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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 15, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[English]

SENIORS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to private member's Motion No. 45 adopted by the House on June 15, 2022, I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the report requested by the motion.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to eight petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, a report of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at the Co-Chairs' Annual Visit in Osaka and Tokyo, Japan, from October 10 to 15, 2022; a report of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting their participation at the 30th Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum in Bangkok, Thailand, from October 26 to 29, 2022; and a report of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting their participation at the 43rd General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from November 20 to 25, 2022.

The Speaker: I have made an error, so I will go back to the introduction of government bills.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, with all due respect, I believe we have moved further on in the rotation of Routine Proceedings. Would we not need unanimous consent to go back?

The Speaker: The error was made by me and I am correcting it.

• (1005)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, you just got advice from the Clerk. Perhaps if you want to elaborate on what happened, I will wait for that.

The Speaker: I can do that. That is not a problem.

What happened is that normally I am given the bill to read and it was not handed to me. When looking at it, I assumed the hon. minister had to stand, and I was waiting for someone to stand. No one stood, so I moved on.

The error was made at this end, not necessarily on the floor. For that I apologize, for myself and my staff. Ultimately it falls on me. That is why I am going back. We discussed it, and according to the Clerk, I have the discretion to go back.

I apologize to both sides for the error. Those things happen. You have a human Speaker, unfortunately. AI has not quite taken over my job yet.

* * *

CANADIAN SUSTAINABLE JOBS ACT

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-50, An Act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, also known as the mighty OGGO, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (A), 2023-24".

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SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Science and Research. This report is entitled “Revitalizing Research and Scientific Publication in French in Canada”. I give a special thanks to the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his motion, for his advocacy and, in fact, for all that he is doing to enhance French-language recognition within our studies.

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

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CANADA-TAIWAN RELATIONS FRAMEWORK ACT

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-343, an act respecting a framework to strengthen Canada-Taiwan relations.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to introduce the Canada-Taiwan relations framework act. Recognizing the important bilateral relationship between Canada and Taiwan, this bill provides a framework for the strengthening of economic, legal and cultural relations. It would make it a policy of the Government of Canada to support Taiwan's participation in international fora as well as membership in international agreements, including the CPTPP. It would appropriately permit the Government of Taiwan's office in Ottawa to be referred to as the Taiwan representative office and would provide opportunities for the enhancement of diplomacy.

This bill is an important step in recognizing the reality of Taiwan, a vibrant democracy, leading global economy and important ally to Canada. I urge its passage.

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

* * *

● (1010)

WRECKED, ABANDONED OR HAZARDOUS VESSELS ACT

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-344, an act to amend the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act, national strategy respecting abandoned vessels.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand today to table my bill, an act to amend the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act, national strategy respecting abandoned vessels. I would like to thank my NDP colleague, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, for seconding it.

Abandoned vessels in Canadian waters have been left to sink, polluting our oceans, harming wildlife and threatening food security. Canadians who live on our coasts know all too well the harms, seeing what locals call “vessel graveyards” lining the coasts. It is time that something is done about it.

This bill includes the development and implementation of a much-needed strategy to address the ever-increasing number of vessels being abandoned along the west coast of Canada, working in partnership with indigenous governing bodies and the province.

The measures include, among others, developing a system to promptly and effectively identify the owners of vessels, developing a mooring plan for vessels and developing innovative recycling initiatives for wrecked vessels and their components.

Derelict and abandoned vessels cannot be allowed to continue to threaten our coasts. Our oceans, marine ecosystems and coastal communities deserve protecting.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, presented on Wednesday, December 7, 2022, be concurred in.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

The seventh report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights speaks to improving the response to victims of crime. I can honestly say, and I think all Canadians agree, if we believe what we are seeing in the news, that the response of the government to victims of crime has been woefully inadequate. I can go further. When we talk about victims of crime, we are also talking about the victims' families, and that came through loud and clear in our report. Once again, even today we are talking about the impact on victims of crime and their families of the government's soft-on-crime revolving door justice system.

I will speak to some of the measures in our report.

One of the things we heard loud and clear was the need to address the unfair situation of sentence discounts for multiple murders. What that means is that in Canada, someone who is convicted of first-degree murder receives a life sentence but is eligible for parole in only 25 years. What this has led to is a ludicrous situation. For example, in Moncton, New Brunswick, an individual killed three of our Mounties, three police officers, just trying to do their job, and that individual would have received a 25-year parole ineligibility, the same as if they had killed one person. We have seen situations of mass murder in this country where someone kills three, five or six people, and they would receive the exact same parole ineligibility as if they had killed one person.

We believe, on this side of the House, that every life should count, every victim should be counted and every victim's family should be respected. That is why when we were in government, we brought in legislation for ending sentence discounts for multiple murders. This meant that an individual who committed multiple murders would receive multiple consecutive periods of parole ineligibility. It is why the individual who killed the three Mounties in Moncton received a 75-year parole ineligibility. Other mass murderers in Canada sentenced since that legislation have received similar sentences.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court struck down that provision. We all know that a charter dialogue takes place between the legislature, Parliament and the Supreme Court, and it is absolutely scandalous that the government has not responded to that Supreme Court decision. We have called on it for over a year to respond to this decision, to make it right and to listen to victims' families.

When we were studying the response to victims of crime, that came up more often than not. One of our great witnesses was Sharlene Bosma. Many members will remember that name, as it was her husband who was killed by a mass murderer, someone who murdered at least three individuals. What Sharlene said left a lasting impact on me as well as on many members, certainly on this side of the House.

She said that through the whole process of attending hearings every day, attending court and working to ensure a conviction of this individual who took the life of her husband, the one solace she took when he was sentenced is that her daughter would never have to attend parole hearings and face this monster. However, with one decision from the Supreme Court, that has been ripped away. Now this individual will be eligible for parole in what is left of his 25 years, and Sharlene Bosma, her daughter and other victims' families will have to face unnecessary parole eligibility hearings. Once again, the government throws up its hands.

● (1015)

Even in today's headlines it is reported that one of the worst killers in Canada, one of the most notorious, the Scarborough rapist, Paul Bernardo, has been moved, to the horror of the victims' families and all Canadians, from a maximum-security prison, where he should have spent the rest of his life, to a medium-security prison. We see, on the other, side feigned outrage. We see crocodile tears. We hear "How could this happen? We're going to look into this", but now we are finding out every day that the Minister of Public Safety knew. Now we are finding out that the Prime Minister knew.

Why did it happen in the first place? Part of the reason it happened is the government's own legislation. When the government brought in Bill C-83, which amended section 28 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, it meant that, when considering transfers from one institution to another, the litmus test brought in by the government is that offenders have to be held in the least restrictive environment. When the Liberals passed that legislation, and when they refused to act when they found out about this transfer, they made this an inevitability. This is on the Liberal government.

I also want to address bail in this country. This came up again and again in our victims study. There are victims who are unneces-

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sarily victimized. They are victims because our justice system has failed to protect them from repeat violent offenders. Just last week, we had a witness at justice committee, and what she said left an impression on me. She said that we do not have a justice system; we have a legal system, but many victims do not see justice in our system.

Canadians fail to see justice when this government, through Bill C-75, put in a principle of restraint when it comes to bail. It has led to the outrageous situation of individuals who are repeat violent offenders, individuals who have been caught for firearms offences and are out on bail, committing another firearms offence. This is happening in Toronto, and the Toronto police helpfully provided us with the statistics. While out on bail for a firearms offence, offenders commit another firearms offence and get bail again. This is outrageous. The Liberals will say, "This is too bad. It is unfortunate that gun crime is taking place", but it is taking place as a direct result of both their actions and their inaction, their failure to respond to a revolving-door justice system. I can tell members that Canadians are fed up with it.

There is only one party that is committed to ending the revolving door, committed to ensuring that victims voices are heard, committed to appealing the measures in Bill C-75 that have led to this revolving door, committed to ending the outrageous situation in which individuals who commit gun crime are given no more than a slap on the wrist, and committed to ensuring that individuals who commit arson and burn down someone's home are not eligible to serve their sentence with a conditional sentence. What is a conditional sentence? It is house arrest. Under our Criminal Code, somebody could burn down a house and serve their so-called sentence playing video games from the comfort of their own home.

When we were in government, we brought in legislation to change that, to end the revolving door, to have consequences for criminal actions and to protect the most vulnerable. We made sure that sex offenders were listed on the sex offender registry. We made sure that sex offenders served their sentence in prison and not in the community where they offended.

However, under the current government, with both actions and failure to take action, we have a situation where communities are more and more in danger. Members do not have to take my word for it; this information is publicly available. Violent crime is up 32% in this country. Gang-related homicides are up almost 100% in this country. The approach of the revolving door, of allowing repeat offenders to continue to offend, is not working, and a Conservative government, led by Pierre Poilievre, will address—

● (1020)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We do not use names in the House.

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Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is great anticipation about our debating Bill C-36, and the Conservatives continue to want to raise issues through concurrence motions in order to avoid government debate on important legislation. What we are talking about in this case is a national child care plan. It is something the Conservatives say they actually are in favour of.

The question I have for the member is this: Why is it that the Conservatives continue to be a destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons by bringing in concurrence motion after concurrence motion to prevent debate on government bills, when they start crying that they do not have enough time to debate? Why is that?

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, is the hon. member for real? Does he not ever get outside of the chamber and see what is happening in the real world? In the real world, where most of us live and where our constituents live, people are concerned about the fact that the government has allowed one of the most notorious sex offenders and murderers in Canada's history to be moved from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security prison. Canadians are outraged. They want answers. The more we peel back this onion, the more it stinks, and the more we realize how irresponsibly the government has acted. We realize it is their actions that have led to this consequence. Their inactions have led to this consequence.

We make no apologies for standing up every day on behalf of victims of crime.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I certainly am as disturbed, I think, as anyone in this country about Paul Bernardo's being moved to a medium-security prison, but I do think the hon. parliamentary secretary raises a good point. I am sure the hon. member for Fundy Royal was not the architect of this strategy, but when we have repeated concurrence debates in this place, we certainly do lose time to debate legislation that is consequential.

I would also say that I do get outside of this place. I do talk to Canadians who are not in a bubble and Canadians would like to see Parliament work and actually debate legislation, pass legislation and have debates that are consequential. This concurrence motion on a committee report will inevitably pass without any change to our legislative framework, but we will have consumed a lot of time.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has any thoughts on that.

• (1025)

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, I think that sometimes situations arise where we have to step up to the demands that Canadians have. I think it is appropriate on a day like today when we are here as parliamentarians, when Canadians are waking up to the news about the situation of Paul Bernardo having been moved to a medium-security prison and the fact that it happened because of the actions of the government.

I think Canadians are entitled to hear the word "victims" in the chamber. I fear that if it were not our party speaking about these is-

suess, they would be swept under the rug and would not be spoken of. Which party raises the issues of victims more than any other? It is our party. Honestly, on a day like today, I cannot make any apology for raising this issue and debating this issue. It is that important.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think that we can all agree that it is important that the justice system fully recognize the rights of victims, that they do not feel victimized for the rest of their lives, and that they can thrive over time. Cases involving individuals such as Paul Bernardo are indeed troubling.

There are other cases, however, that do not involve firearms. In those cases, we expect judges to use common sense and to keep things in perspective. Does my colleague believe that judges are able to keep things in perspective, especially when there is no previous criminal record, or does he think that the same rule should apply to everyone?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, I would encourage the hon. member to read the recent Supreme Court decision on the sex offender registry, where judges themselves were calling out other judges on the misuse of the discretion for adding serious sex offenders to the sex offender registry. Many of our judges do a fantastic job, but we in Parliament are elected to do a job as well. It is time the government took defending the rights of victims seriously. We must take every action we can to make Canada as safe as it can be for victims, their families and our communities.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege and honour to speak in the chamber, but, more importantly, to lend a voice to the fine residents of Brantford—Brant. On a topic such as this, with next to no notice, it is even more important that I lend an appropriate voice.

I come at debates on criminal justice issues and victim issues from a place of significant experience. I know that several members have heard me explain my background, but for those who have not, it is important to remark that, prior to being elected in September 2021, I enjoyed a 30-year legal career. In those 30 years, I saw both sides of the equation. I defended the worst of the worst for 12 years. I defended individuals charged with shoplifting, mischief, paintball, tagging and spray-painting offences, all the way up to and including murder.

I decided, after reflecting on my 12-year defence career, that it did not give me a sense of satisfaction, because, ultimately, when I cross-examined victims of crime from all walks of life, from young children all the way to senior citizens, it was heartbreaking to see how our criminal justice system works. It is extremely adversarial. Defence counsel have a job to do, and that job is to ensure that there is a fair trial, but, reflecting on the fairness of trials, sometimes one has to sacrifice one's personal beliefs and morals.

After 12 years, I was at the point when I was about to get married and wanted to start a family, and I asked myself what type of husband and father I wanted to be. I was taking steps to ensure serious violent offenders were escaping justice and responsibility. Although it is ultimately the task of a defence lawyer not only to ensure not fairness but also, hopefully, win the case, it certainly creates havoc with respect to the victim's sense of what type of system we have. My colleague, the member for Fundy Royal, could not have said it better: in our role as parliamentarians, the theme we hear over and over again is that this is definitely not a justice system but merely a legal system.

When I joined the Crown's office in 2004, every single day that I was a public servant for the Province of Ontario left me with a gratifying feeling. Not only was I contributing to the fairness aspect of our legal system, our justice system, by holding offenders accountable, but also I was, in my small way, giving victims the voice they felt they had lost in being victimized, not being believed by police services, not being believed by legal professionals, or not being believed by judges. I took it as my personal mantra to dispel as many myths as possible when prosecuting, as I said, shoplifting, which has a societal impact, all the way to multiple murders. I have seen it all in my 18 years of Crown experience. I was left with a goal to ensure that, in my small way, I left victims whole again.

• (1030)

While offenders who do get punished usually end up in jail, depending on the nature of the crime, they will serve their sentence and move on with their lives. The same cannot be said for victims of crime. Some victims of crime live with the trauma of this experience for the rest of their natural lives. It was important for me as Crown counsel for the Province of Ontario to equip those victims who went through this horrific process and to give them the tools to put together their lives after this crime.

It begs the question of why I chose to leave a very rewarding, satisfying career as a Crown attorney to enter these halls. The answer is simple. I was sick and tired of seeing the escalation of crime from coast to coast to coast, but particularly in my small riding of Brantford—Brant.

I was born and raised in my riding. I remember growing up, all through high school, my university days, my law school days and ultimately my career as a lawyer and Crown attorney, it was a safe place to live and to raise a family. Literally, in the last 10 years of my practice as a Crown attorney, I was seeing a gradual increase in the prevalence of crime, but more so a prevalence of serious violent crime.

Early on in my Crown days it would be common not to prosecute a homicide for several years. Fast-forward to 2020 and 2021, when I ultimately took a leave of absence to pursue politics, and we had 12 homicides on the books, with a small office of six Crown attorneys. It was overwhelming.

It was not just the homicides. We had shootings, drug trafficking, fentanyl and all kinds of the nasty criminal activity this House speaks about literally on a daily basis and that we read about online or in the papers. That is what was happening. I felt my effective voice as a Crown attorney could only go so far. I wanted to be an

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instrument of change. I wanted to correct the wrongs with respect to our legal system.

I must say it was completely frustrating for me to arrive in this House and hear the government touting how serious it is about our justice system, about holding offenders accountable and about victims' rights. Everything it does ultimately is the complete opposite.

As my colleague has already indicated, Bill C-5 is a disaster. It is still a disaster, taking the most significant, serious, violent offences and opening up the possibility they can serve it in the comfort of their own homes. I am going to go further on conditional sentences, or house arrest. These individuals are entitled to work, spend some time in the community and go shopping.

That is not holding an offender accountable, so it brings me full circle as to why we are here. We are here because the Minister of Public Safety has lost the trust of Canadians and of this House, and on that basis, I am asking that the motion be amended.

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

the Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, presented on Monday, April 17, 2023, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights with instruction that it amend the same so as to recommend that the Minister of Public Safety immediately resign given his total lack of consideration for victims of crime in his mishandling of the transfer to more cozy arrangements of one of the worst serial killers in Canadian history, that this unacceptable move has shocked the public and created new trauma for the families of the victims and that the Minister of Public Safety's office knew about this for three months prior to Paul Bernardo's transfer and instead of halting it, the information was hidden from the families.

• (1035)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The motion is in order.

The hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek.

• (1040)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):
Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his years of work on the issues of safety and improving safety throughout Canada.

I can share with him the fact that when I came here, 23 years ago, one of my issues was very much the issue of crime and safety.

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I, too, lost a cousin who was an OPP officer in a terrible shooting. The results for the individual who performed the shooting were, I felt, very insignificant. I have talked a lot about these issues. I think they matter a lot to all of us as parliamentarians. At the same time, as we move forward, there is always the issue of being responsible and having to be responsible in how we bring in laws and how we enforce them and that we have to also make sure that we are considering everything, including the victims.

I would like to say to the hon. member, as we move forward, that many of us share concerns about how we improve safety, whether we are talking about Bill C-21, guns and knives or all of the rest of it.

Basic safety is critically important and I would like to look at how we can work better together to improve the judicial system and our laws and orders, and find answers.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, how do we work together? It is incumbent upon me to stress that collaboration on these issues ought to never be partisan. If we all come from a goal of protecting this community known as Canada, from coast to coast to coast, we have to put aside our ideological differences. We have to strive to not only talk about issues that are germane to the concerns of victims but actually implement them. It is listening to victims groups. It is not being dismissive of their concerns.

The fact that so many victims rights groups now do not see this as a justice system but as a legal system should be an alarming call to my colleague and to members of this government.

That narrative needs to change. It changes by not only talking the good game, that you are serious about holding offenders accountable and you are concerned about victims' rights, but walking the walk. When your minister who, in my opinion, has deliberately misled this House—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): May I remind the hon. member to speak through the Chair, please.

The hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, I remark upon the minister's commentary. That he had this information available to him for three months and chose not to share those details, not only with the House but with Canadians and, more importantly, with the families of the victims, is completely inexcusable.

The government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We need to give a chance to someone else to ask a question.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague's speech. He has a wealth of experience in the justice system that commands respect, and I am confident that he knows exactly what he is talking about.

I do not have that experience, obviously. That said, I have witnessed certain cases where mistakes or mistreatment resulted in individuals being released. Of course, that is part of the risk of a jus-

tice system. When we accept that there is a defence and a Crown, we obviously accept that the judge will rule one way or the other.

My remarks generally concern resource allocation. My impression is that the Crown does not have enough resources and does not have the time to handle cases properly. That is what I believe happened in this case. I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

How could this be improved? Perhaps it is because there is not enough money in the justice systems, including those in the provinces. Perhaps the government needs to transfer more.

• (1045)

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. Judicial resources are at an all-time low. We have a total of almost 80 federal vacancies. We have vacancies provincially. We do not have enough Crown attorneys. We do not have enough detention centres. We do not have enough money going into police services.

A multi-faceted approach is needed to deal with this crisis known as the criminal justice issue. It is the federal jurisdiction, the provincial jurisdiction and the municipal jurisdiction all working together to fill these gaps.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, maybe the best place to start off this discussion is that, at times, the role the Conservatives feel they need to play can be fairly upsetting. However, before I comment on that, I want to take the opportunity to think of the victims, Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy, and their families. It is incredibly difficult for any one of us to imagine the horror of what took place and the impact it has had, not only on the families of these two victims, but also on their friends, the people who got to know Kristen and Leslie.

There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind of the horror caused by Bernardo, and many have talked about this horrific crime. At the time of the incidents, I was living in the Prairies, and I was an MLA. I can recall many nights watching what had taken place in the trial on the news broadcasts, and I recall the anger that was generated as a result of this horrific crime. I do not believe there is a member in the House, no matter what political party one represents, who would disagree in any fashion whatsoever that the actions taken by Bernardo at that time were nothing less than totally horrific. When we see something of that nature, we want to ensure there is a sense of justice that will be applied.

There is no doubt in my mind that today, just as we saw yesterday, it will continue to be discussed in the chamber. I suspect there is a very good chance that it will come up in question period. I would encourage the Conservative Party, in particular, to consider this issue for an opposition day motion. I say that because there are so many issues out there that no doubt would be of interest to Canadians.

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I have a concern in dealing with the debate Conservatives have put on the floor this morning, and I had posed this in the form of a question to the member earlier, which is that the members opposite know there is a limited timeframe to deal with legislation. They continue to bring forward concurrence motions on reports. They know that by doing so, they are preventing debate on government legislation.

They pull a report out of the pot to say it is an urgent issue, such as the most recent one with respect to housing and the housing crisis. We had a discussion on it. Before that, opposition members brought forward concurrence reports to prevent government from debating legislation. The Conservative Party continues to do that, whether it has been in this session or years past, yet I have never seen it bring a concurrence report on an opposition day, not once. I think it is important for Canadians to realize that the issue Conservatives are raising will be talked about later today, so they are not fooling anyone.

● (1050)

It is an important issue. People are genuinely concerned. As the Minister of Public Safety clearly indicated yesterday, and as indicated in communications from the Government of Canada, we are genuinely concerned about this issue. It is on the front burner. We are all appalled by the impact that this is having, not only on the family members, but also on our communities as a whole.

I do not need to be told by Conservatives that I do not care about the issue because I do care. They try to give a false impression, as if only the Conservative Party of Canada wants to discuss an issue or have an issue addressed. It is a false impression.

Last night I was here, I think it was around 9:30 in the evening, and I was speaking in my place. I was talking about child care. We can talk about inflation and the positive impact the child care program is having, and there is about 20 minutes of debate still left on that. Then we are going to pass through that legislation.

If the Conservatives want to continue sitting for the month June, going into July, it would not bother me. Honestly, I would come back in July. I will sit as many days as the opposition would like to sit. I am open to it. I do not mind when the House sits until midnight.

What I do mind is when the Conservatives continuously and consistently play that destructive force preventing government legislation from passing. We witnessed that when the Leader of the Conservative Party said he would stand up to speak until the government and the Prime Minister changed the budget implementation bill. A few hours later, the bill passed.

It passed because there is a process, and the Conservatives could not bring in a concurrence motion there. Otherwise, who knows what concurrence motion they would have brought in.

Canadians did elect a minority government back in 2021, but what they expected is not only a responsible, accountable government but also a responsible and accountable Conservative opposition. With the exception of some things that might have occurred during the pandemic in the previous Parliament, I have not witnessed that. Instead, I see the Conservatives amping things up

whenever they get the opportunity to do so, even if the opportunity is not legitimate.

Instead, the Conservatives will go on character assassinations and things of that nature. I do not say that lightly. I am not trying to belittle the issue in that report, but we saw that with the moving of the amendment. The members moved an amendment. We could ask how that amendment is directly related to the report itself. I would suggest the Conservatives are proposing a politically motivated amendment. They are more concerned about the politics than the issue, and it is not the first time.

We have seen how the Conservatives always tend to favour fundraising and seem to favour the politics as opposed to the issue at hand. We have seen that not only with the introduction of a concurrence motion but also with the moving of the amendment. Was the amendment even called for? Was it even necessary?

● (1055)

We have standing committees of the House that meet to discuss a wide variety of issues. They come up with reports and a series of recommendations, and then the report comes to the House. The vast majority of reports never get called upon for concurrence motions, but it is a tool to be used on occasion. I even used it when I was in opposition years ago, but I like to think that I never abused that tool.

Let us contrast with the Conservative Party of Canada's behaviour with the concurrence of reports. One only needs to look. Why did the Conservatives bring it in today and then move an amendment to the concurrence motion? If they were genuine in wanting to deal with the report, that is what the debate should have been about. Then we would all concur in the report, or if we wanted to vote against it, we would do that. However, that was not the purpose of moving concurrence of the report. This is the sensitive issue of the murder, and who knows what else, as I am not going to get into the graphic details, of both Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy. The Conservatives are taking that issue today and using it as a way, in part, to filibuster. That is shameful.

They might be able to fool some, but for many the truth is known because we can see it in the amendment more than anything else. What does the report actually talk about? What are the recommendations of the report? I have a copy of the report and a series of recommendations. I was even provided some of the ministerial responses to the recommendations. I do not see any of that in the amendment proposed by the Conservative Party. I do not see that at all.

What I see consistently on the issue of crime from the Conservative Party is a lot of talk. The Conservatives like to talk tough. They really do. The last time we had this kind of talk on an issue such as this was a few years back. It is not that often that I will quote myself, but I am going to do that. I am going back to February 4, 2020, when I am making reference to the Conservative Party in Hansard. I said:

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They tried to give the impression that it was the Government of Canada's fault, as if this government had ultimately allowed for the healing lodge placement of Ms. McClintic. I remind Conservatives that as we got more into the debate, we found out that it was actually Stephen Harper's regime that had her transferred to a medium-security facility, which made her eligible to be brought over to a healing lodge. We also found out that under Harper's regime, other child murderers were put into other medium-security facilities.

It is a totally different, horrific crime, and the Conservatives were jumping out of their seats and giving graphic descriptions. That is how I could recall the speech I had given a few years back. There were graphic descriptions of the crime committed and how it was the Government of Canada's fault. Where was that passion for child murderers then? Was it somewhat misplaced when we found out that it was actually Stephen Harper's government that authorized transfers to medium-security institutions?

Today, here we have a very high-profile incident, likely one of the worst and most horrific incidents in Canadian history, or definitely in the top two or three. It was amplified across the country, even though it is an incident that happened in a relatively small, loving community.

• (1100)

Everyone knew about the case; it was on the nightly news. The opposition members are taking that tragedy, trying to piggyback on top of a report from a standing committee that put forward 13 recommendations. There are many ways in which the opposition could be dealing with the issue. They are using this report as a mechanism to say they want to talk about the issue of crime for three hours, in order to prevent and ratchet up one issue. What are they actually preventing?

If we had gone on to government business, we would have actually been debating Bill C-35, which had under a half-hour of debate left. That legislation will ensure, for the first time ever in the history of Canada, that we actually have a national child care program from coast to coast to coast. This program has already delivered \$10-a-day day care in a number of provinces and, I understand, at least one territory. It is having a real impact on the lives of Canadians. More women are working today in the workforce in terms of a percentage than ever before. The program was modelled after what the federal government saw taking place in the province of Quebec. That is what we were supposed to be debating today. As on many other occasions, the Conservatives, as the leader of the Conservative Party has demonstrated, do whatever they can to prevent legislation from passing through the House of Commons.

We will likely have a chance to go over those 13 recommendations in that report. What colleagues will find is that that report is being manipulated to the degree in which it has been amended to politicize it. This takes away the work that a good number of members on all sides of the House put into the report.

I will just give one or two of the recommendations:

That the Department of Justice establish a national working group with federal and provincial government officials, representatives from community organizations that work with victims, and victims' representatives to agree on national best practices and minimum standards for victims of crime, particularly as regards the level of support and the services available to victims.

The member was talking about victims. The government sees the value in terms of supporting victims. Enhanced funding was part of

the recommendations, recognizing that our judicial system is a joint responsibility. We have to and we do work with provincial, territorial and indigenous communities. The member is criticizing us about the issue of victims. The government has not only recognized victims but also allocated funding to victims. This is a part of the response to the report from the minister: "Several of the Committee's recommendations speak to the need for enhanced funding for victim services and victim-focused activities. A key component of the FVS, a horizontal government initiative led by Justice Canada, is the Victims Fund. When it was established in 2000, the Victims Fund had \$5 million available.... Since then, the funding available has grown to a little under \$32 million in 2022-2023."

The government understands the importance of victims. We do not need to be told by the Conservative Party. We understand the harm that is caused by horrific incidents, and we will continue to be focused on Canadians.

• (1105)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): I have some concerns this morning, Madam Speaker. I am listening to the debate and I am wondering whether this endless back and forth, filibustering, delaying debate, moving motions and tabling reports really benefits our democracy in any way. I do not know whether our democracy really benefits from the never-ending struggle between the Liberals and the Conservatives about who is going to win the procedural battle of the day and who is going to make the headlines by wasting the others' time.

I do not know. I am rather fed up with hearing, seeing and witnessing all of this. I thought that we were here to debate bills. I thought that we were here to advance democracy. I find this really sad.

It is not that I think the current motion is not important or worthwhile. However, it is giving rise to debates that are keeping us here until midnight every night until the House rises for the summer because so much time has been wasted on all this procedural wrangling over the past six months. I find that extremely unfortunate.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I can honestly say that, when I came in this morning, I had no speech prepared whatsoever. I had full intentions of seeing Bill C-35 pass through the House. It was not only going to be a majority; my understanding is that every member in the House is going to be voting in favour of Bill C-35. I honestly believed that we were going to be debating that and then going on to the next item.

I have been in opposition. Most of my political career has been in the opposition benches. Even when I was in opposition, and it can be found in a Hansard search, members will find that I have said in the past that something like time allocation is a necessary tool in order for governments to be able to pass legislation.

Filibustering for no real purpose, other than to frustrate the system, does a disservice to the chamber. I think we need to put Parliament ahead of politics. I have given the odd partisan speech, I will admit that. Having said that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will go to another question.

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

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question for the parliamentary secretary is around the amendment. It gets to the crux of the issue. I am going to give him a hypothetical.

Maybe there is a chance in some future scenario that he is a minister. What would he do if he had staff who were hiding stuff from him, so that he was not aware of some serious allegations, especially when it comes to public safety and the importance of keeping Canadians safe?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is a good question. I suggest the member raise that question during question period. If he addresses it to me, I might even have the opportunity to answer that question directly.

The debate that we are talking about today is about the concurrence report on 13 recommendations. Those recommendations, I would suggest, as in many other reports, would normally be looked at and responded to, as this report has been responded to. Then we would continue on.

In this situation, the Conservatives wanted to bring it forward to the House this morning in order to pick up on a totally different issue. We saw that in the amendment they put forward, which politicizes the report. They are more interested in the politics than they are in the issue.

Once again, we have seen a very clear demonstration by the far-right Conservative Party today on just how far they are prepared to go on the issue of playing partisan politics.

• (1110)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been in the House for 12 years, and I think I saw a first today when the hon. member for Winnipeg North read his own remarks into the record as part of his speech. I compliment him on his creativity.

We have a concurrence report, which was unanimously supported by all the parties and made 13 very important recommendations about victims' rights and services.

Today's debate has a danger of diverting us from those unanimous recommendations and making progress on them together, when this is one of the few times all the parties have come together on a report. Does the member share my concern about this?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I will tie that into the issue of a healthier democracy. We underestimate the real value of what takes place in our standing committees. On occasion, we get reports that are unanimously supported. I do not get to spend very much time in committees myself, but I know about the passion I have seen from a number of colleagues who go to committee to deal with reports. I see the amount of energy, resources, time, pas-

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sion and love of an issue. Reports come from those committees, and when they are unanimous, we do a disservice to the work committees have done on reports when we politicize them.

I believe the amendment being proposed today does just that. It takes a partisan slant and poisons the well, in my opinion.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I have to say I agree that this debate takes attention away. As my hon. friend from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke just pointed out, we are debating a concurrence report with which we all agree. This means that we are not really debating the topic at all. We are not talking about victims' rights. The report focuses on specific recommendations, so the debate today, lest anyone be confused, is for no high-minded purpose. It is clearly a procedural tactic being used by the official opposition; therefore, it is dispiriting.

The topic is not dispiriting. We need to protect victims' rights, and we need much more recognition throughout the system that the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights should have included the Marsy's law material out of the state of California, which would keep victims properly informed at every stage. I argued that at the time. These recommendations are important, but we are not talking about those. The victims in this case are being used as a political football, and I find that dispiriting.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when I started my comments, I referred to the victims, their families, friends and our communities as a whole, because of the high profile of the Bernardo issue.

That aside, the recommendations, in many ways, are focused on victims. I have not read the entire report. As I said, I did not come here expecting to debate this issue today. I have had the chance to look at a couple of the recommendations, of which I understand there are 13. I have had a chance to look at the response to it from the minister's office. The issue in itself in the report is a very good issue. I think that if Canadians go online, they would be fairly impressed by the work of parliamentarians. I suspect they can find it online.

If Canadians could see a lot of the work that is done in committees, I think they would be quite pleased. At times, some of the things that take place on the floor of the chamber take away from reports, and that is what is sad to see today.

• (1115)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very disturbed, as a member who has served on a number of committees, that the work of committees is being used in this manner. Committees are an opportunity for members to contribute both expertise and thoughtful reflections from their constituents.

What are the hon. member's thoughts about how using a thoughtful committee report in this manner, weaponizing it to name and shame, hurts the work of committees in general?

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is correct in her assessment, when she says that it is weaponizing a report that was supported unanimously by all parties in the House. Filibustering, and ultimately making it a very partisan issue, does not do a service to the work that the committee members have put in.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, I ask my colleagues' permission to share my time with my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé.

I am going to talk about the report that is the main focus of our debates today. With respect to the amendment proposed by the Conservatives, I will let the minister defend himself as he sees fit. Those of us in the Bloc Québécois are also outraged by this treatment—I would not say preferential treatment, but the treatment Mr. Bernardo received. It seems victims rights' have been ignored in this case. It is shocking to us too, but I will let the minister present the arguments he deems appropriate. We will see when the time comes.

I was proud to sit on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights when we studied these provisions. Of all the areas of federal jurisdiction, the Criminal Code is among the most important. I do not wish to diminish the importance of international relations, the environment or other matters, but the Criminal Code has an impact on the daily lives of many Canadians. The federal government's power over the Criminal Code and criminal activity is a very big deal. I was very proud to take part in those debates.

The report contains a number of recommendations. They are all important, but I would particularly like to draw my colleagues' attention to the provisions set out in recommendations 7, 8, 9 and 10 regarding victim's participation in the process.

I think this is essential. In a criminal trial, decisions are often made about the punishment that will or will not be imposed on the accused. Some consideration is also often given to the fate of the victims of the crimes in question, but perhaps not always enough. At least, victims may not get a chance to participate effectively in trials that involve them. We heard from many witnesses on this issue in committee. What came up quite frequently was the lack of information. Victims do not know what rights they have during their attacker's trial.

We think it would be important to run education campaigns on this issue, while taking into account the different areas of jurisdiction, of course. My colleagues know how important that is to me. Raising awareness should not mean encroaching on the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. We think there could be discussions on this, but public education campaigns have to be set up to properly inform citizens of their rights when they are victims of a crime.

There is the whole issue of the ombudsman. The position was vacant for quite some time, but was finally filled last fall. A new ombudsman was appointed. However, the budget for the office of the ombudsman is rather meagre. I think this should be reconsidered to ensure that there is a full team of competent people working with the ombudsman, because the role of ombudsman is essential in the criminal trial process. The public education campaigns and the om-

budsman are important elements that we will find in more detail in recommendations 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the report. That said, I do not want to minimize the importance of reading all 13 recommendations.

I would also like to draw my colleagues' attention to recommendations 11 and 12. We talked about them recently. Important groups are calling for this. Motions to this effect have been moved in the House. We must absolutely ensure that the publication bans in criminal cases have the desired scope and effect.

Publication bans are issued to protect the victims, not to protect the public. However, under the current system, most of the time publication bans are requested by the Crown prosecutor, sometimes almost automatically, often without the victims having been consulted.

• (1120)

Once the publication ban has been ordered, the victim does not have the authority to ask that it be lifted. However, victims often want to speak out publicly in the media about the crimes committed against them. They want to talk about how the crime affected their lives and their family's lives. They want to have some input on the punishment they consider appropriate in their case.

In every case, the victim comes up against a publication ban that they do not have the right to breach. If they do, they could be prosecuted. This makes no sense to me. Victims testified at our committee about this issue. I do not even understand why this rule is in place. They are quite right. We need to allow publication bans, because they are essential in some cases. Some victims say they do not want the crime they were a victim of to be discussed. They do not want their family, neighbours or children to read about it in the media.

However, other victims say that it is therapeutic for them to talk about it. The needs and rights of the victims must be considered. Publication bans are central to victims' rights and needs. I recommend that the House pay particular attention to this issue, which is addressed in recommendations 11 and 12 of the report. This strikes me as being essential.

There is also recommendation 13, which deals with the issue of restitution orders. In a justice system that many say should be increasingly restorative, perhaps victims should be provided with better access to restitution. Any time a trial extends over several days or even several weeks, it might make sense to assume that the presiding judge has a good idea of the damages suffered by the victims. It might also seem appropriate for the judge to rule on some of those damages and ensure that the orders made are binding and that the victims have the opportunity to ensure that they are enforced. Access to restitution is important.

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Publication bans should be ordered or sought by the Crown only after the victim has consented to the ban. For example, the judge could seek or require the victim's consent before issuing a publication ban. If the victim does not consent, a discussion could take place with the judge and the Crown as to why a ban should or should not be imposed. A mechanism must be found to ensure that victims participate in these orders and are able to have them lifted when it is in their best interest.

Again, I could never overstate the importance of supporting victims, as I discussed at the start of my speech. However, we need to invest funds in providing the necessary information to victims. At the moment, that information is meagre. Although I dislike using the same word twice, the adjective seems to fit the ombudsman's office and information services too. As things stand, a person who becomes a victim of crime is unaware of the services they are entitled to receive. The victim's level of involvement in the process will depend on the prosecutor assigned to the case. I think we need to inform victims, but we also need to inform Crown attorneys about what they must offer victims to have them participate, understand the process and exercise their rights along the way.

• (1125)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech a great deal. I can tell that he has worked really hard on this issue. In fact, he was on the committee that studied it. I would like his opinion on the fact that we are looking at an amendment that has nothing to do with the committee's report.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Speaker, I would not go so far as to say that the amendment has nothing to do with the adoption of the report, since we are talking about victims' rights and the case of Mr. Bernardo, who was transferred to a medium-security penitentiary without the victims being properly consulted or informed. Maybe there is a connection, but I agree with the member that it is certainly not a direct link.

At the time we wrote our report, we certainly would not have been able to discuss Mr. Bernardo's case, because his transfer has only just taken place. There is a connection, but it is tenuous.

I think we have to wait and see what the minister comes up with. I think the connection is too tenuous for us to be able to discuss it in a useful way at this point. I would rather have the minister explain this motion.

Personally, I want the House to approve our report as written so we can move forward. Once again, this is too important. We need to strengthen victims' right to information, provide funding to the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, launch an awareness campaign, and review the parole process and publication bans.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, it has been a great pleasure working with the member on the justice committee. It is important to note that the justice committee has done an enormous amount of work unani- mously in trying to move things forward for Canadians, despite sometimes being in a minority Parliament that is quite divisive.

My question for the member has to do with recommendation 3, which talks about the establishment of national standards for minimum levels of support for victims of crime. It calls for the federal government and the provinces to work together to establish those standards. Right now there is no right to victims' assistance and there are no common standards among the provinces.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague that it was a pleasure working together on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Despite the differences of opinion from one party to the other, I think we have always been able to work respectfully, and I value that.

With regard to recommendation 3, it is indeed important to establish minimum standards for victim services. Again, I am proceeding very cautiously, because it seems to me that the foundation of this work is fragile.

We are talking about respecting the jurisdiction of Quebec, each of the provinces and the three territories. This needs to play out the same way it did in committee, that is, with respect, and the provinces should be consulted. If the justice ministers of Quebec, Canada, Ontario and all the provinces agree to work together to establish something, I would be the happiest man alive. Even a sovereign Quebec wants to work with Canada and with other countries. That is the crux of the global political, economic, cultural and social reality. We must work together to ensure that the services offered to victims are effective and useful to everyone.

• (1130)

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my dear colleague a very brief question.

I gather that it was important that all the recommendations in the report be adopted and that the report be concurred in as is. I imagine that several of the witnesses that the committee heard from were victims. If there was one priority for victims, what was it?

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville for her question and for the incredible work that she does in her riding and in the House.

I will reiterate everything that I believe is essential: victims' participation in the justice system, restorative justice, publication bans, and victims' participation in parole hearings. However, the fact is that victims' right to information needs to be reinforced, so that is probably the priority.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank and salute my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord for the fine work he does every day on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I have had the privilege of substituting for him on a number of occasions. His are big shoes to fill.

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I will begin by saying that I am disappointed we are once again dealing with a Conservative ploy to disrupt the agenda, to waste time, when we have important work to do. Today, the Conservatives are doing it by raising an extremely important, fundamental and serious issue that we must discuss, so we will discuss it.

It is true that it is an important issue. I am not being critical because the issue is not important. Questioning the minister's authority or legitimacy is important, but when do we get to move forward?

It is rather ironic that the week we are debating the hybrid Parliament so members can have a family life and spend some time at home, we are sitting every damn night until midnight.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Pardon me?

Mr. Yves Perron: Am I not allowed to say “damn”?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is always a question of whether or not it offends another member. In this case, it struck a nerve.

I recommend that the hon. member use other words.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, my colleague will surely agree with me that there is irony in this. I withdraw the word. We are then sitting every evening until midnight. That was my introduction.

Now, we need to talk about this serious and very important subject of victims' rights. This committee report seems fundamental to me. However, we need to be very vigilant on the issue of jurisdiction. The report's first recommendation refers to creating a national working group to agree on consistent standards and practices—or at least as consistent as possible. I understand the merits of that proposal. My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord mentioned it earlier. However, we will have to be very vigilant when working with the governments of Quebec, the other provinces and the territories, because they are the ones responsible for the administration of justice, and therefore all these conditions.

As indicated in the report's second recommendation, the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights must be reviewed to include the right to support. This is fundamental.

I will tell a sad story from last year. There was a traffic accident in my riding. It was an accident caused by someone who was intoxicated. It therefore became a criminal act. The body of a 17-year-old youth who was killed in the accident—I find it hard not to get emotional when I talk about it because I knew these people really well—became an exhibit in court. That is an example of victims' rights. Members may look at me funny, but they will understand the connection. This young person's body became evidence. After three days, the mother called me in terrible distress because she was unable to retrieve the body of the child she had just lost.

I understand the police investigation and everyone understands there are processes, but we can all see the hole in our system. During all that time, the parents were being told nothing; they were not there. They are the direct victims of the criminal act that was perpetrated, and they were not being looked after. The member for Quebec was contacted and this was then resolved. However, those people suffered for many hours.

Maybe that could be fixed, and we could do better. People need to be informed because, in my example, no one was giving the parents any information or telling them when it would be over. I am sure we understand what I mean. It is very important that we take care of victims of criminal acts.

The fourth recommendation of the committee's report pertains to information for victims. This too is fundamental. This information should be provided automatically, and victims should not have to fight for it. That is not normal either. The person has already been victimized by a crime and their life is destabilized; we need to help them, not put new obstacles and new challenges in their way. This is fundamental. Again, it is clear that this victim will want information. To me, making the information available seems central to everything.

Next, information should be provided to people who are victims. In the case of the mother I talked about earlier, no one gave her any information. We need to inform people about their remedies and their rights. Doing that will take money. That was mentioned earlier.

Victims should also be allowed to participate in the process and be informed. Let us imagine a victim of an extremely violent crime. A release process is under way, but the victim was not informed; she is then faced with a done deal. Imagine this person's anguish. The victim may wonder whether this person will come back to see them or whether there will be reprisals. It is important that victims be included in the judicial process, that they be respected and properly supported. That, too, is a question of resources.

My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord also stressed the importance of the recommendations that deal with publication bans. Sometimes, people can act very quickly and these bans will be issued. If I believe the findings of the committee's report, that is being done without the victim's consent.

● (1135)

However, the first person that should be consulted in the entire process is the victim. It may be that the victim does not want the publication ban. That also carries a risk. For example, a person who was shaken, who communicated but made a mistake by conveying too much information, may be found in breach of the ban by the court. This is clearly not acceptable.

Beyond all that, there is the issue of resource allocation. I approached one of my Conservative colleagues who gave a speech this morning to ask him whether we had the necessary resources in our justice system to properly represent, among others, the Crown. I have major doubts about this. Perhaps more money should be transferred to Quebec and the provinces. This is also very important.

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Let us talk about support resources. What we are seeing when we work in our ridings is that there are a lot of community organizations. These community organizations have extremely dedicated people who are there for the right reasons, to help people. When we inquire about these people's living conditions, we realize that they work an incredible number of hours for a scant wage. That requires moral fortitude. Those who deal with human suffering have a hard time shaking it off when they go home to have supper with their families. These people provide extraordinary services to the community. I dream of the day when there will be enough funding for these people, who I see as discounted government subcontractors because taking care of people is a collective responsibility.

In the case of victims of crime, in particular, people need to be taken by the hand, accompanied and informed about what they can do. They need to be asked what they want and what they do not want. For instance, if they choose to allow a publication ban, they need to be told what that means. They need to be asked if they are ready to live with that. Often, things move quickly, and things are not explained because the resources are not there, because there is no time. People must have the time to take care of victims.

