the aggression displayed by the Russian regime will not be tolerated.

Government Orders

These measures apply pressure on the Russian leadership to end its senseless war, which has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and caused indescribable suffering to the people of Ukraine. These measures are the latest example of Canada's unwavering commitment to Ukraine and its people.

Since the invasion of Ukraine commenced in February, the Government of Canada has imposed sanctions under the Special Economic Measures Act on almost 1,200 individuals in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Further targeted sanctions are planned in response to Russian aggression, demonstrating that Canada is a leader in the international effort to hold Russian leaders accountable for this violent and unprovoked attack on Ukraine.

[*English*]

More recently, the Government of Canada imposed additional sanctions under SEMA against Iranian officials in response to the Iranian regime's ongoing grave breaches of international peace and security and gross human rights violations. These breaches and violations include its systemic persecution of women and, in particular, the egregious actions committed by Iran's so-called morality police, which led to the death of Mahsa Amini while in their custody.

Targeted sanctions have been imposed against senior Iranian officials and prominent entities that directly implement repressive measures, violate human rights and spread the Iranian regime's propaganda and misinformation.

The legislative amendments we are introducing to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act would provide Canada with much needed abilities to better align government-imposed sanctions with authorities related to immigration enforcement and access to Canada. The IRPA defines when a person is inadmissible to Canada and establishes the applicable criteria for all foreign nationals and permanent residents who seek to enter or remain in Canada.

However, IRPA, as it stands, is incongruous with our inadmissibility regime. Its inadmissibility provisions do not clearly align with the basis for imposing the majority of SEMA sanctions issued against Russia and Iran.

Issuing sanctions against these countries on the grounds of a grave breach of international peace and security, which has resulted in the serious situation that we see today, does not automatically trigger inadmissibility. This means that most individuals sanctioned pursuant to SEMA may nevertheless have access to travel to, enter or remain in Canada if they are not otherwise deemed inadmissible.

[*Translation*]

This runs counter to Canada's policy objectives with respect to the measured application of sanctions and restrictions on foreign nationals who are part of the Russian or Iranian regimes or who are key supporters of those regimes.

[*English*]

Legislative amendments are required on an urgent basis to align the IRPA sanctions inadmissibility regime clearly with that of SEMA.

That is why I am here today to introduce Bill S-8, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which would, among other things, expressly align the IRPA with SEMA to ensure that all foreign nationals subject to sanctions under SEMA would be inadmissible to Canada.

If passed, the current inadmissibility grounds relating to sanctions would be expanded to ensure that foreign nationals subject to sanctions, for any reason under SEMA, would be inadmissible to Canada. This would include foreign nationals sanctioned not only in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Iran but also sanctioned individuals from Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and North Korea.

In addition, these amendments would also modernize the current sanction inadmissibility framework set out in IRPA.

[*Translation*]

Allow me to explain the importance of this legislation and why I am seeking to pass it into law.

[*English*]

The amendments of this bill would allow for all sanctions related to inadmissibility grounds to be treated in a cohesive and coherent manner; strengthen inadmissibility legislation that we already have in place rendering persons subject to sanctions inadmissible to Canada; ensure that the sanctions imposed by the Government of Canada would have direct consequences in terms of immigration and access to Canada; and allow Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada officials to deny temporary or permanent resident visas overseas and authorize Canada Border Services Agency officials to deny entry to and remove from Canada sanctioned individuals.

Once enforced, these amendments would apply to all foreign nationals who are subject to sanctions issued unilaterally by Canada and to their immediate family members. These changes would ensure that all Russian and Iranian officials sanctioned under SEMA, and their sanctioned supporters, are inadmissible to Canada.

Without the proposed amendments, those who are sanctioned in response to the situations in Ukraine and Iran are not necessarily inadmissible unless they have violated some other provision of IRPA. This proposed legislation would completely close that gap.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

This approach also aligns with and builds on recent strong legislative activity.

[*English*]

For example, in the 2017 report by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled “A Coherent and Effective Approach to Canada's Sanctions Regimes: Sergei Magnitsky and Beyond”, the committee recommended that the IRPA be amended to designate all individuals sanctioned under SEMA as inadmissible to Canada.

Subsequently, also in 2017, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, also known as the Sergei Magnitsky law or Bill S-226, came into force. This act created two new inadmissibility grounds, which aligned with certain sanctions, provisions related to international human rights violations, and significant corruption. Subsequent amendments to the IRPR were also made, so that delegated CBSA officers, as opposed to the immigration division of the Immigration and Refugee Board, were empowered to issue removal orders directly at ports of entry for individuals inadmissible pursuant to the newly created sanctions inadmissibility provisions.

[*Translation*]

This ensured that these individuals would not have to be physically referred into Canada for admissibility hearings before the Immigration Division.

[*English*]

Finally, budget 2018 provided the CBSA with the necessary funding to work with Global Affairs Canada and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to ensure that inadmissible sanctions cases are identified as early as possible in the travel continuum to prevent them from gaining access to our country.

These investments and the effective work of border management and immigration officials in Canada and abroad support the proposed legislative amendments that I am seeking your support for today.

Furthermore, while funding from budget 2018 ensured the proposed amendments were completed in a timely manner, the timeline of this proposal was adjusted to realign with border management and public safety priorities related to the necessary COVID-19 pandemic response. Nevertheless, proactive development of the amendments in Bill S-8 has enabled a timely legislative response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Iran's violent crackdown against civilian protesters.

Further to the work already done, there are additional complementary and coordinating amendments introduced in this bill, which are required to align inadmissibility provisions with the sanctions provisions while maintaining the integrity of both frameworks.

Government Orders

First, all the sanctions inadmissibility provisions will be treated in a cohesive and coherent manner. This includes, for instance, adding a temporal element to all the sanctions inadmissibility provisions, which means that a person is inadmissible only for as long as they remain on a sanctions list. In addition, as is the case today with IRPA, immediate family members of foreign nationals inadmissible for sanctions are also inadmissible. Similarly, existing provisions of IRPA with respect to immigration, detention and sanctioned individuals would apply to the new sanctioned grounds.

Second, further legislative amendments in this bill would ensure that the inadmissibility framework related to multilateral sanctions, such as sanctions issued in concert with the United Nations, would be expanded to include groups or non-state entities, as opposed to only when states are sanctioned, as is the case today. Currently, sanctions issued against groups and non-state entities, such as al Qaeda or ISIL, do not automatically trigger sanctions-related inadmissibility ground. The proposed amendments would further facilitate interdiction and enforcement for sanctions issued multilaterally.

Make no mistake, the proposed amendments would improve Canada's ability to identify and stop sanctioned foreign nationals before they can get to Canada. In the event that some do nevertheless arrive at our borders, delegated CBSA officers would have the authority to issue removal orders immediately at ports of entry for all those inadmissible for sanctions.

[*Translation*]

It is important to note that sanctions inadmissibility is the most efficient and effective mechanism to swiftly identify inadmissible persons as early as possible in the travel continuum and to deny their ability to acquire a visa to Canada.

[*English*]

While other inadmissibility provisions may be applicable to some sanctioned individuals, it should not be assumed that all sanctioned individuals are also inadmissible for other grounds. Moreover, other potentially relevant inadmissibility grounds, such as those relating to engaging in war crimes, require extensive investigation, case-by-case analysis, and hearings before the Immigration and Refugee Board before they can be applied and yield consequences. It is not expected to be the case that all individuals who are sanctioned can in fact also be found inadmissible for some other ground under IRPA.

Government Orders

Unless there is a clear and specific ground for inadmissibility in IRPA against given individuals, immigration and border officers do not have the discretion to deny access to Canada. These amendments are therefore vital to ensuring consistent alignment between inadmissibility and sanctions.

Bill S-8 will also support other inadmissibility and immigration enforcement measures being pursued with respect to Iran. Additional measures against the Iranian regime were announced on October 7. The Prime Minister announced that the Government of Canada would be seeking to designate the Iranian regime under IRPA. This means that in addition to the individual sanctions, the top 50% of the most senior echelons and the members of the Iranian regime most responsible for egregious serial human rights violations will be considered inadmissible to Canada once the regime has been designated, and indeed that has been done.

Other refinements are included in the proposed amendments in Bill S-8. For instance, we will correct an inconsistency with respect to refugee policy that was created through Bill S-226. The Sergei Magnitsky law rendered inadmissible foreign nationals ineligible to make a refugee claim. However, multilateral sanctions such as those issued under the United Nations Act do not have the same consequence in IRPA.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Similarly, the Refugee Convention itself does not identify sanctions in and of themselves as sufficient to warrant exclusion from refugee protection.

[*English*]

The proposed amendments in this bill would correct that asymmetry and ensure that foreign nationals are not ineligible to have a refugee claim referred to the refugee protection division of the Immigration and Refugee Board on account of being inadmissible solely due to sanctions in line with Canada's international obligations.

Given the measures in place to deny sanctioned individuals access to our borders, in the rare case in which an individual can apply for refugee protection in Canada, all foreign nationals inadmissible due to sanctions who are granted refugee or protected person status would not be eligible to become permanent residents while those sanctions are in place. This is a balanced yet firm approach.

In addition, should a person inadmissible due to sanctions be subject to removal proceedings, they would be eligible to apply for a prerule assessment, ensuring a fair assessment of risks facing them upon removal from Canada.

In recognition of sanctions being a deliberate statement of government policy, further amendments are proposed to narrow the available pathways to overcome inadmissibility for sanctions within IRPA.

I believe that lifting of the sanction in and of itself is the mechanism by which the consequences of a sanction should be avoided. As such, the bill proposes to remove access to ministerial relief for individuals who are inadmissible for sanctions. Furthermore, individuals inadmissible for sanctions would not have access to an ap-

peal of the inadmissibility decision before the immigration appeal division, nor may they make an application for permanent residence on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, under our proposed amendments. Any request for recourse related to sanctions ought to be made to the sanctions-issuing body.

[*Translation*]

For example, individuals inadmissible due to sanctions imposed by Canada could submit an application for delisting to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[*English*]

In addition, as with all decisions under IRPA, the federal court will continue to have jurisdiction to conduct judicial review of inadmissibility determinations on the basis of sanctions.

The bill also includes coordinating amendments to the Emergencies Act and the Citizenship Act to maintain and clarify existing authorities related to sanctions inadmissibility in those pieces of legislation.

[*Translation*]

Now more than ever, we must move to align the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act sanctions regime with the regime under the Special Economic Measures Act.

[*English*]

The senators have agreed to adopt the motion and, to quote Senator Omidvar, have marked this bill as “super urgent”. I urge members to review Bill S-8 with the same sense of urgency. The bill will provide Canada with much-needed authorities to better link government sanctions, as well as the authorities necessary for our immigration officials to deny access to Canada. It will also better enable us to contribute to concerted action with our international partners.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

The bill we are introducing in the House today is a prudent and comprehensive approach that would allow our government to respond to the Russian and Iranian regimes' aggression with appropriate immigration consequences.

Government Orders

[*English*]

This legislation and these amendments would provide a clear and strong message that the Government of Canada's comprehensive sanctions framework has meaningful and direct consequences, not only from an economic perspective, but from an immigration and access to Canada perspective as well. Doing so would allow us to stand up for human rights both here and abroad.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I find interesting is that in May, in one month, the Senate went through all the stages. It went through report, committee and debate stages to bring the bill back to the House in May. We are now in the last couple of days of 2022, and the government must be out of its debt-inducing legislation. It has decided to finally bring the bill forward.

Can the minister finally tell us why it took so long to get the bill before the House?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I understand that my colleague from the Conservative Party is quite anxious to see this legislation passed into law. All he needs to do, along with his colleagues in the Conservative Party, is vote for it. I cannot wait to see that moment.

However, I also want to assure him and all members of the chamber that, even as this bill has made its way through the parliamentary process, we have acted decisively. We have delivered among the strongest sanctions against those offenders against human rights and those who are visiting upon women and other vulnerable individuals in Iran the absolutely most atrocious violations with brutal attacks and the murders of the likes of Mahsa Amini.

That is why, in addition to this legislation, we made sure we designated the entirety of the Iranian regime under IRPA so we could prevent those who are most responsible, the architects of these violations, from ever setting foot in Canada again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy about this bill. Clearly, we need to pass it as soon as possible.

However, I do want assurances from the minister about something. Anyone deemed inadmissible on grounds of sanctions may request a review of the reasons for their removal. Generally, the people who are here, who belong to oligarchic families, who are subject to sanctions, are people with money. These are people who can activate every possible recourse and draw things out as long as possible. Has that been addressed?

I checked the legislative summary, but it was not clear. Are there concrete measures to prevent these people from using the money they stole from their people to draw out the process and avoid removal?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes. There are provisions not just in this bill but in other legislation to quash the efforts of those who want to help the Iranian regime violate human rights.

In addition, the goal of this bill is to close the door on that kind of thing by making amendments to the Immigration and Refugee

Protection Act. That is why I encourage my Bloc Québécois colleagues and all members of the House to support this important bill.

It is another way to curb those people's efforts and to stop inadmissible individuals from entering Canada under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. It is a way to defend human rights here and around the world.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP, of course, supports getting the bill to committee. It is an important step in terms of improving our sanctions regime, but there are other aspects that are not included in the bill. There has been a delay around bringing the bill forward. We have seen, of course, with the appalling violent invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime, that there were, on the sanctions lists in other countries, people connected to the Putin regime who were not on the Canadian sanctions list. Therefore, parliamentary oversight is vitally important. Having access to the sanctions list for the public and public officials is extremely important too.

Will the government agree to amendments at committee stage that would allow us to improve the bill so that there would be more parliamentary oversight over our important sanctions regime?

● (1230)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague, the House leader for the NDP, knows both me and our government to be very reasonable when it comes to making improvements to bills, certainly at the committee stage. We will be inviting a good, robust debate about the amendments that have been put forward.

I want to assure the member, though, that this bill would strengthen the regime under the IRPA. It would give us additional powers to make good on the suite of sanctions that we have delivered to the Iranian regime, and specifically to the perpetrators of egregious human rights violations to ensure they never set foot in Canada, because this is important. It is important to the women in Iran who are standing up for their rights and the ability to express themselves fully and freely, which all individuals, no matter where they are from and which country they were born in, have an inalienable right to do.

This legislation would ensure that Canada is a beacon of human rights by sending a very strong message that if anyone supports those transgressions, there are direct consequences. This bill, with its amendments, would allow us to advance that objective.

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the Conservatives' interventions, it seems as though they are eager to get moving with this bill and would like nothing more than to see it move on. I am sure we will not get the typical response from the Conservatives, who delay every piece of legislation, and they will not require putting up 50 speakers and then putting forward an amendment so they can put up another 50 speakers.

I wonder if the minister can comment on why it is important to get this piece of legislation to committee and ultimately have the legislation adopted. Why is it important to do that sooner rather than later?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his hard work every day in this chamber and for being an advocate for human rights.

It is indeed the need to stand up for human rights that makes this particular bill so urgent. The individuals who are responsible for transgressions of human rights and who brutalize, torture and kill innocent women and other vulnerable individuals in Iran need to be held to account. Canada has been consistently and strongly outspoken on the need to deliver sanctions and consequences so they can never set foot in Canada and, equally, so no one in this country can in any way try to support or facilitate those transgressions of human rights.

What this bill proposes to do is strengthen our capacity to deliver those consequences by rendering people inadmissible. Through more clearly articulated and expressed language under the IRPA, we have the ability to make good on that.

The sooner we can get the bill to committee and the sooner we can pass it into law, the better. I am somewhat encouraged, and perhaps it is the time of year, by the anxiousness that I hear from our Conservative colleagues over moving forward with it.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we heard extensively that the minister seems to be very proud of what the government is doing in terms of sanctioning. I am wondering on what day his government will register the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member that by designating the entire Iranian regime under the IRPA, which is a provision that has only been reserved for the most egregious violations of human rights as well war crimes and genocide, we are putting within our crosshairs the IRGC. That is why this particular statutory mechanism is more fit for purpose. It allows us to look at the individuals most responsible for perpetrating egregious human rights violations to make sure they can never set foot in Canada, and ensures those who try to help the Iranian regime from here are not able to do so. This bill would make sure, with more precise language, that we are able to deliver on sanctions.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is it going to take to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization? The IRGC shot down PS752, which was done intentionally as a terrorist act. It funds Hamas, Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations throughout the world. It continues to commit all sorts

of atrocities against its own civilians in Iran. Now it is participating in a defence co-operation agreement with Russia in the war in Ukraine by having kamikaze drones flown into civilian infrastructure to make winter long, cold and hard for Ukrainians.