In closing, let us talk about the amendment. We will not start defending the minister, who seems to be aware of very few things in his life. However, a bit like my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, I question the relevance of tying that to this report, although there is indeed an indirect link. I think there are other ways of addressing that. The importance of the report must not be overlooked, and it must be adopted.

• (1140)

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am impressed with the speech of my colleague. I have heard clearly, in every word he has said, how he feels about this issue and how important it is that we move forward on the recommendations in this report. It covers many of the issues of victims' rights.

A constituent of mine was the victim of a drive-by shooting that left her completely paralyzed. That is when I found out how little services and support we have, whether they are financial compensation, or the avenues that are recommended in the report, the avenues for people to talk to someone, and some sensitivity. Resources that are there are clearly not sufficient.

I would like to hear more from my colleague on what more he thinks we need to do, over and above these great recommendations before us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and her kind words.

What more should be done?

At every level of bureaucracy, the people being served should be taken into consideration. Public servants should look beyond financial considerations and look after their needs. Certainly, if they have to deal with 18 cases in a single day, that becomes impossible.

For example, some youth protection cases have been dragging on for a long time, so resources are needed.

Beyond that, I think that the culture needs to be changed, hence the importance of launching awareness campaigns and setting standards. That is why we agree on the principle, with the usual caveat of respecting Quebec and the provinces.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the previous speaker raised a very important point, which is our dependence on volunteer organizations that deal with victims and the struggles they have to raise the necessary money not just to provide the services, which are sometimes done on a contract basis, but to keep the lights on and the doors open at those organizations. There is very little support for that core funding that is very necessary for those organizations.

I would like to hear a bit more from the hon. member on his views on core funding for victim support organizations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: What a nice softball from my colleague, Madam Speaker. I thank the member for this great question.

Not only is it abnormal, it is revolting. These dedicated people who want to help others have to spend half their week, if not more, filling out damn paperwork.

Keeping an organization on mission for six months or more takes funding, but once they do manage to get funding, after six months they have to account for how those funds were used, which involves filling out more than a couple of forms. They have a stack of papers to fill out. I imagine that that answers my Liberal colleague's first question.

What more is there to be done? Let us look at how administration can be burdensome and tedious for those who want to help people.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke emotionally about the need to provide and share information.

My question is quite simple. What concrete steps can we take to improve these processes for both victims and the system?

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for her question.

What more can we do? It comes back to the same thing. We need to fund our resources properly. We need to provide them with permanent and adequate funding so that they do not have to wonder every year whether they will be able to continue operating. We need to make sure that we have quality resources.

Earlier, I talked about something important, and that is a culture change in the justice system. The most important thing is to take care of victims. I think that is what it comes down to.

Routine Proceedings

• (1145)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am of two minds about this debate this morning, because a concurrence debate about a unanimous report, which is on a very important topic, is a good thing, but I am also concerned if the real intent behind this debate is a diversion from others business of Parliament rather than actually talking about the important recommendations of this report.

Certainly, we heard from a wide range of people in the committee on this report. Many individual victims of crime came at a great personal cost and retold their stories of what had happened to them and the effects of being a victim of crime. We heard from many organizations that provide services to victims of crime. I want to pay particular thanks to the organization Mothers Against Drunk Driving, which has a very active victims' advocacy program.

We heard from the victims ombudsman, and I want to pay respect at this point to both the previous victims ombudsman, Heidi Illingworth, and the current ombudsman, Benjamin Roebuck, for the important research and advocacy work they do on behalf of victims in this country.

I hope what we can do in this debate is maintain the focus on what we heard from those victims and those victims' advocates and the recommendations that were unanimously approved in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. An important function of this debate today could be to encourage the government, in the many different departments involved, to make progress on these recommendations.

There are other mechanisms available in this House for holding government ministers to account. I know the hon. members of the Conservative Party know that, they have been using those, so again I will stress my concern that we are not actually doing this debate for some other purpose when there are other mechanisms available. No matter what one thinks about that issue, they are there, they have been used and they can continue to be used. I hope the impact of this is not going to focus on another issue, which is important, yes, but another issue rather than the issues that were raised in this report. Again, I am concerned we keep that focus on moving forward on the recommendations in this report.

There are a number of chapters in this report, and it kind of amazed me that in the end, on a topic that has often been contentious in Parliament, we were able to reach a consensus on 13 recommendations. That is a bit of a miracle, especially in a minority Parliament and especially on an issue that has previously been so contentious.

I bring attention to chapter 4, which talks about services for victims of crime, and I will come to that in just a minute. There is a whole chapter on the right to information about the legal process in this report. There are recommendations on the rights of victims to participate in the legal process and how we meet the challenges victims face when they try to participate in this legal process. There is a chapter on the right to protection of victims while they are participating in the process, and I will return to that one a little later on.

There is an important chapter on the idea of restitution, on how often victims of crime cannot be made whole again in both financial and circumstantial areas. There is a final chapter on complaint mechanisms and remedies, so when the system goes wrong for victims what they have available to them to make that known to the system and to those who have the power to change that.

If we talk about services, one of the important things I learned from this is that in the Victims Bill of Rights there is no right to access to services for victims of crime. I think that is an oversight, and this committee, in recommendation 2, says that we should fix that. We know it is going to be a challenge. The federal government shares the justice field with the provinces and administration of justice belongs to the provinces.

That is why in recommendation 3 in this report it talks about working together to set some minimum standards of what is available to victims, in terms of support services and participation in the various parts of the legal process. I was very pleased to hear my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois agreeing we do need to work together to achieve some minimum standards. Again, that is part of the miracle of this report, which is that even on contentious federal-provincial issues we were able to reach agreement on how to better serve victims.

What do victims really need? There is a whole range of things, but the thing we heard most often is they need support services that are tailored to their needs and that quite often those needs are different.

• (1150)

Victims from different backgrounds have different needs to support them participating in the process and also to recover as a victim of crime. Lots of times, the services that we have available do not actually take into account the different circumstances, especially of those who are most marginalized in our society and especially of indigenous people. Having culturally relevant and culturally appropriate services available to victims is something we often fall down on and we do not do such good job.

When we are talking about services for victims of crime, we have tended to ignore mental health services. Again, my colleague from Comox has been a great advocate for mental health services. This report acknowledges that victims quite often need very specific kinds of therapy in order to get back to full participation in society, after having been victimized by criminal activity. I commend that chapter to everyone in the House. It is a very important chapter on the gaps in our approaches.

I was surprised to learn that legal aid is generally not available, in any form, to victims of crime. Even though I taught criminal justice for many years, I had not really thought about this from the perspective of victims. We provide legal aid to defendants, and of course we have prosecutors who are paid for by the public. However, when it comes to victims of crime participating, legal assistance is generally not available to them. We depend on advocacy organizations to provide that advice and that assistance to victims of crime.

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That brings me to the chapter on the right to information. Again, we did something peculiar when we established victims' rights and we said that the victims have rights to ask for information about the system. What we heard, again and again, from victims and their advocacy organizations is quite often victims do not even know what to ask. The system is so unfamiliar, so complex and so unforgiving. In particular for people who suffered trauma, it is so difficult to navigate that they do not even know what rights they have or to ask how to access those rights.

An important recommendation in this report, recommendation 4, is that we change the onus of providing information to an automatic provision of information to victims. Some jurisdictions do a better job than others in making sure victims understand what their rights are and what services are available to them. Again, we largely depend on those volunteer organizations to inform victims of their rights. However, if someone is not in touch with one of those organizations, they are left in the dark about how this very complex legal system of ours actually works.

Let us change this from saying that it is on victims to request information to it is on someone specific. We have not tried to solve that problem in this report, but we have indicated that it needs to be someone specific. We cannot just say there is right to information without saying who is actually going to deliver that information. It is up to the governments, again, because we have a justice system that is split over jurisdictions. It is up to those jurisdictions to work together to figure out who is going to make sure that victims actually do get the information.

One of the things we could do is provide core funding to victim organizations that are actually already doing this work. If we provided better funding to those organizations, they could make sure that victims were getting the information that they need on how to participate in the legal system, how to make sure their voices are heard in our legal system, but also on the very services that might be available to them in the community.

Now chapter 7 deals with the right to the protection of victims' identity and the right to privacy of victims. Again, this is probably one of the most surprising parts of the report. We heard very moving and effective testimony from victims of sexual assault, like Morrell Andrews, who talked about something we did many years ago in our legal system. We set up a system of publication bans so that the identity of victims of sexual assault would not become public.

Over the years our understanding of sexual assault has changed, and many of those victims of sexual assault were surprised to learn that they were subject to a publication ban, that they were not allowed to talk about what had happened to them in any way. Many of those victims of sexual assault also felt the publication ban, by protecting their identity, ended up protecting the identity of the perpetrator.

What we heard quite clearly in the testimony that was before us, and it was very eloquent, very difficult testimony for people to give on their personal assault experiences, was that the current arrangements take away agency from victims of sexual assault.

• (1155)

Therefore, in recommendation 11, the committee has recommended: first, that those who are subject to publication bans need to be informed and consulted before that publication ban is put in place; and second, that they need to have the right to opt out of that publication ban.

Many members know that I have spoken several times in the House about being an adult victim of child sexual assault. The veil of secrecy that was put around me at that time was helpful, but it was most helpful to the perpetrator, who had eight other victims. It would have been quite important for me, though as a minor I probably could not make that decision, for someone to make the decision that it was information the public needed to have. We have heard quite clearly from adult victims of sexual assault that they want their agency back. They want the ability to talk about their experience, they want the ability to warn others and they do not want to be treated as if they are minor children when it comes to the issue of sexual assault.

Those are just a few of the highlights in this report.

When I talk about trying to keep our focus on those recommendations so we can move forward, I want to talk a bit about one step forward that the government has taken as a result of this report.

We have Bill S-12 currently in the Senate. The last time I checked two days ago, the Senate justice committee was just about finished its consideration of Bill S-12. It would take recommendation 11 from this report and put it into law. When that recommendation is finished in the Senate, it will come back to the House and we will have the chance, in approving Bill S-12, to give that agency back to victims of sexual assault, to give them the right to know about publication bans before they are imposed and the right to have the ability to opt out of those publication bans.

When I say that focusing on these recommendations is important to make progress, there is a very specific example of the many things that are in this report so that, if we keep the focus on the unanimous support for those recommendations, I believe we will be able to make progress on victims' rights and services for victims.

Again, this is a minority Parliament and often fractious. However, in the justice committee, somehow, on very many issues we have been able to work together to achieve unanimity. The report on improving support for victims of crime is my best example of how Parliament can work, Parliament can be very functional and we can make recommendations that are important to the lives of everyday Canadians.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on a wonderful report. The recommendations cover so many different areas that I have concerns about when it comes to victims' rights.

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As I had mentioned earlier, a constituent was the victim of a drive-by shooting and left paralyzed. That is when I started asking questions about what kinds of supports there were, both financial and restorative as well as emotional supports. I found out that there was very little there.

I congratulate my colleague for the excellent work the committee did on bringing this forward. I would like to hear him spend another minute or so speaking about other suggestions over and above the recommendations that are here today.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I am going to stick to the member's question a bit more about what we heard from victims, because it is important to remember that this report is based on what we heard from victims of crime.

There are two general themes in what we heard. One of those was that victims wanted to ensure that justice was done, absolutely.

However, there is a second theme of victims that gets missed in some of the debates in the House of Commons. That second theme that was almost always there was that they wanted to ensure that no one else would become a victim of the same thing that happened to them. That compassion for others that almost all victims have displayed is how their trauma and terrible experience can be used to inform public policy so that this does not happen to any other family and does not happen to any other community. That is an important part of this debate and it is an important part of what is reflected in the report, which I hope we all respect.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the tone of the debate in the past hour. I find that the report contains good recommendations. The focus is clearly on the victims, and that is really important.

The problem is that the report was brought up this morning when we were supposed to be talking about something else. That has been happening a lot in recent weeks and months in the House. We are behind in much of our work. There are always distractions. There are always attempts to obstruct our debates. For that reason, we will be working until midnight until June 23. Important bills were supposed to be passed, but may not be before we adjourn for the summer.

I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about the partisan game that has been going on between the Conservatives and the Liberals since the beginning of the session.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, there are always issues of importance, issues of the day perhaps that are in the media, but there are many mechanisms in this Parliament to deal with those. The purpose of moving concurrence in this report seems to be to divert other business of Parliament and not focus on the recommendations of the report. That is why I have not been talking about those other issues. I hope we can remain focused on the recommendations of the report and let the parties in this Parliament use the other mechanisms available for dealing with other issues.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure serving with my colleague and southern neighbour from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke in this caucus.

I have been here long enough and have witnessed in the House of Commons that sometimes the crimes that are reported in the news can be sensationalized in this place and the statistics are torqued up to make political arguments. That is why I was glad to hear him underline the complexity of our justice system. I want to commend all members from all parties of the justice committee on the fact this report was adopted unanimously in a minority Parliament, and for putting that work in and arriving at a unanimous report.

I want to direct my colleague's attention to recommendation 8, which asks the government to expand and promote restorative justice, and to ensure there is adequate funding. We often hear about the soft-on-crime or jail-not-bail approaches. Restorative justice is a very complex procedure and centring it on victim's rights is about asking the offender to take a measure of responsibility. It does not always involve incarceration but really a variety of different processes that allow victims and offenders to come to some kind of a conclusion, which can be different in whatever the case may be.

I would ask my colleague to expand a bit on what was heard at committee and to put it into the victim context.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, my friend raises a very important point, and I want to give a very specific example, because I think often restorative justice is not taken seriously, which is why it is not funded seriously.

We had a very horrific incident of anti-Semitism in my riding, where some horrible graffiti was inscribed on The Chabad Centre for Jewish Life and Learning. It was done by two non-rocket scientists who were fairly young. It was done on camera, which they apparently did not notice, and they were fairly easily apprehended.

The police worked with the Chabad Centre for Jewish Life and Learning to create a restorative solution to the problem, which was that these two young people, who had been influenced by online publications and who I think had no real idea of the harm they had done, sit down with the members of that congregation to understand the harm they had caused. I really commend that community for taking a very horrific incident and, as a whole, trying to turn it into something positive.

• (1205)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to provide an opportunity for my hon. colleague and neighbour from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke to explain more fully what we are debating today and why we would be better served to debate other issues that we have to resolve in the few days that are left before, we hope, a parliamentary recess will occur, and not because we want to be on vacation but because we need to get some bills passed in this place.

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Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is really tempting me off what I am trying to do here, which is to say that, once this motion for concurrence has been moved, I would like us to focus on the recommendations in the report and the ability to move forward on those.

However, she is absolutely right. I do not believe that the motion for concurrence was moved for those reasons. I think it was moved to displace other business of Parliament that is also quite important, which I hope we get through before we rise.

We can really make progress on improving support for victims of crime if we all continue to work together as we did on this report.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of themes in the report is the necessity to do a better job at consulting with victims before decisions are made, whether with respect to parole or within corrections services.

Bringing it back to the amendment we are debating, I would like the member's take on the importance of ministerial accountability to consider the victims who need to be informed as a priority. When ministers do not take accountability and hide behind their staff, it reharms the victims. I would like the member's comments on that.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, as I have said several times now, and I will say it again, when we are talking about ministerial accountability there are very good and robust measures in the House, question period being among them, where we can deal with questions of accountability. I do not think that a concurrence motion on a unanimous report is the place to do that.

His question about victims is an important one, but I want to give a caution here. There is a difference between listening to the victims of crime about what will help them recover and about what is needed for them to participate fully in the system, and taking traumatic incidents in our society and exploiting them for political purposes. I worry that this is what we see happening today.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I came in here this morning expecting to be dealing with Bill C-35. I certainly agree with the recommendations in this report. As my hon. colleague indicated, we should stay very focused on these recommendations but move forward.

The amendment that my colleague moved for in the concurrence report is just another effort to politicize another terrible issue that we are concerned about, injuring the very victims who we are talking about in the recommendations from the Standing Committee on Justice and its recommendations to be more sensitive to the victims. With the amendment that was moved earlier, it is exactly the opposite.

I do want to speak today on this and talk about Bill S-12, which is the government's commitment to victims of crime. I will highlight different parts of Bill S-12, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

Bill S-12 has three main objectives: first, to respond to the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada last October in *R. v. Ndhlovu*, which struck down elements of the national sex offender registry; second, to strengthen the effectiveness of the registry; and, third, to

empower survivors and victims of crime by changing the rules governing publication bans and a victim's right to information; all three very important.

Today, I want to explain some of the proposed reforms that aim to ensure that the registry continues to be an effective and efficient tool for law enforcement. The RCMP and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police have lauded Bill S-12, and we are pleased that the legislation would ensure that the police agencies have what they need to do their jobs to better protect victims of crime and to prevent future crimes.

Bill S-12 would add to the list of offences that qualify a convicted offender for registration. Of particular note, the bill would add the offence of non-consensual distribution of intimate images to the list. The bill would also target so-called "sextortion" by adding extortion to the list when shown that it has been committed with the intent to commit a sexual crime. This is an important step forward in helping the police identify perpetrators of offences, which are becoming far more prevalent in the digital age with which we are dealing.

The bill also proposes a new arrest power in the Criminal Code to address the issue of non-compliance with registration obligations. Currently, it is estimated that up to 20% of individuals with obligations related to the national sex offender registry are non-compliant. This is not acceptable to any of us as parliamentarians and it is not acceptable to Canadians.

The only legislative mechanism to facilitate compliance with the registry under the current law is to arrest an individual and lay a charge under the Criminal Code. However, laying a distinct charge does not necessarily result in compliance, which is the goal. The bill would create a compliance warrant to allow police to seek arrest warrants to bring non-compliant sex offenders to a registration centre to fulfill their obligations under SOIRA.

Another important change is that the bill would newly require registered sex offenders to provide police with 14 days advance notice prior to travelling, as well as a list of the specific addresses where they will be staying during to course of their travels. This will allow police sufficient time to conduct a risk assessment and to notify appropriate law enforcement partners, if necessary, in accordance with their existing powers under the SOIRA.

Next, I would like to discuss the publication ban and the victims information measures. These are critical steps to respond directly to victims' requests of our justice system, which is much of what the report that we have from the Standing Committee on Justice refers to, to ensure that we are listening to the victims.

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● (1210)

Bill S-12 proposes publication ban reforms that respond directly to calls from survivors of sexual violence. Victims deserve more agency in the criminal justice process and the ability to tell their own stories if they so choose. They clearly are not being given enough priority and enough opportunities to share their stories.

The various publication ban provisions in the Criminal Code are intended to shield witnesses and victims from further harm by concealing their identity. A publication ban can encourage the testimony of victims and witnesses who may otherwise be fearful of coming forward. As we have heard many times over the last several months about publication bans, people who agreed to them for various reasons actually want them removed. Some survivors and victims of crime have found that publication bans have had the effect of silencing or restricting them. Again, we heard that several times in the last week or so. In fact, I recently saw a news report saying that eight women who were all subject to these publication bans wanted them removed so they would be able to speak about the situation that affected them and use it as an opportunity to educate other people.

Under the current system, we have seen victims convicted of violating a publication ban intended to be for their sole protection and benefit. This is clearly unacceptable. These survivors deserve to share their own stories if they so choose, and it is important that it be their choice and their choice alone, not a condition of some degree of settlement that will restrict them forever. One by one, many of the publication bans being removed are being removed at the request of the victims, at the request of the women who are still suffering as a result of some incident in their lives some years back.

To address this issue, Bill S-12 proposes that judges must ask prosecutors to confirm if reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that a victim has been consulted on whether or not a publication ban should be imposed. This proposal is in line with recommendation 11 of the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, entitled "Improving Support for Victims of Crime". In addition, Bill S-12 would clarify the process to modify or revoke a publication ban after one has been imposed by codifying the process that currently exists only in common law, which is to say through judicial decisions.

The bill would also ensure that publication bans are applicable to online material, an area that is of extreme importance to us as we move forward. Our young people are exposed to a tremendous number of things on our Internet systems, and we are having to deal with more and more issues, as young people are seeing and participating in things that they should not be. However, much of this online material may have been published before a ban was imposed.

Both of these measures recognize that victims and survivors should benefit from the right to change their minds. Choice to revoke or modify a publication ban should be dictated by the wishes of the victim or the survivor, not an employer or some other organization. However, the bill proposes that a residual discretion be given to the judge to refuse such a request if it would, for example, possibly identify a second victim involved who wishes to remain anonymous. It is expected that these types of scenarios would be extremely rare and that, for the overwhelming majority of cases, a

publication ban would be lifted in cases where the victim clearly does not want it in place.

There is no good or right way to be a victim. This legislation recognizes the choice of victims and survivors and provides them with decision-making power. Returning power to victims and survivors of sexual violence can be essential for the healing process and can prevent retraumatization in the criminal justice process. Recently at the standing committee on women, many individuals were talking about their experiences and how difficult it was, and how little support there was, for them to talk about the issues they were facing.

● (1215)

It is important that we get this right. I suspect that many members have already heard from survivors while working on this issue, as I have. I am sure that many of my colleagues from all sides of the House have listened to and heard from many people, men and women, who have been victims.

Survivors are looking to us to fix the publication ban regime to better empower them and to treat them with dignity and respect. With a publication ban in place, they are not able to speak with anybody about the pain and suffering they went through. Removing the publication ban, which is what Bill S-12 is suggesting, would allow them to do that.

I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to ensure that we get this delicate balance right. This is an area that we can review at committee to see if the language can be strengthened further.

I want to take a moment to speak about a victim's right to information about the case of an offender who has harmed them. This right is enshrined in the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights in sections 6, 7 and 8. Bill S-12 would make it easier for victims to access information about their case after sentencing or after an accused is found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder.

To achieve this goal, the bill proposes several measures. First, it would require that the judge ask the prosecutor whether they have taken reasonable steps to determine whether the victim wishes to obtain this information. Second, the bill would allow victims to express this interest through their victim impact statement. Finally, the bill would require the court to provide Correctional Service Canada with the victim's name and the information if they have expressed a desire to receive this type of information. It is an extremely important part of this bill to give victims the option if they want to receive this information. Not everyone would want it because very often it revictimizes the victims.

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Once again, this approach is respectful of the needs of victims and seeks to provide the flexibility required to obtain the information at a time of their choosing. I note that this proposal received particular attention and support from the federal ombudsperson for victims of crime.

The changes contemplated by this bill would meet an urgent need to make the laws governing the national sex offender registry compliant with the charter. At the same time, it would make the registry better able to accomplish its vital purpose of providing police with current and reliable information to investigate and prevent crimes of a sexual nature. It would also take an opportunity to make the criminal justice system more responsive to survivors and victims of crime, including victims of sexual offences.

These reforms are targeted, measured and sensible. They will make a tangible difference for victims of some of the most serious crimes under our law. They align with our government's firm support for victims of crime. We will never leave victims behind, and we are constantly working to improve our justice system to better accommodate victims.

The report that was tabled this morning, on which concurrence has been moved, is from the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, and it has 13 excellent recommendations very focused on how we can make life better for the victims and how we can better respond to the needs of victims. I look forward to discussing those recommendations as we proceed with the hearing today.

• (1220)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for highlighting recommendation 11 in this report. It is now in Bill S-12 in the Senate.

I wonder if she shares the optimism that I feel. A lot of the matters dealt with in Bill S-12 have already been discussed multiple times in this chamber. When that bill eventually arrives here, does she believe that all parties can work together to get its provisions enacted quickly?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his work on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

I hope the bill is the kind of thing that has unanimous support from all parliamentarians in the House. It talks about how we can better support victims in Canada and what kinds of resources are needed as we move forward. I very much hope we will have unanimous support when it comes forward.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the member a similar question to one I asked earlier during this debate specifically around the amendment. It gets to the root cause of how victims are not being treated respectfully at times because of a lack of accountability within the minister's office, in this case the Minister of Public Safety.

If the roles were reversed and she was a minister, would she accept staff members keeping her in the dark and not briefing her about something that is impacting victims in Canada?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, on the amendment, we all have a responsibility as we move forward to try to ensure that prop-

er changes are made and things are done in the most effective way. I believe all of us parliamentarians, and in particular ministers, have a huge responsibility to ensure that we are moving forward on and responding to issues of the day.

The amendment put forward today was another opportunity to politicize a horrible issue, something that all of us are very concerned about. I am not even going to reference the individual we are talking about nor the families, because I think we are revictimizing families over and over again. Every time this is mentioned in the House, like yesterday and the day before, it is revictimizing the families, and that is not acceptable.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while listening to the member's comments, I appreciated the fact that she highlighted a number of the recommendations. In those recommendations, I have found there is a great emphasis on victims. I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on why we should be putting more and more emphasis on victims. In the last budget, there was a commitment to additional funding for victims. I would like her general thoughts about victims of crime.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, I found out first-hand what is available to victims as far as support or anything else goes when one of my constituents was a victim of a drive-by shooting. I went to see what I could do to help and found out how little there was, whether it was financial support, emotional support or just being able to get before a committee and share what had happened. There was very little there.

The report from the standing committee, which was a unanimous report, is wonderful work. It is really indicative of how members of Parliament can work together on difficult issues. The 13 recommendations were supported by all parliamentarians on that committee and were put together while doing exactly what I think we need to do more of: working together to do our job of advancing the issues that are going to better protect Canadians.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the hon. member. I know her to be an MP who stands up very strongly for her constituents, and I thank her for that work.

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She mentioned the concern she has that the amendment today revictimizes, which I believe was the word she used, the victims of this horrific, vile killer and those who have been impacted by men like him. I would ask her to reflect on the fact that it was the minister's failure to do his job that led the families of those women to be revictimized in the way they were. He has made a number of excuses and has taken no accountability or responsibility for the fact that he did not know that the most vile killer and rapist of children in this country's history was being moved to a medium-security prison from a maximum-security prison.

I feel the public trust in the Minister of Public Safety has been broken. It is certainly important to women that we have a minister who is competent in this regard, but he has failed in this regard. He needs to take ownership over this revictimization. I would ask for the member's thoughts on his failure to protect those families.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has done admirable work on the files that she has had, on these ones and on the other ones before. We have worked together on a variety of different things. I have tremendous respect for my colleague, but I have to say that there are issues that are taking valuable time in the House. We are supposed to be talking about Bill C-35, which would entrench the issues of child care across Canada, to make sure that child care will continue to be available throughout the country and be affordable. I came in totally prepared to be dealing with Bill C-35.

What we are doing is wasting time. That is the wrong wording. We are accepting these recommendations and applauding the recommendations, but we should really be moving on with trying to get the legislation of the government through. That is part of what our job is: to move legislation through. That was what my intention was when I came today, and I would hope that, as soon as this is finished, we will get on to doing that. Issues of what a minister did, should do, or whatever, are issues, I believe, that should not be on the table for our continued discussion. We should be putting our legislation through the House.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would echo the comments of my colleague from Manitoba about the hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek, who, I will also note, is a strong member for her constituents on many issues, including this one.

I just want to follow up on the question from my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound with regard to the amendment.

The hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek was a minister of the Crown, and I just want to ask what her reaction would be if, in a situation like this, staff had kept something from her.

● (1230)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I expect that my reaction would be the exact same as my colleague's reaction.

Today, we have important time to try to get legislation through. We all know that we expect the House will rise. I had hoped it was going to rise this week, but clearly it is going to rise next week.

The minister is responsible, at the end of the day, for his actions, and that will follow. We should not be using House time to discuss

something that, at the end of the day, we are not going to be able to take action on.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great disappointment that, yet again, in the last number of days, the Liberal Prime Minister and his cabinet have let Canadians down in quite a tremendous fashion. They have withheld the truth and they have misled the public. They have made egregious errors and taken no responsibility for them. They are making excuses and blaming everyone but themselves. There has been very little, if any, accountability taken, and meanwhile it is the Canadian people and, certainly, our most vulnerable, who suffer as a result.

As such, the amendment the Conservatives moved today in the House is calling for the immediate resignation of the public safety minister, given his long track record of misleading the House and the Canadian people, and in particular his latest quite serious failure of leadership and responsibility in a cabinet position that really, beyond many others, needs the public trust, needs a responsible minister and needs to be beyond reproach in this regard, given the magnitude of the files they are responsible for.

For those who have been paying attention, we are talking about the move of, I believe, certainly the most notorious child rapist and killer in Canadian history, Paul Bernardo. He was recently moved, under the public safety minister's watch, under the Liberal government's watch, from maximum security to medium security. A man who, I would assume almost all Canadians believe, and rightfully so in my opinion, should rot in prison for the rest of his life has now been moved to a medium-security prison with more privileges. The tale that has come out in the last few hours and days about what the minister knew and what the Prime Minister knew, or what they are saying their offices knew, and we will get into that, is just deeply concerning and shows that very little responsibility is being taken.

It is now very unclear whether there is anyone in charge at Public Safety, because it does not seem like there is. Because this issue, what this vile killer did, is so sensitive and has really been burnt into the minds of Canadians, for me, it certainly evoked a very emotional response and a lot of anger at the failure of responsibility and leadership from the Prime Minister and certainly from the Minister of Public Safety, which is why we are calling for his resignation today.

It was on June 1, just a few days ago, that Canadians learned that Correctional Service Canada was transferring this vile killer from a segregated section of a maximum-security prison, where he rightfully belongs until his dying days, to a medium-security prison, a more open, campus-style prison, and he certainly does not deserve that, from my perspective and from the perspective of most Canadians.

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Particularly women, but I think most of us, are hesitant to have his name glorified in Hansard or talked about. He does not deserve any of that, so from now on I will just be referring to him as the country's most vile serial rapist and killer of children. So that we really know what we are talking about, this is a man who, in the late eighties and early nineties, repeatedly kidnapped; raped; sodomized; tortured, often recording it on video camera; and murdered young women, as young as 14.

I have a colleague who was of a similar age at the time and who lived in Ontario then. She was telling me that, in school, girls of her age were being told to watch out for a white van and to be careful when they were walking home from school. This is something that is burnt into the memory of women of that age, of women generally, and certainly of parents who had children, particularly young girls, at that time.

He is a really horrific man, and obviously there has been tremendous public outrage at the idea, let alone the fact, that this man was moved to a medium-security prison.

Of course, the minister denied knowing. He came out saying how shocked he was, and it is really frustrating on a number of levels, because we have found, in the last couple of days, that perhaps that is not true at all. It is very well a strong possibility that he did know and failed to act and that the Prime Minister knew and failed to act on this, that they both failed to stop it in any way that they could. The Globe and Mail really outlined this well. I will just quote an article:

The Public Safety Minister invoked the wrath of Parliament and the anger of the families of the victims of Mr. Bernardo on Wednesday after CBC News reported that his office had been told that [this man] would be transferred to a lower-security prison in March. He told the House of Commons [just yesterday] that his office didn't brief him before the prison transfer happened.

● (1235)

How convenient it is that it did not brief him. We also found out in that same Globe and Mail story, which, I believe, was by Robert Fife and Steven Chase, that the Prime Minister's Office was also alerted months prior to the transfer, and that was confirmed by a Prime Minister's Office spokesperson. They are not even denying it, so I will give them that tiny bit of credit for at least not denying it, though certainly they were not forthcoming in the last number of days that this had broken into public knowledge. As the Globe pointed out, this significantly widens the group of staff, and likely their bosses, the politicians, who knew about this and yet did nothing about it until, oops, the public found out. Now there is shock and disappointment from our elected officials who have been entrusted with public safety and with ensuring that justice is served with respect to the most vile killers in our history. It has not been.

When all this was coming out, I really looked at it with disbelief. How many times are the Liberal ministers and the Prime Minister going to get away with saying, "Oh, I didn't know", "I wasn't briefed", "My staff didn't tell me" or saying that the agencies, CSIS and the RCMP, did not let them know and that the information did not quite get to the elected officials? How many times do we have to hear that, as Canadians or as opposition critics? How many times do we have to believe that and just move on like nothing happened?

We have seen this time and time again. With election interference from Beijing, we heard that they just were not quite briefed or that no one picked up the phone and called the former minister of public safety to tell him that my colleague, the member for Haldimand—Norfolk, was being threatened by Beijing and that his family was at risk. They said that CSIS wanted to tell him but had not quite done so, or that his staff had not. It is just a bunch of baloney.

Once, maybe, we would believe them, but two times, five times or 10 times, time and time again on issues of national security and public safety, are we expected to believe them? I do not think so. Enough is enough. We need to have the resignation of somebody in this place. There needs to be some accountability. There needs to be some responsibility taken for the absolute failure to govern.

It is really embarrassing, honestly, to be represented by ministers who take no accountability and responsibility for some of the most critical issues in this country. I want to be clear about why people are so outraged. We have maximum security and medium security. I just want to make it clear why Liberals should have been outraged and moved mountains to stop it, and should certainly have brought forward legislation by now to stop this, but they have not, and I will get into that later.

This individual, when he was in maximum-security prison, had very limited movement. He was heavily segregated. He had very little association with anyone. He had very, very few privileges, and rightfully so. He deserves to be punished for the rest of his life. Maximum-security prison is where he has been for almost 29 years, I believe. Now that he has been moved, under the watch of the public safety minister and the Prime Minister, who knew for three months, into a medium-security prison, he gets to talk to more people; he gets to walk around more and he has many fewer restrictions on him. He does not deserve that. I think everyone agrees, yet here we are; it happened and they could have stopped it. They knew it was coming for three months before it happened.

If someone makes a mistake, that is fine, and if it is the first time, then maybe I would believe them. It is not the first time, but they did not know and were not informed; let us pretend we believe them for one moment. Why is it, then, that they have not brought forward concrete solutions so this never happens again? They have a working majority in the House with the NPD's support. They could have brought forward legislation to signal to Canadians that they will never allow this to happen under their watch, but they have not done so.

Every effort by the Conservatives to move motions to stop this from happening again is shouted down by the Liberals. We have also introduced a bill, a private member's bill from the member for Niagara Falls, and I seconded that bill, that would make sure this never happens again. The Liberals say that it is out of their hands, that they cannot really do anything about it and that the minister is sort of tinkering around the edges now. However, is that really true? I looked at the legislation, and I am seeing a bit of pattern of a soft-on-crime, soft-on-criminals and forget-about-the-victims approach from the public safety minister, the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister.

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If we look at, for example, the Liberals' Bill C-83, it was adopted in 2019 and created a standard in section 28 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, and this is important, that required prisoner selection to be made by the commissioner of corrections based on "the least restrictive environment for that person". That was legislation they passed in 2019. Their bail reform, their soft-on-crime bail reform bill, was also passed that year.

• (1240)

There was a lot of damage done to Canadians in that short time, in favour of criminals at the expense of victims. This is just another one of those bills. In Bill C-83, the "least restrictive environment" for criminals in prison was the standard put forward.

Now what do we have? We have the "least restrictive environment" for the country's most vile serial killer and rapist of children. This is happening, in part, through the legislation that the Liberals put forward. They have created an environment where this is the case. I will say "the least restrictive environment" over and over, because that was the exact intention of their legislation.

In fact, the Liberals repealed a previous Conservative standard that was put in under former prime minister Stephen Harper's government, where it said "necessary restrictions" for criminals and vile killers. In 2019, these guys brought in bail reform and the "least restrictive environment" for those criminals in jail. Now we have that. The mission is fulfilled for the most vile killer in the country.

When the Liberals say that they cannot really do anything about it and that it is an independent decision, they can do something about it. They could repeal this section or probably the entire bill, Bill C-83. If it is anything like this, the whole thing should go in the garbage, but certainly this section. They could have brought forward a bill already, so that it does not happen again. It has been weeks already.

However, again, this was the objective, that the worst people who go to prison in this country get the "least restrictive environment". When they say that they cannot do anything about it, people should not buy it. That is not true.

Yesterday, my colleague, the member for Niagara Falls, brought forward a private member's bill, Bill C-342, that would keep dangerous offenders, like this individual, in maximum-security prisons. It would replace that legal standard that I just talked about, going from the "least restrictive environment" to "necessary and appropriate restrictions". It is very measured, very responsible and certainly in line, I think, with Canadian values on things like this.

Second, it also requires that inmates like this individual, who are designated by the courts as "dangerous offenders," which this individual is, have their sentences made indeterminate, with no fixed length. Certainly, this would include people who have committed multiple personal injury offences and are considered so dangerous to the public, individuals like the one we have been talking about today or those who have been convicted of more than one first-degree murder resulting in a life sentence.

It is very clear. Guys like this should always be in maximum security. That is what a Conservative government would do. I honest-

ly think that the private member's bill is fair, measured and should be adopted unanimously by all parties, especially in light of what has recently happened.

Let us now just really drill into the failure of the minister to take responsibility on this and to try to stop it before it ever happened. Again, this guy is in a medium-security prison, getting to walk around and getting rewarded. He should not be there. He should have been stopped, and yet the minister failed to do this.

I am just going to read this, from the Correctional Service of Canada. The statement it put out said, "The March 2 e-mail contained information notifying them [the public safety minister's office] of the transfer, along with communications messaging to support this."

That was from Correctional Service of Canada spokesperson Kevin Antonucci in a statement made on Wednesday. He added that in March, three months ago, the final date for the transfer had not been determined. Therefore, the minister's office also received an email on May 25 with updated communications messaging, as well as the fact that the transfer would occur on Monday, May 29.

If we read between the lines of what Kevin Antonucci said, the Correctional Service of Canada is really doing the lion's share of the work here, saying that it sent the message and notified the minister's office that the transfer could be stopped. They are not doing the minister any favours. They are saying that they told him and that they told him twice, and nothing.

We also found out, just last night, as I mentioned, that the Prime Minister's Office was also informed. I will read from the Globe: "A separate statement from the minister's office late on Wednesday suggested that when [the Minister of Public Safety's] team found out about the transfer on March 2, the Prime Minister's Office was already aware of the matter."

It went on to say, "When a staff member in the Prime Minister's Office was alerted in March by the Privy Council Office about the possibility of the transfer, inquiries and requests for information were immediately made to the Public Safety Minister's Office".

When the PMO was told, it immediately reached out to the public safety minister's office and asked what was going on. The Minister of Public Safety still had no idea this was going on, and he had no idea the Prime Minister's office was reaching out to his office for information. It is a bit hard to believe. There are only a few options there. The minister is so hands-off that he has no idea what is going on in his file in any regard, he knowingly ignored this or he knew and he has been misleading the public and the House. That is very difficult to believe.

• (1245)

Given the minister's track record, which I am going to go into, I think it is the latter. What is really interesting in what we are seeing from the statements from the Prime Minister's Office and the public safety minister's office is that the blame game is starting. Fingers are being pointed at each other in public statements to *The Globe and Mail*. That is how desperate they are to deflect blame. No one wants to take responsibility here. It is very embarrassing.

Therefore, I am just going to go through the pattern of behaviour that, unfortunately, the Minister of Public Safety has shown in recent months. This is just within the last year.

In January 2022, and we all remember this, the minister said he relied on the advice of law enforcement to trigger the Emergencies Act. You remember that, Mr. Speaker. However, we later found out from both the RCMP commissioner and the chief of the Ottawa police, when they testified publicly, that they did not ask the government to invoke the act. That was a big one. The minister misled the public in a big way. We will say that it was a large falsehood in that regard of a never-before-invoked, in essence, war measures act that he misled the public about. It was very significant, and he should have resigned then.

Then, on October 12, 2022, he was accused of misleading a federal judge after his office backdated government documents on trademark infringements. The minister said that the legislation concerning this came into effect two weeks earlier than it actually did, so he literally backdated legal documents. The minister said this was just human error. There is a pattern emerging here.

On August 8, the minister admitted at a committee that the RCMP was using spyware to gain information on Canadians, but he promised that the technology was being used sparingly. I am making light of it, but it is just so utterly ridiculous at this point. I am only three points in; we have five to go.

On January 15, the minister said that the safe third country agreement was working, despite enormous increases in irregular border crossers in comparison to the previous five years, and that really nothing could be done about it. Then, two months later, Biden and the Prime Minister of Canada came together in agreement to close Roxham Road. They were not telling the truth there.

Again, on April 25 of this year, he claimed that his legislation would not impact hunting rifles. We know how that went. Of course it did, and so much so that he had to back down. He has permanently lost the trust of firearms owners and hunters in this country, and he will never get it back because of how much he misled the public.

On May 5, the minister said he did not read the report into the People's Republic of China targeting an MP in our caucus. He later said that he was investigating why the report was not passed up to him. How many times are we going to have to believe that?

On May 14, after saying that the PRC police stations operating in Canada were closed, we found out that this is not the case either.

Finally, there is what we have been talking about today. The minister said he had no idea. Despite two contacts from Correctional Service Canada to his office and despite the Prime Minister's Office reaching out to him, the minister is saying he was never told about

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it. However, he has fired no one for that, which tells me that it is not true. If someone's staff members have failed them so badly, obviously, they cannot be trusted with the public safety file, and they have to go. The minister has fired no one. He is the one who should be fired. The buck stops with him.

What we have been calling on is the following:

...that the Minister of Public Safety immediately resign given his total lack of consideration for victims of crime in his mishandling of the transfer to more cozy arrangements of one of the worst serial killers in Canadian history, that this unacceptable move has shocked the public and created new trauma for the families of the victims and that the Minister of Public Safety's office knew about this for three months prior to [this vile killer's] transfer and instead of halting it, the information was hidden from the families.

That is what we moved today.

I will just conclude that this is about ministerial accountability. We have not seen that in the current Liberal government, despite so many failures. So many times, the government has misled the public and failed to take responsibility. Ministerial accountability seems to be dead in this country under the Liberal government.

Ultimately, I will say in conclusion that the Minister of Public Safety, more than most ministers, requires the public to trust him or her. The minister needs public trust; however, as I outlined today, in very real time, he has misled the public, let them down and broken that trust time and time again. This is the final straw. Unfortunately, it is time for him to resign.

• (1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this morning, I actually talked about why the Conservatives are behaving in the fashion that they are. The member opposite amplifies that. Here, the Conservatives bring forward a concurrence report with, just so the member is aware, 13 recommendations. I suspect she does not know that. Who knows whether the member actually participated in the committee? Had she participated, she would have recognized that there was a great deal of unanimous support for the concurrence motion.

The Conservatives chose to do this for two reasons. One reason is to filibuster legislation to prevent us from being able to talk about government business. The second reason is to politicize something which the member herself no doubt will be standing up later today in question period to raise. It is about a filibuster. That is the primary reason.

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If the member is so concerned about what she is talking about, why was she not upset when Stephen Harper was prime minister and there was the transfer of child murderers from high-security to medium-security prisons?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, the member asserts that we should not be talking about the fact that the Minister of Public Safety has repeatedly misled Canadians on issues of national security and public safety or that he is currently, right now, maintaining mistruths about what he knew about the worst child rapist and killer in history being transferred to a cozy medium-security prison when he should rightfully rot in a maximum-security prison.

This is certainly about victims rights. The families of the victims who were murdered by this vile killer were caught completely off guard by this. They have been revictimized in having to relive this.

It is our duty as an opposition to hold the government accountable. That is what we are doing today. The member calls it politicization. I call it accountability, which they have none of. If there were accountability, then there would be a minister resigning. We are not seeing that, because ministerial accountability is dead under the Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I find it fascinating: We know exactly what my colleague thinks about the Minister of Public Safety, but we know almost nothing about what she thinks about the report we are looking at today.

I would have liked to hear what she has to say about the report. She spoke for a long time, after all. We have here a dense and important report about victims of crime in Canada and how we can help them, but she barely mentioned it in her speech.

I would like to hear my colleague elaborate on the content of the report we are studying today.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I think that the victims should have a minister of public safety who tells murderers like Paul Bernardo that they have to stay in maximum security prisons for the rest of their days. That is something the Liberal government can do today for victims, and it is the right thing to do.

I think we need a new minister of public safety to be able to do that, because this Minister of Public Safety is not telling victims and the rest of Canadians the truth. That is not right.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I feel like I have wandered out of the wilderness into a strange country here today. When we are talking about victims, the justice committee heard from victims and victims advocacy organizations very strongly and came with a unanimous report with 13 recommendations. As I said earlier, there are procedures in the House to hold ministers accountable, and a concurrence report is not normally one of those.

My question for the member is this: What action is she going to take to make sure that the tactic the Conservatives have adopted today does not harm the ability to make progress on the 13 recommendations coming from victims that are contained in this report?

• (1255)

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the member is trying to say.