Why will the government not wake up and finally list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, as Parliament called for unanimously in 2018?

• (1235)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concern for the people of Ukraine. That is why this government has been out front in helping Ukraine with military aid, with humanitarian aid and by delivering sanctions that are at the very top tier to make sure we hold the members of the Iranian regime accountable.

As my colleague knows, this is about the difference between looking at just one tentacle and the entire entity. By listing the entire Iranian regime, we are also making sure to put the members of the IRGC who are responsible for these acts on the inadmissibility list. That is how we hold them responsible. We will continue to do whatever is necessary to stand with Ukraine.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I start, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to split my time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the wonderful member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

It is always a pleasure to rise in this chamber to speak to legislation. Today, we are talking about Bill S-8 to ensure that foreign nationals who are subject to economic sanctions are not able to enter our country.

Since we are also talking about human rights, I did want to take a moment to address an incident that happened this weekend to a very important person to Parliament, Irwin Cotler, who was at the premier of a documentary of his life and tireless work for human rights across the world. He was openly harassed and criticized at this event, which disrupted it and made quite a mockery of the whole thing. It made people very uncomfortable. Everyone should be open to public criticism and debate, as Mr. Cotler has always been and has never shied away from, but we are losing our decency as a society if we think it is acceptable to treat fellow humans this way.

In many circumstances, criticisms of accomplished Jewish people are often rooted in some form of anti-Semitism. It is okay for us to disagree with each other and we should encourage that at all times, but free speech also comes with a responsibility to treat one another with respect and decency.

We are now 10 months into Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, but it was back in 2014 when Russia took actions and annexed Crimea. This egregious step was a blatant violation of international law. These attacks have caused the widespread devastation of Ukrainian infrastructure and property and the deaths of a number of civilians, notably women and children. These actions are a continuation of accelerated aggressive steps taken by Russia against Ukraine, and they threaten the international rules-based order. Canada responded, in part, through the use of economic measures, as did many of our allies. These sanctions are contained in the Special Economic Measures Act, and they affect about 1,000 individuals in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

The bill we have before us seeks to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or IRPA, as we just heard the minister refer to it, in order to do several things, as I understand it.

First, the bill seeks to reorganize existing inadmissibility provisions relating to sanctions in order to establish a distinct ground of inadmissibility based on sanctions that Canada may impose in response to an act of aggression.

Second, it proposes to expand the scope of inadmissibility based on such sanctions to include not only sanctions imposed on a country, but also those imposed on an entity or a person. This is important given we have listed individuals as part of our economic sanctions, not just countries.

Third, it would expand the scope of inadmissibility based on sanctions to include all orders and regulations made under section 4 of the Special Economic Measures Act.

Last, it would amend the immigration and refugee protection regulations to provide that the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, rather than the immigration division, will have the authority to issue a removal order on the grounds of inadmissibility based on sanctions under a new paragraph of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. That will provide Canada with the needed ability to better link government action with economic sanctions for those who are seeking to come into Canada and experience a wonderful life here.

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act defines when a person is inadmissible to Canada and establishes the applicable criteria for all foreign nationals and permanent residents who seek to enter or remain in Canada. However, its inadmissibility provisions do not align with the basis for imposing the majority of economic sanctions. This means that an individual who has been sanctioned economically can still show up to Canada and claim refugee protection. They are then able to be here in Canada to experience the life we have built. This is quite clearly a loophole that undermines confidence in our system and laws, and Canadians will not accept that these sanctioned individuals get to remain in Canada.

This loophole matters not only to Russian actors. Let us not forget about other countries with citizens who have been subjected to some of these sanctions: Belarus, Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, North Korea and, of course, Iran.

With Iran, I will also mention that we should be doing much more than we are. We just heard an exchange between members of the opposition and the minister on that front. It is important to list

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the IRGC as a terrorist organization. That was the will of the House constituted back in 2018 and was again reaffirmed by the House just recently. We must act much more forcefully with respect to the IRGC. Canadians expect that of us.

• (1240)

Canada is often behind when it comes to some of these international actions. This is becoming part of our international reputation, and it is not a good one. We have been late with Magnitsky sanctions. We often wait to see where the political winds are blowing. We are too careful not to offend anyone.

Let us consider the government's official response to the Iranian protests, as we have discussed, or the treatment of the Uighur population by the Chinese Communist Party. We have been calling on the government to do more and it continually shies away from its responsibility. We are not being taken as seriously by the international community as we once were.

All too often, Canada's position is not substantive and not principle-based. It is slow to act, and often with half measures. Take, for example, the government's frenetic position on China. If we do not like the government's policy on China, we just have to ask another minister and we will eventually get the answer we like. Often the government is caught without a plan and requires significant public shaming to get some action.

Let us take, for example, the international commitment to fight money laundering through introducing a beneficial ownership registry and regime. This is exactly connected to preventing individuals who are sanctioned economically from hiding their assets across the world. Canada has one of the weakest laws for identifying assets in beneficial ownership. We are one of the only countries that has yet to introduce the beneficial ownership registry. The government promised to do it all the way back in 2019, then it said it would not get to it until 2025. Now it says that it will be bringing it in at the end of next year, but we are still waiting to see the legislation.

Yes, the government has agreed to fast-track it, but there is still much more to do. All the other countries are moving so much further ahead of us when it comes to fighting global money laundering. Again, it is connected to this legislation because these individuals have assets all across the world. It might be the case that we will not allow sanctioned individuals to come into Canada now, but those individuals could still hide their assets here because we do not have a way of finding out who owns what in our country. We need to do much more, much more quickly on this front.

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Once again, the government says all the right things, but fails to execute on much of it. Yes, we see some action here, but I guess, as the saying goes, a broken clock is right at least twice a day.

I look forward to the committee discussions on Bill S-8. It is important legislation. We have already heard members in the chamber on the opposition side ask why it is taking so long. We look forward to moving the legislation through to committee, addressing perhaps some of the amendments that were brought forward by the NDP. It is an important step for our country to put in place measures that make it harder for individuals who have violated human rights and international laws to come here, to remain in a wonderful country that we have built and get the advantages of the political and legal systems that we have built.

It is with great pleasure that I speak in favour of the legislation and I look forward to it going to committee.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees. We also want to ensure that we have everything in our possession to guarantee that our refugees are protected.

Earlier I heard my colleague talk about the fact that the government is behind the curve. That is true not just in defence, but also in foreign affairs. It is no secret that the government is also behind the curve on the environment and privacy protection. Every time we leave this place and talk to our counterparts from other countries, we are all a bit embarrassed.

My question is the following. Essentially, we all agree on this bill; I noticed that from the outset at second reading stage. That being the case, why has the bill dragged on for so long? Why did the government not take action sooner?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned previously, the bill was passed in the Senate in the spring and has been sitting all fall waiting to be dealt with in this chamber. Now it is a couple of days before we rise for the winter holidays and we have been asked to fast-track it.

The Conservatives hope it gets to committee quickly, but, at the same time, it has been sitting throughout the fall waiting for somebody to pick up and for the government to move it forward. We are happy to see that progress today.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I tend to disagree with my friend from the Bloc who suggests that Canada is lagging behind or that Canada is not well respected throughout the world. There is always more work to be done, and I know we have to fight to do that.

I recall, when I was on the defence committee, being in Ukraine and hearing about how all these other countries, particularly European countries, wanting to be part of the Canadian brigade. They wanted to line up behind Canada because they saw Canada as a leader in the world when it came to ensuring peace and stability.

Therefore, I do not know if I would entirely agree with the comment.

For my Conservative friend, he said that this had been sitting here all fall waiting to be picked up. Does he think that perhaps if Conservatives had not been playing games with other legislation, from the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes coordinating random quorum calls in the middle of debates to other delay tactics, that perhaps we may have seen the bill come forward a little sooner?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, no, I do not think so.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address Bill S-8, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, to make consequential amendments to other acts and to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations. The bill before us seeks to make several changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

The bill proposes to reorganize existing inadmissibility provisions relating to sanctions. This proposal is to establish a distinct ground of inadmissibility based on sanctions that Canada may impose in response to an act of aggression.

When Russian dictator, Putin, invaded Ukraine, the world watched in horror. A democratic country, in a region of the world where I and so many other Canadians have family roots, was being shelled and attacked with hostile aggression.

Since the invasion of Ukraine commenced in February, the Government of Canada has imposed sanctions under the Special Economic Measures Act, also known as SEMA, on over 1,000 individuals in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. However, these sanctions on their own were not grounds that would have been enough to prevent those friends of Putin from gaining citizenship, permanent residency or refugee status in Canada. Bill S-8 serves to correct that loophole.

Bill S-8 also proposes to expand the scope of inadmissibility based on such sanctions. It recommends to include not only sanctions imposed on a country, but also those imposed on an entity or a person. Such sanctions are becoming more and more common as we see dictatorial governments where the citizenry need not be held accountable for the tyrannical actions of the dictator in charge.

The sanctions against the country, although beneficial to show Canada's opposition to the actions of a rogue government and practicality, have the largest negative impact against those citizens. It is those citizens who now will bear the weight of a corrupt dictator and face the unintended impacts of our sanctions.

Bill S-8 would also expand the scope of inadmissibility based on sanctions to include all orders and regulations made under section 4 of SEMA, the Special Economic Measures Act.

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It would also amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations to provide the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, instead of the immigration division, to have the authority to issue a removal order on grounds of inadmissibility based on sanctions under the new paragraph 35 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

This gives me pause. I understand the value of having the ability to have the Minister of Public Safety step in and become involved should the situation warrant it, but the current minister is certainly not a beacon of responsibility, accountability and trust.

Let us not forget that it was the current Minister of Public Safety who, in his previous position as the minister of immigration, was responsible for failing to protect the Afghan interpreters that Canada relied upon in the war in Afghanistan.

Let us not forget that it was the current Minister of Public Safety who introduced the strongest emergency legislation in Canada against his own citizens when he invoked the Emergencies Act to avoid meeting with freedom convoy organizers who came here to be heard by the government.

Let us not forget that it was the same minister who was having his Liberal colleagues turn Bill C-21 from a ban on law-abiding handgun owners and sport shooters into an all-out targeting of hunters, farmers and indigenous Canadians.

If I were to go through all the failures of the current Minister of Public Safety, I would need more time than I have, but I know my colleagues are eagerly waiting to speak. I can take solace in knowing that the powers in this legislation will belong to a Conservative Minister of Public Safety after the next election, but I digress.

Currently the laws of Canada do not directly specify that international sanctions are a basis upon which we can reject permanent residents, citizenship or refugee applications. We do have faith in our bureaucracy to make the decisions that need to be made to protect Canada and the enjoyment of citizenship, permanent residency or refugee status. This new framework would provide it the ability to make clear and direct decisions that would completely implement the will of Parliament and fully utilize existing laws, like the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, also known as Canada's Sergei Magnitsky law.

• (1250)

Bill S-8 also practically ensures that no sanctioned individual could appeal the actions taken against them and their application for citizenship, permanent residency or refugee status due to the vagueness of the laws. Without Bill S-8, the bureaucracy could not simply disallow an application on the grounds of the applicant being a sanctioned individual. Now they need to go through a more untraditional process of excluding them for the actions that put them onto the sanctions list, which can lead to vagueness in the rejection.

We know these sanctioned individuals typically are coming to Canada with ill-gotten gains. They therefore have the means available to them to hold up the process, litigate the decisions and not only tie up our courtrooms and appeal processes from those deserv-

ing of them, but also cost the Canadian government and taxpayers time and money dealing with these processes.

I am glad the government has finally taken the time in the House to implement the Magnitsky act in a manner that would give it some teeth. Conservatives are supporting this bill. We have always strongly supported sanctions against individuals, entities and countries that threaten the national interest or international law. We have been critical of cases where individuals with ties to prescribed organizations, but who are not necessarily on a terrorist list, have been allowed entry to Canada. We have always put the national interest first with respect to questions of citizenship and immigration. Conservatives have strongly supported the Magnitsky act.

Canadians should not worry sanctioned individuals are seeking to enter our communities when so many legal, law-abiding applicants are waiting to immigrate. Our allies must also be assured we will uphold our sanctions.

In closing, this legislation was introduced, as was mentioned previously, in the Senate in May of this year. It was passed through the Senate in under a month. That is including first reading, second reading with debate, committee stage, the report stage and the third reading with debate.

The Liberal government introduced Bill S-8 to the House of Commons on October 4, and now, on December 12, it finally gets floor time. We wonder why it took the Liberals so long to close this gap in our immigration law. What has been the hold up? It would seem the Liberals have run out of debt-inducing legislation and have decided to use these final few days before Christmas to move forward with the legislative priorities of Canadians.

• (1255)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in several other public safety bills, notably Bill C-20 and Bill C-26, I have noticed, in the way the bills are written, there is a lack of avenue for parliamentary oversight.

One thing that has been missing with this sanctions regime is also a lack of parliamentary oversight. Would Conservatives join with New Democrats at committee to look for avenues in which this bill could be strengthened to buttress up parliamentary oversight so members of the House could make sure the government is doing its job when it should be doing its job?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, anytime we have legislation before the House that impacts Canadians, it is a must that we have parliamentary oversight. At some point in time, well-intended actions do not necessarily turn out the way legislation is written, so it is critical. I would agree with him that some sort of oversight to provide Parliament with a final say on how this should look would be most appropriate, in my opinion.

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Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, part of this, of course, is to prevent human rights violators from entering our country, but in order for them to be stopped, they need to be named. The Magnitsky sanctions have not been well used. In fact, in the last five years, there have been zero folks named. Does he believe the government is dropping the ball when it comes to labelling human rights violators?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. One needs to look no further than the government's refusal and absolute hesitancy to deal with the IRCG as a terrorist organization. We need not look any further than that to have an answer to that question. It is absolutely dragging its feet.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier, I asked my colleague a question. I wanted to know why the government had waited so long, given the importance of this bill not only for identifying terrorist groups, but also for ensuring the safety of refugees.

I will ask my other colleague the same question. Why has it taken so long, and why are we starting the study of this bill just a few days before we rise for the holidays?

[English]

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I have now been in this place a little over six years, and I have learned that I can not answer questions about or be able to understand why the Liberal government does what it does, so I have stopped.

With all due respect, I do not know why it has waited since May to bring this legislation forward. It seems to me that it focused on other agendas, which were going to have a negative impact on Canadians, rather than the will of Canadians. This is something that Canadians have asked for for some time.

I will give the government credit. It finally did it. It was at the eleventh hour, but it brought it forward.

• (1300)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill S-8.

The bill before us is basically very simple. It adds a ground for refusing entry into the country if one is the target of economic or other sanctions imposed by Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I wish to share my time with my very congenial colleague from Shefford. Fortunately, her arrival jogged my memory. I believe that I also need the unanimous consent of the House to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues. This does not happen often, but I will say it: For once, we all agree.

It is like the bill we are debating now, Bill S-8. Quite simply, we want consistency. The idea is to impose measures against individuals or states, but especially individuals. Top of mind for us all right now are Russian oligarchs, but Iranian groups or groups from other nations could be targeted by sanctions. They would be denied entry or could be removed from the country on those grounds.

The bill will impact a number of laws. I have read the legislative summary, and it is quite complex. There is the Special Economic Measures Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, or Sergei Magnitsky law, and the United Nations Act. The aim is to amend a pile of legislation to ensure that Canada's system is consistent when it comes to imposing sanctions on foreign offenders. There is no point in mincing words: They are criminals, people who have made populations suffer or simply, which is no better, usurped their country's, their nation's, economic wealth and who come to a country like Canada to lead a nice, quiet life.

There have been too many cases in history of war criminals and people who committed horrible crimes and were finally discovered in a southern country at the age of 89. For 40 years, they had relaxed by the pool or at the beach, with their drinks in hand while the people they made suffer never recovered. There were those who died, the children who were injured or killed, and the women who were raped. In the face of all these horrors, we must take a consistent approach and bring them to justice.

However, this does raise questions. My Conservative colleague who spoke just before me raised a very pertinent question. He wondered why this arrived in the House on December 12. I do not know if anyone will vote against it. We always have that right, but I do not believe it will happen. I think that the bill will pass rather unanimously. I think we can pass it quickly and move on to something else.

How did it take two months for the bill to be introduced in the House? During that time, people have been in Canada getting a free ride. That is the issue. These are people who are targeted by sanctions who are taking advantage of the quality of life, health services and so on that Quebec and Canada have to offer, and they are getting away with it. I have a hard time with that.