I believe the report from the justice committee in favour of victims was unanimously supported, which is good to see. I think what we could do today, as a House, in favour of victims is to vote for the Minister of Public Safety to resign. If the member wants to put victims' rights first, then we cannot have a minister of public safety who misleads the public and lets down the families of the victims of the worst mass killer and child rapist in Canadian history. He has misled the public about knowing that he had every opportunity to do something about it for three months, but he did not. I cannot really think of a more pressing, current issue today that the public is more outraged about when it comes to victims and public safety than the failure of the government to stop this man from going to a medium-security prison.

Again, this is a tool that we have at our disposal to hold the government accountable. If the government had ministerial responsibility, we would not need to do this. Rather than the member pointing his guns at us, why does he not point his guns at his coalition partner and call on the minister to resign?

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member brought up the issue that we are dealing with here, that Canadians have lost trust in the government. They have lost trust in the minister, and they have no confidence left.

The minister's incompetency started when he was minister of immigration, and he ruined that file. The Prime Minister moved him to public safety, and he has completely botched that file as well. I thank the member very much for bringing this to light.

The member articulated very well some of the issues, those we are aware of, where he has failed. Could she explain further what she thinks the next steps are for the minister and the Prime Minister to deal with this matter, so that the public could at least have some confidence in this place to deal with the incompetency of the government?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, the member and I do great work together on the public safety committee on behalf of Canadians. His speech triggered something in my mind that I would like to share.

This is something we know the Minister of Public Safety has misled us about. What do we not know? What has not been leaked to the media? What are the things he has not told us? I mean, he has not told us anything. He denies all of this. What do we not know?

This is an individual who is responsible for our national police force, the RCMP; CSIS, our spy and intelligence agency; CBSA, our border security agency; and Correctional Service Canada. It is a big, important file, yet he is repeatedly misleading the public, and this is just what we have found out about.

I think it is a good time for a brand new government that would be tough on crime and keep criminals where they rightfully belong. We would put victims of crime first, their needs and priorities first, and the safety of their communities first. We have repeatedly not seen that here.

We have seen it with bail reform and the least restrictive environment there. We have seen it with correctional services changes and the least restrictive environment there. They are all in favour of criminals like the one I have been talking about today. I think it is time for a new public safety minister at the very least, and likely a new government altogether.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member did not answer my question on Stephen Harper. Back in 2009, there was the horrific crime against Tori Stafford. Members can look it up to find out what took place. Stephen Harper's government ultimately transferred him over to a medium-security prison. He was not the first child murderer the Harper government did that with. The public safety minister at the time, Ralph Goodale, had the system reviewed.

Does the member believe that Stephen Harper was doing something wrong by allowing the murderer of Tori Stafford to go to a medium-security prison?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I believe in 2018, with the minister he mentioned, the Conservatives had proposed an opposition day motion to overturn that decision directly. The Liberals claimed they lacked the power to do so and voted it down, along with the NDP and the Bloc Québécois.

We know the Minister of Public Safety does have that ability to do so. They absolutely have the ability to do so. They have certain powers with the correctional commissioner.

What is really interesting is the Liberals had the opportunity to impact the decision with that individual back in 2018, and they voted against our opposition motion to do so. Perhaps the member needs a summer break. He may have forgotten that.

• (1300)

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague gave an excellent speech. In relation to the parliamentary secretary to the House leader's last question, this particular parliamentary secretary, in fact the entire Liberal government, love to compare and contrast themselves to former prime minister Stephen Harper.

Could my learned colleague share how differently Stephen Harper would have dealt with these obvious conflicts of interest and the deliberate misleading of the House? How would he have handled ministers with this information versus how the government is presently doing it?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, with former prime minister Stephen Harper, ministerial accountability was alive and well in

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many regards on a couple fronts. There was a principled approach, unlike what we have seen in the last eight years.

Just to conclude on the justice file, Stephen Harper brought forward about 80 justice bills in favour of being tough on crime and in favour of victims. I mentioned one of the bills today, and all of the bills the Liberals have brought forward are for the least restrictive environments for criminals. That is the reason the most vile killer in Canadian history has been moved. It is because of legislation like this.

We saw it with bail reform. It has never been worse in this country. That is directly related to Bill C-75, also a 2019 Liberal bill. I am getting pretty sick and tired of these soft on crime Liberals. It is time for a Conservative government to clean up our streets and keep Canadians safe.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed to be speaking to the travesty of justice and human rights committed by our current Minister of Public Safety. I am disappointed, but to be honest, I am not surprised. This minister has a track record of mishandling files, which is ultimately a disservice to justice in this country and to victims. This is why we are debating the amendment put forward by the Conservative Party today, ultimately recommending that the minister resign.

Just so it is clear and on the record once again, our amendment to the motion includes:

the Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, presented on Monday, April 17, 2023, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights with instruction that it amend the same so as to recommend that the Minister of Public Safety immediately resign given his total lack of consideration for victims of crime in his mishandling of the transfer to more cozy arrangements of one of the worst serial killers in Canadian history, that this unacceptable move has shocked the public and created new trauma for the families of the victims and that the Minister of Public Safety's office knew about this for three months prior to Paul Bernardo's transfer and instead of halting it, the information was hidden from the families.

Obviously, I have made some very provocative statements, even in my opening couple of sentences, but I want to lay the groundwork for why I believe this. Let us go back to the minister's track record back in August 2021, when he was the minister of immigration. What happened then? We had the fall of Kabul. We had the fall of Afghanistan.

Instead of the government dealing with that situation with the ministers of foreign affairs, immigration and national defence primarily focused on helping victims, the Afghans who had helped Canada, get to safety, what did they do? They called an election. It is unacceptable.

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This minister here was in that seat. He could have had a process in place, much like we have done in previous years, under the current and previous governments, so that, when we have a situation around the globe in which Canada could make a difference by allowing refugees and people at risk to get to Canada, we could do it.

This is so fundamentally important and unfortunately something that the government is still not putting the adequate priority and focus on. It is allowing bureaucracy and staff to interfere with getting the job done. That is just one thing. That is the minister's background right off the get-go.

He has now been the Minister of Public Safety since that last election. What did we see just in the last year alone on Bill C-21? Again, we saw a minister who is not focused on victims and justice but is instead focused on law-abiding hunters, sport shooters and farmers, despite him saying that, no, this was not what the bill was about. Lo and behold, there was a last-minute amendment put forth by the minister that exactly targeted the thousands and thousand of hunters, sport shooters and farmers across the country.

That bill was not focused on addressing the root causes of the justice issues that allow for criminals, mass murderers, rapists, gangs, drug trafficking, etc. It was focused again on the wrong demographic.

I am just using that to set the stage. We are now dealing with an amendment because we now have evidence that the minister and his office were aware three months prior to the general public becoming aware that Paul Bernardo, one of our most horrific serial killer and rapists, was being transferred out of a maximum security prison into a medium security prison.

I want to set the stage because we are all victims of our life experiences. We live in a Westminster system of government that allows our democracy to work on a day-to-day basis because it is all about ministerial accountability. The buck stops with them.

• (1305)

As for my comments on life experiences, as many members know, I come from a military background. There is a misperception out there that the military is all about following orders. That is not the case at all and is not how the military functions. Forming a plan begins from the ground up, from the lowest levels all the way to the highest levels, enabling the decision-makers to make the best decisions possible.

When I served at the higher levels, whether as a chief of staff or a director, and we were planning for stuff and doing things, there was one common theme, and that was the daily briefs. It did not matter if it was on operations overseas or here at our Canadian Joint Operations Command, there were daily briefs and the staff's primary role was to flag issues of concern directly to the decision-makers, the commanders and people who are ultimately responsible for making decisions and providing guidance and direction. This was not being blocked by the gatekeepers or the staff, and it was brought to the person in charge. That is key to the way our whole democracy works.

Members do not have to take my word for it. There was a CBC report that basically broke this news. I am going to read a bit from a CBC article that was just released, which states:

The demand for [the Minister of Public Safety's] exit was prompted by the CBC's report that staff in the minister's office were aware of Paul Bernardo's pending transfer as far back as March 2. Subsequent reporting confirmed that the Prime Minister's Office was also made aware in March and [the Prime Minister] was himself briefed on the transfer on May 29.

According to the version of events, the minister's staff obviously did not think it was necessary to tell him about the transfer of one of Canada's most notorious murderers until May 30, a day after the move was made, and a day after the Prime Minister himself was briefed. The fact that they neglected to alert the minister about this impending transfer is puzzling in and of itself, and obviously an apparent failure at keeping him informed. However, what is more interesting is that the minister himself described it as a shocking event. How could he be so shocked when this was something his staff should have informed him of three months prior?

The minister initially said it was the Correctional Service of Canada that did it, but he has now admitted that the information flowed in, he was not briefed, and could not have really done anything about it. Lo and behold, what has he done now? He has issued a new directive stipulating that he must be informed, something he should have done immediately. That is just common practice.

Therefore, the issue I come back to is this: The minister needs to surround himself with competent staff and people who understand what is truly an important issue under his responsibility because that is how we protect our justice system and victims in this country. Ultimately, the minister needs to do the honourable thing and resign because that is truly the only option left. If he will not resign, the Prime Minister should fire him.

Another thing the government should do is immediately implement the private member's motion that was put forward by the Conservative member for Niagara Falls, which enshrines into legislation, and I am paraphrasing, that when our most notorious murderers and criminals are found guilty, they must remain in a maximum-security prison.

• (1310)

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

The question is on the amendment.

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

Ms. Raquel Dancho: We request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC) moved:

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That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology that, during its consideration of Bill C-27, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, the committee be granted the power to divide the bill into three pieces of legislation:

- (a) Bill C-27A, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, containing Part 1 and the schedule to section 2;
- (b) Bill C-27B, An Act to enact the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act, containing Part 2; and
- (c) Bill C-27C, An Act to enact the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act, containing Part 3.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be here today to speak on this motion. I will be splitting my time today with the member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

Bill C-27 is a very important bill. We have talked about privacy legislation now for about eight or nine months. Our whole premise was that privacy always should be a fundamental right of Canadians. We talked about the limitations of this bill when the government announced it. That was missing from the bill. The bill was in three parts. The first part spoke to replacing the “PIP” in “PIPE-DA”; the second part was announcing and debating the use of a tribunal; and the third part was about AI. This motion asks to split this bill into three parts so the committee can look at and vote on each part individually.

If we talk about why that is needed at this point, it is very simple. The third part about AI part is the most flawed. When we look at the bill in its entirety and we have gone through debate, we certainly hope to have this bill go to the industry committee. The government delayed sending this to committee, but I am hoping it will be in committee in the early fall, and we want to debate, for the most part, the AI section.

I stand today to shed light on a topic that has captured the imagination of many, and yet poses significant risk to our society: the dangers of artificial intelligence, or AI. While AI has the potential to revolutionize our world, we must also be aware of the dangers it presents and take proactive steps to mitigate them. For decades, AI and the imaginary and real threats it brings has been a subject of fascination in popular culture.

I remember, as a child, watching a movie called *WarGames*. A teenager wanted to change his grades, he went into a computer to try to do that and the computer offered to play a game of nuclear annihilation. It ended up that the U.S.S.R., through this computer, was about to attack the U.S. NORAD thought it was happening, was ready to strike back and somehow the computer could not figure out what was right or wrong and the only way the student was able to figure it out was to play a game of tic-tac-toe that he found he could never win. At the end, after playing the nuclear game he could never win, he said he would play a nice game of chess because that is easier, someone wins, someone loses and it is safe. This was AI in 1984.

My favourite movie with AI was *The Matrix*. In *The Matrix*, humans were batteries in the world, who were taken over and owned by machines until Neo saved them and gave them freedom. Another movie that I remember as a kid was *Terminator 2*, and we know how that one ended. It was pretty good. We are not sure if it has

even ended yet. I think there is another one coming. Arnold Schwarzenegger is still alive.

We find ourselves in a season of alarmism over artificial intelligence, with warnings from experts of the need to prioritize the mitigation of AI risks. One of the greatest concerns around AI is the potential loss of jobs as automation and intelligent machines rise. Has anyone ever heard of the Texas McDonald's that is run entirely without people? It is coming. They have figured out how to use robots and machines to eliminate staff positions.

Even though it is not AI, all of us go to the grocery store now and can check out on our own. When we shop, we see lots of different ways, whether it is Amazon or others, that companies are using AI for robotics. We have heard of dark industrial storage where robots operate in the dark, moving products from exit to entrance, and people are not needed. It is a big problem for job losses.

Another major risk of AI lies in the erosion of privacy and personal data security. As AI becomes more integrated in our lives, it gathers vast amounts of data about individuals, which can be used to manipulate behaviour, target individuals and our children with personalized advertisements, and infringe upon our civil liberties. The first part of Bill C-27 has to do with the third part, but is not the same.

We must establish strong regulations and ethical guidelines to protect our privacy rights and prevent the misuse of personal data. Transparency and accountability should be at the forefront of AI development, ensuring that individuals have control over their own information. Moreover, the rapid advancement of AI brings with it the potential for unintended consequences.

● (1315)

AI systems, while designed to learn and improve, can also develop biases. We saw in the ethics committee, with facial recognition technology, when we had experts come into the committee that, alarmingly, Black females were misidentified 34% of the time by computers. It was called “digital racism”. White males were misidentified only 1% of the time.

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Again, this is technology that we have allowed, in some instances, to be used by the RCMP and to be used by the forces. All experts asked for a moratorium on that technology, much the same as we are seeing with AI, because without proper oversight and diverse representation in the development of AI algorithms and algorithms, we risk entrenching society biases within these systems. It is imperative that we prioritize diversity and inclusion in AI development to ensure fairness and to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities.

The security implications of AI cannot be overlooked either. As AI becomes more sophisticated, it could be weaponized or manipulated by malicious actors. Cyber-attacks exploiting AI vulnerabilities could lead to significant disruptions in critical systems, such as health care, transportation and defence. They say the greatest risk of war right now is not by sticks and stones, but by computers and joysticks and that AI could infiltrate our systems.

One thing I was reading about the other week is the risk of a solar storm that could knock out all the technology, but AI and cybersecurity could do the same. Can members imagine what our world would be like if we did not have Internet for a day, weeks or a month? We certainly saw that with the Rogers outage last summer, but we can imagine if it was malicious in intent.

Last, we must address the ethical dilemmas posed by AI. As AI systems become more autonomous, they raise complex questions about accountability and decision-making. We have heard about Tesla having automobiles that have gone off course, and the computer is making the life-or-death decision about where that car is going.

The other day I heard a report about vehicles in L.A. that are autonomous and running by Tesla or by taxi, and that fire trucks and ambulances could not get by the vehicles, because the vehicles were programmed to stop and put their four-way lights on, so these fire trucks could not get past them due to AI decisions. They had to smash the windshields in order to get the vehicles out of the way, and they lost precious minutes getting to the scene of a fire.

While AI holds immense potential to improve our lives, we must remain vigilant to the danger it presents. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the risks of job displacement, privacy breaches, bias, security threats or ethical concerns. It is our responsibility to shape the future of AI in a way that benefits all of humanity while mitigating its potential harms. We need to work together to foster a world where AI is harnessed for the greater good, ensuring that progress is made with compassion, fairness and responsible stewardship.

Let us shift for a moment to the positive aspects of AI, and AI actually does exist for good. We have AI working right now with health care diagnostics. Algorithms are being developed to analyze medical images, such as X-rays and MRIs, to assist doctors in diagnosing diseases like cancer, enabling earlier detection and improved treatment outcomes.

We have disease prevention and prediction. AI models can analyze large datasets of patient information and genetic data to identify patterns and predict the likelihood of individuals getting certain diseases.

• (1320)

There is environmental conservation. AI-powered systems are being used to monitor and analyze environmental data. I have heard of farmers who are using computer systems to monitor the nitrogen in soil, so they can monitor how much water and how much fertilizer they need to put in the soil, which is saving our environment.

There is disaster response and management. AI is used to analyze social media posts and other data sources during natural disasters to provide real-time information, identify critical needs, and coordinate rescue and relief efforts.

For education and personalized learning, AI is changing the way people are learning right now. The greatest thing we have is ChatGPT, and ChatGPT has revolutionized research. Of course we are looking at the possibility of jobs being lost. It has even helped me with my speech today.

We have a lot of great things that are happening, and in the bill we certainly are going to be looking at how we change and monitor that. The bill should be split into three sections. We need to make sure we look at privacy as a fundamental human right for Bill C-27 as number one; the tribunal is number two; but AI is number three. We need to have as many witnesses as possible to make sure we get it right, and we need to work with our G7 partners to make sure we all look at AI and its benefits, its shortcomings and its benefits to society in Canada and the future.

• (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting tactic. The Conservatives still do not want to talk about child care. I guess they have an objection to that. I think we could pass this historic legislation in about 25 minutes, but they are having an allergic reaction to yet another national program. It is somewhat unfortunate.

The member wants to talk about AI and splitting a bill that is already in committee. I think the Speaker at one point made a ruling on it, but the Conservatives want to continue to kill time. I understand and appreciate that. This is how they feel they are being a good opposition party, though I might challenge that a bit.

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Does the member not recognize the legislation also talks about the protection of data? Data is so critically important. I am wondering to what degree the Conservative Party really recognizes that with technological changes, we need to modernize legislation.

Bill C-27 deals with things like AI and other very important aspects of modernization through technology and data banks. We need to deal with that. When does the member believe the Conservatives will agree to see that sort of legislation pass? Is he and the Conservative regime thinking it should be happening sometime this year possibly, or will they want to continue to filibuster this into the months and years ahead? When would they like to see this type of legislation pass?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Mr. Speaker, we do talk about child care. This bill actually looks at protecting the privacy of our children.

It is disappointing to hear we are not interested in one or the other. We are interested in all of this for our children and in privacy specifically, because children who are using tablets and cellphones are having their data scraped from the Internet and sold to companies. Sometimes their location is shared and it puts them in harm's way. This legislation looks at that.

What the government has not done is recognize that privacy is a fundamental human right. The Conservatives have recognized that that is the case for this bill and certainly for our children. This bill is as important as anything else for our children and their futures, and we are certainly going to focus on that.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my good friend and colleague from Bay of Quinte to expand a bit on ChatGPT and the AI risks associated with it. We do recognize there is some great potential for AI. It can maybe help and streamline things, especially with data management and the sheer information overload that governments deal with. However, in particular I note the importance of guardrails and protection, because it is sort of the Wild West out there when we start talking about artificial intelligence.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Mr. Speaker, everyone knows ChatGPT. The member mentioned at one point that it helped write a question. It is phenomenal how quick it is and how it helps with research and advancement. I even had it help with my speech.

However, there are certainly a lot of risks, and the technology falls short in several areas. Number one, it leaves the details for AI governance to future regulations, and the government has not even looked at them and studied them. We have a focus on addressing individual harm and excluding collective harms such as threats to democracy and the environment and the reinforcement of existing inequalities. Additionally, AIDA primarily applies to the private sector, leaving out high-impact government applications for AI.

In short, we are really narrowly focused even in this bill. When we bring this bill to committee, we are going to bring in a massive number of witnesses to have great testimony. Certainly, when a Conservative government gets in power, we are going to table great legislation that not only maximizes AI for good but also protects Canadians from harms.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned the whole thing about the screen scraping of

information. Screen scraping of information is not free. There is a value transfer that happens every time that occurs. I would like him to elaborate on where the value comes from, which is usually individual Canadians who have no idea about it, and where that value gets transferred to. Of course, when something gets transferred, that process is worth something and people pay for it. Can he elaborate on who those people are and how they are earning value off the backs of Canadians?

• (1330)

Mr. Ryan Williams: Mr. Speaker, data is valuable. Right now we live in an economy based on a tangible old-style economy as well as in an intangible economy. That means data and intellectual property are very valuable to corporations. They are valuable to advertisers. I dare say they are valuable to the government. The government, of course, holds swaths of information.

When we think about all the data out there, it is in every movement we make. Every time someone makes a sound, Siri asks, "What was that?" We see it every time we are doing something with our Apple watches. Our Apple watches even track our temperatures and track women who are going into a menstrual cycle in the U.S. It is very concerning. That data is worth something to everyone.

It is a balance. We should look, first of all, at protecting people from harms, individuals, making sure we have fundamental human rights for individuals for privacy protection. Also, we should recognize that some companies need data for good, as I mentioned earlier regarding health research and development. We want to balance that. Data is valuable. Let us make sure we do it right and do it together.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 426, which deals with Bill C-27. For those watching who do not know Bill C-27, it is the government's piece of legislation to update our privacy laws and introduce a new act on artificial intelligence.

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As to the purpose of this motion, even though the bill went through second reading and is now awaiting study at the industry committee, we are asking that the bill be split in three, because it really is three separate bills. The first bill, as my colleague from Bay of Quinte just mentioned, is the part of the legislation that deals with updating the Privacy Act, including all of the privacy terms for protecting an individual's privacy and protecting the rights of others to use someone's privacy, that is, how they can or cannot use it. The second piece of the legislation would create a new agency called the privacy tribunal. It is really a separate piece of legislation. In fact, it is classified as a separate piece of legislation, an act within this act. Then the third piece is the artificial intelligence and data act.

It really is three pieces of legislation in one bill, and that is why we have moved this motion asking that the bill be split in three. It is a massive 120-page piece of legislative change impacting every person and every business in this country. It deserves to be studied as three separate pieces, and members of the House of Commons deserve to vote separately on those three separate pieces of information.

I will start with the first piece, which is the privacy piece. We talked at second reading about the difference between our views on the purpose of this bill, this act, and the government's views. The government made the claim that this bill was making greater steps toward protecting the personal information of the individual, yet that is not what the bill does.

Clause 5 is the purpose section, the most important section of any bill that sets out what the legal structure or purpose of legislation is. It says that it tries to balance the protection of personal privacy with the rights of businesses to use people's data. It puts business interests on a par with individual privacy interests. As my colleague from Bay of Quinte just said and as I said in my second reading speech, that is a fundamental flaw of this bill. The Privacy Commissioner has already spoken out about it.

There has been discussion about whether privacy is a fundamental human right. There is language on this in the preamble, but the preamble of the bill has virtually no legal impact. It says that privacy is among the fundamental rights people have, but it is not in the purpose section. We have been seeking and will be seeking a broad discussion at committee on that issue and the legal implication of it. The purpose section of the bill, clause 5, should say that the protection of personal privacy is a fundamental right. It is not balanced between business needs and individual needs but is a fundamental right.

That is important not only for the reasons that I just outlined, but because further down, clause 18 of the privacy part of the bill creates a concept called "legitimate interest" for a business. Clause 17, just prior to that, lays out that there has to be the express consent of an individual for a business to use privacy data, but clause 18 goes on to say that there is a legitimate interest for the business to not care about an individual's express consent. In fact, it lets a company say that if something is in its legitimate interest as a company, even if it causes individuals harm, it is okay for it to use their data for something that they did not give permission for. It says that right in the legislation.

• (1335)

This is a fundamental flaw of a bill that pretends to be protecting people's fundamental privacy rights. It in fact protects big corporate data and the right of big corporations to use our data however they wish. It does give additional power, which is needed, to the Privacy Commissioner in that, but the second part of the bill then takes it back with the creation of the privacy tribunal.

Maybe the best explanations of the privacy tribunal is to compare it to and understand the way the Competition Act works. There are two aspects to how we decide competition issues and appeals. One is the Competition Bureau that looks at merges and acquisitions, and it says whether they are anti-competitive or not and will rule on that merger. Then there is a Competition Tribunal, like the privacy tribunal as proposed in the bill, which is the legal framework where the law gets done and the battle gets fought between the company that thinks it should do the merger and the Competition Bureau that thinks it should not.

A classic example recently was the Rogers-Shaw takeover. Quite a bit of time was spent both through the Competition Bureau process and the Competition Tribunal process, which ruled whether that sale could happen and then whether an aspect of that sale, being the sale of Freedom Mobile to Vidéotron, could be done.

The government wants to create that kind of process in the privacy law now. It is a separate act that creates this bureaucracy and this appeal mechanism, where six individuals will decide, as a privacy tribunal, whether a company has breached a person's privacy rights. However, out of the six individuals, only three of them need to any familiarity with privacy law. The others do not need any familiarity with privacy law, no familiarity with business, no familiarity with human rights, nothing. They do not need any other qualifications other than, perhaps in this case, they are a Liberal and are appointed to this board.

I have discussed this with a number of law firms since the bill was tabled a year ago. These law firms have very different views about whether this speeds up or slows down the process of dealing with individual privacy law issues. We need to have a separate study within the committee on that aspect. In fact, I have been talking to the chair of the committee about that structure, trying to get the hearings to be set up in a way that looks at these three pieces separately.

The third piece, which my colleague for Bay of Quinte spoke eloquently about, is on artificial intelligence.

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Remember, the first two parts of the bill are essentially a modest rewrite of a bill from the last Parliament, Bill C-11, when the government tried to amend these acts and then complained that the bill did not pass, because it called an early election. The Liberals could not figure out why it did not pass. However, the Liberals reintroduced the bill, but then they bolted on this other thing, which has absolutely nothing to do with the first two parts.

The third part is called the “artificial intelligence act”, but it has nothing to do with the privacy of individuals and it has nothing to do with the appeal of a person's privacy. It is all about how to regulate this new industry, and it gets it wrong. The government is basically saying that it does not know what artificial intelligence is, which is not surprising for the Liberals, but it is going to regulate it. It is going to define it in regulation, and the minister is going to be in charge of defining it. The minister is going to be in charge of setting the rules on whether the law has been breached. The minister is also going to be in charge of fining someone who has breached the law of this thing the government cannot define. It is a total usurping of Parliament. The Liberals are saying that they do not know what it is, but we should trust them, that they will never have to come back to Parliament to deal with this again.

We are asking the House to split the bill into three, because it really is three separate pieces of legislation. The government would have more success in its legislative agenda if it actually brought in these pieces properly, individually, rather than a mini-omnibus bill of different types of issues. Then they could be properly studied, properly amended, properly consulted on and properly dealt with by Parliament. The government is choosing not to do that, which is why it is having such poor legislative success in all of its efforts to date.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat comical to suggest that the government would have more success in its legislative process if we were to start breaking down our bills, putting in more pieces of legislation, when every opportunity the Conservatives get under the instruction of the current right-wing leader of the Conservative Party today is to filibuster and not let legislation pass.

The member has to be kidding when he suggests that the government should be bringing in more legislation as opposed to focusing on the legislation we have before us today, which would have a profoundly positive impact on communities from every region of the country.

Does the member not recognize that this is a modernization of legislation? How long will it take before the Conservatives understand that we need to pass legislation in order to better assist Canadians in everyday life?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, it would help in passing that legislation if it were actually good legislation, as opposed to this legislation, which would put big corporate interests ahead of individual privacy.

Why is the member for Winnipeg North so keen to make banks and big technology have the ability to use our individual data any way they want, even if it causes us harm?

This is the legislation that the government put forward. The government is in the pocket of big, multinational companies, to give them access to our data to use it for things that we do not allow it to do. Why do the Liberals think that is good legislation? Maybe they are getting personal donations in their campaigns. I do not know.

The issue is that this legislation is horribly flawed and it needs to be split into three pieces so it can be properly studied.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, we are dealing with a stunt to delay the agenda. I will take this opportunity to add to the comments I made earlier this morning.

When such schemes are used to delay the agenda, it is because the other side dropped the ball, as well. The government poorly managed its schedule and lacked respect for the opposition parties. There is a lack of dialogue.

This morning, I asked the Conservatives to please ensure that we can work, and I take this opportunity to ask the same thing of the government. Can we get to work? I am calling for collaboration. Let us be serious. For how long will we have to deal with motions such as these? Of course, it is still an interesting topic. I understand my colleague's argument about dividing up the bill, but that is up to the committee, which is sovereign and can decide what it will do as part of its study.

Does my colleague not believe that the Government Leader in the House of Commons should perhaps begin talking more often with Conservative and Bloc leaders so we can start moving forward and perhaps wrap things up at a reasonable time while getting real results for the ordinary people watching us?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, it is an excellent question. What the government thinks is manoeuvring is actually democracy in action, trying to prevent bad legislation from being put forward and passed.

The member asked a great question about co-operation. The bill was introduced a year ago, and the government had eight months to put it on the floor. It chose not to put it up for second reading debate for about six months.

The management of the calendar of the House of Commons is a responsibility, in co-operation and discussion with the opposition, but we cannot put government legislation on the floor. That is the job of the government House leader.

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The government House leader chose not to put the bill on the floor for discussion, chose never to talk about the bill in the House leaders meeting, and now the Liberals are surprised and shocked that somebody actually wants to have it discussed and split. Only Liberals would say that the last 10 days are when we should pass all the legislation that they could not bother putting on the agenda the rest of the year.

• (1345)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his arguments to divide the bill. I particularly dislike Bill C-27 for the artificial intelligence act that is included in it. It essentially would exempt the government from any kind of serious harms and any designated provincial government, while saying to business and innovation that it would hang this threat of a criminal offence over their heads, but not telling them what this means. It is going to push our industry and innovation down to the United States, where there is no legislation.

Does he believe this bill needs to have a full vetting, because generative artificial intelligence can be something that we can innovate in Canada? It is powerful. I would not say dangerous, but this kind of bill would push that activity to areas that are not regulated.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, I would agree. This is critical legislation. On artificial intelligence, the U.S. and Great Britain are going in different directions than this version. They are allowing the subject matter experts, like their transportation departments that manage the automotive industry, to regulate artificial intelligence, not a grand central agency under the industry department, which is what this is. This bill would drive this important development of money, jobs and industry out of our country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always welcome the opportunity to point out the hypocrisy of the Conservatives. Sometimes they just make it too easy.

When I first walked in this morning, honest to God, I really thought we were going to be passing historic legislation. I really thought we were going to be talking about Bill C-22. After all, if anyone went on the Internet and looked at what is happening in Ottawa, what would be debated in the House of Commons, the first thing in government business was Bill C-22.

I am sorry, Bill C-22 is another national program, that is the disability program. We do so much good stuff, there so much out there. We are supposed to be talking about Bill C-35, and it did not take a Conservative to point that out. They kind of get lost in the numbers.

At the end of the day, we were supposed to be talking about Bill C-35 today. It is a national child care plan, from coast to coast to coast, and we are enshrining it into law. We had 20 minutes to go, and then it would go into law.

However, no, the Conservatives had a different agenda. They have a partisan agenda. They have an agenda that says, “cause frustration, do not allow legislation to pass.” The previous speaker stood up and said that we needed to have more legislation, referring

to Bill C-27. He wants to multiply Bill C-27 into three bills. He wants us to introduce three more pieces of legislation so that the Conservatives have more to filibuster.

The member is criticizing the government, saying that it has been months since we last called this legislation. A lot of issues are happening on the floor of the House of Commons, even with the frustrations caused by the Conservatives, and they cause a lot of frustration. I will give them that much. They know how to play a destructive force. Never before have I seen an opposition, and I was in opposition for 20 years, so focused on playing a destructive force with respect to legislation.

Earlier today, I reminded the opposition that it was a minority government, and I acknowledge that. We accept the fact that we were elected as a minority government, and we thank Canadians for recognizing us and allowing us to continue in government. We take that very seriously. I kind of wish the Conservative Party would recognize that as well.

Do they not realize there is a sense of “responsibility” for opposition members as well. Providing endless filibusters and trying to prevent every piece of legislation from passing is the goal of the Conservative. Just last week, and I referenced it this morning, the Conservative leader made a strong statement, and it made the news. It was on Newswatch in fact, not to mention other news agencies. The Leader of the Conservative Party said that he was going to speak and speak and speak, and he might have said “speak” a few more times, to filibuster our budget implementation bill. Let us think about all the things in that the budget implementation bill, and there is not enough time to elaborate on that. That was his intention. He was going to speak until we changed it, and four hours later it passed.

We have these mechanisms to ensure that at least, even with the destructive force of the Conservative Party, we can still get things done for Canadians.

Let us fast forward things here. The Conservatives did not want to debate the child care bill this morning. Instead, they wanted to talk about an issue that now brings us to Bill C-27—

• (1350)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I have been sitting here for the last 10 minutes, and I still cannot figure out what the member is talking about in relevance to the debate today. I wish he would get to the topic at hand or at least explain what he is talking about.

The Deputy Speaker: I think relevance was called.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is amazing. I had just finished saying “Bill C-27”, and the member then stood up. Bill C-27 is what the motion is actually all about. The Conservative Party has actually moved a motion to try to get the government to divide Bill C-27 into more bills so Conservatives would have more opportunity to cause more filibustering in order to deprive Canadians of good, sound legislation. That is what the Conservative Party is doing.

What is Bill C-27? It would be an actual modernization. Believe it or not, and I say this for the Conservative colleagues across the way, technology has changed over the last 20 years. A lot of things have happened. Do members know the last time we actually had a modernization of this legislation? We are talking about over two decades ago, when iPhones and Facebook did not exist. One would think that the Conservatives would have, and be able to comprehend, the need to change the legislation. However, there has been no signal whatsoever coming from the opposition benches to recognize the value of modernizing this legislation.

The Conservatives should be concerned about it. Do they know the amount of data that is collected in both government agencies and private companies? People must understand that, through technological change, we have seen the development of huge data banks. Canadians are concerned about privacy. They want to make sure that the information being collected is, in fact, protected. A flash disk can have literally millions of entries, and that can be very damaging to the population. Twenty years ago, we did not have flash disks. We might have had the five-inch round disks; I can remember having those about 20 years ago. I will use Tim Hortons as an example, and I could easily use the example of McDonald's too. We can look at those restaurants' apps. People should open up and find out how many apps are out there. When we download these apps, whether they are for a restaurant or any other sort of service like a retail store, and we start using them, we are providing information. People should take a look at the airline industry, hotels and the many different industries out there that are actually collecting the private information of Canadians.

In the Government of Canada, we recognize that we have a responsibility to look at what is impacting Canadians today, and to bring forward not only budgetary measures, as we have done to protect the backs of Canadians, but also legislative measures. That is what Bill C-27 would do in this particular area; it would ensure that the privacy of Canadians would ultimately be respected and that these huge data banks that are being created would not be abused or exploited at the expense of Canadians.

We have consulted extensively. Through private, government and non-profit organizations, the department has done its job in terms of bringing forward legislation that would, in fact, modernize the industry. Most important from my perspective is that it would protect the interests and the privacy of Canadians.

I want to emphasize, at the end of the day, the amount of change that we have witnessed in 20 years, as I said somewhat lightly a few minutes ago. We should understand that when I was first elected to the Manitoba legislature, the Internet was something which people dialed into. The first thing we heard was the “ching-ching-ching” and then the dial tone coming. Then we had to dou-

ble-click and we were into the Internet, and, boy, was it slow compared to what happens today.

• (1355)

There were data banks at that time, and there was information being collected. That is why I would suggest that legislation of this nature is indeed warranted and needed. That is why we have standing committees. Earlier today, in the Conservatives' filibuster, they made a mockery of a standing committee and its efforts by moving an amendment even though the report was unanimously supported. They made a mockery of that.

I will suggest to the members who participate in standing committees of Parliament that they can play a very important role in giving strength to legislation and to improving legislation. We have a minister who is following the debate, listening to what members have to say, and looking for ways we can improve and strengthen the legislation in the name of protecting Canadians, the data banks and our privacy rights.

We want to see stability in the industry. Not only do consumers benefit from that stability, but businesses do as well. If we put more stability into place, also factoring in things like AI, it puts Canada in a better position to be able to continue to grow and expand our economy. This is an important aspect of that.

We have a Prime Minister and a government that have consistently said we want an economy that works for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, urban or rural. The impact of the Internet on rural communities has been significant in terms of economics, not to mention in many other ways. I will focus on the issue of economics.

Retail stores can now be found within our computer, and the actual locations are often in rural communities. It can be a driving force for growth in rural communities. That is why it is important we get it right, that we have the confidence of consumers and Canadians in the information that is being gathered. We have to make sure that information is protected, whether it is names, financial information, health-related information and so much more.

The legislation is good. It is sound. We would like to be able to encourage the Conservatives to see its value. By supporting the legislation, they are supporting Canadians. This legislation is a reflection of what Canadians want to see put into law.

On that point, I know there is legislation the Conservatives say they support. Let us see if we can stop the filibustering here in the chamber so we can pass additional legislation so Canadians will be even better served by the House of Commons.

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

● (1400)

*[Translation]***EDUCATION STAFF**

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, parliamentary business will be wrapping up in a few days. This is also a busy time in primary and secondary schools across the country, as the end of the school year is fast approaching for thousands of children and teens.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the teachers, education professionals, support staff, administrators and principals for the work that they do every day. These are dedicated, hard-working people who spend countless hours educating and training our future plumbers, electricians, psychologists, doctors, entrepreneurs, educators, lawyers, managers and, in some cases, future politicians, to name but a few professions.

I wish to thank them for everything that they do. Our children, our fine young people, and our future are in good hands. I wish them all a wonderful end to the school year and an energizing summer break, so they can come back next year in top form.

* * *

*[English]***SPORTS HEROES FROM KITCHENER**

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Nicolas Hague and the Vegas Golden Knights on their remarkable triumph in winning the Stanley Cup.

Nicolas, a Kitchener native, has achieved what many young Canadians dream of doing: hoisting the Stanley Cup. In this achievement, he will not only have his name etched among the greatest names in hockey, but will also inspire countless young athletes to dream big and strive for greatness. This triumph reminds us all of the indomitable spirit of hockey and the power it holds to unite communities. We look forward to Nicolas visiting Kitchener with Stanley.

The citizens of Kitchener are truly having an incredible week, with two local sports heroes reaching the pinnacle of success by winning the national professional trophy in their chosen sports, first in the NBA, and now the Stanley Cup.

On behalf of the House, I extend our warmest congratulations to Nicolas Hague and Jamal Murray on their amazing accomplishments. May these victories be a source of great pride and joy, and may they serve as a reminder of the immeasurable value of teamwork, determination and the pursuit of excellence.

* * *

COMMUNITY LEADER IN SASKATOON

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about a citizen of Saskatoon who has passed on but will never be forgotten. Syed Shah came here in 1982. For

the next 40 years, this was his city; it was his home, and he worked tirelessly to make it a better place for everyone.

He was a pillar of the Ahmadiyya community, played a key role in welcoming many newcomers throughout the years, and was known for his hospitality to new and old alike. He was involved in the construction of three mosques in the province. Building a mosque in Saskatoon was always a lifetime goal of his, and he built an amazing one. He encouraged people of different backgrounds and faiths to get to know each other in order to build a more peaceful society, and he centred the community around these values. He was a father figure for the Ahmadiyya community of Saskatoon, and an important pillar of the broader Saskatoon community, which was reflected in the many dignitaries who attended his funeral.

I believe that he will live on in his legacy, and I hope we can continue to unite people around the morals of love and harmony preached by him and the Ahmadiyya community: love for all, hatred for none.

May my friend rest in peace.

* * *

● (1405)

ACTIVE LIVING

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as summer approaches and the sun shines brighter, I am looking forward to the opportunities that lie ahead for active living in our communities.

On the weekend, I joined the ninth annual Bike the Creek ride, a celebration of the joys of cycling and our environment.

I want to recognize the team at BikeBrampton, including David and Dayle Laing; The Walnut Foundation and Linden King, who organized a walkathon for men's health; EcoSikh Canada; Credit Valley Conservation; the Toronto conservation authorities that encourage people to plant trees; and the various seniors clubs that are keeping seniors active in Brampton. I am particularly excited about the upcoming Sun Life Walk to Cure Diabetes for JDRF in Peel.

These events carry the very powerful message that the benefits of active living are vital for building a healthy and sustainable community. As we eagerly await the arrival of summer, let us seize the opportunity to embrace active living.

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*[Translation]***WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY**

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since today is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, I would like to express my firm commitment to protecting and respecting the rights of the elderly.

About one in six people over the age of 60 suffered some form of abuse in 2022. Elder abuse is a worrying reality that requires a collective response. There are many types of elder abuse, including ageism, one of the most common forms of discrimination.

With Bill C-319, which I introduced, we hope to break down this age barrier by increasing old age security for all seniors starting at 65.

This is an important day in Quebec, which already has an action plan to fight elder abuse. Greater health transfers would help Quebec do more.

We must work together to create a society that respects and protects seniors. Let us wear our purple ribbons today and commit to promoting the dignity and well-being of seniors.

* * *

FATHER'S DAY

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a message to all the dads who are celebrating their first Father's Day or their 50th, to the new dads who gaze at their infant son's face and know that their priorities will never be the same, to the dads who work overtime so their kids can go to summer camp for the first time, to the dads who rushed home after a long day to tell their children bedtime stories.

[*English*]

To the dads who just walked the daughter they used to carry on their shoulders down the aisle and are wondering where the time went; the dads who did not know if they would make it through the week and are still wondering if they will; the dads who walked into their first or their 100th AA or GA meeting, because they knew it was the only way; the dads who are not perfect but are trying to be better men, husbands and fathers, day in and day out; and all the dads, uncles, big brothers and mentors who know that fatherhood runs deeper than blood and who have opened their hearts and lives to children who no longer have a dad to call their own, I say happy Father's Day.

* * *

STANLEY CUP WINNER

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan did not have an NHL team. However, in 2017, two young men from Saskatchewan, Justin Reeves and Greg Moore, made a social media plea to adopt the Vegas Golden Knights as Saskatchewan's team.

At the same time, a young man named Brett Howden was playing for the Moose Jaw Warriors as their captain. Brett was a hard-nosed centre on the ice, and he fought hard for his teammates. Off the ice, he would bring players from the team to play floor hockey with the Special Olympics athletes in Moose Jaw. How he and his teammates were able to walk away after getting roughed up by them, I will never know. Brett knew what it was to give to the community he lived and played in.

There is a saying in the Special Olympics: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." On Tuesday night,

Statements by Members

Brett Howden got his due reward and became a Stanley Cup champion with the Vegas Golden Knights.

On behalf of Moose Jaw, the Moose Jaw Special Olympics and every Saskatchewanian who adopted Vegas as our NHL team, I say congratulations to Brett. I would like to point out that I work with his brother-in-law.

* * *

CRAIG BOWMAN

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe in our hearts that if our loved ones were ever in danger, we would do whatever was necessary to keep them safe. However, how far would we be willing to go to help someone we did not know?

Would we charge through the front door of a burning house to search for someone caught in the flames? Would we be willing to breathe air loaded with soot and ash, knowing it could shorten our lives? How far would any of us go? What risk would we take?

Welland firefighter Captain Craig "Opie" Bowman knew the answer to those questions. Because of his courage and the courage of firefighters like him, few of us will ever face those kinds of decisions.

On May 21, Captain Bowman lost his life after a courageous battle with occupational illness. His wife, Alisen, and children, Alexis and Colin, have suffered an enormous loss, but so many others have been spared that pain because of the bravery of such firefighters as Craig Bowman.

On behalf of the people of Canada, I thank my friend Captain Bowman for his service. May he rest in peace.

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● (1410)

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we stand on the shoulders of giants as we inch towards progress. I stand today to recognize these giants, our seniors, who deserve to live with respect and dignity. Today, on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, it is crucial to raise awareness about the well-being of our seniors and to provide them with the quality supports they need.

Elder abuse can take many forms; it may be physical or psychological, or it may occur through neglect. We all have a role to play in fostering a culture of dignity and watching for warning signs. This also includes supporting elders, as our government has done, through budget 2023 and our New Horizons for Seniors program to ensure that our seniors and our elders have proper access to opportunities to actively participate in our society.

Statements by Members

Today and every day, let us recognize the many contributions our elders have made to Canada; let us cherish their health and security.

* * *

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): *Signor Presidente*, it is an honour to rise today to celebrate Italian Heritage Month.

I am one of over 94,000 Italian Canadians living in King—Vaughan. Many Italian immigrants, including my grandparents, came to Canada with enthusiasm and a desire to achieve their goals. They went on to succeed in business, education, entrepreneurship and community leadership, establishing the groundwork for future generations while fostering a deep love for Canada.

The Italian language, the language of love and passion, is spoken by many across Canada. This month, we honour Italians across Canada for their contribution to the development of this country.

[Member spoke in Italian]

[English]

* * *

END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to welcome the next generation of leaders to Parliament.

Two weeks ago, the Montessori Jewish Day School came to Parliament, and it was wonderful to engage with these young change-makers and answer their terrific questions. Today, I welcome the next generation of women leaders from the Eitz Chaim Girls school to Parliament. They come to see and learn how their House and the democratic institutions we all cherish work, as well as how they can engage with them.

June marks graduation season for our students from coast to coast to coast, and the resumption of grad trips, which are the milestones of youth exploring our great country. Our students visit Ottawa to learn about our democratic institutions and nurture their curiosity.