When we talk about the Magnitsky law, we talk about people who were tortured and mistreated. I am thinking about Evgenia Kara-Murza, whom I had the great privilege of meeting at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights a few months ago. She holds her head high, courageously, and talks about her husband as much as she can. Her husband is currently imprisoned in Russia by people who have already poisoned him twice. I invite members to stop for 30 seconds and try to imagine being in that situation. She is touring western countries, trying to drum up international pressure and have people talk about her husband as much as possible, hoping to save his life.

How can we allow people who poison dissidents, who imprison them without cause and who create hundreds of political prisoners to come to Canada or Quebec to live a nice, quiet life? We cannot do that. That is why the House is unanimous.

Inadmissibility on the grounds of sanctions will be added to the grounds of security, human rights violations, criminality, organized criminal activity, health grounds, financial grounds, misrepresentation, non-compliance with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and family inadmissibility. The grounds for inadmissibility in the bill also apply to individuals who are alleged to be members of non-state organizations, such as terrorist groups.

• (1305)

Incidentally, there are ways to identify terrorist groups. Yes, there are groups that should be on the list and are not yet, but it is in the works. Still, it is possible to blacklist terrorist groups, implement specific sanctions for those people and take away certain rights. If it can be done in that context, why is it not possible to create a list of criminal organizations as a means to control illegal firearms? I do not understand that.

I hope nobody catches any of the flu viruses, which are pretty bad. That is why I have been absent a few times in recent weeks, but I have been keeping an eye on what is going on in the House from afar. I am very proud of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, who very capably dealt with the firearms management crisis the government caused and who demanded additional meetings with experts. We are fortunate to have a group of hard-working, professional people here. Those people are, of course, the Bloc Québécois members.

I was watching all of that from afar, and I found it very sad. I think it is a good thing when members of terrorist organizations are banned from entering the country. We do not have to do these people any favours. However, why are we doing favours for known gang members who party on the weekends wearing their colours and vests? I do not understand that.

This is not about democracy. It is about weapons trafficking. My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, who is a member of the justice committee, introduced a brilliant bill on criminal organizations. I invite the government members to use it to draft a bill along the lines of the one we are currently examining. We do not have to give a chance to criminals, abusers and those who make others suffer.

This bill is a no-brainer. The Bloc Québécois thinks that Canada and Quebec should be a safe haven for people fleeing war, but not for those who cause wars and make people in their home country suffer. It should also not be a safe haven for thieves, con artists, criminals or profiteers.

Therefore, I invite everyone to quickly vote in favour of this bill. Before I conclude my remarks, I just want to mention a concern that we should be vigilant about as we move forward. Earlier, my NDP colleague made a good point about parliamentary oversight for the bill's next steps, and I believe that is very pertinent. Nevertheless, I want to raise another concern.

The oligarchs living here have money. They can pay for lawyers and take legal action. One of my concerns is that these people could

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launch lawsuit after lawsuit, claiming that the deportation is not justified. They would get to remain here for several more years enjoying themselves, while the people who suffered at their hands are dead or in prison in their country of origin. If any of my colleagues can respond to that, I thank them in advance.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look at the very principles of the legislation. It is encouraging, whether it is from the former Conservative speaker or the member across the way, that it would appear there is once again legislation before the House for which there is unanimous support.

We see that as a good thing when we take into consideration Canada's leadership role on the global scene in regard to the issue of human rights. This does deal with it in a very direct fashion. I believe Canada plays an important role. When we look at what is taking place in countries like Iran, and in Ukraine with the war, it sends a very strong message.

Could my colleague provide his thoughts in regard to the type of support we are witnessing today, recognizing the need to reflect in our refugee policy, or even immigration in general, that those who have caused harm abroad or who have violated human rights would not have a place through immigration to Canada?

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North and I agree on something for once. It is clear that we are getting close to the holiday season. I am happy to agree with him.

I agree with him wholeheartedly. That is why this bill is a no-brainer, why it is obvious and why I think there is unanimity in the House. He is right to point that out.

However, we wondered why it took so long to get to the House. Because of the inner workings of government, my colleague may have some answers that we are not privy to. Many of us do not understand why it took so long.

Of course, we need to move quickly to pass this bill, because war criminals and people who have made people suffer should not be allowed to take it easy in Quebec and Canada while the citizens of their home countries are still suffering. We have a moral duty to ensure consistency with all the other sanctions we have imposed.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé for his speech.

All political parties support this bill, but I do not think the Liberals are taking it very seriously. Thousands of people, including Canadians of Iranian origin, had to demonstrate in order for the government to decide to show that it is taking the situation seriously. Now the government is beginning to study this bill a few days before Parliament rises.

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Does the member agree that the Liberal government is prioritizing this bill at last only for political reasons, not because it is a real priority and not because it is genuinely motivated to do so?

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for his question, which was well articulated in French.

Yes, I quite agree, unfortunately, and I think that is all too common.

However, the bill before us today is truly necessary and urgent. We will therefore support it in the good faith that we always show here in the House, by making constructive proposals to improve things.

My colleague is right to point out the government's typical Liberal inconsistency, given that it took so long to begin working on this bill. I digressed earlier in my speech to talk about gun control and to point out that the government amateurishly started proposing amendments after the committee had finished studying the bill. That is unacceptable. Anyone looking at this from the outside would wonder how it is possible. This is just one more question to add to the pile of questions about the government's way of doing things. Let us hope that voters remember this.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy sitting on the agriculture committee with my colleague.

I think there is general agreement in the House that what is in the bill is important, and there is a desire to get it to committee. However, I would like to ask for the member's and the Bloc Québécois's thoughts on what is missing from the bill and what could be worked on at committee. For example, the bill would not fix the lack of parliamentary oversight. The bill would not fix the clarity issue of why some names are added to the sanctions list and some are not, and for what reasons.

I am wondering if he could offer some thoughts on those two key missing pieces that could have been in the bill and how that might inform committee work at the next stage.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I want to return the compliment to my colleague regarding the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Once again, he has contributed a very relevant comment. The possibility of adding parliamentary oversight is indeed something that the committee should study. It will also be important to see how this legislation is enforced over time.

My colleague raised some important questions. I also raised a very relevant question earlier regarding concerns that wealthy people might resort to legal action in order to stay here. Those shortcomings will have to be addressed in committee.

• (1315)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always a challenge to speak right after my colleague from Berthier—Maskinong . I would like to say hello to him today, as I have

not seen him in a while. I am happy to see him again and I wish him a happy and healthy new year. I think that is the least I can do.

I have been listening to the debate today. There is an expression that says that we cannot be against apple pie. I am trying to find a better expression for the holidays. I could say that we are not against tourti re or Yule logs. I really feel that this is a bill that we all agree on.

This makes us all feel good at the end of a year during which the government all too often introduced poorly drafted legislation and another party obstructed proceedings for the sake of being obstructionist and engaging in petty politics. How many times have I said that we need to have more children like us in the room? Actually, I mean the adults in the room. It is what it is. It is a reasonable and sensible position for a bill that must be passed.

I rise to speak to the bill that amends the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to reorganize existing inadmissibility provisions relating to sanctions to establish a distinct ground of inadmissibility based on sanctions. The bill also seeks to expand the scope of inadmissibility based on sanctions to include not only sanctions imposed on a country but also those imposed on an entity or a person. Finally, the bill would also expand the scope of inadmissibility based on sanctions to include all orders and regulations made under section 4 of the Special Economic Measures Act. This will give it even more weight.

The bill also makes amendments to the Citizenship Act and the Emergencies Act. Finally, it amends the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations to, among other things, provide that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, instead of the Immigration Division, will have the authority to issue a removal order on grounds of inadmissibility based on sanctions under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

I will begin by saying a few words about the bill, I will talk about different points of view, and then I will list some gaps we should address.

First, the bill, which passed in the Senate, updates the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to make inadmissible to Canada individuals and their immediate families that are targeted by sanctions such as those imposed on businesses and individuals. This is being done in the wake of escalating Russian aggression since the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. That is the context for this measure.

In 2017, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development released a report, known as the Sergei Magnitsky report, that addressed the approach to Canada's sanctions regimes. Recommendation 13 of that report called for the act to be amended. Sergei Magnitsky was a Russian lawyer who died in a Russian prison under murky circumstances after exposing the corruption of Russian oligarchs. His death gave rise, in both Canada and the United States, to sanction regimes under the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, also known as the 2017 Sergei Magnitsky law.