I would like to pay a special tribute to every teacher who has inspired our kids and prepared them for a bright future. I give my congratulations to all our graduates. We are proud of all they have accomplished. *Yasher koach*.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it used to be that if somebody worked hard, they could live a good life here in Canada. They could own a home, drive a reliable vehicle, afford groceries and even save up to go on the occasional holiday. Those things are not luxuries and should not be items reserved for elites and trust fund beneficiaries; however, the reality is that these things are now out of reach for far too many Canadians.

More and more Canadians are cancelling their vacations, going without the necessities or accessing food banks; many have totally given up on the dream of ever owning a home. One must ask why. The answer is simple: The Liberal-NDP policies are to blame. These are things like the carbon tax, attacks on Canada's most productive sectors, gatekeepers reducing productivity and inflationary spending that diminishes the purchasing power of Canadians. It is time for better, and the leader of Canada's Conservatives and his team from across the country are ready to roll up our sleeves and get to work to make sure we axe the tax, make work count again and bring home a Canada that works for all Canadians.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

HOUSING CRISIS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are already having a hard time making ends meet because of inflation caused by the Liberal government's economic policy; now they are also facing another problem.

In Quebec, a lot of people move on July 1. This year, it is an even bigger deal than usual. Here is the story of a good man from Trois-Rivières who has to camp in the bush because of the accessible housing shortage. Seventy-four-year-old Richard Dufault cannot find housing. He told TVA Nouvelles that he had been to about 15 rentals but was unable to secure a lease. He said, "Every landlord I meet with takes my contact information, but they never call me back. When I call back, they tell me the place has been rented."

Here is an important statistic: At 0.9%, Trois-Rivières has one of the lowest rental vacancy rates in Quebec. According to the CMHC, a balanced housing market has a vacancy rate of around 3%. For this to be happening in Canada in 2023 is unacceptable. This government has been in power for eight years. Why is it abandoning—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hochelaga.

* * *

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF VIVRE ET VIEILLIR À ROSEMONT

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 6, the seniors round table, Vivre et vieillir à Rosemont, celebrated its 25th anniversary. This round table, a citizen-led initiative, brings together over 20 players representing the community, the three levels of local elected officials, and citizens who advocate for the well-being of seniors in my riding and that of my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

On this June 15, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, I want to acknowledge everything that Vivre et vieillir à Rosemont does. Since 2010, the round table has been organizing events to raise the public's awareness about this issue that unfortunately still remains. It has been contributing to the quality of life of this segment of the population that is far too often forgotten, working to break the isolation of seniors and encouraging civic engagement.

I thank all the members and volunteers at Vivre et vieillir à Rosemont.

* * *

[English]

RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, constituents from Elliot Lake are demanding action from Natural Resources Canada and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission to clean up radioactive waste found at their homes in Elliot Lake.

This waste, from closed uranium mines, was widely used as fill for constructions in the 1960s.

[Translation]

Without their knowledge, these families were exposed to radiation exceeding allowable limits from mining waste buried under their properties.

[English]

Yes, this radiation was found in their yards and driveways.

There is a duty to ensure that all radioactive waste in Canada is managed, isolated from the public and safely stored for generations to come. This is the approach embraced by Natural Resources Canada's radioactive waste policy, yet these families' requests for action have been denied. It is imperative that this decades-long issue be permanently fixed. It should not be a family's responsibility to deal with radioactive waste, nor to bear the burden of health risks caused by the uranium mining industry.

Jennifer, Lisa, Kathleen, Margaret and Pamela are asking that this radioactive waste be removed from their properties.

* * *

[Translation]

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF ACFAS

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is cause for celebration, as ACFAS is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

ACFAS was established in 1923 by a generation of Quebec pioneers, including botanists Marie-Victorin and Jacques Rousseau and radiologist Léo Pariseau. In a powerful gesture of national affirmation, these visionaries wanted to give the Quebec nation a strong and united francophone scientific organization. They understood that the territorial, economic and national sovereignty of a people hinges on scientific sovereignty.

One hundred years later, ACFAS proudly continues its mission to promote, disseminate and value science in French in Quebec and

Statements by Members

across the Francophonie. More than ever, its work is of crucial importance to Quebec's researchers.

I invite all my colleagues to join me in saying long live French, long live science, long live ACFAS.

* * *

● (1420)

[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have come to learn that the Minister for Public Safety has a complicated relationship with the truth, and they are taking notice.

He backdated documents to mislead a federal judge, but he dated one April 31, and he was found out. He said that law enforcement asked him to trigger the Emergencies Act. He said the Liberal gun grab did not target law-abiding gun owners. He said that CSIS did not share intelligence that Canadian lawmakers were being targeted by foreign dictatorships. He said that his government had shut down the Beijing-run police stations here in Canada. The things he said are not true, and Canadians have come to learn that they just cannot believe him.

When he said he did not know that notorious serial killer and rapist Paul Bernardo was being transferred to less-restrictive conditions in medium security, the truth got in the way again.

We know the minister was informed. We know the Prime Minister was informed. The minister needs to do what is right. He needs to be responsible and accountable.

He needs to resign today.

* * *

HALIFAX INTERNATIONAL FLEET WEEK

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces serve our country at home and abroad, promoting peace and security, responding to disasters and humanitarian crises and defending our interests.

As MP for Halifax, home to CFB Halifax, Canada's largest military base and home to our navy's Atlantic fleet, I have seen up close the skill and dedication of our forces. Whether responding to hurricane Fiona or departing Halifax for operations around the world, CAF members always answer the call of duty. We owe them our most enthusiastic gratitude.

Oral Questions

That is why I am pleased to announce the inaugural Halifax international Fleet Week will be taking place this September 7 to 10. A partnership between the civilian community and the Canadian Armed Forces, Fleet Week will showcase Canada's proud maritime heritage with a wide array of activities, including ships parades and tours, interactive demonstrations and more. A number of our NATO allies will also participate, giving Fleet Week international significance as well.

I invite everyone to join me in Halifax this September for the first-ever Halifax international Fleet Week.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now know why the Prime Minister did not fire his incompetent and deceitful Minister of Public Safety. It was because the Prime Minister himself accepted Paul Bernardo's transfer to a minimum-security prison offering more freedom and comfort.

Considering that the Prime Minister is here in Ottawa today, does he have the courage to rise and explain to the victims of Paul Bernardo why he wanted to give this monster more freedom and comfort?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the crimes in question were atrocious. Crimes like that defy description.

They affected people across the country. They traumatized not only the victims' family members, without question, but all Canadians.

First of all, the correctional system is independent. Keeping our correctional system free from political interference is imperative.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now know why the Prime Minister refuses to fire his incompetent and misleading public safety minister.

It is that the Prime Minister himself was the one who accepted the transfer of Paul Bernardo from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security prison where he would have access to human interaction, more freedom and more comfort. His office knew three months beforehand, and his cabinet has the power to direct the correctional authorities to keep mass murderers in maximum-security prisons.

Will the Prime Minister show the courage to stand on his feet and explain to victims of Paul Bernardo why he wanted to give this monster more freedom and comfort?

• (1425)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the idea that anybody in this House would have any sympathy for the monstrous acts that were committed is absolutely repugnant.

The second thing I will say is that it is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition mis-characterizes what happened. He knows very well that the Correctional Service of Canada makes those decisions independently. He knows very well that we have a system where we are not supposed to interfere politically with that.

It is true, in March, that staff were informed of the possibility. It was not until that possibility was confirmed that they informed the Prime Minister at the end of May.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, based on that account, the Prime Minister knew the day of the transfer, and his office knew three months earlier.

The government has, in the past, issued directives to the Correctional Service on what should be done with various classes of prisoners, like forcing those with contraband into dry prison cells, for example. In other words, the government does have the power to direct corrections on these issues.

The Prime Minister and his office knew for three months. Given that he is here in Ottawa today, does he have the courage to explain his decision to let this monster go out of maximum-security penitentiary, yes or no?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite cares as deeply about the gravity as those crimes and the impact on the families as I do. I know he cares as deeply about what we are going to do for Canadians on that. I also know that he knows the independence of our correctional services system. I know that he also knows that we are not supposed to interfere politically.

I would ask him to work collaboratively with us to find a way where we do not politicize Correctional Service of Canada, and we work together to make sure that the families who are impacted by crimes of this nature are taken care of.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I look across at the Prime Minister's seat. I know that he is in Ottawa today, and if he had the courage, he would be standing to answer these questions directly—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I just want to remind hon. members that we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly. I will let the member continue.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I take the government House leader up on his challenge to work with us.

We have a bill that would make sure every mass murderer stays in a maximum-security penitentiary. It is before the House. Will the government pass it with unanimous consent today?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would say that I am looking directly at the leader of the official opposition for a reason. I am looking at him for a reason because when we are dealing with something as serious and as brutal as the crimes that occurred in a community that was right next to mine, that I felt viscerally, the conversation that we have has to be measured. It has to be based on co-operation and, frankly, it needs to be based on the underlying premise that every member cares equally and deeply about this, about two things, about the victims absolutely but also about not politicizing our correctional services system.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I take the House leader at his word that he is equally horrified with this monster and that he wants to do something, but I take him at his word when he says he wants to work with us to reverse this transfer and put this monster back in a maximum-security penitentiary. The good news is that he can do that today. The Conservative member for Niagara Falls, who represents many of the family members and friends of the victims, has a bill that would ensure that every single mass murderer stays in a maximum-security penitentiary forever.

Will the government commit to passing it with unanimous consent and send Paul Bernardo back to a maximum-security penitentiary?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are, in all instances, ready to have a conversation about how we do not politicize our correctional services, about how we ensure that we take care of victims and their families. There is a review of the decision that was made by the Correctional Service. It is going to be completed in two weeks. I would suggest that we take a look at that.

I would also suggest that, when we are dealing with something as major as changing our correctional services system, it deserves discussion and it deserves the ability for it to be examined by all parliamentarians and to make sure that we do not create unintended consequences.

* * *

● (1430)

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, an inquiry into Chinese interference must be launched before we rise for the summer. It takes a lot of time to investigate, and we have wasted too much time already. If we want to reassure the public, we need to shed light on the interference that occurred in the last election before another one is called. That is the only way to convince the public of the integrity of the next federal election. I am appealing to my colleagues' statesmanship. Time is of the essence.

Will they announce an independent public inquiry before we rise for the summer?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very encouraged by the exchanges between my hon. colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and the Bloc and the NDP. I hope there will be other conversations with the

Conservatives. Fighting foreign interference is not a partisan issue. If we work together, we can create new authorities, provide resources and strengthen them to fight foreign interference. That is the most important thing.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues must realize by now that the Bloc Québécois will not give up. Public trust in democracy is at stake. The people are calling for an independent public commission of inquiry. Its commissioner must be approved by the House. The commission will have to report on its work, not in five years, not in two years, but in the next few months. We realize that this is an immense task. That is why we are working with the government, and they know it. We have our work cut out for us. Will the government announce this commission?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her co-operation. Yes, a public inquiry is still an option. That is exactly what my hon. colleague the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities is negotiating with the opposition. The most important thing is that we are now working with Canadians to create new authorities in order to better protect not only our democratic institutions, but Canadians as well.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what do the Minister of Public Safety, the President of the Privy Council, the former minister of foreign affairs and the Prime Minister have in common? Obviously, they are unable to check their email. That can be dangerous. Is this government aware that it is retraumatizing the families of the victims of one of the most fiendish murderers in Canadian history?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely true that the crime in question probably comes close to being Canada's most serious crime. It is such a serious crime. I can also say with certainty that our correctional system is independent. As I explained earlier, staff were informed of the possibility that the individual in question might be transferred. Once all the details were confirmed, the Prime Minister was informed. It was—

The Speaker: The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen fiasco after fiasco with the government. The level of disorganization and negligence from Liberal ministers is often appalling.

After the public safety minister was failed to be informed of the transfer of one of the most brutal criminals in Canadian history, we now know that the Prime Minister's Office was informed three months ago. The Liberals could have used that time to ensure the victims' families were warned.

How does this keep happening on such serious files? Why are the Liberals showing such clear incompetence? When will they fix this?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, in March, staff were informed of the possibility of a transfer. There were still many details that were not certain. It was not until the end of May, once the details were confirmed, that the Prime Minister was briefed.

I would say for the member opposite, who knows that Correctional Services is independent and that decisions must not be made with political interference, is that we have to have a conversation, as a House, about how we do not interfere with Correctional Services but also ensure that a transfer of this nature does not occur. That needs to be a mature conversation that does not involve a lot of politics.

• (1435)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just when we think things cannot get any worse with the Liberal government, the Prime Minister says “hold my beer”, because it is a game to the Prime Minister. That is what this is.

For three months, the public safety minister knew that child murderer and Scarborough rapist Paul Bernardo was being moved from maximum to medium-security prison and did nothing. Now we know the Prime Minister also knew for three months and also did nothing.

This is not a game. Incompetence does not even begin to describe that leadership. Canadians deserve better and these victims' families deserve better. Therefore, will the public safety minister—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know the member for Peterborough—Kawartha well, but I do know that she is very sincere when she cares about these cases, and she would know that the Prime Minister would be deeply impacted as a father and as a Canadian by the horror of these crimes. Any assertion to the opposite is just frankly not constructive to the debate that we need to have.

I said that Correctional Services operates independently and that it cannot be interfered with politically. I would also say that we have to be very careful, when dealing with the victims of crime, that we do not politicize that or attempt to use it in a way other than to ask how we stop—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is so upset, why will he not stand up and answer the question, and talk to the victims' families? If the Liberals care so much, then do it.

I have said this before: The buck stops with the minister. Stop the blame game. This is people's lives. You are in the government, the Prime Minister, and there is no one below that.

Again, there is duty here: Either fire the public safety minister or resign. That is it; those are the options.

The Speaker: I want to remind the hon. members to place their questions through the Chair and not speak directly to each other.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the duty that each of us share as hon. members in this chamber is, on behalf of the people whom we are fortunate enough to represent, to attempt to the best of our ability to keep them safe; to make sure that when they are harmed we do everything in our power to restore them; and to make sure, yes, that we have a corrections system that is free from interference. Why do we say that? Because we have one of the best correctional services systems in the world.

If we are talking about the rightful outrage that we all have in this circumstance, we have to temper it in a mature conversation on how to balance those two priorities.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Public Safety expect us to believe that for three months his office withheld information from him that the most notorious murderer and serial rapist in Canada had been transferred to a medium-security prison?

It is clear that the minister likely knew about the transfer in March and did nothing. The entire government likely knew and did nothing about it, including the Prime Minister's Office.

When will the Prime Minister finally admit that he has lost total control of his cabinet and ask the minister to resign?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by taking a moment to express my support for the families of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French, which have no doubt been traumatized time and time again by the decision that was taken under Correctional Service Canada. That is why, when I found out on May 30, I took immediate action to reach out to the commissioner to express those concerns.

I want to work with all members to make sure that this does not happen again. The directions that I have put into motion will ensure that I am directly briefed and, most important, that victims are given advance notice before these decisions are taken in the future.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is in town, so why will he not stand and answer these questions?

The minister has misled Canadians before. He has said at least 11 times that law enforcement requested the Emergencies Act; that was false. He said that Bill C-21 was not going to ban guns used by hunters and farmers; that was false. He said that Chinese police stations in Canada had been shut down; that was false.

Canadians have lost confidence in the minister. Will he do the honourable thing and just resign?

• (1440)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on each and every one of those priorities, this government has defended public safety in the interests of all Canadians.

When it comes to fighting against gun violence, we are banning AR-15s; the Conservatives want to make them legal again. Last year, when we faced an unprecedented national emergency, we invoked the Emergencies Act, a decision validated by Judge Rouleau independently. What did the Conservatives do—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry, I am going to interrupt. The noise level is starting to build up again and we are having a hard time hearing the answer. The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk asked a question; she would like to hear the answer. If there are people yelling behind her, it is very difficult for her to hear.

Maybe the hon. member could start about 15 seconds from the end.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to fighting gun violence, we are banning AR-15s. The Conservatives want to make them legal again. When it came to the decision to invoke the Emergencies Act, we defended that decision to restore public safety. The Conservatives were doubling down, encouraging illegal protesters to stay in the region they should have left. We will always—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is in Ottawa but, strangely enough, he is not rising to answer questions.

The Minister of Public Safety feigned surprise last week when the criminal Paul Bernardo was transferred from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security prison, yet he had known about it for three months. In fact, even the Prime Minister's Office knew about it.

No one did anything. Everyone looked the other way. This is Liberal incompetence in all its glory.

When will the Minister of Public Safety resign?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious situation. Everyone was concerned about this tragedy.

However, it is important to remember that our correctional system is independent. It is essential that the decision to transfer someone be made by the correctional service.

Now, there are a lot of emotions, and I understand that. I feel the same way, but we have to talk—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he knew that this dangerous criminal was go-

Oral Questions

ing to be placed in a prison with fewer restrictions. He must also have known that this decision would outrage and worry the victims' families.

The Minister of Public Safety has a less than stellar record, with questionable decisions, backtracking, and untruthful statements.

If there is anybody in charge in this government who sees things clearly and manages things in the interests of Canadians and of victims, have them stand up and throw this minister out.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to begin by expressing our deepest sympathies to the families of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French.

When I was informed on May 30, I took the necessary steps to have a discussion with the board. An independent review is now under way. In addition, yesterday I issued new directives to the Correctional Service of Canada to ensure that victims are informed before such decisions are made in the future.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us not ask the Minister of Public Safety for details about Paul Bernardo's transfer. He knows nothing about it, even if his staff did.

Let us not ask the Prime Minister either, he too knows nothing, even if his staff knew, just like he knew nothing about Beijing's threats against a Conservative MP, although his staff did.

Let us not talk about the threats with the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, who also knew nothing, even if his staff did.

If we want to talk to someone who is aware, we need to speak to a staffer. Should we appoint the staffers as ministers?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take this issue very seriously. That is why, when I was informed on May 30, I took the necessary steps. I had a frank conversation with the commissioner of Correctional Service Canada.

That is why I will be putting in place new directives to protect the rights of victims. We need an approach that respects that. In addition, we will work with all members of the House to protect the rights of victims and to make decisions that make sense.

• (1445)

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at this point, it is a pattern. The ministers are constantly telling us that they are not aware of the briefing notes that senior public servants nevertheless confirm to have sent directly to their staff.

We can take their word for it once, maybe twice, that their staff did not see fit to inform them, but there comes a point where it is the political equivalent of saying that my dog ate my homework. These ministers lose a lot of homework.

When are we going to see real responsibility on their part? We are starting to worry about their dog's health.

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the current context, as I have already explained, the staff was informed that this was a possibility, without any concrete details. As I have also already explained, the choice to transfer an incarcerated person is an independent choice. When the details were finalized at the end of May, at that time, staff informed the Prime Minister of the situation.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just because people laugh does not mean it is funny. Ministers have a responsibility to get informed and then in turn inform the public. This spring alone, if we had relied on the work of the ministers instead of the media, three members of the House would still be the target of threats from China without knowing it. Diplomat Zhao Wei would still be in office. A dozen or so ridings would still be the target of Chinese interference. That is what would have happened without the media if we had relied on the responsibility of ministers.

When will they take their ministerial responsibility?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a minister has a responsibility to determine the problem and correct it. That is exactly what we did by giving directives to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and giving new directives to Correctional Service Canada. We did this to ensure that the information is shared effectively to protect the rights of the victims and ensure public safety for everyone.

[English]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government put convicted murderer, kidnapper and child rapist Paul Bernardo into a medium-security prison. Meanwhile, the PM is in Ottawa. Why will he not stand up and answer the questions?

In 2013, the Conservative government took responsibility when it was faced with exactly the same issue. Paul Bernardo was to be transferred to a medium-security prison and the Conservative government of the day said no.

The public safety minister, including the Prime Minister himself, has said yes.

Will the minister resign for granting leniency to the most notorious child murderer and rapist—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, as every Canadian knows, the crimes that are in question are among the most grievous this country has ever faced. There is not a person in the House who is not impacted by them. I trust that the member cares deeply about it, as do I.

However, the assertion that this is a decision of the government is false and, in fact, it is dangerous. The decision to transfer inmates is a decision of Correctional Service Canada. The independence of our Correctional Services has been a foundation of our country for a very long time.

Having a mature conversation about how we respect that and respect victims is what I think Canadians expect.

The Speaker: I would point out for the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies that we have heard his comment. He does not have to repeat it over and over again. It is just not the right time. The member should talk to his whip about getting a speaking role.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think it is worth noting that the government has the authority to introduce legislation, such as bills the Conservative Party has just put forward, to ensure that offenders like Paul Bernardo, one of Canada's worst serial rapists, stay in maximum security. That is its job.

The Prime Minister's Office and the Prime Minister knew about this for three months. He has a litany of highly paid staff to tell him about these things. It is preposterous to think they did not. His public itinerary today says that he is in the national capital region. How come he has not informed the House of the public safety minister's resignation?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across has made clear, not just now but for a long time, her desire for her party to be successful and for it to get on this side. They have to do that through an election.

I will say, on this issue, that the decision made was independent. If we want to have a conversation about Correctional Services' decision, that is exactly what we are doing. There is a review taking place, which concludes in two weeks. We have asked it to review this decision, and I think understanding that these decisions are done independently is important. It has been an important foundation of corrections in this country.

● (1450)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has had eight years to consult, and it should not be a leap of logic to understand that revictimizing families by allowing the transfer of serial rapists out of maximum-security prison is something the government should have worked to avoid, just like it failed with the Terri-Lynne McClintic case.

If the member looks behind to his caucus, he will see his caucus cringing. The public safety minister has the worst record of failure in the government outside of the Prime Minister. How come the Prime Minister, who is in the national capital region today, has not informed this House—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

*Oral Questions***GROCERY INDUSTRY**

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we should choose what we talk about. If we want to talk about the circumstances that are involved in these horrific crimes and how we can responsibly deal with a corrections system that is one of the best and most envied in the world—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry, but I have to stop the hon. member.

The hon. government House leader, from the top, please.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about these issues, I would suggest that they require enormous sensitivity. I am concerned that the Conservatives are peppering every question with partisan commentary and trying to extract political advantage from this situation.

I have attempted, as I have talked about this, to talk about our responsibility. We have one of the greatest correctional services systems in the world. It is admired all over the world, and one of its principal tenets is to not interfere with it politically.

We all rightly feel outrage about this transfer. We have great emotion about the crimes that occurred, but we need to deal with that emotion responsibly and make—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, international students who were victims of unscrupulous immigration agents should not be punished. They have invested everything they have to study in Canada. They have contributed to the economic, cultural and social fabric of our community. Halting the deportation and removal orders is a good first step.

The minister said that he is working on a long-term solution. However, what the students need is permanent residency status. Will the minister follow up to ensure that an alternate permanent residence pathway is made available to the victims of fraud?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy, along with members who come from all parties represented in the House of Commons, in finding a solution for innocent victims who were taken advantage of by fraudsters who allowed them to enter Canada on the basis of fraudulent letters of admission.

Yesterday we announced a new path forward, including a task force, that would give an opportunity to students to demonstrate that they were not complicit in fraud but were in fact victims of fraud. They will be given temporary status in Canada to allow them to complete their studies or to continue to work. We have also advanced new measures to ensure they can apply for permanent residency or remain in Canada without prejudice. That is the right path forward—

The Speaker: The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the London Food Bank is seeing its highest turnout ever. People cannot afford the cost of food right now, and major grocers are using inflation as a cover to jack up prices. The government is choosing to protect the profits and greed of major grocers while Canadians' bills skyrocket.

The multipartisan committee released a report stressing how a windfall tax would incentivize large grocers to keep prices low. Will the government implement this windfall tax immediately so that Canadians can stop going to food banks and can actually afford their groceries?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the member, and we know that Canadians are paying far too much for their groceries right now. That is why, not long ago, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry wrote to the Competition Bureau to make sure that the bureau is using all the tools it has at its disposal to keep prices down and to prevent businesses from taking advantage of the high prices to profit off of Canadians. We have also asked the bureau to look immediately into these matters. We will continue to work to make life more affordable for Canadians in all matters.

* * *

• (1455)

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, around the world we are seeing the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people being restricted. Even within our own borders, we are seeing extremist groups callously using innocent trans and non-binary children as political targets.

The Minister of Labour recently represented Canada at the UN International Labour Organization in Geneva, where he raised this issue. Would the minister share with the House what he said to this international forum?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago I stood before nations that have attempted to roll back 2SLGBTQI+ rights, and I reminded them that as a gay and married man, I would be jailed or even condemned to death if I happened to have been born in their countries.

Nations make progress and they achieve rights in their own time and in their own way, as was the case with Canada, and we respect that, but once those rights are achieved, once they are named, we will not stand by and see them swept under the carpet, put back in the closet or taken away, not here, not there, not anywhere.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and cabinet have never taken responsibility for their many acts committed in bad faith.

For example, the Minister of Public Safety alone has misled the House no less than seven times. He even misled a judge by back-dating documents. He should have been fired for that, but he is still here. The Liberals have also never showed empathy or compassion for the victims of Paul Bernardo.

The Prime Minister is in Ottawa. Can he rise today and tell us whether he is going to fire his public safety minister?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, that is absolutely not true. I called the representatives of the families of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French to express our government's solidarity and our full support.

In addition, we will now work with CSC to prevent further cases like this from happening. Victims must be notified before such decisions are made. That is the commitment we are making for the future.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Correctional Service of Canada took the trouble to inform the Prime Minister's Office three months ago that Paul Bernardo was being transferred to a medium-security prison.

Did anyone in the Prime Minister's Office think to have the common sense to contact the families and warn them? No one seems to have thought about calling the victims' families, even though this should be standard procedure.

The minister says that he did so two weeks ago. Why did his prime minister not do it three months ago?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, my hon. colleague does not understand our current laws. These are issues that we need to address. We are prepared to work with all members of the House.

In the meantime, I have issued a new directive to CSC to make sure of one very important thing: I will be briefed directly, and CSC will notify victims when making such decisions in the future.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an unsealed justice department indictment in U.S. court revealed that a Canadian in Vancouver was coerced back to the PRC. It has been eight months since the first reports about Beijing's illegal police service stations. Beijing brazenly admitted to five of these stations, and another two have been identified. These stations are being used to coerce people back to the PRC.

The minister has indicated these stations were shut down, but they have not been. When will they be?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with great respect to my colleague, he needs to listen carefully to the RCMP, which has consistently updated Canadians that

it is taking action in regard to foreign interference associated with these so-called police stations.

If the Conservatives are serious about fighting foreign interference, they will stop with the partisan attacks. They will support the government's agenda to tackle this issue and do so in a way that is unifying, because we must protect our democratic institutions, and most importantly Canadians, from this phenomenon.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that same indictment also revealed that in New York City last summer, PRC agents tried to coerce someone in New York City to come to Toronto for more intensive interrogations. The implication is that Beijing is comfortable using Canada as its foreign interference playground. Maybe that is because two months ago those same PRC agents were arrested, yet here north of the border there is nothing: no arrests, no new legislation.

When will the Prime Minister replace the minister with someone who will get the job done?

• (1500)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are getting the job done by adding new authorities for our national security establishment, by adding \$49 million for the RCMP to protect Canadians from foreign interference, by being on the cusp of introducing a new foreign agent registry—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I have to break for a second. We are starting to see the volume go up again, and we are hearing individual voices. It is getting a bit out of hand, so we are going to take a deep breath and pause a bit.

I will ask the hon. minister to start from the top, please.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, we are getting the job done by making sure that we equip our national security establishment with the tools that it needs to fight foreign interference, by adding resources for the RCMP, which we put into the budget, by raising the bar on transparency through the creation of NSICOP and NSIRA, and by continuing to engage Canadians on this.

That is what we are doing. What the Conservatives are doing is continuing on with an agenda that focuses on partisan attacks. They should stop that and do the work with all members in the chamber so that we can fight against foreign interference and protect our democratic institutions.

[Translation]

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 1,300 people learned yesterday that they would be losing their jobs at Bell Media. Six radio stations are going to stop broadcasting. When even a giant like Bell can no longer protect its media and newsrooms, the situation is dire. The entire news industry and the people who work in it are all under threat.

The Bloc Québécois is proud to have contributed to Bill C-11 and Bill C-18, two very important bills. However, I think the minister is beginning to realize, as I have, that this will probably not be enough.

In light of these new job losses, does the minister have anything to suggest in order to better protect the diversity of information?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my thoughts are with all those who have lost their jobs, and with their families. It is always worrisome when radio stations shut down and journalists lose their jobs. That is why we have been there from the start. We worked with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP to study Bill C-11 and Bill C-18, but the Conservatives did everything they could to delay the passage of those bills.

Do they finally understand that their actions have consequences?

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, layoffs at Bell Media are a sign of growing pessimism even among the telecom giants. We can only imagine how the smaller industry players feel.

Will current federal programs and the compensation flowing from Bill C-18 really be enough to ensure the survival of the news?

The Bloc Québécois is proposing the creation of a dedicated fund, separate from existing programs, wholly dedicated to protecting news media and newsrooms. I think we are at that point.

What does the minister think? Is he prepared to work with us to develop a fund like that?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will always be open to new solutions. We will always look at what more we can do and what we can do better.

However, when we introduced the Canadian journalism labour tax credit, the Conservatives were against it. When we created the Canada Media Fund for the regions, the Conservatives were against it. When we introduced Bill C-11, the Conservatives were against it. When we introduced Bill C-18, the Conservatives, again, were against it.

Do they understand that their actions have real consequences?

* * *

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a way to show the world his admiration for the basic dictatorship of the regime in Beijing, the Prime Minister wanted to personally contribute to its expansion in 2016 by proudly announcing an investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in the Asian Infrastruc-

Oral Questions

ture Investment Bank. We warned the Prime Minister. The Conservatives saw the trap many times. We know from one of its executives that the AIIB was in fact run by the Chinese Communist Party. Canadians should not have to pay a quarter of a billion dollars to expand the Beijing regime.

When will the Prime Minister get our money back?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Prime Minister said yesterday in answer to this question, the Government of Canada will immediately halt all government-led activity at the AIIB. Furthermore, she has instructed the Department of Finance to lead a review of the allegations regarding Canada's involvement in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The Canadian government will also be discussing this issue with its allies. The review announced yesterday is to be undertaken expeditiously. No outcome is being ruled out following its completion.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-appointed board member on the Asian infrastructure bank just resigned, calling it a cesspool and saying that it was controlled by “the Communist Party crowd who operate like a secret police.”

Who could have seen this coming? Who could have predicted that a bank structured to give Beijing effective control would use the bank to expand the power and influence of the Communist regime in Beijing? Who could have possibly seen that coming? The Conservatives, that is who.

We warned the Liberals not to put tax dollars into this scam of a bank. When are they getting our money back?

● (1505)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Prime Minister and I said in the House yesterday on this matter, the Government of Canada will immediately halt all government-led activity at the bank. She has instructed the Department of Finance to lead an immediate review of the allegations raised and of Canada's involvement in the AIIB.

The Canadian government will also be discussing this issue with our allies and partners who are members of the bank.

The review is to be undertaken expeditiously, and no outcome is being ruled out following this investigation.

Oral Questions

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nobody likes an “I told you so”, except for everyone who told them so.

It was not only Conservatives, but also our major security partners, such as Japan and the United States, and foreign affairs experts, who said the same thing, that the Communist regime would use the bank to bully developing countries and expand its power and influence.

This bank built railways and ports with taxpayer dollars while Canadians here at home are struggling just to pay the bills. Now that the con has been exposed, will the government do the right thing and get Canadians their tax dollars back?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the same question, we say the same answer as we gave yesterday in the House.

The Deputy Prime Minister has been very clear. We have ceased all government-led activities with the AIB. We have asked the Department of Finance to conduct an immediate investigation into the activities of the bank. This investigation is to be undertaken expeditiously, and no outcome will be ruled out.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, countries around the world are racing to seize the extraordinary economic opportunities that come with building a low-carbon economy, investing in clean energy, and scaling new technologies. We must ensure that Canadian workers are equipped with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources please share how this government is helping workers capitalize on this opportunity and ensure Canada is a leader in all things energy?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the question, and for his advocacy on these important issues.

The global race to build a low-carbon economy is the greatest job-creation opportunity of our time. We can either work to seize this opportunity or put our heads in the sand and let it pass us by.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, having a serious plan to address climate change is required to have a serious plan for Canada's economic future.

Today, with the tabling of the sustainable jobs act, our government is choosing to seize the moment. This act will create and maintain jobs in communities across Canada by helping workers gain the necessary skills and training to fill the jobs of a low-carbon world. We are building an economy where Canadian workers and businesses will thrive.

The Speaker: Before going to the next question, I would like to remind the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore that it is not polite to scream over the voice of someone else.

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of the Prime Minister's Liberal government is driving up the cost of living. The more he spends, the more things cost.

According to the latest National Rent Report, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in King—Vaughan is \$2,650, the fifth-highest in the GTA.

Canadians are sick and tired of the government trying to convince them they have never had it so good. When will the Liberal Prime Minister show some compassion and stop the out-of-control inflationary spending so Canadians can stay in their homes?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians are sick and tired of is the Conservatives' hypocrisy that they care about affordability for Canadians. Right now in the House they are holding up Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care. There are only 19 minutes left in debate to get this bill passed through the House to go to the Senate.

Conservatives keep saying they care about affordable child care, but all they have done is play partisan games to hold it up. When will they finally be honest with Canadians and tell them they do not care about it, instead of playing silly games?

* * *

● (1510)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fuel companies throughout Atlantic Canada have sent letters to their customers telling them that on July 1 propane is going up 12¢ a litre. Gasoline is going up 17¢ a litre, and home heating and diesel are going up 20¢ a litre.

Folks in Kentville, Antigonish, Sydney, Saint John, Fredericton, Edmundston, Corner Brook, Clarendville, Conception Bay South, Labrador City, and all over P.E.I. have sent me a copy of that letter. Will the evil genius who invented carbon tax 2 please stand up to tell us why he is persecuting Atlantic Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that the Conservative Party of Canada campaigned on a platform to implement a clean fuel standard, except that party is all words while we are all action. We have worked with companies across the country to ensure we can have lower carbon-emitting fuels in Canada. We are creating investments across the country in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Newfoundland of more than \$2 billion in the last year alone in clean fuel.

We will continue ensuring that we can create good jobs, have a good economy and tackle climate change.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a pile of baloney. Canadians know that all they have done is destroy jobs in Canada. The Prime Minister's childhood friend, who believes the same thing, Premier Furey said that when he asked the federal minister what impact the carbon tax 2 would have. He admitted that it will not be zero. No, it will not be zero, it will be \$850 a year per household in Atlantic Canada.

Will these Liberals finally admit that the carbon tax is not working, stop persecuting the people who elected them and end the carbon tax?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really find it quite rich when I am listening to our colleagues on the other side of the House. I would like to give them a little history of lesson, especially from my part of the country.

The first thing we did was reopen the veterans affairs office that the previous government had closed. The other thing we did, as a coastal community, was to build and open a new facility after they had closed down the Coast Guard search and rescue. Then we raised taxes on the wealthiest, lowered them for the middle class and lowered taxes for small businesses twice.

We have been there to help people through the pandemic. We are there now helping with dental care, with child care benefits and with people turning off—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that raising awareness is one of the most effective ways to combat elder abuse. With today, June 15, marking World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, could the Minister of Seniors provide an update to the House on the steps being taken by the government to increase awareness and prevent the mistreatment of senior citizens in Canada?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, any form of elder abuse is a despicable crime that we take very seriously. Our government is taking action by supporting over 600 community organizations that help seniors recognize and identify fraud and abuse by finalizing a definition of elder abuse, establishing new offences and penalties under the Criminal Code related to elder abuse, and investing in better data collection.

To ensure that tragedies like the ones we saw in long-term care will never happen again, we welcome the national long-term care standards and are working toward delivering a safe long-term care act.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Pacheedaht First Nation in my riding does not have a school for kids from grade 6 to 12. Every day, children as young as 11 have to take a bus 75 kilometres each way between home and school on a windy and narrow highway. That is three hours a day. Chief Jones came all the way to Ottawa to plead with Indigenous Services and Infrastructure Canada to help.

Will the minister honour reconciliation and start working with the Pacheedaht to get this community the school they desperately need?

● (1515)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since this government was elected, we have worked tirelessly to close the gaping infrastructure gap left by the previous Conservative government. It underinvested in indigenous children, underinvested in indigenous infrastructure and did nothing about boiled water advisories for a decade, which left a massive gap of infrastructure across the country, including children's schools. Our government has reversed that trend.

Of course I will work tirelessly to make sure that every community has a school that children can be proud of and safe to learn in.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on June 10, Canada seized a Russian aircraft at Pearson airport. Global Affairs Canada said it is working with Ukraine on “options to redistribute this asset to compensate victims of human rights abuses”.

Why then is the government fighting the families of victims of flight PS752 from using an Ontario superior court ruling to allow them to seize assets and obtain compensation from Iran? Why is the government protecting a ruthless regime and its murderous IRGC terrorists? Why is the government standing with terrorists instead of grieving Canadian families?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an important question, and it gives me the opportunity to talk about two things.

The first is what we are doing to make sure the Russian regime is held accountable. Canada is the first country in the world now able to seize and forfeit important assets of the Russian regime. Indeed, we seized the Antonov plane, which has been stranded at the Pearson airport.

When it comes to Iran, we will continue to make sure that the regime itself is held accountable. We have sanctioned the IRGC. We have also sanctioned key leaders. We will make sure that the families of the victims of PS752, with whom I have had numerous contacts and numerous meetings, are compensated and well supported.

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for question period today.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move that notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of this House, Bill C-342, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act regarding maximum security offenders, be deemed read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the House of Commons' "Report to Canadians 2023".

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE

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

The Speaker: It being 3:18 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of Mr. Brock to the motion for concurrence in the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

[*English*]

Call in the members.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 378*)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Berthold | Bezan |
| Block | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Brock |
| Calkins | Caputo |
| Carrie | Chambers |
| Chong | Cooper |
| Dalton | Dancho |
| Davidson | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Doherty |
| Dowdall | Dreeshen |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Ellis |
| Epp | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Falk (Provencher) | Fast |
| Ferrier | Findlay |
| Gallant | Généreux |
| Genius | Gladu |
| Godin | Goodridge |
| Gourde | Gray |
| Hallan | Hoback |
| Jeneroux | Kelly |
| Kitchen | Kmieciak |
| Kram | Kramp-Neuman |
| Kurek | Kusie |
| Lantsman | Lawrence |
| Lehoux | Lewis (Essex) |
| Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Liepert |
| Lloyd | Lobb |
| Maguire | Martel |
| Mazier | McCaulley (Edmonton West) |
| McLean | Melillo |
| Moore | Morantz |
| Morrison | Motz |
| Muys | Nater |
| Patzer | Paul-Hus |
| Perkins | Poilievre |
| Redekopp | Reid |
| Rempel Garner | Richards |
| Roberts | Rood |
| Ruff | Scheer |
| Schmale | Seeback |
| Shields | Small |
| Soroka | Steinley |
| Stewart | Strahl |
| Stubbs | Thomas |
| Tochor | Tolmie |
| Uppal | Van Popta |
| Vecchio | Vidal |
| Vien | Viersen |
| Vis | Vuong |
| Wagantall | Warkentin |
| Waugh | Webber |
| Williams | Williamson |
| Zimmer— 113 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|-------|-----|
| Aldag | Ali |
|-------|-----|

Anandasangaree
 Arseneault
 Ashton
 Bachrach
 Bains
 Barron
 Battiste
 Beech
 Bennett
 Bittle
 Blair
 Blanchette-Joncas
 Blois
 Boulerice
 Brière
 Cannings
 Chabot
 Chahal
 Champoux
 Chen
 Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
 Dabrusin
 Davies
 Desbiens
 Desjarlais
 Dhillon
 Dong
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Ehsassi
 Erskine-Smith
 Fillmore
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser
 Fry
 Garon
 Gaudreau
 Gerretsen
 Gould
 Guilbeault
 Hanley
 Hepfner
 Housefather
 Hussien
 Iacono
 Ien
 Johns
 Jones
 Julian
 Kelloway
 Khera
 Kusmierczyk
 Lalonde
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Lattanzio
 LeBlanc
 Lemire
 Long
 Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacDonald (Malpeque)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Martinez Ferrada
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McPherson
 Mendicino
 Michaud
 Morrice
 Murray

Angus
 Arya
 Atwin
 Badawey
 Baker
 Barsalou-Duval
 Beaulieu
 Bendayan
 Bérubé
 Blaikie
 Blanchet
 Blaney
 Boissonnault
 Bradford
 Brunelle-Duceppe
 Casey
 Chagger
 Champagne
 Chatel
 Chiang
 Coteau
 Damoff
 DeBellefeuille
 Desilets
 Dhaliwal
 Diab
 Drouin
 Duclous
 Dzerowicz
 El-Khoury
 Fergus
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fragiskatos
 Freeland
 Gaheer
 Garrison
 Gazan
 Gill
 Green
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Idlout
 Jaczek
 Joly
 Jowhari
 Kayabaga
 Khalid
 Koutrakis
 Kwan
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Larouche
 Lauzon
 Leboutillier
 Lightbound
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacGregor
 Maloney
 Masse
 May (Cambridge)
 McDonald (Avalon)
 McKay
 McLeod
 Mendès
 Miao
 Miller
 Morrissey
 Naqvi

Ng
 Normandin
 Oliphant
 Pauzé
 Petitpas Taylor
 Powlowski
 Rayes
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Sajjan
 Samson
 Scarpaleggia
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Simard
 Sorbara
 Ste-Marie
 Sudds
 Taylor Roy
 Therrien
 Trudeau
 Turnbull
 Van Bynen
 Vandal
 Vignola
 Virani
 Wilkinson
 Zahid
 Zuberi— 207

Routine Proceedings

Noormohamed
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Perron
 Plamondon
 Qualtrough
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Sahota
 Saks
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sinclair-Desgagné
 Sousa
 St-Onge
 Tassi
 Thériault
 Thompson
 Trudel
 Valdez
 van Koeverden
 Vandenbeld
 Villemure
 Weiler
 Yip
 Zarrillo

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Bibeau
 Savard-Tremblay— 4

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion.

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

• (1550)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 379*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
 Albas
 Ali
 Anandasangaree
 Arnold
 Arya
 Atwin
 Badawey
 Baker
 Barlow
 Aitchison
 Aldag
 Allison
 Angus
 Arseneault
 Ashton
 Bachrach
 Bains
 Baldinelli
 Barrett

Routine Proceedings

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Barron | Barsalou-Duval | Larouche | Lattanzio |
| Battiste | Beaulieu | Lauzon | Lawrence |
| Beech | Bendayan | LeBlanc | Lebouthillier |
| Bennett | Berthold | Lehoux | Lemire |
| Bérubé | Bezan | Lewis (Essex) | Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Bittle | Blaikie | Liepert | Lightbound |
| Blair | Blanchet | Lloyd | Lobb |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Blaney | Long | Longfield |
| Block | Blois | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) | MacAulay (Cardigan) |
| Boissonnault | Boulerice | MacDonald (Malpeque) | MacGregor |
| Bradford | Bragdon | MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Maguire |
| Brassard | Brière | Maloney | Martel |
| Brock | Brunelle-Duceppe | Martinez Ferrada | Masse |
| Calkins | Cannings | Mathysen | May (Cambridge) |
| Caputo | Carrie | May (Saenich—Gulf Islands) | Mazier |
| Casey | Chabot | McCauley (Edmonton West) | McDonald (Avalon) |
| Chagger | Chahal | McGuinty | McKay |
| Chambers | Champagne | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLean |
| Champoux | Chatel | McLeod | McPherson |
| Chen | Chiang | Melillo | Mendès |
| Chong | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) | Mendicino | Miao |
| Cooper | Coteau | Michaud | Miller |
| Dabrusin | Dalton | Moore | Morantz |
| Damoff | Dancho | Morrice | Morrison |
| Davidson | Davies | Morrissey | Motz |
| DeBellefeuille | Deltell | Murray | Muys |
| d'Entremont | Desbiens | Naqvi | Nater |
| Desilets | Desjarlais | Ng | Noormohamed |
| Dhaliwal | Dhillon | Normandin | O'Connell |
| Diab | Doherty | Oliphant | O'Regan |
| Dowdall | Dreeshen | O'Toole | Patzer |
| Drouin | Dubourg | Paul-Hus | Pauzé |
| Duclos | Duguid | Perkins | Perron |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Dzerowicz | Petitpas Taylor | Plamondon |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury | Poilievre | Powlowski |
| Ellis | Epp | Qualtrough | Raves |
| Erskine-Smith | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) | Redekopp | Reid |
| Falk (Provencher) | Fast | Rempel Garner | Richards |
| Fergus | Ferreri | Roberts | Robillard |
| Fillmore | Findlay | Rodriguez | Rogers |
| Fisher | Fonseca | Romanado | Rood |
| Fortier | Fortin | Ruff | Sahota |
| Fragiskatos | Fraser | Sajjan | Saks |
| Freeland | Fry | Samson | Sari |
| Gaheer | Gallant | Scarpaleggia | Scheer |
| Garon | Garrison | Schiefke | Schmale |
| Gaudreau | Gazan | Seeback | Serré |
| Généreux | Genuis | Sgro | Shanahan |
| Gerretsen | Gladu | Sheehan | Shields |
| Godin | Goodridge | ShIPLEY | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Gould | Gourde | Sidhu (Brampton South) | Simard |
| Gray | Green | Sinclair-Desgagné | Small |
| Guilbeault | Hajdu | Sorbara | Soroka |
| Hallan | Hanley | Sousa | Steinley |
| Hardie | Hepfner | Ste-Marie | Stewart |
| Hoback | Holland | St-Onge | Strahl |
| Housefather | Hughes | Stubbs | Sudds |
| Hussen | Hutchings | Tassi | Taylor Roy |
| Iacono | Idlout | Thériault | Therrien |
| Ien | Jaczek | Thomas | Thompson |
| Jeneroux | Johns | Tochor | Tolmie |
| Joly | Jowhari | Trudeau | Trudel |
| Julian | Kayabaga | Tumbull | Uppal |
| Kelloway | Kelly | Valdez | Van Bynen |
| Khalid | Khera | van Koeverden | Van Popta |
| Kitchen | Kmiec | Vandal | Vandenbeld |
| Koutrakis | Kram | Vecchio | Vidal |
| Kramp-Neuman | Kurek | Vien | Viersen |
| Kusie | Kusmierczyk | Vignola | Villemure |
| Kwan | Lake | Virani | Vis |
| Lalonde | Lambropoulos | Vuong | Wagantall |
| Lametti | Lamoureux | Warkentin | Waugh |
| Lantsman | Lapointe | Webber | Weiler |

Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

Williams
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi — 320

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Bibeau
Savard-Tremblay— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know all members have been patiently waiting for the famous Thursday question.

Could the government House leader please inform the House what business the government intends to bring before the House for the remainder of this week and into next week?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to respond on behalf of the government.

This afternoon we will continue debate on Government Business No. 26, concerning amendments to the Standing Orders. When debate concludes later this evening, we will consider Bill C-35, respecting early learning and child care, followed by Senate amendments to Bill C-9, concerning the Judges Act.

Tomorrow we will consider Bill C-42, respecting the Canada Business Corporations Act, at report stage and third reading, and Bill S-8, respecting sanctions.

The priorities for next week shall include Bill S-8, on sanctions; Senate amendments to Bill C-18, respecting online news; Bill C-40, concerning the miscarriage of justice review commission act, also known as David and Joyce Milgaard's Law; and Bill C-33, which strengthens the port system and railway safety.

Thursday shall be an allotted day.

Finally, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the next sitting be 12 midnight, pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the government House leader's request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED BREACH OF MEMBER'S RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege regarding evidence I have received through an ATIP request that demonstrates the government deliberately withheld information I sought from the Minister of

Privilege

Natural Resources through written Question No. 974. Question No. 974 was also the subject of a point of order I raised on January 31, 2023.

As background context, on November 3, 1978, the member for Durham—Northumberland raised a question of privilege and charged that he had been deliberately misled by a former solicitor general. The member had written a letter in 1973 to the solicitor general, who assured him that, as a matter of policy, the RCMP did not intercept the private mail of Canadians.

On November 1, 1978, during testimony before the McDonald commission, the former commissioner of the RCMP stated that they did indeed intercept mail on a very restricted basis, and that the practice was not one which had been concealed from ministers.

The member claimed that the statement clearly conflicted with the information he had received from the then solicitor general some years earlier. The Speaker ruled, on December 6, 1978, that there was indeed a prima facie case of contempt.

I am in the same position today. I received information from a written question, and I am now in possession of new information from an ATIP that establishes that an answer from the Minister of Natural Resources was a deliberate attempt to deny me an answer.

Instead of providing the House with accurate information, which, in your own words, Mr. Speaker, “is a fundamental one and it is a central accountability mechanism”, the information was based on the communication needs of the minister. The quote I just gave is pulled from the ruling you made on my original point of order on this matter, which you made on February 2, 2023.

My claim of breach of privilege in this matter stems also from a ruling the Speaker made on December 16, 1980, at page 5797 of Hansard. The Speaker ruled, “While it is correct to say that the government is not required by our rules to answer written or oral questions, it would be bold to suggest that no circumstances could ever exist for a prima facie question of privilege to be made where there was a deliberate attempt to deny answers to an Hon. Member.” This is clearly one of those circumstances.

In the ATI response regarding the government's preparation of the response to Question No. 974, there is a departmental note beside it that reads, “There is some communications risk resulting from the use of high-level limitation language that does not answer the written question from an MP who is an effective communicator and former Natural Resources critic.” The ATI file outlines correspondence between dozens of staff involved in a strategy on how to deny me information, instead of working to provide it to me. I encourage members to read this whole thing; it is quite something.

Privilege

An email from Paige Ladouceur includes this description on the strategy behind the government's approach to Question No. 974: "IADT worked with CPS and PAU to land on this response, which relies on approved media lines. [Response] does not answer question directly....PAU has confirmed that this approach is appropriate." This email in itself shows that the government was deliberately attempting to deny me information related to my question. It may be appropriate for the government to craft a political communications response to the information provided in an Order Paper question, after that information is produced for the member, but it is a breach of my privilege for government employees to craft a strategy designed to deliberately withhold information which I am to be afforded by way of the Standing Orders of this place.

Again, to re-emphasize, the emails in this ATI file, of which I will not read all into the record though I am happy to table this with the House, show that there were numerous meetings and discussions purposely designed to withhold information from me. I am referenced personally. The ATI file number is A-2022-00489 for anyone who is interested, and I encourage members to read it.

The government's approach to providing information to members appears to be based on defensive communications, and not on providing accurate information to members, which, as you, Mr. Speaker, said in your ruling on February 2, is fundamental and is a central accountability mechanism. That, and as per the 1980 Speaker's Ruling I mentioned above, should constitute a breach of my privilege.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage you to review the ATI response. It shows that there are dozens of federal public servants, likely collectively paid millions of dollars, engaged in an exercise to decide how best to withhold information from me, and then approving it.

● (1605)

However, there is another big problem that this ATI file outlines. The department's flippant views do not stop with me or other members of the House but are aimed at the Speaker's office. Allow me to explain. The Speaker's ruling of February 2, 2023 said:

The right of members to seek information from the government is a fundamental one and it is a central accountability mechanism. Written questions are one of the means members possess to obtain the information that allows them to perform their parliamentary duties.

Written question Q-974 was placed on the Order Paper on November 15, 2022. The government presented an answer on January 30, 2023, within the 45-day limit. The response provided appears in that day's Debates.

The main point of contention raised by the member for Calgary Nose Hill regards the substance and completeness of the government's response. In her view, the response fails to address many of the matters raised in her question.

However, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 529, states, "There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions."

Apparently, officials in the minister's office are well aware of this passage, and I have email communications within the minister's office that suggest they are using this as some sort of loophole to deny answers to a member of Parliament.

In the ATI, the minister's regional adviser for Quebec asks in an email, "What is the jurisprudence on those [types] of Points of Order?" The minister's deputy chief of staff, Kyle Harrietha, responds, "Thanks, heard it after QP and did the inbox search of Q-974. Al-

ready in touch with GHLO. I'm expecting the Speaker to tut tut and then say it is not for him to judge the quality of a response".

Again, we have government staff who are depending on the office of the Speaker to say that the strategy of high-level withholding of information is appropriate to withholding information from me. They are using government resources to withhold information from me as opposed to providing it to me, and that is a breach of my privilege.

Should the Speaker take issue with the government's using this loophole to withhold information from me, it would not be the first time that a Speaker has taken departments to task for their attitude towards Parliament. On November 6, 1997, the Speaker ruled:

...the Chair acknowledges that this is a matter of potential importance since it touches the role of members as legislators, a role which should not be trivialized. It is from this perspective that the actions of the Department of Finance are of some concern....

This dismissive view of the legislative process, repeated often enough, makes a mockery of our parliamentary conventions and practices....

I trust that today's decision at this early stage of the 36th Parliament will not be forgotten by the minister and his officials and that the departments and agencies will be guided by it.

Again, as per my original point of order, the government purposely used, as revealed extensively and embarrassingly in this ATI, a strategy called "high-level limitation language that does not answer the written question" to deliberately withhold information from me.

This ATI file also outlines several other MPs, and folks may want to look at this as there are several members who are mentioned in this ATI file, whose Order Paper questions were also subject to the strategy with a risk analysis based on the Speaker's assessment as to whether or not member are good communicators. I encourage you, Madam Speaker, to look at this part of the ATI file to see just how pervasive this strategy is.

I find it atrocious that Canadian taxpayers are paying dozens of public servants to deliberately withhold information from members of Parliament. I also find it shameful that ministers are allowing this to happen.

However, the bottom line, as per the 1980 Speaker's ruling I cited before, is that this ATI file squarely shows a deliberate attempt to withhold information I requested in an Order Paper question, and I argue that my privilege has been breached. If you, Madam Speaker, find this to be a prima facie question of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motions.

• (1610)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The Chair will take it under advisement and return to the hon. member with an appropriate answer if and when necessary.

The hon. leader of the government in the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 26—AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 26, I move:

That debate be not further adjourned.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[Translation]

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

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, obviously, I feel profoundly disappointed again that we are here facing time allocation on a profoundly substantive change to the way Parliament functions. We have had just a few hours to discuss this. I am planning to speak to this issue later on.

This is an issue that goes back to during the COVID pandemic. The government made its intentions very clear at that time that this is the direction it wanted to go. There are a lot of voices that want to speak on this issue because of the substantive nature of this change, and I cannot quite understand why the government is invoking time allocation on something that would have a profound impact on the way this place functions. Here we go again. I am not surprised that the government House leader has risen on this matter. Does he not understand how substantive this issue is and how many voices he is silencing in this place, the voices of members of Parliament in this place, who are representing millions of people across this country? It is just ridiculous.

• (1615)

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I think the member recognizes well why we have to use time allocation. He can see that the Conservative Party has done everything from faking technical

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problems to raising point of order after point of order to try to disrupt the House from doing its business. In fact, last Friday, an entire day of Parliament was lost as a result of procedural tricks by the Conservatives, and the leader of the official opposition himself has said that they will do everything to block the ability of the House to do its job. Of course, one party that represents one-third of the seats does not have the opportunity or right to stand in the way of every other party from doing its business. That is most certainly not democratic.

The other thing I would point out is that it is the Conservatives' right to make the same point again and again, which is that they are against the utilization of hybrid Parliament, which they have said they would never support under any conditions. They can keep making that same speech again and again, but it is not a restriction of democracy to hear that speech 10, 20, 30 or 40 times. At some point, when they say the same thing, the message is heard. They are against it.

I am sorry, but the House is moving forward with this because it is the right thing to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am at a loss for words to express my frustration with this government, especially its leader, and its methods. The rules of Parliament are being changed without a consensus or even the semblance of one in the House. The government is riding roughshod over the way we do things, in complete violation of the very spirit of the parliamentary system. It is a disgrace to democracy and a disgrace to the House. To add insult to injury, a gag order is being imposed after a few days of debate. I have never seen anything like it.

As everyone knows, I sit on the Standing Committee on Finance. I had the pleasure of working with the committee's chair, former Liberal MP Wayne Easter, for several years. He agrees that attempting to make these changes is preposterous. These are fundamental changes that will have far-reaching implications. Whenever ministers are put on the spot, they can simply duck behind their screen or hide in their basement to avoid pressure from reporters or members of Parliament.

Since this involves changing the way things work, consensus is needed. We need to take the time to debate this motion before adopting it. Right now, the government leader is acting like a bulldozer and is not seeking consensus. He is telling us that he does not care. What is more, he is moving a time allocation motion to limit debate on this motion. I cannot believe what is happening to democracy and to the history of this Parliament. This way of doing things is unprecedented. It is unacceptable. I am truly disappointed.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, context is really important. At the start of the pandemic, when we were in a very difficult situation and it was impossible to work in person, we had to use technology to be able to continue our work in Parliament. At that time, we unanimously passed a motion to operate in a hybrid format.

Government Orders

When health conditions improved, we were able to return to the House to continue our work in person. Over the past three years, we have seen just how effective the system has been. Ministers have continued to be in the House when members on the other side stand up during question period, and this will continue to be the case. The concept of accountability is included in the change proposed today.

However, this motion provides some flexibility. Every party, whether it is the Conservative Party or the Bloc Québécois, uses the hybrid format. Every day, the members use technology to vote. Just a few moments ago, we saw the Bloc using this technology. I find it strange that the Bloc is against this proposal when it makes use of all the options available in the hybrid format, such as electronic voting.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a pretty complex debate and there are substantive arguments on both sides of it. However, it seems like the government has had some challenges in managing its legislative priorities over the course of this year. We are in this final stretch. If this was such a priority, why was it not introduced a bit earlier, which perhaps would have provided for a fullness of discussion and debate and might not have forced us into closure and would have allowed for all of these nuances and democratic principles to be fully fleshed out?

• (1620)

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, as the member knows, this matter was put before the procedure and House affairs committee. That committee did take an enormous amount of time to study the issue, and the member's party was part of those agreeing with the recommendations that were before this House. After that came forward, we worked with all parties, asking their opinions about the work PROC did. Of course, it takes a bit of time to hear from all parties, and now, after that consultation, we have a continuance of what we have done for the last three years.

If we were to take longer than this session and had not adequately used that time in PROC and then the time immediately after PROC to have those discussions, the consequence would be that we would have missed this window and we would have had to reintroduce these provisions in the fall and have the same debate that we have had again and again.

I want to thank the member opposite for their work at PROC and I want to thank the member for the work that they did after PROC to find a position that works. We have listened very carefully to how members are utilizing these provisions, and of course we are often hearing in hallways from every party about how much they love them. We see how they use them, evidently, and the rhetoric does not quite match what they are doing.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by recognizing that we are in the midst of never-ending partisan procedural games right now, so I get why this motion is being introduced, but let us also recognize that this is pretty serious.

We are in the midst of debating the very nature of how our Parliament functions. It is not legislation, so there is not even a chance to propose amendments. It is already a take-it-or-leave-it approach, and on top of that, we are now being limited in our debate. I believe

it was just on Monday night that we began this conversation. I can speak for myself in saying that I am still researching, reading and listening to inform my own vote on this measure.

Therefore, I have this question for the member, whom I respect deeply and who I know is thoughtfully considering how best to move this ahead: If the official opposition were in government and put forward what is being put forward right now, how would he respond?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I would respond in the following way.

The history is important. Let us remember that this system was created, with unanimity, in the depths of the pandemic. All parties agreed to how it would function and how it would work. Then those provisions started to live, and those provisions have lived for the last three years. In fact, the proposal that is on the table now is a continuance of an existing system that the member uses regularly, that I use regularly and that I think every member of this House has used. I see members rail against the utilization of these provisions, and then they turn on their application and vote electronically or they turn on their screen and use it.

After this system was unanimously created and had existed for three years, the procedure and House affairs committee heard from witnesses and did very detailed work, exactly as the member is describing. What came out of it was that it became very clear that two parties were against this under all conditions. The parties were asked numerous times what it would take for them to support it and if there was any flexibility: The answer was “no”. They do not support it in any form and they do not support it in any function.

As a result, we are at the point where continuing the debate means just listening to “no” a thousand times over. That does not make sense. At some point, we have to proceed to implement it, and that is what we are doing today.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the debate that we have been having in the House on this issue. The one issue that I keep hearing from the Bloc members is that we need to have consensus. However, I reflect on the fact that on Monday of this week, there was not a single vote in which fewer than 50% of the Bloc members used their voting app. As a matter of fact, when we voted on Bill C-41, 80% of the Bloc members used their voting app. When we voted on their own motion about climate change, 50% of the Bloc members used it.

Would the House leader not agree that consensus is pretty well established, given the participation in using the application?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is precisely right. If on the one hand members say they are against something and on the other hand 80% of them use it just in a single vote, it is a little hard to believe the rhetoric. We have to step back from that rhetoric and talk about the conversations that we have in hallways in this place. I have conversations with members from all parties who talk about how meaningful it is for them to be there for key moments in their families' lives or how they personally are dealing with incredibly difficult health issues or how someone in their family is, and they are able to be there for them.

Government Orders

This measure provides a bit of flexibility and would change nothing. Our committees continue to work, the House continues to function and of course members from all parties, as the parliamentary secretary rightly pointed out, are using these provisions themselves. That hypocrisy is a little jarring.

• (1625)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am surprised and shocked that the debate on something as fundamental as the way this House operates is now going to be cut off. If we are going to have a hybrid Parliament, we need to come to an agreement on how it is going to operate.

I recall many years ago that Chuck Cadman, a member of Parliament for Surrey, in my area, came here to vote even though he was undergoing cancer treatment. That is how important it was for him. Nowadays we see people voting on the app just because it is more convenient for them. Often when there is a vote right after question period, a whole lot of Liberal members of Parliament dash out of here because they are going to vote on the app.

This is worthy of a full debate, but debate is being cut off right now. I do not think that is appropriate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind members that they cannot refer to the presence or the absence of members in the House.

The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I have a couple of points.

First of all, this has been debated at the start of every parliamentary session. We have had an enormous amount of debate on it. There was an enormous amount of debate that happened at PROC, and the position of the Conservatives was just “no”. I do not know how many times they think we need to hear “no” over three years to know that they are against it and that there is no point in continuing the debate.

The more important point I would make, if we are talking about Chuck Cadman, is that I am not sure if the member opposite listened to Chuck’s wife Dona, who talked about the use of these provisions and their importance. I do not know if the member heard my speech when I talked about watching Arnold Chan, who was dedicated to this House, having to drag himself away from cancer treatment in the last moments of his life to fulfill his obligations to be in this place to vote. That is not a choice any member should have to make.

If members are in a position of losing their lives and are being forced to drag themselves across the country to exercise their vote on behalf of their constituents, that is unacceptable, with all due respect to the member opposite. If a member who is ill and is at the end of their life decides to come to this chamber, that is one thing, but I have to take great umbrage with the idea of not even giving them the choice at the end of their life to fulfill their functions remotely as they receive critical health treatment.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I hear my colleague. I feel he could at least have the intellectual honesty to correctly quote what the Bloc Québécois said. We are facing a

rejection of custom and tradition, and he is acting like it means nothing.

He is taking an exceptional pandemic situation, in which we all participated and co-operated, and setting an absolutely shameful precedent. He is talking about the voting app. He should have consulted us instead of unilaterally doing what he is doing today. I would like him to have this done to him when he is on this side of the House after the next election just to see how he likes it.

If he had consulted with us and read our dissenting report, he would know that we were willing to make concessions on the voting app. There is nothing wrong with that. People may have obligations in their constituency on Fridays or Mondays. Rather than setting up a pairing system, we can vote remotely. It is something worthwhile.

Why does his motion not comply with the report’s sixth recommendation? Why the double standard? He is asking the opposition parties for quorums that he will not need to reach on the government side. It is despicable. Doing it with a closure motion is even more despicable.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, over the past three years, I have had several discussions with the Bloc Québécois. I asked them what changes they were proposing for a hybrid system and for voting. Unfortunately, they made it clear every time that a hybrid system was not acceptable.

This is very odd, because the member opposite uses this system every day. I see this as providing an option. With the support of a majority of members, it would be possible to change the rules and, for example, cancel the hybrid system.

I do wonder what would happen if we did not adopt the hybrid system, however. In the future, this way of doing things will continue to exist for one reason: It provides flexibility for important moments in a member’s life. That is so important that we must continue using this system.

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the procedural aspect is important. I heard my friend from the Bloc raise the concern that the Bloc was not consulted, yet the hon. member suggested that the Bloc was consulted after PROC. Perhaps he could refresh my memory as to when that was tabled and what the nature of the extra consultations was with the parties.

If he is comfortable doing so, could he also provide his recollection as the House leader of what the outcome was, substantively, and what the various parties had as potential criticisms or support for the bill that we are debating here today?

Government Orders

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, it was January 31 that PROC completed its report. Immediately after that, we were able to engage in discussions with the House leader from his party. Then we got the response from his party about, I believe, three or four weeks ago, when they let us know what their final position was and what their proposed changes were. It took a little while for them to get them. I do not criticize them. I know there are a lot of things happening in his party, but we certainly appreciated receiving those.

What I heard from the Bloc Québécois was, “Well, maybe, maybe not; maybe we want to change some things; maybe we don’t.” There was never any specificity. I still do not know what the position of the Bloc is. I heard, “Maybe we’re for the voting application.” That would be great, as they use it. In one recent case, 80% of the Bloc members used it. Some Bloc members have told me that they love the voting app and the ability to speak at a distance, use the screen and participate virtually, while other members do not agree with that, so I do not know what their position is.

That is over the past three years, by the way, which we have come back to again and again.

The Conservatives have been very consistent, I have to say: They are against it in any and all circumstances. They say they want to debate it more, but the only thing they say when they debate it is that they are against it. I do not know how many speeches we have to listen to, year after year after year, as they say “No, we’re against it. We don’t support it.”

We have heard them, but these provisions, which have been in place now for three years, allow the House to continue to do its work and the government to continue to be accountable. These provisions provide a little bit of flexibility, and, by the way, Conservatives and Bloc members use them every single day.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak on the amendments to the Standing Orders, and of course I am in support of them. We have heard in this 30 minutes of debate some of the hypocrisy in the fact that a couple of the opposition parties who are against this are readily using these tools.

My question to the hon. House leader is this. We have moved through a continuum of making changes as this House sees fit, and I know that right now some members are going to ask that committee chairs be in the room physically when they are conducting meetings. Can the hon. House leader talk about the fact that, yes, we are adopting this, but perhaps ease some concern for those who are worried about this, in that we can adjust it as we go forward, as we have done all the way along?

This is a good thing. It provides more tools to Parliament, but with the will of Parliament, we can adjust as necessary.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague.

A number of changes have been recommended, in some instances by all parties. He mentions the change requesting that committee chairs be present. That is a change that was made. There was a request by opposition parties that all questions in question period be answered by the government in person. That change was made,

and we have the opportunity to continue to evaluate how these provisions work.

However, to his point, when members say they are against hybrid sitting and then use it, it is hard to find them credible in that. If we say that a change in the Standing Orders should come from a unanimity of opinion, I think we can look at the past three years, including out of health circumstances, when members had every opportunity to be here. They use it, and it shows that they want it.

If the members from the Conservative Party and the Bloc were serious in their opposition to this, then we would see them here for every single one of the votes; we would see them here in person for every question and every speech, and of course that is not the case. The case is that they are using it, and in the hallways they are saying, “This is great; this is life-changing. There was an important event; something happened in my family; I had to be there for my child; I had to be there for my spouse; I was able to do it, because of hybrid; it changed everything for me; I am so glad it is there.”

Then, they walk in the chamber and say they are against it and it is wrong and an affront, and how terrible it is. It stretches believability.

● (1635)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would encourage the House leader to go listen to my speech from Monday night on this, because I do not accept his argument that, just because certain members of opposition parties have used hybrid, it is somehow hypocritical of us.

It is the rules. It is like the analogy I used on Monday night. It is like playing hockey 100 years ago, when they could not pass the puck forward. It is like we are going to play with the same rules that were in place 100 years ago, although the rules have changed. We have to use the rules that are present, and it was decided that hybrid would be in place, but I just want to get to two quick points.

One is that the Conservative Party was in agreement, with even the Bloc on board, if a sunset clause was put in. We could have gotten to unanimity. Hybrid would have remained here for the remainder of this Parliament and into one year of the next Parliament, and then whatever government would have to come back and approve of keeping it in place.

My second thing, and I know the House leader has been around a heck of a lot longer than me, is that this place is partisan and divisive enough. The best way we can get things done in this chamber, especially for those of us in opposition, happens when we can talk face-to-face to ministers and parliamentary secretaries who ultimately have the privilege to be in government.

Government Orders

Would he agree, even as another step forward, to not just having the ministers and the parliamentary secretaries present for question period, but that the only way they should be allowed to participate in the House in debate is to be here in person, because it is such a privilege to be in government?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I will start with the hockey analogy, because I think it is an apt one. Members can imagine a circumstance where there was a change, where there was an option to play hockey outdoors or play hockey indoors, either option was available, and someone chose every single day to play hockey indoors, but then came and said that playing hockey indoors is evil, awful and terrible. It is the worst thing to do, yet they keep showing up to the indoor arena. That is the actual analogy here.

There is an option. If one does not want to use hybrid, they do not have to use hybrid. They can show up and vote in person, and they can participate in person every single day, but that is not the choice the Conservatives make. The choice they make is to use the virtual functions when they do not have to. That is the point I am making.

The consensus is found in the utilization of all of it.

I certainly hope it is not the case, but if there is Conservative government one day, and that government decides with another party to get rid of these provisions, then it can. However, I am saying there are so many circumstances, such as what we talked about with Chuck Cadman. We talked about what his wife, Dona Cadman, said. We can talk about my good friend, Arnold Chan, one of the closest people in my life, whom I had to watch drag himself into this chamber with no option other than to be here, sick. We could talk about Mauril Bélanger. The list could go on and on. I have not even heard from the members how they would accommodate at least that.

In the reverse, what we have seen is that when the opposition has had issues, like saying ministers should be present in question period, we agreed. When they said chairs of committees must be present for accountability and in order for committees to function and work, we said “yes”. When they made actual constructive suggestions, we listened to them, and we will continue to listen to them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am listening to what the government House leader is saying, and it is mind-boggling in its intellectual dishonesty. If he keeps talking about electronic voting and all the little things in the reform of the Standing Orders, it is for an obvious reason: He is embarrassed to talk about the way he works.

We have before us a government that shows contempt for Parliament, for parliamentarians and for the work of the committee, as we saw with China. It also shows contempt for the electoral system. Today, the government shows contempt for tradition. Changing the Standing Orders without unanimous agreement happened once, and for a minor rule, under Pierre Elliott Trudeau, one of the prime ministers with the lowest moral standards in Canadian history.

Today, what the Liberals are telling us is that we did not think fast enough for him and that he would have liked an answer sooner.

He decided to trample on the traditions of this Parliament. After listening to all the arguments, the made-up facts and the leader's dishonesty, I have no questions for him, and I invite him, in the time remaining, to continue to spout nonsense.

• (1640)

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, speaking of honesty, what I find dishonest is members using all the options available with the hybrid system and then saying it is a terrible system that they hate. They use the system every day.

We debated this for three years. We are free to use the hybrid Parliament every day. I love democracy here in Canada. I am so proud to say that, each day, I make sure that our democracy is as open as possible. When we have a system that provides a bit of flexibility, it helps more people become MPs. The hybrid system allows people to have a personal life while also fulfilling their responsibilities here in the House.

The member opposite knows full well that being a member of Parliament is very hard work and that the hybrid Parliament gives us a little room for a personal life.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, the report from the procedure and House affairs committee is dated January of this year. The motion we are discussing now that is under closure I believe we began a few days ago.

What happened over those months? Why did we not start this conversation earlier when that report was received from committee, so all of February, March and April? Why is this conversation being started so late and, as result, we are at the place we are now?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, remember, these provisions have been in place exactly as they are for three years, and so we have had an opportunity to use these. At the beginning of every session of Parliament, we had a protracted debate for, in some cases, weeks about the use of the applications. We have had an opportunity House leader to House leader to have extensive conversations.

As I said earlier, once the report from PROC was completed at the end of January, it was an opportunity to digest two and a half years of information and have conversations about how we could move forward. It became clear that one of the parties, the Conservatives, said that under no circumstances would they ever accept this. The only way it could go forward, despite the fact they were using it every day, was for us to proceed in this fashion.

I tried to provide as much time as possible to find that bridge, to find some way to work together, to find some way to get to unanimity. Unfortunately, working with the Bloc and working with the Conservatives it became clear such consensus would never be possible. It would not only not be possible between January 31 and now, it would not be possible between January 31 and, if one listens to the Conservatives, the end of time. However, they still want to use these provisions, and that is the point—

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forth with the question on the motion now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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.

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 380*)

YEAS

Members

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

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| Julian | Kayabaga |
| Kelloway | Khalid |
| Khera | Koutrakis |
| Kusmierczyk | Kwan |
| Lalonde | Lambropoulos |
| Lametti | Lamoureux |
| Lapointe | Lattanzio |
| Lauzon | LeBlanc |
| Lebouthillier | Lightbound |
| Long | Longfield |
| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) | MacAulay (Cardigan) |
| MacDonald (Malpeque) | MacKinnon (Gatineau) |
| Maloney | Martinez Ferrada |
| Masse | May (Cambridge) |
| McDonald (Avalon) | McGuinty |
| McKay | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McLeod | McPherson |
| Mendicino | Miao |
| Miller | Morrissey |
| Murray | Naqvi |
| Ng | Noormohamed |
| O'Connell | Oliphant |
| O'Regan | Petitpas Taylor |
| Powlowski | Qualtrough |
| Robillard | Rodriguez |
| Rogers | Romanado |
| Sahota | Sajjan |
| Saks | Samson |
| Sarai | Scarpaleggia |
| Schiefke | Serré |
| Sgro | Shanahan |
| Sheehan | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Singh |
| Sorbara | Sousa |
| St-Onge | Sudds |
| Tassi | Taylor Roy |
| Thompson | Trudeau |
| Turnbull | Valdez |
| Van Bynen | van Koeverden |
| Vandal | Vandenbeld |
| Virani | Weiler |
| Yip | Zahid |
| Zarrillo | Zuberi— 168 |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Berthold | Bérubé |
| Bezan | Blanchet |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Block |
| Bragdon | Brassard |
| Brunelle-Duceppe | Calkins |
| Caputo | Carrie |
| Chambers | Champoux |
| Chong | Cooper |
| Dalton | Dancho |
| Davidson | DeBellefeuille |
| Deltell | d'Entremont |
| Desbiens | Desilets |
| Doherty | Dowdall |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Ellis | Epp |
| Falk (Provencher) | Fast |
| Ferreri | Fortin |
| Gallant | Garon |
| Gaudreau | Généreux |
| Gill | Gladau |
| Godin | Goodridge |

Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Patzer
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Small
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Vecchio
Vien
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Larouche
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrice
Motz
Nater
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Rays
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
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Vignola
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 140

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Bibeau
Savard-Tremblay— 4

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

BILL S-8—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading stage of 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.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to

Private Members' Business

allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the respective stages of the said bill.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[English]

HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT

The House resumed from May 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-275, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act (biosecurity on farms) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always great to rise to speak in this most honourable of House.

I would like to first offer thanks to the member for Foothills for his work with regard to the agricultural sector in Canada. I know the hon. member is a champion for the agricultural sector in the area he represents. We all come here championing our causes and issues, and I would like to speak to the hon. member's private member's bill this evening.

The government welcomes the opportunity to speak to the importance of supporting Canadian farmers. Now, more than ever, farmers face increasing hardships. These range from sustained supply chain issues to the rising costs of doing business.

Moreover, the effects of climate change and the risk of harmful and deadly animal diseases are only compounding these difficulties. It feels like farmers cannot catch a break. It is crucial that we provide these hard-working Canadians and their families with the tools they need to do their jobs safely so that they can be competitive and ensure the safety of their animals or livestock.

I would like to take a few minutes to speak to importance of the agri-food system in Canada and the actions that our government is taking to support Canadian farmers across the country.

The agriculture and agri-food system is a key pillar of Canada's economy. In 2021, it employed 2.1 million people in Canada, representing one out of every nine jobs. In the same year, Canada exported nearly \$82.2 billion in agriculture and food products, making us one of the top 10 exporters of agri-food and seafood in the world, something of which we can be quite proud.

It is safe to say that agriculture touches every Canadian. In fact, the agriculture sector is very broad and encompasses federal, provincial and territorial governments, industry partners and farmers. Each of these groups plays a unique and indispensable role to keep Canadian livestock safe and healthy.

I can proudly say that the Government of Canada takes its role seriously in supporting Canadian farmers and in supporting the Canadian agri-food sector. We have a long record of championing initiatives that protect and grow our agriculture and agri-food sector.

Private Members' Business

Just recently, budget 2023 announced a number of initiatives to respond to the emerging needs of the Canadian agriculture industry. These included \$333 million to establish a dairy innovation and investment fund to increase revenues for dairy farmers; \$34 million to support farmers for diversifying away from certain fertilizers; and \$13 million to increase the interest-free limit of loans under the advance payments program to provide additional cash flow to farmers in need.

Budget 2023 also announced \$57.5 million over five years to establish a vaccine bank for foot and mouth disease so that farmers can maintain market access for their livestock and protect their livelihood in the event of an outbreak.

In addition, the government has a history of working closely with provinces and territories to support economic growth for the agriculture and agri-food sector.

For example, the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership was launched on April 1. The renewal of this important five-year policy framework will benefit farmers and processors from across all of Canada. The sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership has set aside \$3.5 billion, up 25% from the previous 2018 to 2023 agreement, to strengthen the competitiveness, innovation and resiliency of the agriculture sector.

This partnership agreement recognizes what we already know, that farming is a difficult job. That is why the government is also committed to supporting the mental health of Canadians, including farmers and their families. For instance, under the Canadian agricultural partnership, it provided \$7 million for two multi-year mental health initiatives to support farmers.

In addition, the government funds the Wellness Together Canada portal. This portal operates 24 hours a day and seven days a week. It provides free, credible information to individuals to help address their mental health and substance use issues. The Wellness Together Canada portal also provides information and self-assessment tools, peer support networks and access to psychologists and other professionals.

This government recognizes that meaningful support to farmers must recognize both economic and psychological hardships.

I understand that Bill C-275 tries to protect farmers by minimizing risks to on-farm biosecurity. Let me be clear that the government takes these risks seriously. Disease outbreaks can have major impacts on animal welfare and food supply, and result in economic losses. We also know that farmers are also focused on biosecurity as they too care about the health and well-being of their animals.

• (1735)

It is important to note that the health of animals and biosecurity measures are a shared responsibility among the federal government, the provinces and territories, industry associations and farmers.

Recognizing the importance of biosecurity in preventing the spread of animal disease, the Government of Canada has championed efforts and has provided funding to strengthen on-farm biosecurity. For instance, federal funds helped support the development of 14 commodity-specific national biosecurity standards. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, industry, academic institutions, and

provinces and territories developed these voluntary national biosecurity standards, protocols and strategies to protect animals from disease.

Additionally, through the federal AgriAssurance program and its predecessors, the government has provided industry associations with funding to develop on-farm assurance programs that include biosecurity protocols. Several of these associations, such as the Dairy Farmers of Canada and the Chicken Farmers of Canada, have on-farm programs that include biosecurity requirements.

In addition, under the Canadian agricultural partnership, federal, provincial and territorial governments have advanced a number of cost-shared investments that support biosecurity. Some recent examples include funding of up to \$1.5 million for the poultry biosecurity preparedness initiative in Ontario, and up to \$45.3 million to fund efforts that enhance Canada's African swine fever response, including actions to mitigate risks to biosecurity.

These examples all highlight the important work and investment that farmers, industry associations, provinces and territories, and the Government of Canada have all made toward on-farm biosecurity. There is a collective recognition that on-farm biosecurity is an important measure to safeguard animal health and to minimize the risk of animal disease outbreaks in order to protect the livelihood of Canada's agri-food producers. To really help farmers, we should be championing the use of these on-farm biosecurity standards and protocols and encouraging their use.

In conclusion, the government recognizes the hard work, day in and day out, of Canadian farmers, their families and agriculture producers along the complete agricultural continuum, and it is responding to the sector's needs. The government is interested in supporting legislation that builds on the investments that various partners, including farmers themselves, have already made to improve animal health on farms.

We look forward to studying Bill C-275 at committee and discussing ways that it can be amended to recognize and build on the great work farmers, their families, the communities involved and others are doing to support biosecurity measures on farm.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are in the House this evening to study Bill C-275, which amends the Health of Animals Act. This bill was introduced by the Conservative member for Foothills, in Alberta, and is now in the House at second reading.

Briefly, Bill C-275 proposes to “make it an offence to enter, without lawful authority or excuse, a place in which animals are kept if doing so could result in [their] exposure...to a disease or toxic substance that is capable of...contaminating them.” So it amends the Health of Animals Act, and it is under that amended act that penalties will be applied.

The Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-275, subject to a thorough study in committee. We are in favour of it because it is an important bill and subject. Fundamentally, it is about trespassing. These are criminal acts rooted in extremism. Of course, extremism has never solved anything.

I would like to clarify a few things about this bill before I move on.

First, it is not an indictment of veganism, but an indictment of extremist activism and certain antispeciesists.

Second, this is not about freedom of speech. People absolutely have the right to protest and denounce practices they do not agree with. However, we cannot condone that being done through illegal acts that could also harm both farmers and animals. Obviously, one's personal freedom ends where another's begins.

Third, this bill does not condone animal abuse. We all have a personal and collective responsibility to prevent animal suffering. Once again, that does not mean we are exempt from the law or our duty to go through the designated authorities. In Quebec, the ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food, or MAPAQ, is responsible for this.

Fourth, it is about making people aware that there are biosecurity standards to be respected on farms in order to ensure the safety of animals and livestock.

What is biosafety? MAPAQ defines it as the set of tools, measures and procedures for preventing and addressing the dangers associated with the transmission of pathogens through various pathways for contamination. Mad cow disease, H1N1 and H5N1 influenza, circovirus, scrapie and wasting disease of cervids are all examples of transmitted diseases with serious consequences for the entire agri-food complex, public health and the balance of biodiversity. When humans come into contact with animals or their habitat without taking the appropriate precautions to avoid contamination, the risk of disease increases tenfold. For a breeder, an outbreak can obviously lead to serious financial losses. In the case of a spread outside the farm, the consequences can be devastating.

It is interesting to learn that this bill was drafted partly in response to a specific event that occurred on December 7, 2019, when 13 vegan and antispeciesist activists broke into a hog farm in Saint-Hyacinthe. The farm was named Les Porgreg. They were there to protest the breeding of animals for human consumption. They entered the hog barn, filmed and demonstrated for almost seven hours in front of the pig pens in an attempt to expose the pigs' quality of life.

Several Sûreté du Québec officers had to enter the building to remove them. As a result, some 30 people who should not have been there contaminated the premises.

Private Members' Business

According to the owners, the incident caused a rotavirus outbreak, which considerably increased the maternal mortality rate of the herd.

• (1740)

Moreover, the criminals were fully aware of what they were doing, and what they were doing was completely illegal.

Events like those in Saint-Hyacinthe are unfortunately not isolated. What is interesting in this particular case is that it was discovered that MAPAQ followed up a year later. That helped move the issue forward and raise public awareness of the situation. The MAPAQ inspector noted that there were too many animals in certain pens at the Les Porgreg pig farm. The pens were soiled with manure, lacked proper ventilation, contained too many flies and so on. The good news is that on March 16, 2020, the farm followed the inspector's recommendations to the letter. Yes, the farm had committed a number of violations, but is this type of stunt allowed, or should it be allowed? The answer is, quite clearly, it absolutely should not.

My brother Alain is a farmer and has been a goat farmer for a number of years. I can say that it is an extremely—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind members that the business of the House is continuing. There are a lot of conversations going on on both sides, which is really rude. I would ask members to please take their conversations out.

The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, I was saying that my very dear brother Alain is a farmer and raised goats. I can say that it is an incredibly difficult job that requires working seven days a week, 365 days a year. There is no vacation.

Farmers and ranchers use equipment that costs a fortune. They have to tighten their belts. It is an extremely demanding job.

I believe that ranchers and farmers have been forgotten by today's society. Society depends on them, but does not recognize the true value of everything they do for us.

The Bloc Québécois will obviously vote in favour of this bill.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate today to talk about this bill and its objective of trying to maintain biosecurity on farms. As the member who was just speaking was talking about, we owe a lot to farmers. They do a lot of hard work. Farming can also be challenging financially, particularly in bad years; even in good years, there is a lot of upfront investment that folks need to make in order to be able to have a successful farm. When disease strikes the livestock population, it can be devastating for farmers, financially and otherwise. It stands to reason that there is a real concern about how to protect the biosecurity of farms.

This is a bill we saw in the last Parliament as well. It went to committee. Ultimately, it did not pass. I do not know if it got through the House, but because of an early and untimely election call, it certainly did not get through Parliament. Therefore, here we are debating the same issue again.

It is a legitimate goal to want to protect livestock operations from bacteria and other biological threats that would create problems in the livestock population, and this bill talks about that. Any time one is talking about food, many Canadians are going to have an interest. People want to know where their food comes from and how it is produced.

There are folks who have expressed concern about this bill being more about trying to keep people off farms for the purpose of not talking about how things are produced, but it seems to me that there ought to be a balance that can be struck between these two legitimate concerns. I think, in the last Parliament, in a similar bill, some of that work was being done at committee; there had been some progress made on striking the right balance.

I am optimistic that the right balance can be struck again. This is why it is important for this bill to go to committee, so that work can continue. As I said, this work is not starting from nothing. There are many members who sit around the committee table in this Parliament who were there in the last Parliament, just as my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford was our critic on that bill in the last Parliament and is now again. I am optimistic that the work can be undertaken in a good way and that they are not starting from scratch, even though it may seem like that on paper, here in this Parliament.

I am pleased to rise to put some of those thoughts on the record and express my support once again for this bill going to committee. There, committee members can hear from folks in civil society, both those with experience running farming operations and others who are concerned about some of the, perhaps, unintended consequences of this legislation. I look forward to the conclusions of the committee after it has had an opportunity to do its work.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today to support the bill of my friend from Foothills, Bill C-275, an act to amend the Health of Animals Act, relating to biosecurity on farms.

I just listened to my friend from the NDP talk about some of the things this act might do, but I would like to read into the record some of the comments by my friend from Foothills in response to

the bill. He said that he wanted to make clear what this bill does not do: It does not limit an individual's right to protest on public property. I just want to make sure that we have an understanding of what this bill is meant to do and what it will not do even if some people have some concerns. It will not prevent whistle-blowers, and it will not prevent people from protesting on public property.

What my friend from Foothills is trying to do is to ensure that animals are secure on private property, on farms. We know that there is a lot going on right now in the agriculture industry, and we have very real concerns about African swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease. There are a lot of diseases that can be contracted, and transferred from farm to farm, that have really devastating effects on the animals on a farm. I just want to make that very clear from the get-go.

This bill is really close to my heart. I was born and raised on a dairy and beef farm in southwest Saskatchewan. That is where my roots are, and that is where I try to get back home to as much as possible. I think some people who, like my NDP friend would say, are concerned about the protesting aspect of animals being on farms, do not really know how to be around animals as much as actual farmers do.

I have to put on the record that people who are raising animals take amazing care of the animals. When I was growing up on the dairy farm, we showed cattle all over North America. We were at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and the Madison World Dairy Expo. Those animals were our livelihood on our farm. I remember my dad going out to the barn every night to make sure all the animals were okay, checking to see if a calf was coming and just ensuring the animals were safe and had clean bedding, making sure they were taken care of, making sure there was feed in the alleyways. There were exciting times on the farm.

What I would like to portray this evening, in talking about this bill, is what great care our agriculture producers, our farmers, take with their animals. That is what helps them to provide for their families. As a young boy, I learned this on our farm by watching my dad and my uncle look after—

• (1750)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saint-Jean is reporting a problem with the interpretation.

It seems to be working now. The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan may continue his speech.

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I was saying that, as a young boy growing up on a farm, I watched the care that my dad and uncle took with the animals. I wanted to portray that and make sure people realize that our producers are second to none in the world in ensuring the security and safety of animals on their farms. That is why this bill is so important.

There have been cases in B.C. and Alberta where people did not have the knowledge of how animals should be treated or of the possibility of spreading diseases from farm to farm by protesting, and I want to portray what kind of impact that has on family farms. It goes from distraught animals and the diseases that could be carried to farms to the mental health of the farmers who look after those animals. That is what it comes down to.

Farmers' livelihoods depend on the safety of these animals. There is nothing more important to them than making sure the animals are secure. When people go to farms to protest, they have to realize the unintended consequence of their actions, and that is transferring diseases from farm to farm. Even if there are no diseases, unknown people on farms can cause animals to stampede, to trample each other and to get really upset. Being distraught can result in a lot of stress on animals. There are examples where they just drop dead; that has happened.