I will digress for a moment, because this phenomenon still exists in 2022. My thoughts are with the journalists who died under some very disturbing circumstances in Qatar after speaking out against what was going on with LGBTQ+ communities. Quite frankly, it is worrisome. I hope this bill will be a first step and send a clear message that this is unacceptable in this day and age.

Implementing this recommendation became a priority last spring in the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine, as I said.

As my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé pointed out, inadmissibility based on sanctions might relate to security, international human rights abuses, criminality, organized crime, health, finances, misrepresentation, non-compliance with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act or family inadmissibility. It is quite interesting.

Furthermore, the bill's inadmissibility provisions include individuals who are members of a non-state organization, such as terrorist groups. That aspect is explicitly set out, which is good.

This bill should pass unanimously. As I said, when I was listening to the debates in the House, I got the impression that there was unanimous agreement. That was the case in the Senate. After all, the bill simply brings the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act into line with the economic sanctions that Canada wants to impose and must impose on belligerent countries.

• (1320)

On May 17 the bill was introduced in the Senate before ending up in the House of the Commons. This bill has been on quite a journey.

Rumour has it that the Conservatives and the NDP are going to support the bill. Something interesting is happening as we wrap up before the break. I would like to note what Senator MacDonald said in his speech in the Senate:

I recognize that there is jurisprudence that permits literally anyone to make a refugee claim at a Canadian port of entry, but I remain concerned that there are those who will inevitably abuse this, using it as a loophole to gain entry into Canada. Such individuals can then potentially use the slow pace of our judicial system against us in order to remain in Canada for an extended period of time.

There is not only the slow pace of the system, but also the means that some may use to take advantage of the situation, including financial means.

The Bloc Québécois has called for and defended economic sanctions against Russia's unjustified invasion of Ukraine. We believe that the individuals targeted by these sanctions should be inadmissible because the sanctions are a foreign policy tool intended to combat violations of international law and international standards.

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Quebeckers and Canadians alike want Quebec and Canada to be a safe haven for people fleeing war, corruption and persecution, not a refuge for criminals. That has been said before, and we are saying it again.

It is all the more important to say this because Granby, in the heart of my riding, is a safe haven, so we experience all kinds of situations.

Quebec wants to be a safe haven for people who have fled war, corruption and oppression. Those who start wars and violate human rights should not be welcome here.

That is why the Bloc Québécois will support Bill S-8.

According to the UN, Russia has committed numerous war crimes during its invasion of Ukraine, including bombings of civilian areas, a large number of executions, torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence. That list could grow longer as the conflict drags on, which would be even more worrisome.

From the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the Bloc Québécois has brought forward several concrete proposals that were accepted by the government to accelerate the intake of Ukrainian refugees and families. We asked that the requirement for the collection of biometric data for certain categories of refugees be lifted and that flights be chartered. I know that some MPs, like the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, even took Ukrainian families into their homes. In such cases, what can we do to work together and welcome these people?

Moreover, it is vital that we update the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act so it is consistent with all the sanctions regimes. Bill S-8 updates this law to add sanctions to the list of grounds of inadmissibility. We want everything to be consistent.

I should note that the bill is consistent with the different sanctions implemented under the Special Economic Measures (Ukraine) Regulations pursuant to the Special Economic Measures Act. These regulations have been amended more than 40 times since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its invasion of Ukraine in February. We can see that progress is being made.

If Bill S-8 is passed, the various sanctions regimes, such as those under the United Nations Act, the Special Economic Measures Act, or organizations of which Canada is a member, like NATO, could apply. I think that is a good thing.

The bill would allow a border officer to turn back a sanctioned individual upon arrival, which would greatly simplify the deportation process. The bill also fixes gaps in the law to ensure that Canada respects the rights of asylum seekers and meets its international obligations in terms of taking in refugees.

Government Orders

A person who is targeted by a sanctions regime can claim asylum, but they cannot be granted permanent residence as long as they are targeted by a sanctions regime. That adds weight.

Bill S-8 would also make it possible to fix the problems that were introduced by the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, which prohibited individuals targeted by a sanctions regime to file a claim for refugee protection. This correction is in line with the refugee convention, which states that only refugees who have “been convicted by a final judgement of a particularly serious crime, [constitute] a danger to the community of that country”. That is sufficient grounds to remove a refugee from the country or deny them entry. That is very interesting.

I would like to close with a bit of compassion. Beyond what we are talking about today and the debate on how people are welcomed here, I want to point out that, as I mentioned, Granby is a welcoming place. I would be remiss if I did not mention the incredible work of Solidarité ethnique régionale de la Yamaska, or SERY, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

● (1325)

This organization helps newcomers to integrate. It does an outstanding job for the community and the region. As its slogan so eloquently says, “our home is your home”.

I would like to end on that positive note and recognize the good work of the people at SERY.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member might be aware that, in 2017, we had a standing committee through foreign affairs that came up with a number of recommendations that are, in fact, reflected in the legislation as brought forward through the Senate. We know we have a fairly substantial legislative agenda, especially going towards the end of the year.

Everyone seems to be very supportive of the legislation. As I said, it has already been before a standing committee indirectly. I am wondering if the member would not agree that it would be a wonderful thing to pass this legislation or attempt to get it to committee before we break at the end of the week.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, all parties in the House today, including our own, are unanimous about wanting this bill to go forward. That is worth noting.

In his question, my colleague spoke about a 2017 report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. However, this is 2022. He said that this was put forward again because of the Senate. It is strange that the government did not introduce this bill itself given the recommendations made in 2017. We have been waiting five years for something on which there seems to be a consensus and that is just common sense. These people have done unspeakable things.

That delay is unfortunate, and I hope that the rest of the process to get this bill passed will move more quickly.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would not want to take anything away from members of Parliament and their efforts on this particular project. As I pointed out, members from all political entities came to the foreign affairs committee recognizing the issue.

We did have a pandemic, as I am sure the member will recall. It was not that long ago, and I am sure it had a bit of an impact. The pandemic was more than just two years. We also have to deal with the current and huge number of pieces of legislation that were brought forward. However, it does not mean that the government did not prioritize.

The Senate often brings forward legislation that is a priority for the House of Commons. The point I hope would be recognized is that, whether in the Senate or the House of Commons, there seems to be a great deal of political will.

I would suggest that the timing is right. We have seen, this year, the war taking place in Europe. We are seeing human rights violations in Iran. This is a good piece of legislation and a good reflection of the fact that it is time for Canada to send a strong message. Would the member not agree?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to expand on that.

To be clear, that was 2017. It was before the pandemic. It is true that the current context and what we have seen this year have put the issue of what we do with these criminals back on the agenda. I just hope that we will be able to work together to speed this bill through the process because these recommendations date back to well before the pandemic. It should have been done a lot faster. In particular, I hope the committee will be able to follow up. What we are hearing is interesting.

How to administer this law is an interesting question. Voting for a bill is one thing, but following up and making sure it is implemented is another. We will look at the list of people who will be affected by the bill. Let us hope that goes better so we can move forward and fix some of the problems members have been raising this afternoon. That is my hope.

● (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to get the member to comment on the fact that the House requested that the government list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. It has not done so. A bill like the one before us comes through, and it just seems to be a bit of a distraction from the fact that the government has not followed through with the will of Parliament. I am wondering if the member has any comments on that.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his remarks. I would remind the House that I was the one who moved the motion in support of Iranian women and the fight they are waging because of what is happening in Iran.

I have been to some demonstrations with Iranian women, and this was something they were calling for.

Bill S-8 is one thing, but what happens next? Who will be targeted and affected by this bill? There is the whole issue of the Iranian regime and what this might include. It will be very interesting because these are important issues. This is another fight that is far from over, in another part of the world.

I want to once again express just how strongly we stand in solidarity with the Iranian people who are demanding more justice and equality, especially for Iranian women.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always a great honour to stand in this place to speak on behalf of the residents and constituents of Edmonton Strathcona. I am particularly delighted to stand today to speak about our sanctions regime and the work that needs to be done to strengthen it and ensure it is as adequate and as strong as it can be.