I am glad to hear that my Liberal, NDP and Bloc colleagues will support this bill going forward. In the last Parliament, we did not quite get to the finish line, which is a shame. There was an election call that was probably unnecessary. It was really a \$600-million cabinet shuffle. I want to ensure that people realize the intention of Bill C-275. As I said in my earlier comments, peaceful protests on public property would still be allowed. There would also still be opportunities for whistle-blowers to report wrongdoing on farms, but animals on farms need to be taken care of.

Saskatchewan is an agricultural community, and agriculture is still the backbone of the province and drives its economy. I cannot be more clear in saying to people that our producers take amazing care of their animals, whether they are producing beef, dairy, pork or chicken. They have the best of intentions for their animals.

The scary thing is that people, while possibly well intentioned, do not realize how quickly diseases can spread. That is really at the heart of this bill. African swine fever could devastate our hog industry in this country, putting billions of dollars at risk. An outbreak of avian flu is devastating to our producers. People should think of the impact this would have on the mental health of these amazing producers if a flock of birds were wiped out because someone trespassed on private property. This is devastating not only to the community but also to the chicken and poultry community as a whole. It is the same with the African swine fever.

We have seen it in other countries, such as the United States. We have seen these outbreaks and how much they affect these industries. Right now, our agriculture industry is trying to work with a government that continues to tie one hand behind its back, whether it be with carbon tax 1 or carbon tax 2. The industry is trying to make the best of a bad situation.

● (1755)

This bill gives the agriculture producers a leg up, the opportunity to ensure their farms and private properties are safe and secure. That is something we really need to take into consideration moving forward. In fact, we have all-party support on this non-partisan issue. Ensuring that agriculture producers have the opportunity to have security on their own farms is the reason we need to get this bill to the finish line.

Private Members' Business

I am very excited that my colleague from Foothills brought this forward. It is a strongly worded bill. He did take pains to ensure he talked to all parties to bring forward a bill that everyone could vote in favour of. It is very important to work along non-partisan lines, and we are able to see that from the support this bill has had in the House of Commons. That is how this place should work, in a non-partisan way.

Hopefully, once it is passed in the House of Commons, the Senate will move quickly to pass it as well. It will help our agriculture producers across the country ensure that they, their animals and their families are safe and secure on their own private properties, so they can do the best possible job in raising the amazing world-class livestock we have in this country.

* * *

COMMITTEE TRAVEL

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, in relation to its study of threat analysis affecting Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces' operational readiness to meet those threats, seven members of the Standing Committee on National Defence be authorized to travel to Tallinn, Estonia; Riga, Latvia; Wrocław, Poland; Warsaw, Poland; and London, United Kingdom, in the Summer or Fall of 2023, during an adjournment period, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

● (1800)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. deputy House leader moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

[*Translation*]

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

Private Members' Business

[English]

HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-275, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act (biosecurity on farms), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to enter into debate tonight. I certainly appreciate the speech given by my friend and colleague the member for Regina—Lewvan. It touched upon a lot of what I believe are the important subjects and contents related to Bill C-275.

If I could, I would like to start with a quote. This quote is from somebody I know, and a number of people in this place know this individual as well. I happen to know him really well, as he is my father, and this is a quote that he shares with me on a fairly regular basis. It is related to farming, which is very close to my family's heart. He says, "We owe our entire existence to a few inches of topsoil and some timely rains."

The reason I bring that up in the context of this debate is that farming is a unique occupation. It is something to which I subject myself, year after year, generation after generation, and I am proud to be the fifth generation that is farming in the dust in Alberta's special areas. We subject ourselves to so many factors that are outside of our control, such as the weather, and that has become a significant topic of conversation, especially in light of some of the wildfires that have impacted many communities across the country.

We are subject to market conditions. On a small farm or a large farm, in the context of the larger global situation, a farmer is a price-taker. We do not have any control over how much we sell our products for. We also do not have control over how much the products cost, in inputs, to put in the ground.

When it comes to the larger context, the reason I wanted to start with that quote is that it is important for people in this place to understand how there are so few factors within a government's or any individual's control when it comes to a farm operation.

I know that, when it comes to health and the importance of the ethics of animal management, there has been some debate about where agriculture and Canada's ag industry fit into that, but let me make something very clear: We can be proud of our ag industry. We can be proud of the record of our farmers, our ranchers, our chicken farmers, our turkey farmers and our pig farmers. Canada has an incredible reputation, one that we can and should be proud of, because we have demonstrated not only our ability to produce food to feed the world, but also how we can do so in a manner that is good for the environment and done ethically. It is truly the gold standard on the planet. That is something we should all be very proud of in this place.

One of those factors within our control is something that this bill touches on. I appreciate the shadow minister of agriculture from the Conservative side, somebody who knows a lot about agriculture, understands the dynamics of what I am talking about and cares about our farmers, ranchers and producers from across the country. Whether they are on potato farms on P.E.I., dairies on Vancouver

Island or anywhere in between, there is a care that the shadow minister and Conservatives have for those in this sector.

Specifically, one of the areas within our control has to do with what is known as biosecurity. Many people do not realise that, when there is a report on television of activists showing up at a turkey farm, there is far more than that 30-second clip on the news. What may have happened, and what this may have led up to, is that those activists, probably inadvertently, although one can never be quite sure, may have brought in a disease that could impact an entire flock. They could have gone to a ranch and brought in a disease that could have an impact on an entire herd.

There is a number of diseases that are widespread across the world right now. African swine fever is one of them, and avian flu is another, and when I talk to any producer of animals that could be affected by those things, there is an amount of stress when it comes to managing those things, factors that are largely out of the control of a producer.

However, we have a chance here with Bill C-275 to make sure that, within the bit within our control, we can manage and navigate it, so there is not an incident where a disease is brought into a producer's operation that could have devastating effects on an entire industry, let alone on what is usually a farmer's small business.

● (1805)

I talked about the pride that we can have in our national ag industry. I can tell members of the pride so many producers across our country have, like those who raise turkeys. One of my constituents is proud of the turkeys he raises. There are broilers, chickens, that they are incredibly proud of, and dairies, with the milk they produce.

I am proud to be from an area that I affectionately refer to as "cowboy country". There are many areas of east central Alberta where the only thing someone can do on the land is ranch. We have some incredible ranchers who showcase the best of that industry. An activist, well-intentioned or not, showing up to an operation could have a devastating effect, which could result in an entire herd or flock having to be culled.

This bill simply takes heed from some of the work that provinces have done related to biosecurity and adds some penalties and additional teeth to ensure that it is not stopping activism and it is not stopping whistle-blowers. That is not what this is about, but it ensures that there are appropriate safeguards in place so we do not have the devastating consequences of activism gone wrong.

There are some activists across the way. I know our Minister of Environment is probably one of the only members of the House who has been to prison, and he went because he was an illegal activist. I know the Liberals understand a bit about what activism is about.

We are talking about making sure that the livelihood and welfare of farmers, and the welfare of the animals, are protected. This is a very straightforward way to do that.

Private Members' Business

Something else this bill would do that I think is so very important is that it talks about mental health. Mental health is a significant issue across our nation. In the industry we are talking about, agriculture, as I mentioned, there is so much that those in the ag industry deal with that is so out of their control.

The bill proposes a small adjustment to the Farm Credit Canada Act to include mental health as part of its mandate. What is significant about this is Farm Credit Canada is a lending institution, a Crown corporation lending institution. It would have, if the bill passes, the ability to include mental health resources as part of its core mandate.

I want to give kudos to Farm Credit. This is already part of what it does. If someone googles “farming mental health”, Farm Credit Canada is one of the sites that comes up. It has some good resources and a checklist.

Farming can be incredibly stressful. It might be around calving time when, for a rancher, the hours of sleep are short, or when seeding a harvest for a farmer, or any of the other times of the year that can have undue stress. They all have a significant impact on a farmer. To be sure, we need to do everything we can to promote mental health in an industry that is so vitally important for our country. Again, it cannot be understated how important this sector is.

Parliament needs to recognize there needs to be teeth when it comes to ensuring that we do not put the livelihood of a herd or a flock at risk. We need to ensure that there are protections for those farmers who work diligently each and every day, while striking that right balance to ensure that it does not stifle freedom of speech or anything like that. Further, we have to acknowledge the necessity of mental health as part of the conversation.

I would point to a number of great examples, such as Facebook pages by farmers, ranchers and others involved in the ag industry who have taken the cause upon themselves to ensure they are promoting mental health in the sector. It is incredible work, which I would love to be able to talk more about.

This is a piece of legislation coming before the House that strikes the right balance and protects what is one of the most significant industries, certainly in my constituency, and truly for any person in this country who eats. It is one of the most significant industries we have. We need to be taking those steps to ensure that we can provide that protection when so many factors are out of our control. This is a simple step that can be taken to not only promote mental health, but also ensure biosecurity on farms. It is worthy of everyone's support.

● (1810)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it truly is an honour to once again rise today as the representative of the people of North Okanagan—Shuswap to speak to Bill C-275, put forward by my hon. colleague from Foothills.

Bill C-275 would amend the Health of Animals Act to “make it an offence to enter, without lawful authority or excuse, a place in which animals are kept if doing so could result in the exposure of the animals to a disease or toxic substance that is capable of affecting or contaminating them.” This is an important bill for farmers.

I come from a community in North Okanagan—Shuswap where we grow just about anything that can be grown in Canada. We also have some incredible ranchers, chicken farmers, hog farmers and dairy farmers who truly care about their animals. I have toured their farms and seen the care they put into making sure their animals are healthy, safe and secure. However, I have also heard about farmers finding foreign objects in their grain auger, such as a bolt that should have been nowhere near the grain auger system and could have caused damage to the auger, basically crippling the ability to feed the chickens that were on the farm. That is just one example of what farmers believe to be trespassing and attacks on their farms.

Earlier this year, I had the honour of hosting the shadow minister for agriculture in my riding. We did a round table with farmers and members of the agriculture sector. One of the things we heard from those farmers, who were quite open, is something that had not been evident before: their concern for their mental health and their family's mental health.

There are so many stresses placed on our farmers these days. Many of them are carrying mortgages or farm loans to carry on their operations. Those stresses, along with being responsible for supporting their family, meeting deadlines and paying bills, just add to the mental health stress put on these farmers. Also, the added stress of not knowing who might come onto their farms and what they might be doing in the dark of night or at any time not only affects them and their families, but also affects their livelihoods and the animals they care so much about. This added stress was one of the pieces they raised with us about their mental health situation, because they are under so much stress.

These farmers really pay attention to their animals. They know when the animals are stressed, they know when the animals are comfortable and they know when things are not right. It is interesting how birds can be very sensitive to that, and I have experienced it while touring a chicken farm. When I entered the barn, the farmer actually instructed me to move slowly and cautiously so as not to alarm the birds, because it would throw them off their laying cycle and so on.

Private Members' Business

This reminded me that, a number of years ago, my sister and brother-in-law started an ostrich farm. They were raising ostriches and set up a barn for the hatchlings to grow in. My brother-in-law was doing most of the interaction, with feeding, checking up on the birds and so on. He could walk into that barn at any time dressed any way he chose and the birds were calm and relaxed and would carry on as if nothing was going on. However, if my sister entered that barn, it did not matter whether she put on his clothing, his coveralls or his hat, doing everything to disguise herself as him. There was something that those birds knew instantly, and it would send them basically into a state of stress and they would be running around. Ostriches are very susceptible to leg problems, such as knee joint problems, in their very young stages, so they had to be careful about who went into the barn and when.

• (1815)

The same thing can happen in many situations. We know that dairy farmers for years have played music on the radio. It has a calming effect on the animals in the barn. Having strangers come onto a farm for nefarious reasons or to ignore the biosecurity measures that have been put in place is something that needs to be addressed in legislation and law.

There is so much at stake with farmers across this country feeding not just Canadians but people around the world with the food they produce: the grain, the beef and the chicken products. So many different products feed not just Canadians but people around the world. We need to be certain that those products and that supply chain are stable. I believe this bill would go a long way toward making sure there is no disruption in that process.

I mentioned biosecurity. When we visit a dairy farm or a chicken farm, we are often expected to change our footwear or to walk through a type of wet bath for our footwear so that any toxins or biohazards on the footwear are cleaned off by the product in there. People going in without authorization would not be doing that. They could put that entire farm and neighbouring farms at risk if they are not there for the right reasons with the right authorizations.

As I mentioned, we have heard of farmers who have found potential damage to their equipment. We have had, in my hometown of Salmon Arm, protesters trying to protest trucks coming into a hog abattoir and blocking the processing of food for Canadians. I do not believe this bill would cover that aspect, but it sends the message that our food production is so important here in Canada that we need to take every step we can to make sure we secure it and keep it safe. I do not think that people who have not been exposed to farm life can understand that.

I think I mentioned that I grew up on a dairy farm. I spent my formative years there learning about taking care of animals. They had to be fed every day. They had to have water every day. They had to have a place of shelter every day. It was not something I could do part time and then just leave until I felt like coming back again. There was responsibility with that, and that responsibility is something that farm life has instilled in so many young people across our country today. However, it is not often understood by people who have not been exposed to farm life.

I hope that many people will listen to the speeches that have gone on about this bill, Bill C-275, which is from my colleague

from Foothills. What is such an important piece for people to understand is that farmers, almost 100% of them, want to take care of their livestock. There are the odd bad apples out there and they get found out, but the vast majority of farmers care so much about their livestock that they would put their own health and their own mental health at risk to make sure those animals are fed, to make sure they get water and to make sure they are safe from any threat. This bill would go a long way toward reducing at least one threat to the animals and to the farmers' livelihoods and would improve their mental health, as they would not have to worry quite so much about the possibility of someone coming onto their farm without authorization.

I want to thank my fellow colleague, the member for Foothills, for putting this bill forward. It is an excellent bill and I look forward to supporting it.

• (1820)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Foothills for bringing this bill forward again. He brought it forward in a previous Parliament, and I believe I had the chance to jointly second it then. Unfortunately, I missed the opportunity to speak to it, so I appreciate the opportunity to get a short intervention in to highlight the importance of this bill.

Some of the previous speakers have already highlighted one of the key aspects of this bill: Not only is it about biosecurity and ensuring our food supply and food chains are protected, but it is about education. It is about letting Canadians know that in Canada, we have some of the best farmers and people in the food industry and agricultural sector, who really take care of their animals and the food they are raising. Canadians do not have anything to be worried about. This bill does a great job of providing that security, reassurance and education.

I want to share a bit of my own history, although I am maybe not as experienced as some of the members here in the House. I grew up on a farm. I raised 700 ducks, a couple of hundred chickens, a couple of hundred turkeys and 50 geese every year in the summers. It was free range, pretty loosey-goosey. It was not what one would call a mass production facility by any stretch. We handled everything, raising them from day-olds right through to butchering time. The good thing about being the eldest of five boys is I did all the chores to grow them, but come butchering time, I let my brothers do the butchering and the plucking.

Private Members' Business

I grew up there, and after high school I joined the military. I was on the road and not at the local farms near as much as I was when growing up and working. I was shocked when I got home and made the transition into politics and went out to visit to the farmers in my area. I am privileged to represent the riding with the most beef production per capita in eastern Canada. We have dairy farmers and have turkeys and chickens. We have everything.

When I have gone to visit beef farmers, and all farmers, I have been impressed with how seriously they take their operations, how seriously they take the health of their animals and how clean everything is. I would argue that most of the barns I have been in are cleaner than my nine-year-old daughter's bedroom. It is impressive to see the care they take. I think that is the essential message: It is not only about the health of the animals, but about how seriously our farmers take this.

There has been mention of mental health. Our farmers are in a very volatile industry. They are subject to everything from climate change to market volatility. They are stressed. Their day-to-day lives are impacted by a number of factors, and the last thing they need, and I am not trying to be provocative, is uneducated people interfering with their livelihood and their ability to put food on the table for all Canadians.

We have some great examples historically. The first question I had the privilege of asking in the House of Commons was tied to mad cow disease, BSE. I was wondering why the government had failed to react quickly enough in getting our status changed at the World Health Organization. It ended up costing Canadians in our ag industry, our beef farmers in particular, millions of dollars. My point is that lessons have been learned the hard way in this country about what happens when we have any type of illness.

I want to again thank the member for Foothills for bringing this bill forward. It is a great bill that would help keep our food industry protected. It is a good thing to see.

● (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will allow the hon. member for Foothills five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all of my colleagues in this House who have spoken in support of my private member's bill, which would amend the Health of Animals Act to protect biosecurity on farms.

Many of the comments that have been raised in the speeches tonight, and I have heard it online, are that there have not been occasions where diseases have been spread as a result of protesters. That just simply is not case. There was an outbreak of rotavirus in Quebec when protesters were found at a hog operations in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec. Mink farms in Ontario had an outbreak of canine distemper when protesters were on the farms.

This is happening, and we cannot allow this type of activity to continue if we want to protect the biosecurity not only on farms but of our food security across Canada and around the world.

This came about from an instance that happened in my riding. I have spoken about this in the House previously. I received a call

from farmers near Fort Macleod, who woke up one morning, checked on their free-range turkey farm and found 40 protesters in the barn trying to take their animals. The stress this put the Tschetter family under is incredible, and it still goes on today.

We have heard that from farmers across Canada, who have had instances where protesters have been on their farms. They ask, "Why me?" They ask what they did to attract this sort of activity. I received many calls from farmers across Canada asking if this was open season on farmers and whether they were not even safe on their own property. There are the mental health impacts on farmers but also the financial risk to the agriculture industry and consumers across the country.

We are seeing this take place right now across Canada, and certainly in the Fraser Valley and across the Prairies with the outbreak of avian flu. My colleagues have talked about the mental health impact this has on farmers when they are worried about protesters, but we are also dealing with euthanizing thousands and thousands of animals.

B.C. chicken farmers are having to euthanize complete barns of their animals. This is happening across western Canada and some parts of central Canada and eastern Canada. I cannot overstate the impact this has on these farm families, who do everything they possibly can to take care of these animals and who follow very strict biosecurity protocols to protect their operations.

One cannot imagine how difficult it is to ask CFIA to come in when there is a positive test of avian flu and a farmer is told he has to put down all of his animals he worked so hard to raise from chicks to adulthood.

It would be similar if we had an outbreak of African swine fever. The pork industry said that an outbreak of African swine fever would be a \$48-billion impact on that industry. It would wipe out the hog industry in Canada. We have seen it in China, which had to euthanize more than a million animals as a result of African swine fever.

We have very strict biosecurity protocols in place for these very reasons. Unfortunately, these protesters who come on to private property in many cases just do not understand the consequences of them going from farm to farm, operation to operation, and possibly spreading those viruses and animal-borne diseases from one farm to the next. The consequences of that activity could be disastrous, on a scale we have never seen before in Canada.

I certainly do not want to see another outbreak of something similar to BSE, be it African swine fever or foot and mouth disease. We are already seeing the implications of avian flu.

Government Orders

The other comment that has been made is that this is the ag-gag bill. That simply is not the case, and I cannot stress this enough. This would not stop protesters from protesting on public land outside of the farm, and it certainly would not stop whistle-blowers or employees on a farm from reporting issues they see that are not up to standard. In fact, those employees and the farm families themselves have a moral and legal obligation to report any poor activity that does not meet our standards.

I want to thank all of my colleagues in this House for supporting this legislation, supporting farm families and supporting our agriculture industry. I look forward to discussing this further at committee.

• (1830)

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

[*Translation*]

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*]

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 21, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 26—AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed from June 13 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

This House is struggling to fulfill its constitutional role. It is struggling to hold the government accountable. Over the last several years, the House has tried to hold the government accountable on various matters where it has clearly failed in the discharge of its responsibilities. I would like to give a couple of examples to illustrate my point.

Four years ago, on July 5, 2019, two government scientists were escorted out of the government's microbiology lab in Winnipeg by the RCMP. They were reportedly walked out of the lab because of national security breaches, but what exact breaches occurred were not known. When that story broke, this House tried to do its job and find out exactly what happened.

A committee of this House began to investigate, asked for documents from the government and put in place measures to ensure that those documents would be held under lock and key to prevent anything injurious to national security from being released. However, instead of giving documents to this House, the government thumbed its nose at the committee. It refused to hand over the documents, so the committee escalated its request and issued an order to the government for the documents. The government defied the order of the committee for the documents.

Ultimately, this House and its committee issued four orders ordering the government to hand over the documents concerning the national security breaches at the Winnipeg lab. Not only did the government defy those four orders, it took the Speaker to court. The Speaker stood up to defend the rights of members in this House and indicated that the Speaker was going to fight the government in court, but before any of that could take place, the Prime Minister advised the dissolution of this place and, along with that, the four orders of this House were dissolved.

Now we have an extra-parliamentary committee, a committee that sits outside of this place, which is reviewing these documents. Members like me have no access to that process or those documents. Having initiated an inquiry in this House, this House has been unable to get to the bottom of what happened at the Winnipeg lab and, therefore, has been unable to hold the government accountable.

More recently, a similar situation occurred. When the story broke last November 7 that the government knew for years that Beijing was conducting foreign interference operations targeting our elections and involving this democratic institution, this House and its committees began to uphold their constitutional role. They began to ask questions in this House and to conduct studies in committees to find out exactly what happened.

Despite the passage of eight months, we have found out little. All we have received are heavily redacted documents, scraps of information here and there and nothing that will lead us to a definitive conclusion. Most of the information we have received has come from outside Parliament, from media reports. Most of what we have gotten from the government is a mountain of process outside Parliament; NSICOP, NSIRA and the special rapporteur, all of which are appointed by and accountable to the Prime Minister.

We have gotten so desperate that we are willing to support the establishment of an independent public inquiry outside of Parliament so that we can get answers as to what happened. While this inquiry would stand outside of Parliament, at least it would be independent and would have all the powers that this House supposedly has to call for witnesses, to order the production of documents and to get to the bottom of who knew what and when. At least a public inquiry would hold the government accountable. We should aspire to a Parliament that can do the work we are punting to a public inquiry, and that leads me to the motion in front of the House today.

The House of Commons is the only national democratic institution there is in Canada. The introduction of this motion will diminish a place that is already struggling to fulfill its constitutional role: to hold the government accountable. Hybrid Parliament has made this House and its committees less efficient. Our output has declined. Here is one example. Votes in this place before hybrid Parliament used to take eight minutes. They now take at least 10 minutes and, in many cases, 12 minutes. At 12 minutes, votes take fully 50% more time than they did before hybrid Parliament.

• (1835)

I have counted and last year we had 227 votes. If we multiply that by four minutes per vote, it is 15 hours of lost time, almost two days of sittings. In 2019, the first full day before the pandemic, we had 403 votes. If we multiply that by four minutes lost per vote, it is 26 hours of lost time. That is three or four sitting days of this House.

This is but one example of the inefficiencies a hybrid Parliament is creating. Others are time lost because of microphone checks, technology failures and the cancellation of committee meetings due to a lack of technology resources.

All of these things have led to a less efficient Parliament and a reduction in the work we do here.

The Canada-China committee has been cancelled three times in the past four weeks because of the technology limitations of a hybrid Parliament. It is one of the most important committees of this House, which is doing work on the relationship between Canada and the People's Republic of China.

More important than all of that is the loss of the magnificence of this place and its committees when we meet in person, when all eyes are on the other, watching the cut and thrust of debate, watching government officials testifying in person at committee and watching how Canadians' representatives are standing up for the things they believe in. That is why we are investing \$5 billion in the buildings of this place. That is why the Fathers of Confederation spent vast sums of money they did not have building Parliament Hill; they understood the importance of meeting in person. They could have built much more modest buildings than they did, out of wood or fieldstone, but they did not. They understood the importance of interacting with others in person.

The tyranny of technology is to turn us all virtual. We must resist. We are the only major western democracy that still has a hybrid Parliament and now the government is proposing to make it permanent. The U.K. House of Commons ended hybrid sittings on July 22, 2021, two years ago. The U.S. House of Representatives ended hybrid sittings on January 9 of this year. The Australian Parliament ended hybrid sittings on July 25 of last year. Only the current government is proposing to make hybrid sittings permanent.

The French National Assembly never had hybrid sittings. In fact, in April of 2021, the French Constitutional Council declared a proposal from the assembly unconstitutional because the measures were not precise enough. That proposal would have modified the assembly's rules of procedure in order to allow for remote participation in plenary and committee meetings under exceptional circumstances.

Government Orders

In our Constitution, the Constitution Act, 1867, section 48 requires the presence of a certain number of members in this place for this House to meet. The framers of our Constitution thought it so important that a certain number of members be present in person for this House to meet that they put it into the Constitution. They did not allow members to "mail it in", as one could do in those days, to allow this House to meet.

I will finish by saying this. We already sit far less than national legislatures in other western democracies. The U.S. House of Representatives typically sits between 164 and 192 days a year. The U.K. House of Commons typically sits between 146 and 162 days a year. We only sit 129 days a year.

We also sit far less than we used to. We used to sit 160 to 170 days a year during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. During the Pearson era, when Parliament was so effective in dealing with framework legislation on major initiatives like the Canada pension plan, our public health care system and the national flag, the House sat 160 to 170 days a year, eight weeks longer than the 26 weeks we sit today.

The motion in front of us today will further weaken and diminish this place. Therefore, I urge all members to vote against this motion.

• (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that he was trying to ask questions while the hon. member was speaking. He has been here long enough to know that he is to wait for questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to point out the hypocrisy here. Let us really stop and think about this.

The Conservative Party says no to the hybrid and the voting application. However, in the last vote we had, 65 Conservative members of Parliament, the member's colleagues in his party, voted using the hybrid application; 43 of them voted in person. Can members imagine? A person is voting against the voting application in the hybrid format, and they are on their phone, saying, "I do not want to be able to vote with my phone." It sounds pretty stupid to me.

Does the hon. member believe that he really has the full support from his entire caucus, in terms of the statement he has just made?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, the voting app is actually driving people out of this place.

Government Orders

If there are two votes to take place in this chamber, they take at least 20 to 24 minutes. If one is using the voting app, one can literally take about 30 seconds of those 24 minutes to vote. If one sits in the chamber, one actually cannot do certain things while the voting takes place, across those two votes. One cannot, for example, be on a phone call with somebody else. One cannot be doing something other than what one is permitted to do in the House.

The voting app, perversely, is actually driving members out of the chamber. This is why these sorts of measures need to be ended and sunsetted, as has been done in other western democracies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my hon. colleague for his excellent speech.

I would like to respond to the parliamentary secretary representing the government. For days now, the government has been giving examples like the one about the voting application to claim that everything in the motion is positive. However, the motion includes a lot of other things.

We, the Bloc Québécois, are not opposed to the voting application. However, the motion contains other things that cannot be changed or seriously debated to make them better. That is a problem.

The biggest problem, however, is this: In the entire history of Parliament, such changes have always been adopted unanimously by the House to protect every elected official. As far as minor changes go, one exception was made under Pierre Elliott Trudeau. It was the first time in history that the rules were amended by a simple majority. What does my hon. colleague think about that?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question and for sharing his perspective with us. This is a very important point.

[*English*]

To this point, generally speaking, permanent changes to the Standing Orders of this chamber have been done on a consensual basis, involving support among all the parties of the House. There have been exceptions to that rule, but they were rare.

I think the government is setting a dangerous precedent here in proposing this change without the consent of the second-largest party in this place, the official opposition. I think it is a very dangerous precedent that does not bode well for future changes to this place.

For that reason, I do not think the change should be made permanent. I think that there would be a consensus among all recognized parties in the House to have hybrid Parliament go on but to have a sunset clause, where it would expire at the end of this Parliament.

• (1845)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's service to Canada, but the fact is that we had even greater problems with many of the things he raised in his speech when the Harper regime was in place.

I lived through the lack of access to documents and the refusal of ministers to talk to members of Parliament; I saw it first-hand. As

for the things he is raising now, for example, the time it takes for the House to vote, last Friday, we saw how Conservatives stretched a vote from what should have been 10 minutes to over an hour, through inconsequential, dilatory points of order. We see this in terms of committees. We have had to cancel committees because Conservatives have filibustered to block legislation, such as putting in place dental care and ensuring a grocery rebate for all Canadians, including in their ridings.

Conservatives have been the cause of many of the problems that the member is raising.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, as a lifelong Conservative, I supported Speaker Milliken's rulings regarding the right of this place to order the production of documents, with respect to the Afghan detainee issue, as well as a committee of the House demanding information about the cost of the justice reforms that have been proposed by the government and the cost of the new F-35 jets. I supported them then and I support them now.

Today, as a Conservative, I support the continuation of this House in a way that does not diminish its efficacy, in a way that ends hybrid Parliament at some point, as all other western democracies have already done.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin my comments, I just want to express my concern about the situation that is unfolding in Manitoba. Tragically, by the latest account, 15 people have been killed in a traffic accident on the Trans-Canada Highway. My thoughts are with the families, obviously, with the victims and with the first responders as well. This is going to be a difficult night for people in Manitoba.

I am actually profoundly disappointed that I am here again, as I was a year ago, when a similar motion to extend the hybrid sitting was proposed before Parliament. As the opposition House leader at the time, I actually spoke for almost two and a half hours on this issue. The theme of what I was talking about last year was, sadly, a decline in our democracy, a decline in our institutions, a lack of respect for the conventions of this place and how Parliament has functioned historically throughout the Westminster system, and particularly in this country for over 156 years. I just cannot express enough how profoundly disappointed I am that not only are we dealing with changes to the Standing Orders on a permanent basis without the consensus of parties, which has again been the convention of this place, but we are also dealing with it in a time allocation motion. Something that will make such a profound change in the way this place operates is being dealt with through just a few hours of debate, with a lack of consensus. It is extremely frustrating and disappointing. I think every Canadian should be concerned about the direction in which the government, aided and abetted by the NDP, is taking not just Parliament but also our institutions, as well as the general lack of respect they have for them.

Government Orders

I recall back in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, that I was the deputy whip, and I happened to sit at PROC. Clearly, at the time, there was a lot of uncertainty and confusion about what was going on. That is when the issue of a hybrid Parliament and the voting app started really taking root in the psyche of parliamentarians. We had to function. We had to make sure that the business of the nation was going to continue, that there was some continuity. We sat down as the PROC committee. Again, I will remind members that it was a Liberal majority at the time, and there were certain patterns that were already starting to evolve. There were things that were being foretold back then that bring us to the day that we are facing today.

I recall that the first issue we were dealing with was the voting application. The Conservative members of the committee issued a dissenting report at that time. There are some highlights of that report that I would like to mention now. One of them is that the “underlying Liberal motivations left us skeptical”. Members may recall that, back in 2015, when the manifesto of the Liberal campaign policy book was issued, it talked about restructuring the way Parliament functions, so this was their intent back in 2015. What they did was use the pandemic as a means to an end. That end was always to disrupt this place and not allow it to function in the manner in which it was designed. The other aspects of what we were discussing back then included that the “Liberals seemed committed not just to a direction, but to a specific outcome”, as I referenced before, because that was in their campaign policy book.

The committee worked hard. There were long days throughout that summer that we discussed this because of the importance of the issue at the time, but it was all in the “service of a Liberal talking point”. In other words, the fix was in. They knew specifically where they were going.

There were some other things. One of the things in our dissenting report that we highlighted was that the “House of Commons must—and can—[and should] conduct its business in person”. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills just spoke eloquently on that, so I am not going to expand on that. Later on, I am going to give some reasons and examples of why this is important.

As we went on later that summer, we talked about the voting app, and we wrote the dissenting report. Again, a Liberal majority, not a Liberal minority propped up by the NDP, caused us to write this dissenting report.

• (1850)

Several times today, the government members have said that they are surprised about the opposition position on this. Our position was made clear back in 2020 as it related to the hybrid sittings of this House. The report said, “The Official Opposition will strongly resist any effort to exploit the pandemic as a cover to implement a permanent virtual Parliament, with its reduced ability to hold government accountable, gravely undermining our democracy.” It was almost like prophecy back then. We were predicting exactly what was going to happen, that this day would come, and here we are. Why is it important? It is important because of accountability.

In this place, when we gather 338 members, our constitutional obligation is to hold the government to account. As we saw throughout the pandemic, as we are seeing as recently as this week, just how difficult it is to hold the government to account when its

members are not in this House or when they are simply voting by the app. It is not just parliamentarians holding the government to account. It is the media. In such a situation as we are seeing this week and over the past couple of weeks, with the Minister of Public Safety, how can the media, Canadians and their representatives in this place hold the government to account if its members are hiding out on a TV screen or if they are voting by app?

There are so many things that I cannot even do them justice within 10 minutes as I discuss the challenges that this hybrid system presents. There is the fact that it is not being done on consensus but is being rammed down the throats of Canadians, fundamentally changing the way this institution operates. We cannot do it justice within 10 minutes, and we certainly cannot explain why this is an ill-conceived idea through the proposal of time allocation. Again, it was supposed to be temporary.

Human-to-human interaction is critical in this place; it is critical that I, as a member of Parliament in the opposition, can go and speak to a minister who is present in this place. I will give an example. At ethics committee the other day, we were dealing with an issue on the access to information report, which we expect to be tabled at some point over the next few days. There was a discussion that was engaged in between members of the committee who were in that room. It was about how we were going to move forward on a stalemate situation that we were facing. As the meeting continued, those members from the Bloc, the NDP, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party got together and worked out a deal to end the stalemate. That cannot happen when we are sitting on a TV screen or voting on an app. Those things have to happen in person, and this is why it is critical that we do not support hybrid sittings.

We are the only western democracy in the world and there is no other legislature in Canada that is voting by an app, that is not meeting in person or utilizing a hybrid system. There is not one, and that should tell members everything they need to know about why this proposition is wrong. If we cannot set the example of what this institution means to this country, as the premier democratic symbol in this country, then it is awfully difficult to expect others to follow suit. I happen to think that it still means a lot. There are legislatures in this country that are leaders in this regard, yet here we are, not the leader.

There are a couple more issues that I want to touch on. The first is interpretation. We have seen an increase in injuries to our interpreters as a result of the hybrid system. The system has become better, but the problem still exists, and it is going to continue to exist as a result of this hybrid system. I cannot support this. We have to return in person for the sake of our democracy and not continue down this path. We need accountability. We need transparency. We cannot continue down this path as a democracy in decline. Sadly, this motion would do that.

Government Orders

• (1855)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the previous speaker mentioned that no other parliament in the world continued to allow a hybrid parliament, and the member himself mentioned that no other government in Canada was doing it. However, and perhaps I am wrong in this, my understanding is that the Scottish Parliament has decided to continue to allow a hybrid parliament, as has the Welsh Parliament. In addition, the Estonian government has also decided to do that, and the last I heard, New Zealand was still trying to decide on this matter.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I think I was pretty clear in what I said, which was that there is no other western democracy. I was referring specifically to national legislatures. There are provincial legislatures in Canada, but not one of them is using a hybrid model or a voting app. They have all returned to some sense of normalcy, and that is specifically where we need to go. We cannot continue down this path, because, as I said earlier, we are going to continue to see a further decline in democracy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, we know how things work in the House and we know how the negotiations went for these changes to the Standing Orders of the House. The government House leader went to see the NDP. They came to an agreement. After that, they did not talk to the other parties. They decided to shove new rules down the members' throats.

Here we are in mid-June discussing this under a gag order at the last minute, when it has been weeks, if not months, that the government and the NDP, with whom they are in bed, have known exactly where they are going with this.

I would like my colleague to tell me why, in his opinion, they used this strategy of endless stalling, making us waste time until the last minute to finally use the most undemocratic procedure in the House of Commons, the gag order, and force this down our throats.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, there is another example. Last year, the government did the same thing in June, with the NDP's help. They did it right before Canada Day. They said that if we did not vote, we would be staying here.

[*English*]

They are using this issue as a hostage-taking exercise. This is why we are ending up at the end.

However, on the point of not discussing, we have had consensus around this place on changes to the Standing Orders. That has been the convention, but obviously the government knows that it has NDP members in its hip pocket and it is using them to make these changes.

I ran as an MP knowing the issue, knowing that I would be here in Ottawa, and I would suggest to anyone that if they do not understand the obligation of a member of Parliament to sit in Ottawa, in this seat of power, the constitutional place of power in this country, and if they cannot conform to that, then maybe they should run for mayor or maybe they should run for councillor or maybe they should run for public school trustee.

I understand what my obligation is, as do many of the members, not just on our side but I suspect on the Bloc Québécois side as well. This is where people need to be.

• (1900)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I like the member, I remember his speech and I appreciate his consistency. He is saying something that the Conservatives have been trying to hide, which is that they are absolutely opposed to the hybrid Parliament. They are absolutely opposed to remote voting and the voting app.

However, we just had a vote in which over half of the Conservative caucus actually used the voting app to vote to try to block the use of the voting app, which is, to say the least, a contradiction.

We also know, dating back to *The Globe and Mail* exposé in June 2020, that Conservatives have the highest absentee rate when it comes to virtual Parliament. They were absent 53% of the time. The NDP showed up 85% of the time.

How does the member explain this contradiction?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I have heard this argument all day. The government, aided and abetted by the NDP, has set the rules. We are working within the rules. If those rules change and we get rid of the hybrid Parliament, every single Conservative will be in their seat representing their constituents and voting here on behalf of their constituents. However, the government set the rules.

There is one thing that is critical about this, which is that we cannot continue on this hybrid system and not expect our democracy to decline. That is exactly what the NDP is contributing to by voting with the Liberals on this issue.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am really pleased to be speaking on the hybrid provisions today.

In 2021, I was honoured to be chosen by the people of Steveston—Richmond East to serve as their member of Parliament. However, that same fall, as I began work as an MP in Ottawa, I became very fatigued and my symptoms worsened. I was born with a solitary kidney, and upon my return to B.C., I was informed that my only kidney was deteriorating faster than expected. The time had come to prepare for a transplant, and I was to immediately receive dialysis treatment.

As serious as this was, I did not want my condition to affect my work or limit my ability to represent my community. To ensure there were no conflicts with my parliamentary responsibilities, I trained myself to self-administer the dialysis treatment at the nocturnal dialysis unit at the Vancouver General Hospital, where I would stay overnight three days a week.

While I waited for my transplant, it was crucial to avoid travel in order to not risk contracting any viruses, like COVID-19, so that I could be operated on safely when the time came.

Government Orders

If it had not been for the hybrid provisions, I could not have safeguarded my health and kept my commitment to represent my constituents in Parliament. I was able to fulfill my responsibilities virtually in the House of Commons and in committees. I was able to speak to bills, speak on the Emergencies Act, participate in a study on military procurement and share an untold inclusive Canadian heritage story confronting the realities of systemic racism, which was a very important priority for me.

I was also able to provide statements in the House regarding key investments the government is making in Richmond. Since I was elected to office in 2021, over \$200 million in investments were secured in my city. I have been able to participate in all relevant caucus meetings to communicate Richmond's economic and service priorities. I participated in caucus meetings to communicate Richmond's social, economic, service and infrastructure priorities. At the same time, I was able to meet stakeholders within the municipality and throughout the riding. Many individuals, throughout all those meetings, mentioned that they had never even met their MP, and some of them had served in the municipality for over 20 years.

While many of my colleagues in the House agree with this motion, many former MPs also support this initiative. On October 4, I appeared before the procedure and House affairs committee to tell my story and share how hybrid provisions helped me serve Canadians through my difficult health journey. My fellow witnesses included former MPs Dona Cadman and Léo Duguay. Dona Cadman, who sat across the aisle, recalled the hardship and the toll it took on her husband's health while he was serving as an MP and spoke about how the positive effects of working virtually with his colleagues across parties could have made a strong impact on his mental health in the last years of life.

In his opening remarks, Léo Duguay, the president of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, said that in 1985 he wanted to look at two things. The first was electronic voting. The second was improving the House of Commons.

During my preparations I learned that PROC released a report in 2016 entitled "Initiatives toward a family-friendly House of Commons". The report details the heavy personal toll that legislators live with as a result of their work. Although virtual proceedings were not one of the recommendations, the hybrid provisions are vital to easing the pressures caused by uncontrollable long absences from Ottawa.

• (1905)

There are reasons to support this motion, as highlighted by the 2021 PBO report on the costs of a hybrid Parliament. Over a full year, the net savings from a hybrid parliamentary system are estimated to be \$6.2 million. It is also estimated that the hybrid parliamentary system would reduce GHG emissions related to travel by about 2,972 metric tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

These figures do not include the savings from reduced travel and accommodation costs for witnesses who appear before committees.

Although these are benefits of a hybrid Parliament, they are not the main reason that I support this motion. As members of Parliament, we are responsible for nurturing our democracy. It is our role to ensure that as many Canadians as possible can participate fully

in our democratic processes, not just when it comes time to vote but when we want to raise our hands and represent our fellow Canadians. However, travel commitments and long separations from family and friends are a price many Canadians are unwilling to pay.

A modern Parliament is a hybrid Parliament. It is inclusive, accessible and a window into the future of democracy in the 21st century. As Canadians, we must not let this window close, because we would be doing a disservice to democracy and to Canadians.

A hybrid Parliament creates a more flexible environment to accommodate a greater variety of Canadians and keeps MPs closer to their communities. Returning to the way things have always run would be a step back in our national journey to build a stronger, more inclusive and more engaging democracy. Expanding each Canadian's capacity to stand for elected office and serve as an MP is important not just for the individuals who sit in the House of Commons but for our communities, because the best ideas on the needs of Canadians come from the regions each MP represents, allowing us to remain rooted in our communities and maintain a strong understanding of the everyday impacts people are experiencing.

Hybrid provisions allowed me to fulfill my parliamentary obligations, limit my exposure, maintain strong mental health and reduce the fears my family had as they supported me through my health journey. I received my transplant in August of last year and I owe a world of thanks to the person who gave me the gift of life. It is very hard to express how very fortunate and extremely grateful I am to be able to work in and serve the city I was raised in and the province of British Columbia that I was born in.

Of course, it also would not have been possible to keep doing a job I passionately enjoy without the excellent care provided by the team of medical professionals, the dialysis unit and the organ transplant team at Vancouver General Hospital, as well as Canadian Blood Services.

Madam Speaker, I failed to mention earlier that I will be sharing my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River. I am prepared to take questions.

• (1910)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague referenced Chuck Cadman, whom I knew. He was from my neck of the woods, and I know that when he was seriously ill, he came here to vote, but an alternative option would have been for the government side of the House to have paired somebody with him so that he would not have had to go through the trouble and pain and inconvenience of travelling.

Government Orders

Is that a way forward for exceptional cases that make it impossible, or nearly impossible, for somebody to travel here?

Mr. Parm Bains: Madam Speaker, I think one of the key things here is that what he is suggesting, the pairing of someone, actually takes the voice of the elected member who is there to serve the community that elected them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very uncomfortable with this motion, not so much because of what it contains, even though my party and I disagree with that, but with the way the government is going about getting this motion adopted.

There is a tradition in this House, which, to my knowledge, exists in all Parliaments. The rules are not changed by the simple majority because that would mean imposing the majority's vision on all the minorities. That is not the right approach.

However, that is what the government is doing here. Rather than trying to reach a consensus with all the parties and agree on the rules before putting them in place, the government is refusing to discuss them with us and imposing its way of doing things. Is that not completely undemocratic?

[*English*]

Mr. Parm Bains: Madam Speaker, I have heard a lot about tradition, and I know other members have talked about tradition as well, but it was a break from tradition to bring cameras into the House of Commons, and that changed in 1977.

This is a meaningful discussion, and I understand the concerns, but we are having a debate and raising these questions. Members have had an opportunity to raise them for a few years now, so on this side, we believe these changes are necessary to increase democracy.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Steveston—Richmond East for sharing his story.

We both come from British Columbia. It is very difficult, as many members know, to travel back and forth every week, as we like to do, to our homes when we live in British Columbia. The member happens to live very close to an airport, so he is luckier than I am, but I was really interested to hear of his health issues and how he got through them.

I think he touched on this in the answer to a previous question, but having this hybrid Parliament allowed him to represent his constituents while he was home in British Columbia rather than, as the Conservative member was suggesting, taking away someone else's right to vote as well as a better solution. I think sitting virtually is by far the best solution we have, and we should keep it.

• (1915)

Mr. Parm Bains: Madam Speaker, that is exactly why I think this is an important piece.

I mentioned this while I was speaking, but to really understand the priorities of a region, members sometimes have to be there longer than they are here. When we go to events, we see the mayor and the council, but do we get an opportunity to speak to the people

who are operating within the municipality, the people who are building the homes or the planners? They told me that they had never met their member of Parliament, and that was a very important piece I was able to do while I was there.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to speak to this issue for a couple of reasons.

One of the reasons I am here, the reason we are all here, is to represent our constituents, and I really think the measure of a hybrid Parliament does further the interests of our constituents. I also think it furthers the interests of democracy as a whole.

The other reason I wanted to talk about this is that it is a measure that came out of COVID. As a parliamentarian who was fairly involved with the whole COVID process, I was interested in this. I have to say that there is not a whole lot of good that came out of COVID, but this is perhaps one of the few good things.

I will start with COVID because that is really the origin of this hybrid Parliament. I am not sure about the rest of us here, but I am from the class of 2019, and we had a rough start to Parliament. Three months into that parliamentary session, we heard of the outbreak of a novel respiratory virus in Wuhan, China.

I followed this, because I am a doctor and I used to work for the World Health Organization. I studied and also taught global health law. In addition, during the SARS pandemic, I was working as a doctor around Toronto. I was actually quarantined because of SARS, so I followed this. Certainly, what was happening in Wuhan, China, did not look good.

Then the dominoes began to fall. First, it was Iran, with news stories of satellite images showing mass graves there. After that, it was Italy, and there were, I believe, over 140 doctors in Italy who died early on in the COVID pandemic. Then we started to get cases here.

I was sitting on the health committee. We had Dr. Tam, members from PHAC and other people coming before us. We asked some questions about COVID, and they responded, "Nothing to see here. We have it under control. It is not going to be a problem."

I was rather frustrated. It was like watching an old disaster movie. For anyone who has ever watched one, it does not matter the disaster, whether it is the sinking of a boat, a big volcano going off, an earthquake killing lots of people or a big shark, in all of these, there is an unshaven has-been, because these are old movies and nowadays there would be a lot of women, but this person would be sitting at the end of the bar early on in the disaster. They see the disaster coming and say, "Well, I think maybe we ought to be worried here", but no one gets worried. This is how I felt in the early days of the pandemic.

Then came March 13, 2020, and the wheels fell off the bus that day. On that day, it was announced that Tom Hanks, the actor, had COVID and the Prime Minister's wife had COVID. The NHL and NBA, in an unprecedented fashion, decided to end their seasons. It was horrible for us hockey and basketball fans.

Government Orders

At the same time, Parliament decided to shut down indefinitely. I remember, I believe it was a Thursday night, at the Marriott bar with some of my colleagues, who are undoubtedly here. We were talking about what we were going to do. Were we supposed to go home? Should we have been talking to each other? Were we giving each other COVID?

Going forward three years, on this side of the House, we think we did pretty well with COVID. We got through it. However, for us in Parliament, the democratic process to get through it was done thanks to being able to partake virtually in a virtual Parliament. Without that, we certainly would not have been able to continue the democratic process through COVID.

Moreover, generally speaking, the vaccines in society provided a lot of what we needed to deal with the pandemic. Later on, the various forms of treatments that came out in the health care system played a big part in reducing mortality. However, I would suggest that it was technology, the Internet and the ability to do virtual meetings that allowed us that social distancing, which we needed early on before we had the vaccines to prevent the spread of disease. These virtual meetings were certainly a big part of how we responded to COVID.

Hopefully, COVID is over, but we cannot say that for certain. I do not think this will happen, but perhaps in the fall there will be another wave with a new variant, and for that reason alone I think it is good that we are still able to meet virtually.

• (1920)

Rather than talking further about why I am for virtual Parliament, let me admit that I do think there are advantages of being here in person, and some of my colleagues on the opposite side talked about them. I would not deny there are a lot of good things that come out of that.

For those in the class of 2019, after having been meeting virtually for about a year and a half, to then come back felt like we were starting high school in grade 11. In our time back here it has become apparent to me, and perhaps to a lot of my colleagues from the same year, how much of the real work of Parliament does not occur right here on the floor, but in the back rooms.

The back is a place where I can corner a minister to ask them about an issue that is big in my riding and get an answer. It is also a place where we can form coalitions. In my experience, and in the experience of all parliamentarians here, an individual will have a really hard time moving any particular item. However, when they get consensus, it is far easier to do. That kind of consensus cannot be made on a Zoom call, but it is the kind of consensus we can make in the back rooms.

Having said that and having agreed that, generally speaking, being here in person is better, I think there are real advantages of being able to meet virtually. Those advantages certainly outweigh the disadvantages. I would like to point out that it is quite difficult to be a parliamentarian when one has a family. I have six kids. I have big kids, little kids, young kids and old kids, and being a good parent when spending half of my time not at home, but in Ottawa, is very difficult.

Our poor spouses end up running a single-parent family half the time. It is hard on anyone who has kids, but I would suggest it is particularly hard on women with small children. There are some women here who do have small children, so it is not impossible, but it is very difficult. I would suggest that reality scares off a lot of young women from wanting to partake in the democratic process.

We really want to encourage women to run. The hybrid Parliament makes it easier. For example, these last nine weeks or so, we have had one constituency week. However, with virtual Parliament, if someone has a family and kids, and the kids are sick or they are asking for them, they can spend a week back home with the kids and still partake in parliamentary duties.

Similarly, if someone lives in Labrador or the Northwest Territories, they can do Monday and Friday virtually, meeting their obligations to Parliament while still having time with their family. It allows parliamentarians to balance their obligations to their families with their obligations to their constituencies and to Parliament.

I suggest that is also the case for people, for example, with disabilities, with family members who are ill or who have elderly people in their family to whom they have obligations. It allows them to come to Parliament.

Why is that important? I have said before I think not being able to go virtual would be particularly hard on women. In Parliament, 50% of MPs ought to be women. Parliament, for the sake of democracy, ought to be a Parliament that reasonably reflects the population at large. That means not only having women in Parliament, but also having people who are mothers and fathers with younger or older children, or who have no children at all.

Let me reiterate that not much good came out of COVID, but I think one good thing that came out of COVID was hybrid Parliament. It is good for MPs, Parliament and the democratic process, and I think it is good for Canadians.

• (1925)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech, and he did identify the nature of proximity and the ability to establish rapport and trust between members when they are in close proximity to each other.

There is nothing in the Standing Orders that gives any requirement of this. Under the changes that are proposed, any member could be virtual as much as they want, and the increasing use of the voting app shows the extent to which the expediency of it drives people out of this place.

Why make the permanent change now? Why not give us the opportunity to get it right following an election and following further all-party consensus, rather than a permanent change now?

Government Orders

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member opposite, and I wrestle with this every week when it is a choice of whether I should stay at home with my family and my kids and participate virtually or come to Ottawa. I decide to come to Ottawa because I think I can do a better job here. On the other hand, we have to balance that desirability of having close proximity to and being able to talk to people with the fact that not allowing it is a real, significant impediment to people with kids, especially women, being able to partake in the democratic process.

Without that, we have a Parliament with a bunch of older males or older women or people who do not have families, but we are missing a certain demographic of our population who are not here to vote and make decisions because they do not want to come to Parliament because they cannot both have a family and be in Parliament. With the hybrid system, they can.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I worked together at the Standing Committee on Health, and he knows that I appreciate him.

I know he is a democrat. In his speech, he discussed the importance of having a well functioning democracy. He believes that the new rules could help us to enhance the way democracy functions.

I am wondering if he does not see that there is a certain paradox in the fact that, to enhance democracy with the new rules, we are violating democracy, we are violating the parliamentary tradition, we are violating the tradition of unanimity. We are dismantling a long tradition and setting a precedent that will allow any government, especially a majority government, to henceforth have the moral sanction to change all our operating rules as it pleases.

Does the member not find that strange to want to enhance the way democracy functions in a completely undemocratic way?

[*English*]

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Speaker, as much as it is desirable to have unanimity, the democratic process does not generally require unanimity, because it is that difficult. Maybe this is wrong, but I understand that in Poland there was an absolute democracy that required unanimity in every decision, but that is practically impossible.

Therefore, I would suggest that in an example like this, where we are trying to protect a minority, perhaps young women, and allow them to be party to the democratic process, sometimes we have to stand up against the majority. That is the whole purpose of the Constitution. Moreover, if even a majority is not good enough and we need an absolute majority, that is a pretty hard hurdle to bypass. I would say that the ends we are seeking, which are allowing more women and more people with families to participate, are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give another member an opportunity to ask a question.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things we have heard in this debate is a concern about abuse of the virtual tools that we have become accustomed to. Thinking about the constituents I represent, I think they have an

expectation both that I travel to Ottawa, be a part of this place and represent them in the House of Commons and also that, under certain circumstances, the virtual tools allow me to do an even better job and be present more of the time. Does the member agree that our constituents' expectation that we spend time in Ottawa and in the House of Commons will serve as a control on the potential abuse of these virtual tools that we now have available?

• (1930)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member. Ultimately, we are all accountable to our electorate. I think those of us who decide not to come to Ottawa or are seen always up in their bedroom on a Zoom call, participating virtually in Parliament, perhaps will suffer as a result at the ballot box. There is a certain element of accountability there that will keep us honest and keep us from abusing that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, Parliament exists so that common people, the commons, would have protection from what would otherwise be the unlimited power of government.

Every now and then, we have to get back to the basics. King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta, 808 years ago this week, actually. I have a real passion for civic literacy around the issue of what Parliament is here for, why Parliament exists and getting back to those basics.

Members are elected to this place. They are sent here to fulfill that basic purpose. We are here to hold the government to account. Not just the members who happen to run under parties that did not win the majority of seats or even the most seats, but all members here are elected as a Parliament that will hold government to account. Some members are chosen to become part of the government, but even the backbenchers of the governing party are here to hold the government to account. We all are. That is our job.

Our basic function is to vote on the key issues of the day, particularly to grant authority to the Crown to spend money, to make changes to the Criminal Code that affect people's liberty, and these kinds of things. This is what we are here for. That is why Parliament exists.

Let there be no doubt: The changes being proposed by the government would weaken the power of the House of Commons and strengthen the power of government.

Before I get too much further into this, I must point out that I am going to share my time with the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston. I look forward to his remarks.

I am familiar with the arguments around the changes we are talking about here. We just heard some of the arguments in favour of the Standing Orders changes from the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River. I am a western MP. I spend a lot of time on airplanes, a lot of time travelling. I am family man, too. There is certainly some expediency around the voting app.

Government Orders

However, hybrid Parliament would give more power to the government. It does give more power to the government and less power to the opposition, making the tools available to the opposition more difficult to use. I have never heard a constituent, a person in my riding, say to me that what is really important to them is that Parliament become easier for MPs, so that we could make things easier for ourselves. That is not what Canadians say. They do not want their government to have more power and Parliament to have less.

There are practical problems, too, with the motion. We have all seen the inevitable technical glitches, which will always be there. We have problems with connectivity, with equipment and with simultaneous translation. The motion certainly does not address any of those issues, but here we are.

There are also lots of other problems with it that are not technical. There is a general lack of decorum that sometimes occurs through hybrid. We have the lack of uniformity in background and people can use a hybrid camera shot to create their own political messages or messages that do not belong in parliamentary debate.

By far and away, the biggest problem that we will have if we adopt a permanent virtual Parliament is entrenching the isolation and silo effect on MPs. If hybrid Parliament is to be made permanent, we have to answer these questions first: Do Canadians want their MPs to have less physical interaction and less proximity to each other? Do Canadians think that their elected officials would make better decisions for Canadians if they spent less time actually interacting with each other? Do Canadians want their parliamentarians and their Parliament to be more or less collegial? Do they want elected representatives to have more or less opportunity, as the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River said, to speak informally with members of the government, on either side?

● (1935)

Do Canadians want their MP to have the opportunity to walk across the floor and have a quick discussion with another member? Do they want their MPs to have the ability to interact with each other in person? Do they want ministers and the Prime Minister to spend more time face to face, facing the accountability of an opposition in Parliament with the equal rights and privileges that are afforded to members in this place?

I know Canadians expect more and not less accountability from their governments and they expect their elected MPs to have the ability to deliver that. Hybrid Parliament allows MPs to have every ability to just silo themselves and be isolated from other members.

Canadians in my riding ask me sometimes why we cannot work with other parties. I say that there are many occasions when MPs work across the floor and work with other MPs in their own caucus to effect outcomes on legislation or committee business or issues. However, in order to work effectively together, they have to have the opportunity to build rapport and trust, and they cannot do that through a video screen.

This really reveals itself in hybrid committees. When members of all parties are present, and the member for Barrie—Innisfil talked about this, members from each party can gather in a corner and resolve an impasse they have come to by just being able to talk to each other. Non-verbal body language is conveyed when we

meet in person. When one is across a committee table from another member, one can get an idea of the effect of what one is proposing if negotiating on a motion or debating a committee report. We do not get that through hybrid Parliament. We do not get that through a video screen.

When trying to get through a committee report, if all the members are together and there are differences, there is no unanimity, but there might be the ability to have a consensus report. It is not going to get done through a video screen. People need to be able to talk to each other. The importance of personal interaction is just lost in the hybrid.

Some members have commented on the growing use of the voting app by members and the incentives to not be here with a hybrid system. The ability to use a voting app encourages members to do really anything but the job they are elected to do as legislators and debate legislation in the House. They have every advantage to just go back to their ridings while Parliament is sitting and campaign or do any number of other activities. Members have talked about the ability to achieve a better life and family balance, and I am sure this is an advantage for some members in that case, but it also gives incentive to do anything other than the job they are elected to do.

This brings us to the permanence of it. What is being proposed here tonight is a permanent change to the Standing Orders, which is ordinarily only done through consensus, when all parties agree. This is our democracy. The Standing Orders are how we govern ourselves in this place. It is extraordinary that we are here under a closure motion. They are ramming this through with closure, the permanent change to our Standing Orders.

Conservatives proposed at committee maintaining the use of the voting app and hybrid Parliament, that we would keep it and let it run through another election so members who are elected here could run and tell their prospective voters how they feel about this issue, and not permanently change the Standing Orders until there actually is an all-party consensus. That is the way to do it. That is the way that respects the democracy of this place.

If members value the office they are elected to and think Canadians want and deserve more and not less democratic accountability, and if they think the permanent changes should not be done without all-party consent, I beg them to show some respect for the 808 years of parliamentary accountability and oppose this motion.

● (1940)

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree that there are a lot of advantages to being here together to make sure we serve our constituents, but my question is this: What would he say for those members who, God forbid, have to go through health challenges?

Back in February 2018, I was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. Not having the provision of the hybrid Parliament, I was not able to be the voice of my constituents here for four months, until my chemotherapy was completed. I was not able to participate in debates and I was not able to vote.

Government Orders

What would the member say in regard to those situations? I ask, because we never know what is coming around the corner.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I am so happy that the member is here in this debate tonight and that she is able to be here. The member for Steveston—Richmond East and his remarks on his health challenges are important, but there have been long-standing tools. This is not new. Previous Parliaments have dealt with this by way of vote pairing. I do not think any constituent would want their MP to feel they had to leave medical treatment to fly here and use their voice in debate. People should take time and look after their health, make that their personal priority and make sure their vote is paired, so that there is still democratic representation.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take the hon. member a few years back in time. When he was in the House in 2017, the Liberal government had a majority. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons wanted to change the Standing Orders so that, for example, the House would no longer sit on Fridays. The Bloc Québécois was in favour. The Liberal government House leader in 2017 said that it would not happen because there was not unanimous support. She had the support of some opposition parties, but she did not have unanimous support. In order to change the Standing Orders, the way the House operates is that unanimous consent is required. She backed down, and it did not happen.

We now have a government that says that it is going to change the rules with a simple majority, which sets a precedent. What does the hon. member think about that?

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, the member is right, and it is disgraceful. The members of that government and its caucus should be ashamed of themselves for what they are doing, and so should the NDP members.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I like the member. I know that he shows up. Many of his colleagues do not, and this is the problem. The Globe and Mail exposed the fact that the Conservatives are the most absent in this virtual Parliament. After the first couple of months in a virtual Parliament, The Globe and Mail showed us that Conservatives only show up 47% of the time. New Democrats showed up twice as much: 85% of the time.

That member shows up; I am not trying to pretend otherwise. I am saying his colleagues do not, and the real concern is about MPs abusing this. It really comes from the example Conservative MPs have set themselves, being more absent than any other party in this House.

● (1945)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to put this nonsense to bed.

During the time that article came out, I could not even have, in a city like Calgary, in my home, enough reliable upload speed to be able to engage with the hybrid Parliament at that time. I would watch it on TV, because at least I could reliably see the image. I did not show up as being at work by logging in to Zoom; I followed

what was going on in the chamber. If I knew that I was going to be speaking or participating in debate, I had a real scramble on my hands to make sure I actually could get the connectivity to participate, so if that Globe and Mail article and that member's measurement of showing up for work is whether they hit the log-in credentials on their Zoom call, I think that is a pretty flawed measurement of how people participate in Parliament.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, from a strictly procedural perspective, I am speaking in favour of an amendment proposed, two days ago, by the House leader for His Majesty's loyal opposition, to the government motion to adopt a series of amendments to the Standing Orders. I will not read out the amendment here, because it runs several pages, and I will certainly not attempt to read out the government's set of proposed amendments to the Standing Orders, which run to 25 pages in 12-point type. My speaking slot is only 10 minutes and I simply would not get through those things before I ran out of time.

The general thrust of the government's package of amendments is to make permanent the interim Standing Orders, which would otherwise expire at the end of the month, that allow MPs to participate in the House debates and at committee meetings remotely, using Zoom, and to vote remotely as well using the app on our telephones.

The government amendments would make this change permanent, extending not merely beyond June but also beyond the life of the present Parliament.

The thrust of the opposition motion is that the expiry date should be pushed back from June to a date that is described in the amendment as "one year after the opening of the 45th Parliament". This would provide a full year subsequent to the next election, during which a consensus could be developed as to which aspects of the rules for virtual sittings and remote participation would be retained. If, at that time, no consensus were achieved, then, after the year expires, it would be necessary for all MPs to attend sittings of the House in person, as was the case prior to the pandemic.

Of course, if a consensus was achieved, then we could carry on with some form of virtual sittings. Very likely, the addition of a further year or two of experience with virtual sittings and online voting would allow us to make incremental improvements to the rules over the voluminous package being voted on today.

Of the two alternatives before us, I prefer the one presented by the opposition House leader, but that is not the subject that I wish to address today. Rather, I want to focus on the entirely inappropriate way in which the government is attempting to push through changes by means of a whipped party line vote.

I have been in this place for 23 years, nearly a quarter of a century, and until the present Prime Minister took office, that was never how changes were made to the Standing Orders. I could go back to the prior century and that was also not the way things were done. Some kind of non-partisan path has always been sought.

There are two distinct ways in which the House of Commons has been able to achieve non-partisan changes to the Standing Orders. The first way, which is used more frequently, is to have a committee develop the details of any proposed changes to the Standing Orders and to have that committee present a consensus report, which contains only proposed amendments that have won the support of all groups that have party status, which is to say of all parties, and which have at least one MP on that committee.

The centrepiece of the committee's report is always the exact wording of the proposed Standing Orders. The House then concurs in the report. A recorded vote may be taken or in some cases there may be approval by unanimous consent, but the key point is this: a consensus has been sought and the party or coalition of parties that have the majority in the House of Commons and on the committee judiciously refrains from attempting to impose measures that are not also supported by the minority.

The purpose of the Standing Orders is, of course, to protect the rights of whoever is in the minority in the House of Commons, whoever is, in one form or another, on the opposition benches. In a political system where the majority can act with complete freedom and with no restraints in its actions, Standing Orders of any kind are a mere impediment. This kind of unbridled majoritarian system is not the Westminster system and has no place in Canada.

It is with reason that this kind of unbridled majority rule is referred to as the “tyranny of the majority”, a term or a phrase developed in the 1840s by Alexis de Tocqueville, who was trying to distinguish between the unexpectedly moderate governing practices he had encountered in a trip to North America, as compared to the tempestuous situation in his native France, where one majority coalition would succeed another in an apparently unending series of revolutions, coups and counter-coups, with each majority coalition then proceeding to trample of the rights of the newly created political minority until it, too, would be overthrown, following the defection of one faction or another and the cycle of oppression would continue with new masters and new victims.

Returning to the committee for a moment, the work of creating and then sorting out the details of a series of changes to the Standing Orders, particularly in the case of technically complex changes, is often too much for a committee that is burdened with other matters as well, as is frequently the case for our procedure and House affairs committee, on which I served for 15 years.

• (1950)

We were in the habit, when I served on the committee, of delegating the task of drafting such changes to ad hoc subcommittees. One such subcommittee developed a code of conduct for MPs regarding sexual harassment, which now forms Appendix II of the Standing Orders. Another subcommittee, which I chaired, dealt with the definition of “gifts” under the MP conflict of interest code, which forms Appendix I to the Standing Orders. Whatever the case, the rule was always to seek out consensus and to go no further than was possible on a multipartisan basis.

The second way of achieving consensus is to have the procedure and House affairs committee review a set of proposed amendments to the Standing Orders and then to present the amendments to the House of Commons without making an actual recommendation.

Government Orders

This is what was done in 2015 with regard to a motion that I had brought forward to change the manner in which the Speaker is elected, from a series of runoff ballots to a single preferential ballot. My motion was made in the Commons and then referred by the House of Commons to the procedure and House affairs committee, which examined it in detail, including hearing from expert witnesses.

The committee then made a report to the House, stating:

The Election of the Speaker is a matter for all Members to decide. The Committee does not oppose nor endorse motion M-489 brought forward by [the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington]—

As I was at the time.

—and feels that the entire membership of the House of Commons should have the opportunity to vote on whether or not to change the Standing Orders in the manner suggested by M-489.

In order to accomplish this purpose of having a vote in the House, the Committee recommends that Standing Order 4 be amended as follows...

In the committee's report, this was followed by the text of the Standing Order amendments that I had proposed.

As part of this arrangement, which is not written down in the official record but which can be gleaned from the debates that took place in 2015 in the House and in committee, it is clear there was an all-party agreement to allow all members from all parties to vote freely on the proposed amendment. No party would apply a whip to its members, and this is exactly what happened. The vote took place in the very last division of the 41st Parliament in June 2015, in fact almost exactly eight years ago today.

Every single party in the House of Commons allowed a free vote, with the result that 27 Conservatives voted differently from their leader, 15 New Democrats voted differently from their leader, one Liberal dissented and even the Bloc Québécois, which only had four MPs elected in the prior election, recorded votes on both sides of that division. This is a reasonable model as an alternative to the consensus model, although I do worry that achieving a genuinely free vote is notoriously difficult in this place, which is why we elect our Speakers by secret ballot.

In the event that a consensus cannot be achieved at committee, it would be reasonable to follow the model laid out by the procedure and House affairs committee in that 2015 report with the addition of a secret ballot in the House of Commons on the motion that the committee has proposed. I note that this kind of secret ballot is not currently possible and would itself require a change to the Standing Orders, but I think that it is worthwhile to put the idea out there for future reference.

Nothing remotely like either of the two models I just outlined has been used in the present case, however. The procedure and House affairs committee signalled a majority preference for changing the Standing Orders in a report that features two dissenting reports from parties that, together, represent nearly half of all MPs in the House of Commons. This is as far from a consensus as it is possible to be.

Government Orders

Worse yet, the committee did not actually endorse any specific set of amendments to the Standing Orders, only the idea that such amendments should exist, and the government then produced a text drafted by bureaucrats confidentially to the text of the Standing Orders. This process makes detailed changes to those proposed Standing Orders, those 25 pages, virtually impossible as any micro changes of this sort that are done in committee can only be done if the House of Commons chooses to sit as a committee of the whole, which is clearly not going to happen.

Then, of course, there is the matter of closure. We are actually limiting debate and ramming through changes to the Standing Orders, something utterly unprecedented in this country, utterly without precedent and, I would say, utterly disgraceful.

From a process perspective, this is a retreat from the Westminster model to the majoritarian tyranny that de Tocqueville warned against. It is grand being a tyrant while the tenure lasts, but it is terrible to suffer the tyranny of those whom one had formerly oppressed, as many former leaders have learned, after the tools that they had forged are turned on their former masters. That is the real lesson to be learned today, and since the way in which we will be voting does not allow this lesson to be easily teased out, I thought it best to commit these sentiments to words and to express them today.

I have one last thought. This whole mess could be stopped if a standing order were adopted here that makes it impossible to amend the Standing Orders in the future using closure. If there was enough opposition, it would be possible for opposition parties to prevent a standing order change going through. That is not going to happen in this Parliament, but in the next Parliament, I will be proposing exactly such a change so that this kind of tyranny can never happen again.

• (1955)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me suggest a different reality. There were 108 Conservatives who voted in the last vote we had. Out of those 108, get this: 65 voted virtually. Imagine them saying, “I don’t want virtual Parliament” as they pull up their phone apps to vote virtually. Sixty-five out of 108 did this, and 43 of them actually showed up to vote inside the chamber. I am not an actuary, but I do believe that is less than half. Many might see a bit of hypocrisy there. I, for one, see a whole lot of hypocrisy.

Can the member explain why he cannot even get a majority of his own members to come in here as a way to make a statement that they do not want hybrid and will not participate in it?

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, did the member have cotton wool stuffed in his ears during my speech? I was talking about the fact that the government is using closure to ram through this amendment. That is what I was discussing. I was not discussing whether or not there should be hybrid voting. I did point out that the opposition motion allows for hybrid voting to go on for the entire rest of this Parliament and a year into the next Parliament.

If the member ever paid any attention to what anybody else says, he would know that his argument is complete nonsense and has no bearing on reality. Frankly, I will say tonight that the member

should be ashamed of the ignorance he brings to every debate he participates in. He is a disgrace sometimes.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would like to advise members not to insult each other, please, and to refrain from calling other members names.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech because, since this debate began, we have been hearing all kinds of generalities and nonsense about who votes virtually and who does not. The hon. member for Winnipeg North has once again lowered the level of debate.

However, I think my colleague raised the level of debate. Indeed, he pointed out that the way this motion is being put forward, regardless of content, is unacceptable. Since 1867, the House has always been able to operate unanimously. During the pandemic, we were always able to operate unanimously. The hybrid Parliament we have today was adopted unanimously. We have always been able to do that.

A few minutes ago, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River told us suddenly that unanimity is not always the best thing, that things can change. Suddenly, everything becomes relative.

How is it that, since 1867, we have always been able to operate properly and now, all of a sudden, we cannot?

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, there is just one thing I would like to say today about all the speeches from the Bloc Québécois.

There is a party in the House that wants to separate Quebec from the rest of Canada, and that party is more respectful of our institutions and our democracy than the government itself is.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have always enjoyed the member’s speeches and hearing his learned thoughts. It is great to hear de Tocqueville brought up and that sort of history. I like being here, and we have seen in the past few weeks and months that basically everybody is here.

I would like to hear a good argument against a hybrid Parliament that addresses accommodating the people who cannot be here, like the people who are sick, the people who are—

• (2000)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will give a very brief moment to the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston to answer.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I do not think I can provide an argument against it because I am not actually against hybrid. I am not against the voting app, nor indeed is the motion proposed by our House leader, which would allow the voting app to continue for the rest of this Parliament and one year into the new Parliament. I am really against the removal of the consensus requirement for changes to the Standing Orders.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 8:01 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 26 now before the House.

[Translation]

The question is on the amendment.

● (2005)

[English]

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

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

● (2035)

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

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of amendment to House]

● (2050)

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

(Division No. 381)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Berthold | Bérubé |
| Bezan | Blanchet |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Block |
| Brassard | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Calkins | Caputo |
| Carrie | Chabot |
| Chambers | Champoux |
| Chong | Cooper |
| Dalton | Davidson |

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|---------------------------------|
| DeBellefeuille |
| d'Entremont |
| Desilets |
| Dong |
| Dreeshen |
| Ellis |
| Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Fast |
| Findlay |
| Gallant |
| Gaudreau |
| Genuis |
| Godin |
| Gourde |
| Hallan |
| Jeneroux |
| Kitchen |
| Kram |
| Kusie |
| Larouche |
| Lehoux |
| Lewis (Essex) |
| Liepert |
| Maguire |
| Mazier |
| McLean |
| Michaud |
| Morantz |
| Motz |
| Normandin |
| Patzer |
| Paupé |
| Perron |
| Poilievre |
| Redekopp |
| Rempel Garner |
| Roberts |
| Ruff |
| Seeback |
| Shiple |
| Sinclair-Desgagné |
| Soroka |
| Ste-Marie |
| Stubbs |
| Therrien |
| Tolmie |
| Uppal |
| Vecchio |
| Vien |
| Vignola |
| Vis |
| Wagantall |
| Webber |
| Williamson |

Government Orders

| |
|--|
| Deltell |
| Desbiens |
| Doherty |
| Dowdall |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Epp |
| Falk (Provencher) |
| Ferrier |
| Fortin |
| Garon |
| Généreux |
| Gill |
| Goodridge |
| Gray |
| Hoback |
| Kelly |
| Kmieciak |
| Kramp-Neuman |
| Lantsman |
| Lawrence |
| Lemire |
| Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Lloyd |
| Martel |
| McCaughey (Edmonton West) |
| Melillo |
| Moore |
| Morrison |
| Muys |
| O'Toole |
| Paul-Hus |
| Perkins |
| Plamondon |
| Rayes |
| Reid |
| Richards |
| Rood |
| Schmale |
| Shields |
| Simard |
| Small |
| Steinley |
| Strahl |
| Thériault |
| Thomas |
| Trudel |
| Van Popta |
| Vidal |
| Viersen |
| Villemure |
| Vuong |
| Waugh |
| Williams |
| Zimmer—136 |

NAYS

Members

| |
|--------------|
| Ali |
| Angus |
| Arya |
| Atwin |
| Badawey |
| Baker |
| Battiste |
| Bendayan |
| Bittle |
| Blaney |
| Boissonnault |
| Bradford |
| Cannings |
| Chagger |
| Champagne |

Government Orders

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Chatel | Chen |
| Chiang | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) |
| Cormier | Coteau |
| Dabrusin | Damoff |
| Davies | Desjarlais |
| Dhaliwal | Dhillon |
| Diab | Drouin |
| Dubourg | Duclos |
| Duguid | Dzerowicz |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury |
| Fergus | Fillmore |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fragiskatos | Fraser |
| Freeland | Fry |
| Gaheer | Gazan |
| Gerretsen | Gould |
| Green | Guilbeault |
| Hajdu | Hanley |
| Hardie | Hepfner |
| Holland | Housefather |
| Hughes | Hussen |
| Hutchings | Iacono |
| Idlout | Ien |
| Jaczek | Johns |
| Joly | Jowhari |
| Julian | Kayabaga |
| Kelloway | Khalid |
| Khera | Koutrakis |
| Kusmierczyk | Kwan |
| Lalonde | Lambropoulos |
| Lametti | Lamoureux |
| Lapointe | Lattanzio |
| Lauzon | LeBlanc |
| Lebouthillier | Lightbound |
| Long | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| MacAulay (Cardigan) | MacDonald (Malpeque) |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Maloney |
| Martinez Ferrada | Masse |
| Mathysen | May (Cambridge) |
| McDonald (Avalon) | McGuinty |
| McKay | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McLeod | McPherson |
| Mendicino | Miao |
| Miller | Morrice |
| Morrissey | Murray |
| Naqvi | Ng |
| Noormohamed | O'Connell |
| Oliphant | O'Regan |
| Petitpas Taylor | Powlowski |
| Qualtrough | Robillard |
| Rodriguez | Rogers |
| Romanado | Sahota |
| Sajjan | Saks |
| Samson | Sarai |
| Scarpaleggia | Schiefke |
| Serré | Sgro |
| Shanahan | Sheehan |
| Sidhu (Brampton East) | Sidhu (Brampton South) |
| Singh | Sorbara |
| Sousa | St-Onge |
| Sudds | Tassi |
| Taylor Roy | Thompson |
| Trudeau | Turnbull |
| Valdez | Van Bynen |
| van Koeverden | Vandal |
| Vandenbeld | Virani |
| Weiler | Wilkinson |
| Yip | Zahid |
| Zarrillo | Zuberi — 168 |

PAIRED

Members

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Bergeron | Bibeau |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Savard-Tremblay— 4 |

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to the House*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

● (2055)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

● (2105)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 382*)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Aldag | Ali |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Ashton | Atwin |
| Bachrach | Badaway |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barron | Battiste |
| Beech | Bendayan |
| Bennett | Bittle |
| Blair | Blaney |
| Blois | Boissonnault |
| Boulerice | Bradford |
| Brière | Cannings |
| Casey | Chagger |
| Chahal | Champagne |
| Chatel | Chen |
| Chiang | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) |
| Cormier | Coteau |
| Dabrusin | Damoff |
| Davies | Desjarlais |
| Dhaliwal | Dhillon |
| Diab | Drouin |
| Dubourg | Duclos |
| Duguid | Dzerowicz |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury |
| Fergus | Fillmore |
| Fisher | Fonseca |
| Fortier | Fragiskatos |
| Fraser | Freeland |
| Fry | Gaheer |
| Gazan | Gerretsen |
| Gould | Green |
| Guilbeault | Hajdu |
| Hanley | Hardie |

Government Orders

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Hepfner | Holland | Dowdall | Dreeshen |
| Housefather | Hughes | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Ellis |
| Hussen | Hutchings | Epp | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Iacono | Idlout | Falk (Provencher) | Fast |
| Ien | Jaczek | Ferreri | Findlay |
| Johns | Joly | Fortin | Gallant |
| Jones | Jowhari | Garon | Gaudreau |
| Julian | Kayabaga | Généreux | Genuis |
| Kelloway | Khalid | Gill | Godin |
| Khera | Koutrakis | Goodridge | Gourde |
| Kusmierczyk | Kwan | Gray | Hallan |
| Lalonde | Lambropoulos | Hoback | Jeneroux |
| Lametti | Lamoureux | Kelly | Kitchen |
| Lapointe | Lattanzio | Kmiec | Kram |
| Lauzon | LeBlanc | Kramp-Neuman | Kusie |
| Lebouthillier | Lightbound | Lantsman | Larouche |
| Long | Longfield | Lawrence | Lehoux |
| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) | MacAulay (Cardigan) | Lemire | Lewis (Essex) |
| MacDonald (Malpeque) | MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Liepert |
| Maloney | Martinez Ferrada | Lloyd | Martel |
| Masse | Mathysen | Mazier | McCauley (Edmonton West) |
| May (Cambridge) | McDonald (Avalon) | McLean | Melillo |
| McGuinty | McKay | Michaud | Morantz |
| McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLeod | Morrison | Motz |
| McPherson | Mendicino | Muys | Nater |
| Miao | Miller | Normandin | O'Toole |
| Morrice | Morrissey | Patzer | Paul-Hus |
| Murray | Naqvi | Pauzé | Perkins |
| Ng | Noormohamed | Perron | Plamondon |
| O'Connell | Oliphant | Poilievre | Rayes |
| O'Regan | Petitpas Taylor | Redekopp | Reid |
| Powlowski | Qualtrough | Rempel Garner | Richards |
| Robillard | Rodriguez | Roberts | Rood |
| Rogers | Romanado | Ruff | Scheer |
| Sahota | Sajjan | Schmale | Seeback |
| Saks | Samson | Shields | Shiple |
| Sarai | Scarpaleggia | Simard | Sinclair-Desgagné |
| Schiefke | Serré | Small | Soroka |
| Sgro | Shanahan | Steinley | Ste-Marie |
| Sheehan | Sidhu (Brampton East) | Strahl | Stubbs |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Singh | Thériault | Therrien |
| Sorbara | Sousa | Thomas | Tochor |
| St-Onge | Sudds | Tolmie | Trudel |
| Tassi | Taylor Roy | Uppal | Van Popta |
| Thompson | Trudeau | Vecchio | Vidal |
| Turnbull | Valdez | Vien | Viersen |
| Van Bynen | van Koeverden | Vignola | Villemure |
| Vandal | Vandenbeld | Vis | Vuong |
| Virani | Weiler | Wagantall | Warkentin |
| Wilkinson | Yip | Waugh | Webber |
| Zahid | Zarrillo | Williams | Williamson |
| Zuberi — 171 | | Zimmer — 137 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Aboultarif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Berthold | Bezan |
| Blanchet | Blanchette-Joncas |
| Block | Brassard |
| Brunelle-Duceppe | Calkins |
| Caputo | Carrie |
| Chabot | Chambers |
| Champoux | Chong |
| Cooper | Dalton |
| Dancho | Davidson |
| DeBellefeuille | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Desbiens |
| Desilets | Doherty |

PAIRED

Members

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Bergeron | Bibeau |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Savard-Tremblay — 4 |

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion carried.

Government Orders

[English]

CANADA EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ACT

The House resumed from June 14 consideration of the motion that Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I may be having a technical problem with my microphone, just to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We cannot hear the hon. member. I think the hon. member is on mute. No, the hon. member is in a car, which is very difficult for sound.

The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I know we just passed a motion with respect to supporting hybrid, but I do not think it is appropriate for someone to participate in a hybrid debate while in a vehicle. I do not know if he is driving or if he is a passenger.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): He is not driving. It is only the sound that could be an issue. As well, the hon. member's headset is not the one accepted by the House, from what we are being told by technical services.

I cannot hear the hon. member.

[Translation]

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to take a few moments to talk about the tragic accident that occurred in Dauphin, Manitoba. Fifteen people were killed and another 10 are in hospital fighting for their lives. On behalf of all my colleagues from Quebec, my Conservative colleagues and all my colleagues in the House, I want to say that our thoughts are with those who responded on the scene, the first responders, the families of the victims, who are at the hospital with their loved ones, and all the communities affected. We are talking about seniors, who are the heart of the community around Dauphin, Manitoba. I feel we need to take a moment to think about all these people who are currently going through extremely difficult times.

I am feeling a bit emotional as I say this. I hope my colleagues will allow me to digress from the subject at hand, which is Bill C-35. This summer will mark the 10th anniversary of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, when 47 Lac-Mégantic constituents lost their lives in a tragic accident. It was the worst rail tragedy in eastern Canada's history.

These moments are always difficult. A community can never really recover from a tragedy like this. Yesterday in room 325 of the Wellington Building, I had the opportunity to present a documentary directed by Philippe Falardeau about this tragedy. The title of the documentary is *Lac-Mégantic: This is Not an Accident*. Why was this title chosen? Because many things could have been done to prevent this terrible tragedy from happening. Some of my colleagues attended the screening, and they were all shaken by the images they saw, by the reminder of this terrible tragedy. When

tragedies like this happen, it is our responsibility as members of Parliament to take the time to look at what happened, to take the time to analyze what was done then, what was done beforehand and, above all, what will be done in the future.

We will soon mark the 10th anniversary of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. It should not become just a date on which we remember things that happened. It should be a date on which we remember that we failed to do enough and that we must always do more to protect people's lives. People are counting on the legislators here in the House to make a difference when it comes to regulations and to corporations that are interested only in making a profit, sometimes, and too often, at the expense of safety.

In closing, I thank my colleagues who attended yesterday's screening of the documentary. I also encourage anyone who would like to watch the documentary to do so. My Bloc Québécois colleague was there. Members of the Conservative Party were there. There were Liberals. My colleague from the NDP was there as well. Partisanship has no place here when it comes to doing our jobs. We can disagree on how to fix things or how to come up with solutions, but one thing is certain: We must all work toward the same goals to ensure that such tragedies never happen again.

Just now, after seeing the images of this new tragedy in the media, I needed to take a few minutes to think back on what happened in Lac-Mégantic and remind these people that we are with them and we support them. I also wanted to emphasize that our duty as members of Parliament transcends partisan games. Our duty is to improve the lives of the citizens we represent here, as well as the lives of citizens across Canada.

I thank my colleagues for allowing me to digress for a moment about these developing events.

We are here to discuss Bill C-35.

● (2110)

My wife has been an early childhood educator for about 20 years. That has given me the opportunity to observe the evolution of public child care in the province of Quebec. I had the opportunity to see how these services were implemented because I was also involved in other levels of government at the time. I had the opportunity to see what a difference it can make for families, but I also saw what a difference it made for families that did not have access to child care.

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I saw how much hard work and energy went into ensuring that, first and foremost, child care enabled women to access the labour market. I will tell it like it is: Parenting responsibilities have traditionally fallen to women. Unfortunately, many women have to say no to a career, put their career on hold or delay going back to school because they do not have access to child care. That is the reality we are facing today.

In recent years, we have seen more and more women enter the workforce, particularly in Quebec, and more and more women become totally independent. That is what we should be striving for. A growing number of women are getting involved in politics, in management and in decision-making positions. Madam Speaker, you are living proof of this. There are many things that a woman can do. Nothing is impossible.

The fact remains, however, that when a woman decides to have children with her husband or partner—and I do not want to limit this to a man and a woman—when a couple decides to have children, there is always the issue of child care. When someone has a child, if they want to go back to work, if they want to keep their job, if they want to keep getting ahead, they may not necessarily be able to do both at the same time. They have to take a break. If the break lasts too long, sometimes women unfortunately do not get back into the workforce, or sometimes men do not get back into the workforce. That is the reality.

The government came up with the proposal of a national early learning and child care system in Canada. We have already seen this play out in Quebec. More than 20 years ago, Quebec tried to set up a similar system. For the past 20 years, child care has cost less than \$10 a day for families in Quebec. Does every mother, every family have access, 20 years later, to child care services? No, unfortunately. Why? Because the system is not able to absorb all the applications for child care.

My wife is an educator, and I have seen up close the different attempts by the government to ensure that families have access to public, educational child care services. They were called placement centres. People went there to register their children on waiting lists. In Quebec, people practically have to put their child on a waiting list before they are even conceived. If they wait too long, the child will be two and a half or three years old before a spot becomes available.

The Government of Quebec chose that system. The families who do not have access to this system, who did not have the chance to enter the system, whether at a facility with several groups, a yard and some games, or at a home-based service, which is also subsidized in Quebec, have no other option.

• (2115)

If they do not get a place for two and a half years, families have no other option. They cannot access affordable child care because the Quebec government chose the public child care option. Public assistance will therefore go to those who are lucky to have a spot.

Quebec is now facing another problem. I can speak to it because my wife is aware of it every day. Not only are there not enough spots, but now there are not enough early childhood educators in the system to be able to fill all the spots. There are children on wait

lists that cannot access child care services because there are not enough educators. Some spend hours and hours with children without a break all day. At the end of the week they are burned out. They are spread so thin that, after a few years, these young women quit their jobs and look for other work.

The system is struggling because there is not enough staff and families do not have spots. This is all because the Quebec government chose to put all its eggs in one basket, namely public child care and early learning services.

The government could have chosen another option. If the government had offered help, mothers could opt to spend a year at home. Instead of putting all their eggs in one basket, the government could have offered a credit to mothers who decide to stay at home.

The government could have chosen to offer a credit to families who want to go to the private sector to access a spot. There is a parallel network of private child care in Quebec, alongside public child care. Private child care costs a lot more, but unfortunately, the government does not contribute to that network. It costs families a lot more. They have to pay out of pocket right away. They will recover some of that money at the end of the year, but it will never be as much as if they had had access to the public system.

The thing is, these mothers and families pay the same taxes and income taxes as everyone else, but unfortunately, they do not have access to the same services. The consequences of that are serious for these mothers. I often talk about mothers, but that is the reality. I wish it were not so, but it is. The lack of child care spaces primarily affects young moms. That is what we see.

The government's proposal was to introduce a national child care plan that would reduce child care costs by an average of 50% by the end of 2022 and bring them down to an average of \$10 a day by 2026. The question is, who gets these discounted child care services? It is 2023. Will everyone have access to child care at an average cost of \$10 a day by 2026? Quebec has not been able to pull that off in 20 years.

That is the reality. Everyone has good intentions. We want to do the right thing and help, but if there are no educators on the ground, it is not going to work. If there are no services, it is not going to work. If there is no incentive for a parallel network to absorb the surplus that the public network cannot handle, it is not going to work.

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That is why we have expressed some doubts. Will the promised results ever be achieved? I have seen a lot of promises. Every government that has come and gone in Quebec has promised to either move faster or offer more spots. At one point, they even wanted to increase child care costs and make them proportionate to salary, so that people who earn more would pay more. During another election campaign, it circled back to the idea of a single rate for everyone. In short, they have tried everything, yet, even now, there is a significant shortage of child care spaces.

• (2120)

I therefore urge people to be cautious. I am speaking to mothers and families across Canada. There is no way that we will be able to set up a national child care system that is fair and equal for everyone in three years. It is simply not possible. If it were, all mothers and families in Quebec would have had access to a subsidized system a long time ago.

I want to talk about something that is very dear to me. I am often asked whether these child care and early learning services are useful. I am told that babysitters are available, and I am asked these questions: Why should people who are not working not have access to child care in Quebec? Why should subsidized child care be provided to people who do not need it because it is available at home, since mothers can stay at home? There are many reasons, but it is not for me to judge.