We know that sanctions are one of the tools we have to hold governments and individuals around the world to the rule of law, to human rights, to democracy and to fairness and justice for their citizens. For a very long time, many members in this place have worked very hard and well together to try to increase the effectiveness of our sanctions regime and the ability of sanctions to do what we hope they will do, which is to change the course of governments and individuals, to change their behaviour and punish them for the harms they have caused without harming and punishing innocent people and citizens.

The act we are debating today is Bill S-8. This act would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, to make consequential amendments to other acts and to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations.

The proposed legislation amends the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or the IRPA, and it provides Canada with much-needed abilities to better link government sanctions with authorities related to immigration enforcement. I think we can all agree that this means that not only will foreign nationals sanctioned due to the invasion of Ukraine be inadmissible to Canada, but it will also stop all previously sanctioned individuals from places like Iran, Myanmar or Burma, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Zimbabwe among others.

I and the NDP are very supportive of the bill, but we need to consider, and most of my comments today will be on this, that this is a small piece of what needs to be done to strengthen Canada's sanctions regime.

The bill would not fix some of the things for which we have been calling for some time; for example, the absence of parliamentary oversight. We have very little parliamentary oversight of our sanctions regime, and I will speak to that a bit later.

This would also not fix the enforcement in areas that are not immigration related, for example, the seizure of assets. Again, I will speak to this in more depth later on, but I would raise again in the House that to date about \$121 million has been seized from Russian oligarchs as part of our sanctions regime to force Russia to stop its illegal war in Ukraine. While that \$121 million is an awful lot to me and probably an awful lot to most of us in this room and in the country, it is not an awful lot for Russian oligarchs.

The bill would also not fix the challenge that we as parliamentarians have with clarity. We still do not have a good system in this place that explains why the government chooses to add some people to the list to be sanctioned, how those decisions are made and how the timing of those decisions is determined. We know we work with our allies and other countries. That is very important for sanctions to be effective. However, as parliamentarians, we need to have more clarity on how those decisions are made.

As we go forward in looking at strengthening the sanctions regime, there are people in the House who have been doing very important work on this. I have to call out my colleague from the Conservative Party, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, for his excellent work on the Magnitsky sanctions. The Deputy Prime Minister also did great work on ensuring the Magnitsky act was put in place. Of course, as some people have mentioned before, and my colleague from the Bloc mentioned just previously, the challenge is that putting a law in place does not actually matter if we do not enforce it or if we do not ensure it is adequately applied.

A perfect example of this is that with the Magnitsky sanctions, we are supposed to do a five-year review. Five years is 2022. There is some review being done in the Senate, but we have not done any review within the foreign affairs committee or within this Parliament. For me, that is the challenge we have.

• (1335)

I spoke briefly about the need to strengthen our sanctions regime. For years, the NDP has been pushing for a stronger sanctions regime. We are happy to see some of the important changes that this bill would bring forward, but there are things we have been asking for for years, including in the 2017 foreign affairs committee study on Canada's sanctions regime. Many of the recommendations from that study have not been implemented. We look forward to the government moving somewhat faster than it has to date to make sure those are implemented, especially considering that right now what we are seeing in Ukraine is a vital need for sanctions to be a key piece of our response to the Ukrainian war.

Government Orders

Another example of why our sanctions regime has not been as effective as it could be is the waiver. We saw the government in the summer, in the middle of July, put a waiver in place that would cancel some of the important sanctions we put in place against Russia. I am not going to stand here and pretend that would not have been a very difficult decision for the government to make. Our German allies and Ukrainian allies were asking for different things, and that is a very difficult situation to be in. While I did not agree with the decision that was made by the government, I do accept it was a difficult decision to make.

That said, first of all, the pipeline the waiver was supporting was a piece of equipment returned to Germany to be returned to Russia, and Russia did not pick it up. The second thing is that the pipeline it was meant to be used on has now been blown up. There is no reason whatsoever for us to still have this waiver in place and still have this lessening of our sanctions against Russia, yet we still do.

The Government of Canada has still not cancelled the waiver, which is appalling. It is something it should be doing immediately. I know the foreign affairs committee will be recommending that, if we can get out of the filibuster that has been put in place by some of our colleagues in the Conservative Party.

The other piece of our sanctions regime that I want to know about is how we can double-check it to see that what is happening is adequate and being done properly. I have talked a bit about sanctions oversight, and we know that after Russia invaded Ukraine in February, sanctions were put in place. However, we also know that those sanctions trickled out after months and months. We learned that many oligarchs had the opportunity to move their assets from Canada so they would not have those assets seized. That is a missed opportunity since those assets were supposed to help rebuild Ukraine and help with the rebuilding initiatives.

We also know that the government has failed to provide the clarity on sanctions that we have hoped for. For example, I have asked about this multiple times in the House and through Order Paper questions to get more information and details on who is being sanctioned, what is being sanctioned, what has been seized, how it is being seized and what processes are being used. However, I have never been able to get an adequate answer from the government.

In fact, one of the Order Paper questions was returned to me with a response that said the government was not 100% sure that it would be able to give me accurate information, so it provided me with no information at all. That is an interesting tactic. I would love to see somebody try to say in a high school or university course that since they are not sure they are giving all the information, they will give none at all. That is something we have problems with. We still do not have that level of clarity.

I have another concern. When the government introduced the last budget implementation act, there was a change to the way that sanctions were dealt with. In the past, there was parliamentary oversight because the government needed to record the use of the sanctions regime or the sanctions act and needed to report it to Parliament. It needed to be tabled with Parliament.

• (1340)

In the Budget Implementation Act, that requirement was removed. Therefore, it is now no longer the government's obligation to tell Parliament what those sanctions are or what has been seized. We could find out if we took the government to court and used a judicial remedy, but we cannot find out just through parliamentary processes.

This is taking away the right of all parliamentarians to have that transparency and to have that understanding of how our sanctions are being chosen, how they are being enforced and if they are working. A sanction is not that useful if it is not being enforced. A sanction is not that important if countries or individuals understand that it will not be enforced in Canada.

There is an interesting thing I found out as I was doing some digging around sanctions. If we want to find out what goods are coming into Canada from Russia, we can look at Russian shipping records. We cannot find that out by looking at Canadian shipping records.

It is very interesting to me that there is transparency that can be found in the U.S., the U.K., the EU and Russia, but we cannot find it here.

That is another challenge I have with our sanction regime. As I said at the beginning, this particular bill would help with some aspects of our sanction regime. I am very happy to support this legislation. I am very happy to see that it would be fixing some of those holes around our sanction regime. However, this seems very much, to me, like tinkering around the edges.

We have heard from the Senate. One of the key quotations from the Senate hearings on Bill S-8, from Canada's foremost expert on sanctions policy, Andrea Charron, was this:

While there is nothing wrong with highlighting in the Immigration and Refugee Act that inadmissibility due to sanctions is possible, this repeats a pattern whereby Canada tinkers on the margins of legislation without addressing core policy and process issues. If we are to continue to sanction autonomously with allies, we need to fix fundamental issues of policy and [fundamental issues of] process.

I believe that we have many things we still need to do. We need to have a comprehensive review of Canada's sanction regime. The NDP has proposed a study at the foreign affairs committee on Canada's sanction regime. That study was meant to have taken place during this fall's session. We are very hopeful that it will take place very quickly once the winter session begins. I urge my colleagues in the Conservative Party to stop filibustering our committee so that we can get on with the very important work of foreign affairs.

We can ensure that our sanctions are being more effectively applied. We can bring forward legislation that would align with the recommendations in the 2017 foreign affairs committee report that called for greater transparency. It called for a review of our sanctions regime and called for a parliamentary body of all parties that would assist in identifying which names and which individuals should be on the Magnitsky list and should be sanctioned by the Government of Canada.

One of our biggest problems, and I have said this many times, is that if we cannot fix our sanction regime, our sanction regime very quickly becomes not as effective and not as useful as we need it to be.

I think that members of the House have brought up circumstances where that is the case. We know that, for example, in Ukraine, sanctions are one of the key tools we have to hold Russia to account for its illegal invasion in Ukraine. It is one of the key levers that Canada can pull to force the Russian Federation to re-think this horrific and illegal attack on civilians.

It is also one of the things that we can use when other human rights abuses are raised around the world. We are seeing horrific attacks on protesters in Iran. Just this morning, I woke up to another horrific example of a protester being executed because he was fighting for his freedom. We know that there are many Iranians who are in grave danger right now. If this sanction regime can be fixed and can help the people in Iran even a little bit, it has to be done.

• (1345)

I am interested in looking at sanctioning a whole range of characters around the world who we know have been responsible for atrocious human rights abuses, such as what we see in Yemen and from members of Saudi Arabia. We need to be ensuring that, as a country, we are standing up for human rights, using the tools we have at our disposal for those efforts.

I also want to point out that the sanctions regime is a tool we also have to use for our feminist international assistance policy and for the feminist foreign policy that we certainly hope the government tables in Parliament very soon. We know that a huge percentage of the people who are identified by the Magnitsky sanctions and the other SEMA sanction measures are perpetrating human rights abuses that are disproportionately impacting women and girls around the world. We know that sexual violence and gender-based violence have been used as a tool to silence journalists and human rights defenders around the world. We know that rape has been used. This violence does not align with a country like Canada, which has a feminist foreign policy and a feminist international assistance policy, and we need to be looking at our foreign responses through that lens.

I would like to end my comments with this. As I was travelling here from Edmonton yesterday, I took some time to read some of the speeches from the Nobel Peace Prize winners, and I want to read a quote to the House. It is by Oleksandra Matviichuk from the Center for Civil Liberties, the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize winner. She spoke to me about the need for sanctions and why it was so important that we work with our allies to make our sanctions regime stronger.

She stated:

Peace, progress and human rights are inextricably linked. A state that kills journalists, imprisons activists, or disperses peaceful demonstrations poses a threat not only to its citizens. Such a state poses a threat to the entire region and peace in the world as a whole. Therefore, the world must adequately respond to systemic violations. In political decision-making, human rights must be as important as economic benefits or security. This approach {must} be applied in foreign policy...

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are happy that the holiday season is approaching. There are a few days left before we rise. My colleague opposite will have enough time to ask a question because I will be brief.

I appreciate my colleague's speech. I am sad to hear that she did not get an answer to her Order Paper question. I cannot believe it.

My question concerns the possibility of recourse to ensure that there are no delays or ways to hide behind the rules. Does my colleague believe that this should be discussed in committee to make sure the bill is robust and we have the tools we need to prevent that?

• (1350)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, there is a system in this place where we send legislation to committee to look at it, examine it and hear from experts on it. Unfortunately, the last two bills that came before the foreign affairs committee were not given that due diligence. We were not allowed to do the required due diligence. It is the job of parliamentarians to have the strongest legislation possible. It is not the job of parliamentarians to allow the government to bring things in at the last minute and try to rush them through. Our job is to look at it, hear from experts on it and do what we can within the constraints of our time to ensure we produce adequate legislation.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member talk about openness, transparency and accountability with respect to how such individuals would be identified. I wonder if she can explain how she sees that happening and why she considers that to be so important when it comes to something like this.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, one of the ways we could do it is by having a parliamentary group, which would be made up of all parties, that would have the ability to scrutinize how these names are put on our list. If we had members from all parties, we would have the ability to work collaboratively and bring in experts. There are people in the world who know this work very well. Bill Browder is a perfect example.

Another thing that we need to do is work with our allies, ensuring we are working with like-minded democracies, and that our lists align with those of our allies.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, back in 2018, the House called for the government to recognize the IRGC as a terrorist organization. I am wondering what the hon. member has to say about the fact that it has not done that and why the NDP continues to support the government in the face of its disregarding of the actions of this place.

Government Orders

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my comments today, we got appalling news from Iran just this morning that more protesters are being killed by the horrific IRGC regime. Everything must be done. Every possible thing must be done to hold those committing these human rights atrocities accountable. Everything also must be done to ensure that no innocent person is harmed, that innocent people are not being put at risk.

I would absolutely support using every tool we can for holding those at the top of the IRGC accountable for their terrorist, murderous actions and the horrific things they are doing against the people of Iran.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the foreign affairs committee meeting back in 2017. I did not catch if she was a member at that time, but that committee sent a report to the House. When the member talks about the process in the House of Commons, it is important for us to note the principle of the issue was sent to a standing committee and has also now been thoroughly debated in the other chamber.

I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on why we could perhaps be reasonably hopeful, or a little optimistic, that there is a chance we could pass it before the end of the week.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I was not a member in 2017, so I was not part of the foreign affairs committee at that time. I was not elected until 2019.

However, my colleague H el ene Laverdi ere, who sat on the committee at the time, was an extremely vocal advocate for the sanction regime. She did an awful lot of work bringing forward the recommendations. While I am happy that debate happened in the House, one of the recommendations was that there would be a five-year review, and we are almost at the end of five years.

While the parliamentary secretary is interested in getting this bill passed by the end of this week, just as we all are, by the end of this week we also lose the opportunity for the five-year review for the sanction regime, something that has not happened. I hope at the very beginning of 2023, when we all come back refreshed and full of energy, we will be looking at our sanction regime.

• (1355)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the hon. member that the NDP actually voted against listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization back in 2018. Has her party's position changed on that?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat myself, as I have said it many times already, but it is very important that the members of the IRGC who are responsible for the human rights abuses against their citizens be held accountable and that they be sanctioned. It is also important that we do everything we can to ensure they cannot come to Canada, that their assets are seized and that they be expelled from Canada.

I am very concerned as well about the potential for innocent people to be harmed by sanctions. We have seen that happen in Iran before and I, for one, will do everything I can to ensure those who are

guilty are held accountable and those who are innocent do not have to pay that price.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite wanted a few things for Christmas. She wanted pharmacare; 10 sick days, which has not happened; and dental care for everybody who does not have it, which has not really happened either. However, she is forced to support a government that is raising the price of gas, groceries and home heating. For Christmas, does the member want Santa to give her a way out?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, the member perhaps did not listen to my speech and does not know that we were debating Bill S-8 today, which is about sanctions, our sanction regime and how to strengthen our sanction regime. It is not really about my Christmas wish list, although I will say that dental care, pharmacare and sick days for workers are super important to me, and I am glad that she brought them up.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Edmonton Strathcona, who has done incredible work on this file.

Throughout the debate today, I have heard issues raised about the lack of clarity in this bill and the fact that there is not enough parliamentary oversight into the sanctions regime. I am just wondering if my hon. colleague could tell the House if that would inform her committee strategy. Does she see that there might be opportunities amongst the government and opposition sides to reach a compromise to make sure that the important aspect of parliamentary oversight is there?

I have noticed that, in public safety bills introduced earlier in this session, notably in Bill C-20 and in Bill C-26, there was a clear lack of parliamentary oversight specified. That will inform our strategy going forward. I am just wondering if the member could add some further comments on that.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the important work he has been doing in the committee on public safety as well.

Realistically, one of the key ways we ensure the legislation we pass in the House is as strong as possible is by hearing from experts, by inviting experts who know more about the topics we are legislating upon than perhaps some of us may know. The idea that this has to come forward, that we need to take that time and do that due diligence, is very important. It will, of course, inform my strategy.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how appropriate this is, but I would ask my colleagues if we could have a moment of silence. Our colleague Jim Carr just passed away. I think it would be an appropriate thing if we could just have a moment of silence and a prayer.

HON. JIM CARR

The Deputy Speaker: We will stand for a moment of silence for the passing of the Hon. Jim Carr.

[A moment of silence observed]

● (1400)

The Deputy Speaker: If people want to speak quickly to this, maybe we will allow that for a few moments, just to pass on our deepest condolences to the constituents of Winnipeg South Centre and, of course, to Mr. Carr's family and friends on his passing. He was in here last week passing his bill. It just shows how quickly things can change in our lives, and then we lose friends and family in that way.

Does the hon. member for Winnipeg North have something to quickly add before we move on?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I realize it is a very sensitive time and there are no doubt other members who would like to be able to contribute at a more appropriate time in giving our condolences to the family and friends. We all know Jim's passion for his country. We saw that in the speech he delivered just last week.

For now, with the support of the House, we could take a two-minute recess and then get back into S.O. 31s at that point, if it is deemed appropriate by you as Speaker.

Government Orders

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Deputy Speaker: The House will suspend for two minutes.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 2 p.m.)

● (1410)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 2:12 p.m.)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very sad day for our parliamentary family. As has been announced to the House, our dear friend and colleague, the Hon. Jim Carr, has died. Given that news, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: By unanimous consent, the House adjourns out of respect for the late Hon. Jim Carr, member of Parliament for Winnipeg South Centre.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:12 p.m.)

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