I can say that my wife is a child care technician. She was trained at college to be able to not only take care of children, but also support them in their learning. That is a good thing. It is needed. That is the choice that Quebec made.

Now, what I would like for Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, is for the program being brought in to allow the provinces to choose the system that works best for them. We know that it is not easy because in 20 years, Quebec has been unable to create enough spots. I would also like the program to allow families to have a choice and create the spots that women need. It is great to talk about money and say that this is not going to cost much, but if there are no spots that do not cost much, then women and families will not have more access to child care services and we will be back at square one.

Will Bill C-35 help produce better results? I hope so, but I am counting on the provinces for that because they are the ones that will ultimately make the decisions. It is not the federal government that will make the decision. So why is the federal government imposing standards on the provinces on how they should set up their network of child care and early learning services? I do not think it is a good idea to do this.

This bill seeks to confirm agreements that already exist. The government has already reached agreements with all the provinces to give them money to establish child care services. It is setting conditions. I believe that the best way to move forward would have been to remove the conditions and allow the provinces to develop the best child care services possible based on their situations. We could have then made progress and made it possible for more and more women to access the labour market and education to fulfill their careers and dreams.

I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Peterborough—Kawartha, for the excellent work she did for our party on Bill C-35. I think she did a lot of research and that she is very up-to-date on this matter. I will follow her lead when voting on Bill C-35.

• (2125)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 9:29 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, March 6, 2023, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[English]

The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 19, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

• (2130)

JUDGES ACT

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved:

That a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours that, in relation to Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Judges Act, the House:

agrees with amendments 1(b)(i) and 1(c)(i) made by the Senate;

respectfully disagrees with amendments 1(g), 1(i), 1(j) and 1(k) because they undermine the mechanisms in the bill for controlling process costs and delays by introducing a second intermediate appellate level into the proposed new judicial conduct process that would duplicate the work of the first and, as a result, would introduce into the new process costs and delays comparable to those that have undermined public confidence in the current process;

respectfully disagrees with amendment 2 because it undermines the mechanisms in the bill for controlling process costs and delays by maintaining most of the unnecessary costs and delays that the bill was intended to excise from the process for obtaining court review of a Canadian Judicial Council report issued under the current process;

respectfully disagrees with amendments 1(a), 1(b)(ii), 1(f) and 1(h) because they would, taken together, have the effect of redefining the roles of lay persons, expressly defined as persons who have no legal background, in the proposed new judicial conduct process by obliging them to fulfill decision-making functions requiring legal training or that are best fulfilled by those with legal training;

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respectfully disagrees with amendments 1(c)(ii) and 1(c)(iii), 1(d) and 1(e) because, taken together, they would redefine the balance struck by the bill between confidentiality and transparency considerations arising during the investigative stages of the process in a way that risks disclosing information of a personal or confidential nature, and that would require substantial new financial resources that are not otherwise necessary for the proper operation of the proposed new judicial conduct process; and

respectfully disagrees with amendments 1(b)(iii) and 1(l) because, taken together, they substantially rework the principal mechanisms contained in the bill for ensuring that the Canadian Judicial Council makes public information about the process, and these amendments do so in a way that risks disclosing information of a personal or confidential nature.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-9, an act to amend the Judges Act, which proposes reforms to the judicial conduct process. There is no doubt that these reforms are necessary. On Tuesday, the Chief Justice of Canada noted the importance of passing the bill quickly and I hope all members here take his advice to heart and that we proceed quickly.

Before moving to my prepared remarks, I would like to thank the Chief Justice of Canada as well as the Canadian Judicial Council and the Canadian Superior Court Judges Association for their work on this bill. I would also like to thank my very able parliamentary secretary, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke; as well as the members for Fundy Royal and Rivière-du-Nord. Obviously, as well, I would like to thank the hon. senators who put a lot of work into this bill, including Senator Pierre Dalphond.

Before discussing the central elements of Bill C-9, I would like to remind the hon. members of the process that got us here. As members will recall, the current judicial conduct process originated in 1971 when Parliament amended the Judges Act to create the Canadian Judicial Council, which was vested with the authority to investigate allegations of misconduct against federally appointed judges.

More than 50 years later, Canada's judge-led model for overseeing the conduct of a federally appointed judiciary remains a forerunner in the world, but the main characteristics of Canada's process have remained unchanged. This is despite fundamental changes in the field of administrative law and changing social values and public expectations that help to inform norms of judicial conduct. As a result, the structures and processes currently in place under the Judges Act are outdated. Worse still, in some recent high-profile cases, they have proven ineffective, jeopardizing the public trust that they were meant to inspire.

• (2135)

[*Translation*]

The current process for reviewing allegations of misconduct against federally appointed judges is seriously flawed. If left unaddressed, those flaws risk undermining public trust in the process and, by extension, our judicial system.

That is where Bill C-9 comes in. For the purposes of our consideration this evening, I would like to focus on the main objectives of the bill, namely, to make the judicial disciplinary process fairer, faster and more cost-effective, without compromising the rigour of the investigation, all with a view to ensuring greater accountability to the Canadian public. The bill meets these commendable objectives by proposing a set of reforms that take into account the many

competing factors that come into play in a complaint process such as this one.

The bill, as passed by the House, will replace the current process with a streamlined one that includes an internal appeal mechanism that will ensure the fairness and integrity of findings against a judge, rather than allowing the judge to step out of the process and initiate multiple court challenges that can interrupt and delay the case for years, as we have previously seen. The decisions of the internal appeal panel will be final, subject to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, with leave.

The bill therefore strikes the right balance to ensure that the most serious and complex cases are not only reviewed as thoroughly as necessary, but that they are also completed in a timely manner. What is more, rather than treating all cases as though they could necessarily warrant the judge's removal, the new process will make a wider range of possible sanctions available. This will allow certain complaints to be resolved both quickly and fairly, avoiding, in many cases, the need for public hearings.

[*English*]

Finally, through the reform process, the bill involves members of the general public at key decision-making stages where appropriate and ensures transparency and accountability to Canadians, while balancing the interests of complainants and judges.

Bill C-9, as adopted unanimously in the chamber, is a balanced, carefully considered and meticulously crafted bill that was born of extensive consultations with judicial and legal stakeholders, as well as members of the general public.

It benefits from the support of cornerstone judicial institutions, most notably, the Canadian Judicial Council, which stands at the very heart of the judicial conduct process that the bill seeks to reform.

As Bill C-9 made its way through this chamber, I was delighted, but not surprised, to see it benefit from significant approval and ultimately receive unanimous support. Once again, I thank the critics from all parties in every part of the House. However, the other place has adopted several amendments to Bill C-9, the majority of which simply cannot be accepted. While I am grateful for the thorough deliberations of the other place with regard to this bill, I am disappointed to see the results of their second thoughts.

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Allow me to begin my overview with the amendments from the other place on a positive note. I propose that we support the amendment that would strike the qualifier “As far as possible” from the current text of proposed section 84 in clause 12 of the bill. This provision requires that the Canadian Judicial Council make best efforts in ensuring that the roster of laypersons and puisne judges from which the decision-makers for various stages of the proposed new processes are drawn reflect the diversity of Canadians. The amendment helps to bolster the message sent through our legislative texts that our government, as well as all parliamentarians and, indeed, all Canadians, value the great diversity of our nation and are committed to ensuring that this diversity is reflected in our institutions, including the decision-making bodies of the new judicial conduct process.

We also welcome the amendment that would add complaints alleging sexual misconduct to the types of complaints that cannot be screened out by a screening officer and that must be reviewed by a member of the council. The two other types of such complaints are those that allege sexual harassment and those alleging discrimination within the meaning of the Canadian Human Rights Act. The spirit of this amendment aligns with the overall objectives of the bill and does not otherwise undermine the operation of the proposed new judicial conduct process. While it was unlikely these allegations would be screened out, it being clearly laid out in the text does not undermine the legislation or any ongoing process.

This brings me to the remaining amendments. We cannot support them because they substantially undermine the bill's excellent solution to chronic delays in the current process in two ways. First, it has been proposed to make the decisions of appeal panels reviewable as of right by the Federal Court of Appeal instead of by the Supreme Court of Canada with leave. I remind everyone that the appeal panels provided for by this bill are designed to be the equivalent of an intermediate appellate court to give the judge the same rights and the public the same level of transparency as a court like the Federal Court of Appeal. By making this change, the other place has added a second intermediate level of appeal to the process, giving a judge accused of serious misconduct a second kick at the can, as it were, at the intermediate appellate level before trying to do the same thing at the Supreme Court of Canada, something no other Canadian gets.

This change would reintroduce a substantial portion of the costs and the delays that plague the current process and that this bill was in fact intended to excise. It completely undermines the most central objective of this bill, making the process faster and less costly while maintaining its fairness. I would note that a similar effect was deemed out of scope by our own justice committee.

● (2140)

[*Translation*]

Secondly, the Senate proposed to add laypersons where they should not bring their perspectives. This would undermine the effectiveness and fairness of the new process in the bill, and it would particularly undermine the appeal mechanism. It is undeniable that laypersons can make a meaningful contribution and add great value to a process such as this.

That said, as with the other aspects of this bill, it was important to strike the right balance between factors conducive to the inclusion of laypersons and the inherent limits to their participation. Involving laypersons is certainly appropriate and useful for increasing public confidence in the fact-finding stages of the process. This is precisely where their involvement is provided for in Bill C-9 as passed by the House.

The Senate's proposed changes jeopardize this carefully established balance by proposing to include laypersons in appeal panels while, in these processes, the appeal panels deal primarily with correcting errors in law. In the context of the judicial conduct process, laypersons are defined as people with no legal knowledge, such as people who do not have the training required to address matters of law.

The Senate is proposing to add laypersons to two other stages of the process where training will be required or considered an important asset. The Senate's proposed changes represent a fundamental redefining of the role of laypersons as set out in the bill adopted by the House at second reading. Accordingly, I believe that they are simply not consistent with the stated purpose and cannot be retained.

● (2145)

[*English*]

The amendments proposed by the other place also undermine the bill's sensitive balancing of confidentiality considerations with the need for transparency. Here again the amendments in this respect go so far as to be out of scope.

As it stands, Bill C-9 includes transparency guarantees that reflect the broader public interest in open proceedings. However, the bill rightly situates the public's interest in open proceedings by building in adequate confidentiality safeguards that protect the complainants and judges who are the subject of the disciplinary proceedings. The other place's amendments would unravel this delicate balance by requiring, for example, ongoing disclosure, even when proceedings have yet to conclude. Perhaps most significantly, the other place's amendments lack safeguards to ensure that the council can protect the identity of complainants who fear reprisals from the subject of a complaint.

In the same vein, the final set of amendments require the collection and public disclosure of an unwieldy amount of information that would be gathered for the purpose of informing the Minister of Justice in deciding whether or not to recommend to the Canadian Judicial Council that new judicial education seminars be established on this information. Since the minister can speak to the council at any time about judicial education opportunities, such amendments are quite literally unnecessary and, as amendments whose primary objective is the establishment of new judicial education opportunities, they are also out of scope.

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Hon. members, we have reached a critical stage. As I have reiterated throughout my remarks, Bill C-9 is a bill about balance, balancing interests that are in tension with one another: confidentiality and transparency, fairness and efficiency, independence and accountability. Bill C-9, as adopted in this chamber by all parties, has struck the right balance, a balance these amendments would upset in arbitrary ways that run counter to the bill's central objective of restoring public confidence in the judicial conduct process. As a result, these amendments, quite simply, would defeat the purpose of this bill. Bill C-9 is critical to ensuring nothing less than continued public confidence in the independence of our judiciary and, by extension, in our system of justice.

I look forward to working together toward the common goal of ensuring that this important bill passes at the earliest opportunity. I will again note the urgency raised by the Chief Justice of Canada with regard to passing this legislation and I encourage all of my colleagues in this place to make this happen.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, we agree that it is high time that Bill C-9 becomes law.

I am disappointed to hear that the government is rejecting an amendment put forward by the other place that we think is very important, and that is the right to appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal.

Right now Bill C-9 says that there can be an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, but that is really just a right to apply for leave to appeal, and very few applications for leave to appeal are actually approved by the Supreme Court of Canada. It is something under 10%. Witnesses at committee have said that this is really just a faint hope for a judge who is perhaps going to lose his livelihood, reputation and legal profession. In the opinion of those experts in appeals, there should be one real appeal, and it should be to the Federal Court of Appeal.

I wonder what the minister would say.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, there has been a slight misunderstanding here. There is already an appeal process after the hearing panel decides in a case of removal. There is an appeal heard by three members of the Canadian Judicial Council, three chief justices of Canada, as well as two other puisne judges, which is an old Norman French word. A panel of five judges, the two puisne judges as well as the three others, would hear the first appeal. It is from there that a second appeal would go to the Supreme Court.

What the amendment proposes is a lateral appeal to the Federal Court. We are trying to eliminate that precisely because we have seen a rather celebrated case of a judge who kept appealing every single decision laterally to the Federal Court, and it ended up bogging the whole thing down and costing us a lot of money. We are trying to eliminate that while still maintaining fairness.

● (2150)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to hear from the minister, and I commend the fact that he is with us so late tonight to debate his motion.

The Bloc Québécois will support this motion because we are satisfied with the work that has been done. However, I would like to make a small clarification, and this is what I would like to hear the minister talk about. We agreed to the amendment to delete the words “as far as possible” with regard to reflecting diversity when selecting judges and laypersons. By striking out the “as far as possible” portion, it seems to me that we are moving from an obligation of diligence to an obligation of result.

We have the following question: Knowing that this is an obligation of result, is there a risk of restricting other characteristics, such as knowledge of French or bilingualism for example, in the search for candidates?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, every lawyer who was trained in Quebec like me knows the distinction between the obligation of diligence and the obligation of result. I fully understand her question and, in principle, I completely agree with her.

That said, we are accepting the Senate's proposal, in the circumstances, because we believe we can do it. We have consulted the judiciary, who believe they are able to live with the obligation of result. That is why we accepted the amendment.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the minister on his work. Of course, the NDP will also support the government's proposals. I must say that I very much appreciated his praise for the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, who does a tremendous and excellent job every day as the NDP justice critic.

We are talking about the Senate amendments, of course, but I would like to come back to the House of Commons stage. The NDP brought forward an amendment that broadened the definition of “discrimination” in subclause 90(3) of the bill, adding something very similar to discrimination. The government rejected this amendment. I would like to know if the minister can explain why. This is an NDP amendment brought forward by the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, we used definitions that are already known and accepted in the legal community. We believe that we have found the right way to express the concept of discrimination in the current bill. Of course, we worked with the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke and looked at what he had brought forward. We sincerely believe that we have chosen a better path.

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this bill has had widespread support among all the parties in the House and from the many stakeholders who have spoken in support of it across Canada.

We are at a very critical juncture here, in that we are reflecting on some of the proposals from the other place. The bill has gone through an extensive process in the House, and I am wondering if the minister could tell us why it is important that we get this bill passed before we rise and why it is important to ensure that the new process is in place before September.

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Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his question and for his work on this bill and all the other bills. If there was co-operation among the various critics in this House on this bill, it was largely due to his work, and I thank him for that.

When we conceived of this bill, there was a very high-profile case going through the system, again with all those lateral proceedings to the Federal Court that were bogging everything down. There is currently another one. We have also now seen, or at least been able to infer by reading the papers in recent days, that there has been a third case, this one at the level of Canada's highest court. In every single one of these cases, this process would have been better, both for initial evaluations and also for the ongoing procedures.

This will happen. There is an important value in trusting the judiciary and having confidence in the judiciary, and this will help. The judges themselves want it, because they are the ones who felt most acutely the problems of previous disciplinary cases.

• (2155)

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Senate is supposed to be a place of sober second thought. On this bill and on many other bills, it has continually brought forward recommendations, which this government continually rejects.

I am wondering if the minister can confirm to me that he uses the Senate as nothing more than a rubber stamp.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, frankly, I think if there is one minister who has not used the Senate as a rubber stamp, it is the current Minister of Justice.

I have been successful, again with a great parliamentary secretary, in getting a number of pieces of legislation through this House and the Senate in the past four and a half years.

I have compromised. I have accepted Senate amendments on a number of bills; on others I have not, and I have come back to the House to say that we should not.

However, I have a healthy relationship with the Senate. I sometimes joke that I am there more often than some of its own members, but I will not say that in the other place. Indeed, I think there is a healthy relationship there, and we have evaluated the amendments in this case very carefully.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise here this evening to engage in the debate on Bill C-9, a bill to update the Canadian Judicial Council review process for judges' conduct.

The last time I spoke to Bill C-9 was in December 2022, when it was here for third reading. At that time, I used an example of a case that had gone through the court system. I think the Minister of Justice referred to it as well. I think we are talking about the same one.

It was an example of a judge who abused the process to his own advantage. In that case, there had been allegations of misconduct outside of the courtroom. There was nothing about the judge's abilities in the courtroom. Of course, the judge denied all that. Early in the review process, it became evident that his days as a judge were numbered and that he would soon be asked to resign. However, he

used every trick in the book. He used every delay tactic, every appeal opportunity and every diversion, and he managed to drag the process on for years at great expense to the public, because taxpayers paid for his substantial legal fees throughout the process.

There is one more thing: Throughout the whole process, which went on for many years, this judge earned a full salary. On top of that, his pension continued to accrue. Mercifully, at some point, he resigned; he had a full pension by that point. The public became very cynical about judges judging judges.

I said at the time that the reforms that Bill C-9 sought to bring to the judicial review process were not about that one judge. That was just a good illustration of why reform is so necessary. The process must be simplified, shortened and clarified so that judges being reviewed know what they are up against, the Canadian Judicial Council knows what its responsibilities are and the confidence of the public in our judicial system is restored.

Judges judging judges can be a hard sell to the public, so let us not make it more difficult and more opaque than it has to be. The principle of judicial independence runs deep in our constitutional fabric, and its integrity must be retained. That is why Bill C-9 is so urgent.

My earlier speech was on December 9, 2022, at third reading. The House voted unanimously to send it to the other place, and it went through the chamber of sober second thought. Somewhat surprisingly, it met some resistance, and it has come back to this House with some amendments. There are six in total, and I will get to them.

Before I get into the merits of Bill C-9, as now proposed by the Senate as amended, I want to give an update on what has been happening in the world of judges in Canada. Six months ago, I raised the example of a case that had gone wrong and had gone badly.

Today, sadly, we have another good example of why reform is needed urgently, and that is the example of Mr. Justice Russell Brown of the Supreme Court of Canada, who just resigned.

In the earlier case, the very clever and capable judge abused the Canadian Judicial Council review process for his own advantage. In this latter case, I would submit that the judicial review process abused the judge.

Government Orders

I am not going to get into the details, but I will summarize what happened. During off-hours, the judge encountered a group of people, and security footage showed that they had consumed too much alcohol. Details of who said what, who pushed whom and all that were put before the Canadian Judicial Council. It should have been a speedy process, but it was not. Six months later, the initial review panel still had not completed its work; there was no light at the end of the tunnel as to when a final decision might be made. In the meantime, Justice Russell Brown was suspended from sitting with the other nine judges; there were only eight sitting. His life was on hold, as was his family's life.

As one legal academic described disciplinary hearings, the process itself is sometimes the punishment. Moreover, as another legal expert stated more recently, "Justice Brown's retirement constitutes an honorable discharge of an honorable man in a dishonorable process."

● (2200)

It does not need to be that way. If we are serious about maintaining judicial independence, the integrity of our justice system and public confidence, while upholding the dignity of judges, reform is urgent. That is why we need to expedite this bill through Parliament as soon as possible.

How would Bill C-9 improve things? It would simplify the system. It would clarify some of the rules. Bill C-9 establishes a two-stream process for complaints, first, that are serious enough to warrant removal from office, and second, for other complaints that would warrant less serious sanctions, such as orders for counselling, education, a reprimand or requesting an apology. There is a wide range of things that the council could order.

In that two-stream process, Bill C-9 now establishes a five-step streamlined process that should have the positive effect of speeding up the process to final resolution. First, there is an initial screening by a council official to decide whether the complaint has any merit at all. For example, the complainant might be a disgruntled litigant who is unhappy with the judge's decision. That would be a complaint without merit. The draft legislation also clarifies the criteria to guide the screening officer in their work. There is more predictability, the rules are clearer and there is less fishing for irrelevant facts.

Any case not dismissed by the screening officer then proceeds to a review by an official to decide whether the complaint merits further investigation. The reviewing member is guided by the same criteria as the screening officer. The reviewing member can dismiss the case altogether or refer the matter to a review panel.

Once it gets to the review panel, the panel could either dismiss the case or make orders, short of a recommendation to the minister for removal. If the panel forms the opinion that the judge should be removed, it directs the case to a full hearing panel. In all other cases, it has significant power to order lesser remedies or sanctions. I have already mentioned the remedies. These powers would be much broader, at this level, than they are under current legislation. That is what makes this new process so unique and so important. In theory, this allows the Canadian Judicial Council to directly address all types of judicial misconduct and enables prompt resolution of less-serious cases without a full hearing.

If the judge is unhappy with the order that has been made, he or she could appeal the review panel's decision to a reduced appeal panel. Appeals relating to remedies or orders short of removal go to a reduced hearing. Those related to removal recommendations would go to a full hearing.

The panel can hear evidence, take sworn testimony and, hopefully, settle the case. However, if the judge is unsatisfied with that, they could then have a final appeal within the system.

This internal appeal mechanism has no equivalent under the current system. Appeal panels replace, as the minister has said, the current right to judicial review through the superior courts, where cases are subject to court rules of evidence, potentially greater delays and substantially higher costs. Let us think of the earlier case, where the judge dragged the process out for many years through the superior courts using judicial review procedures that were available to him. It was an abuse of the system. This legislation would put a stop to that.

The whole process would stay within the four walls of the Canadian Judicial Council review process. There are no appeals from a decision of the appeal panel, with one very important exception. Under clause 137 of the legislation, either the judge or the presenting counsel, which is like the Crown prosecutor, could apply for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. This is a party's only opportunity to appeal to the courts under the new process.

● (2205)

The purpose behind this restriction, of course, is to reduce opportunities for endless delays by appealing into the court system. There is one appeal to one court at the end of the internal process, and that is it. Purportedly, according to the government, this limitation balances the right to fairness with a need for expediency; in fact, it is just a faint hope, because a right to appeal to the Supreme Court is only a right to seek leave to appeal, to ask for permission. The Supreme Court is very busy, and it receives many appeal applications in any given year; however, it grants very few of them. As a matter of fact, it grants fewer than 10%.

We had experts come to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and testify that, in their opinion, this is just not sufficient, and that a judge should have at least one real right of appeal into the court system. Conservative members of the committee supported that, and for that reason, we put forward a motion to amend Bill C-9 to give one more right of appeal, and that is to the Federal Court of Appeal.

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In searching for the right balance between expediency and fairness, Conservative members of the committee felt that this was the right place to land. However, the chair of the committee disagreed, calling the motion “out of scope”. Bill C-9 came back to the House without amendment, and it was that unamended bill that came before the House for third reading in December 2022. The House approved it unanimously. It went to the other place, and surprise, it has now come back with six amendments, including the one the Conservative members put forward. It was a remake of our amendment, so we support that amendment, of course.

Incidentally, we also support the other amendments concerning more technical matters, such as the structure and composition of hearing panels, reporting and transparency requirements and the collecting of data. We looked at those, and they all make sense.

I want to turn back to the Russell Brown issue, which has been in the news recently. At a press conference held earlier this week, Chief Justice Wagner had this to say: “Since I became Chief Justice in 2018, I realized that there was something to be corrected at the Judicial Conduct Committee. The judicial conduct process was...opaque. It was too long, too costly and...it was not possible...for the public to have trust.... I was happy to see that government has decided to legislate on that issue, to be more transparent, less costly.”

He went on to point out that this process of reform started several years ago, but because of a number of delays, the bill fell off the order table. We all know what those delays were. They were caused by the Prime Minister's decision for prorogation of Parliament and then later to ask the Governor General to dissolve Parliament and force an election in the middle of the pandemic. It was an election that nobody wanted, and the results after are exactly what they were before.

The bill fell off the order table, and that was the cause of the delay. Parliament had to start over, and now the bill is once again before us in the form of Bill C-9. It should have received royal assent by now, and if the Liberals had agreed to the Conservative members' common-sense amendment concerning the Federal Court of Appeal, the bill likely would have been law by now already. However, let us get it done now.

As I wrap things up here, I want to reflect on Russell Brown's legacy. I will quote several legal scholars, whose words were picked up by a publication.

Joanna Baron, executive director of the Canadian Constitution Foundation, said, “[Justice Brown's] track record in just under eight years on the SCC is extraordinary. It's sad to consider the counter-history of what his judicial career might've been otherwise.”

● (2210)

Ms. Baron goes on to cite Justice Brown in the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act case of 2021. We should remember that Justice Brown was writing in dissent; he was on the minority side of this. Ms. Baron says, “He was skeptical of the move by the majority to accept that Parliament could wade into provincial jurisdiction to legislate reduction of carbon emissions under the ‘national concern’ doctrine, noting that such a move would permanently vest ex-

clusive jurisdiction in Parliament over any matter said to be of the vaguely defined ‘national concern’.”

Sean Speer, editor of The Hub, writes about the distinction between judges and scholars who are “living tree” proponents when it comes to constitutional litigation, and those like Justice Brown who pay deference to laws and regulations passed by Parliament and by legislative assemblies.

Asher Honickman and Gerard Kennedy of the Advocates for the Rule of Law had this to say about the vacancy created by Mr. Justice Brown's departure creates at the SCC:

Justice Brown's departure robs this country of one of the greatest judicial minds and legal writers to have presided over the Court in recent decades. We urgently recommend that the Prime Minister appoint a successor from Western Canada [where Justice Brown is from] who exhibits a similar legal brilliance and commitment to foundational principles.

I have another quote, from Howard Anglin, a doctoral student at Oxford University, who had this to say about Justice Brown's departure:

His departure leaves a yawning intellectual hole on the Court. The Supreme Court today is a more jurisprudentially diverse body than it was eight years ago when he joined it, but it is always a threat to resume its old ways of lazy collegiality. If it does, at least future justices and scholars [and I would add law students] will have Brown's trove of fine writing and clear thinking to challenge, inspire, and shake them out of that all-too-Canadian tendency to complacency.

I just want to have one more quote from Justice Brown read into the record. This is another dissent. It is a case that is important to me because it involves Trinity Western University when it was trying to establish a law school and was turned down by the Law Society of British Columbia. This is important to me because Trinity Western University is a very important institution, highly regarded and highly respected in my home community of Langley, and it is also my alma mater. It is where I did my undergraduate degree many years ago.

I am going to conclude with this quote from Justice Brown from that case, again writing a dissent. That decision went the wrong way, in my opinion, but Justice Brown's words, I think, are very important. Hopefully they will form the basis of judicial scholarship going forward. They read, “the public interest in fostering a liberal, pluralist society is served by accommodating religious freedom...which freedom allows religious communities to flourish and thereby promotes diversity and pluralism in the public life of our communities.”

I would like to thank Mr. Justice Russell Brown for the great service he has given to Canada, to the Supreme Court and to legal scholarship.

I am going to wrap this up, but I have a motion that I would like to read into the record. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “That” and substituting the following:

“the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Judges Act, be now read a second time and concurred in.”

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• (2215)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that was an interesting contradiction, but there have been a lot of contradictions within the Conservative Party in the last number of hours.

I notice that the member says the Conservatives support the bill and want to see the bill get passed, and now what the member does at the very end is read a motion. The motion is an amendment. That continues the tradition of the Conservative Party. Whether it supports a bill or it does not support a bill, its members tend to want to try to prevent legislation from passing.

The Minister of Justice just expanded on why there are some issues related to the Senate amendments, and why we cannot support them. I do not quite understand. Is the Conservative Party really wanting to see the legislation pass, or is the idea that it will move an amendment in order to cause additional votes and maybe even put up endless speakers? Is the member going to be the last speaker, or can we get some sense of whether there are going to be another 25, 30 or 40 speakers who want to speak to the legislation?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, this is very important legislation, and it has been dragging on for a long time, so some of my colleagues want to speak to it. This is important legislation, and we have important things to say about it. As for the amendment I just put forward, it says to accept all the amendments put forward by the other place. We think they are important. One of them is actually our own, which the Senate has remade. As for the other amendments, we are saying we agree with them, and we think the legislation would be improved.

We are not trying to delay anything; we are just trying to make the legislation better.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like him to answer the same question I asked the Minister of Justice.

Do we not run the risk of limiting the number of candidates who could be added to the list of judges and laypersons if we strike “as far as possible” from the sentence about selecting candidates who reflect diversity, especially given that there is a shortage of judges?

The minister mentioned that the Canadian Judicial Council seemed convinced it would be able to fulfill an obligation of result in appointing people from diverse backgrounds. Does my colleague share the Minister of Justice's optimism given the current shortage of judges?

• (2220)

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, some of the Senate amendments we would be approving speak to exactly that, so we are on record as saying we want to go forward with that.

As for there not being enough judges, that is another point I could have raised. I did not, but the shortage of judges is an issue Chief Justice Wagner raised as well in his press conference. There are 80 vacancies right now.

At the justice committee, we are studying bail reform, and some of the issues are that the trials are bogged down and bail hearings are not happening the way they should, so it is hitting a crisis point. We need the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister to fill those vacancies as soon as possible.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is not often I agree with the member for Winnipeg North, but I am confused by the Conservative tactics here.

This is a relatively non-controversial bill, something the Canadian Bar Association and the whole legal system has pointed out to us that they would like passed as quickly as possible so judges who do things that are improper would be properly handled and properly sanctioned. However, here we have, with a few days left in this session, the Conservatives stalling again with amendments that they know will not pass and that will delay other bills that are more important and deserve more debate. Here we are, talking endlessly about a bill that we basically all want to see pass.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, once again we have a colleague saying we are delaying things. We are not.

On December 9, we passed this unanimously. It went to the other place, which came up with some amendments, and we think they make a lot of sense. One of the amendments is one of the amendments Conservative members put forward at the justice committee. If it had not been ruled out of scope, and if the Liberal members had voted with us on that, this likely would have received royal assent by now.

I am confused as to why the other members think we are delaying things. We are just trying to make the legislation better.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would say respectfully to the government that, if it wanted this law passed, it should not have prorogued or called an unnecessary election. This could have been law years ago.

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These are substantive amendments to be put in place here, so this is not some tactic. We are talking about the livelihoods and reputation of justices. In my opinion, it is not untoward to have a right of appeal. Requesting leave to the Supreme Court is not real. One will get no shot at it. This will not bog down the court system. There might be a handful of cases that would make it to the Federal Court of Appeal. Does the member agree with my comments?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I would completely agree with that. As the Minister of Justice said, there was an appeal process built within the four walls of this legislation and likely that is the end. However, the experts who came to committee said there must be that one appeal into the court system that everybody recognizes as being fair, judicious and generally accepted by the Canadian public. I do not think it would bog things down at all.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when the member first talked about the bill, he spoke about how the legislation is good in that it cuts down on the length and makes it more efficient. He even made reference to how it could ultimately go to the Supreme Court. At the end of his speech, he then came onside, saying that the Conservatives support the amendments. That makes me question if these are Conservative senator amendments or if they are from the senators in general. It seems that they might be Conservative senator amendments the member is proposing.

I wonder if he can expand on if he is perhaps being influenced by the Conservative wing of the Senate.

• (2225)

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I do not even know where to start with that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Members who have not been recognized should not be speaking.

The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I am not going to speculate on that. This has come back from the Senate with amendments, and we think they are good. One of them is an amendment that the Conservatives put forward initially, and the Senate picked up on that.

I do not know why the member would impute bad motives to the senators. They are just trying to do their job to the best of their ability. After a reflection of sober second thought, this is what they think would improve the bill. We agree with them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, once Bill C-9 is adopted, should the Minister of Justice finally become involved in the judicial appointment process in order to make it less partisan and more effective?

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I completely agree that the appointment of judges and people to the Canadian Judicial Council should be non-partisan. One of the problems we have seen is that it has become too partisan, so I completely support that.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, Conservatives said that they wanted to pass the

bill. Now they have put in an amendment that provokes hours of additional debate on the bill. How do they reconcile that contradiction of always blocking legislation, even when they say they support it?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I have been asked this question a few times. We think these amendments make a lot of sense. They improve the legislation. That is exactly the way the process is supposed to work after the other place looks at it, and we think the House should accept those amendments.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, even though it is late, we are wrapping up our work and we may be a little jagged, it is a pleasure to speak to the return of Bill C-9 as amended by the Senate.

This all feels a bit like groundhog day. I was rereading the notes from my last speech on Bill C-9 and they begin with a reminder to wish everyone a merry Christmas.

In my notes, I was talking about the fact that I had spoken to Bill C-9 or its equivalent, Bill S-5, before the 2021 election. All that to say that I have spoken to Bill C-9 many times now. I feel like I am repeating myself, unfortunately. It may be a feeling shared by my colleagues, either in their own speech or in having to listen to mine for the umpteenth time this evening.

This has been mentioned many times: There is a real urgency to look into the misconduct of federally appointed judges, as current events are reminding us. There is the case of Justice Brown, for instance, where there were unending delays in the probe of what seemed to be alleged misconduct.

In a context where, unfortunately, there is a shortage of judges, we are reminded that we need to streamline the process for studying misconduct and that we need to do so in two ways. First, Bill C-9 provides for fewer judges to study a case of misconduct. Second, it provides fewer possibilities for using delaying tactics throughout the process to ensure that the work is done diligently and that the judges are assigned for a shorter period of time.

With respect to the amendments proposed by the Senate, only two were retained by the government and the rest were rejected. I will spend a little more time on one of the amendments, which prompted some questions that I have already asked my colleagues. It concerns an amendment to clause 84, which follows up on the clauses that provide for the creation of a list of judges and laypersons who can be involved in the different stages of the process for studying the misconduct. There is a diversity provision for this list. The initial clause read as follows:

84 As far as possible, the Council shall name persons who reflect the diversity of the Canadian population to the roster of judges and to the roster of lay persons.

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The amendment suggested by the Senate and accepted by the government would delete “as far as possible”. As I mentioned, this points to a shift away from what seemed like an obligation of diligence to an obligation of result. To the extent possible, the aim was to incorporate diversity into the list of judges and laypersons for selection. However, by deleting “as far as possible”, I get a sense that we are creating more of an obligation of result, which raises a number of issues.

We are told that there is currently a shortage of judges. We cannot change the current number of judges simply by snapping our fingers. It would be nice if we could because we need them, but we have to work with what we have. If we absolutely had to start reflecting diversity now, with our very small pool of existing judges, we could run into certain problems by selecting judges concentrated in certain geographic areas, where there is better representation. We could end up relying more heavily on specific locations to find judges more representative of diversity. We could also run the risk of sidelining certain other necessary or useful criteria in selecting the judges we want to include on our lists. One example could be knowledge of both official languages. By making diversity an obligation rather than something we are striving for or want, we could be limiting our options at a time when resources are already scarce.

● (2230)

When I asked the minister whether it might not create obstacles that are more difficult to overcome if we make it an obligation of result rather than an obligation of diligence, I got the impression that he somewhat agreed that it was perhaps not the best amendment that the Senate could have suggested. He seemed to be saying that we can live with it, it is not so bad, but that, clearly, we could have done without it.

When it comes to this aspect of creating an obligation of result when drawing up a list, I think we could have done without this amendment. It creates an obligation that may be difficult to fulfill. I do not necessarily share the Minister of Justice's optimism when he says that the Canadian Judicial Council is of the impression that it will be able to fulfill this obligation.

The other amendment that was proposed and welcomed by the government is to add the term “sexual misconduct” to the list of complaints that cannot be systematically dismissed by a screening officer who receives complaints. It therefore says that “A screening officer shall not dismiss a complaint that alleges sexual misconduct [that is the term being added] or sexual harassment or that alleges discrimination on a prohibited ground of discrimination within the meaning of the Canadian Human Rights Act.”

In the complaints analysis process, a complaint can be dismissed from the outset if it is frivolous, vexatious or obviously unfounded because the grounds for complaint are not sufficiently substantiated. A complaint cannot be rejected if there is an element of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment or discrimination.

This amendment is timely in the context of the #MeToo movement, as we increasingly seek to eliminate everything to do with sexual misconduct. We do not want this to be such a specific criterion that we never reach it. We want to widen the scope. I think it is a good thing to add “sexual misconduct” to the list of criteria for not automatically dismissing a complaint.

In that regard, I believe that good work was done. In my opinion and in the Bloc Québécois's opinion, the minister clearly explained the reasons for which he supports these two amendments, although we do not entirely agree with one of them. However, this will not prevent us from voting in favour of the motion, because it will finally make it possible to implement Bill C-9. This is becoming increasingly urgent. We need to get this done as quickly as possible, so we can truly streamline the complaints analysis process.

The government rejected the rest of the Senate amendments in order to prevent the complaints analysis process from becoming more cumbersome, given that the original intent of the bill was to streamline it. In our opinion, it was warranted to reject the proposed amendments.

I want to come back to the fact that this bill was debated at length on multiple occasions and in various incarnations. The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights has done a lot of work on this, and it seemed as though we finally had a version that parliamentarians agreed on.

Bill C-9 was unanimously passed at third reading. I think we could have done without the Senate deciding to get involved and adding its two cents. I will not get into the details of Bloc Québécois's position on the very existence of a second chamber. However, I would like to come back to the general purpose of the bill. It is important to remind members of that. The community, all jurists, have been asking for this bill for a long time.

What is more, as I mentioned recently, after the news broke about Justice Brown, the Right Hon. Richard Wagner once again emphasized the urgent need to take action and pass Bill C-9. He also mentioned that it was too bad that the bill was still being examined by the House.

● (2235)

This allows me to add this little grain of salt: If not for the snap 2021 election, we would already have a bill in place. I mention the following purely as a hypothesis, since I do not have a crystal ball, but Justice Russell Brown's case might have gone differently had it been handled under the future version of Bill C-9, which we will likely adopt, instead of under the old complaints process, which is several decades old.

This bill, which seeks to shorten the process and therefore lower the cost, is well balanced. It helps speed up the process and make it more efficient, while upholding the rights of any judge who may be the subject of complaints for misconduct of all kinds within or outside their practice.

Government Orders

The other thing we really liked about the bill is that it gets us out of a binary repression mode, a binary method for sanctioning complaints. In the first version, either the judge was cleared of the charges and remained in their position, or they were found guilty of the charges and had to be removed. There was no grey area between the two for less serious misconduct, for example. That is something that has been corrected in Bill C-9.

I think it is still worth mentioning a few things that are now possible. I did this last time, and I think it is still relevant to repeat it again today. Clause 102 of the bill states: “If the review panel does not refer the complaint to the Council under section 101, it may dismiss the complaint or take one or more of the following actions if it considers it appropriate to do so in the circumstances”.

One of the things the panel can do is “issue a private or public expression of concern” about the judge's alleged conduct. It can “issue a private or public warning”. It can also “issue a private or public reprimand”. Once again, these measures may be more appropriate depending on the type of misconduct that may have occurred, rather than an all-or-nothing approach, in other words removal or no removal. The panel can also “order the judge to apologize, either privately or publicly, by whatever means the panel considers appropriate in the circumstances”. This means the judge can be supported through an apology process that would be tailored to the situation.

It can “order the judge to take specific measures, including attending counselling or a continuing education course”. There is a rehabilitation aspect. This is a much more positive approach that shows a desire to retrain judges, if they make honest mistakes, for example.

The panel can “take any action that the panel considers to be equivalent to any of the actions referred to in paragraphs (a) to (e)”. This provides the panel with a fair bit of latitude in the actions it can take. Finally, the panel can, “with the consent of the judge, take any other action that the panel considers appropriate in the circumstances”. The fact that the judge's consent is absolutely required for measures beyond the scope of those mentioned is perhaps the aspect of the bill that made us hesitate a little more.

Generally speaking, this is a bill that has long been awaited and desired by the judiciary and the bar associations. We are pleased to finally see it come to fruition, to completion. We hope that, despite the little game of ping-pong between the House of Commons and the Senate, no more obstacles will be thrown in the way. I would like to point out that the fact that another amendment has been proposed just this evening worries me a little. I hope that this will not prevent the bill from being passed before the summer, or before what could happen in the fall. Nobody here has a crystal ball. I hope this will not be the umpteenth bill to die on the Order Paper. We could fill a lot of shelves with all the bills that have died on the Order Paper. Unfortunately, we are making a lot of work for shelving manufacturers.

In general, we feel that the government's motion assessing the Senate amendments is balanced.

● (2240)

It prevents excessive amendments from undermining the bill's original substance and its original objective of streamlining the pro-

cess and making it much more efficient. We still have some uncertainty about deleting the words “as far as possible” and imposing an obligation of result. However, we can live with that uncertainty. I think that voting in favour of the government's motion is worthwhile, because it will finally allow the bill to be implemented.

With that in mind, the Bloc Québécois has no problem in supporting the motion. Most of all, we hope that the next steps will be taken in a timely manner and will finally produce an acceptable bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have heard some of the stakeholders, particularly from our judicial system, indicating that this legislation is sound and they are recommending that the House of Commons pass it. I recognize that the Bloc has been very supportive of the legislation since before it went to the Senate. I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on respecting the independence of the courts and the suggestion that they would really like to see this legislation pass.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, one of the analyses I did in my first speech on Bill C-9 was under section 99 of the Constitution, which addresses judges' security of tenure. Different jurists and analysts who worked on the bill mentioned that this principle of immovability was respected. The foundation of the analysis process for misconduct is that it is to be done by peers and a judge must not be removed for minor issues. It was balanced.

The fact that the number of courts in the analysis process is being reduced and that only a right of appeal to the Supreme Court is being retained was balanced in context to still allow for the right of defence for judges accused of misconduct. This is a bill that is balanced and respects the constitutional part on security of tenure.

● (2245)

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her well-thought-out speech on this very important topic.

One of the amendments the Senate is recommending is that there be one more appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal because the appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada is really a faint hope, likely never to happen. One of the reasons the minister has given for there not to be an appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal is to stop the proliferation of appeal after appeal.

This is only one appeal, and I wonder what the member thinks about that. I get a sense that the Bloc is going to vote with the government on this, but just as an intellectual exercise, what does she think about one more appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal?

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I think we have seen abuses of process in the past. The case of Justice Michel Girouard was an example. By eliminating some recourse to common law courts, we can avoid not only appeals, but also everything that is incidental to an appeal. There are various dilatory measures that can be taken in the case of an appeal in a common law court. That is what is being minimized.

It is not ideal, but the judge does not completely lose his right to a full defence. There seems to be a balance between the two, because there are a number of steps. It's not a case of one person having the final say. There are several panels made up of a number of legal experts. This is a more specialized form of internal appeal, so to speak, than the appeal that could be made to a common law court. It seems to me that the right balance has been struck.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always find it interesting to hear what my colleague from Saint-Jean has to say.

It has been 50 years since there has been any reform of the complaints process. We thought that we were just about to complete this process, but then we just received an amendment from the Conservative Party that will add another debate on all these issues. I wanted my colleague to tell me if she is worried, because we are starting another debate on another amendment, when there have already been very long delays.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I mentioned at the end of my speech that adding another amendment raised some concern. What is that going to accomplish? That is ultimately the question.

I am not against ideas being debated or everyone being able to express their point of view, but the way that it is done is sometimes problematic. Is this a way to delay passage of the bill? If so, it is absolutely deplorable. It has been dragging on for a very long time. A lot of work has gone into it. Committees have worked on it many times.

If the goal is simply to delay adoption, that worries me. If, in the end, we add a little time for debate so that points of view can be heard, then it may not be so bad. We will have to see. As they say, the dose makes the poison. I think that is what will tell us whether this was a motion for real debate or just a waste of time.

• (2250)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to come back to one specific aspect of my colleague's speech. In the Senate amendments, there is a change to clause 84, which deals with imposing greater diversity. I understand that, in post-1982 Canada, there is a desire to promote diversity. However, diversity is promoted differently in Quebec than it is in Canada, plus Canada is now a so-called postnational state. I get the impression that this is also reflected in the bill with the Senate amendments that aim to shift diversity from being encouraged and desirable to being imposed and mandatory.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this shift, which could be described as ideological in a regime where the noose keeps tightening, despite the consequences it may cause.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, we often like to say in the House that good intentions do not necessarily make good bills. I will not impute bad intentions to anyone with regard to this amendment. On the contrary, I think it comes from a good place.

However, by setting a fairly strict obligation in its application, we may be losing some flexibility. The Senate means well, but ultimately, this could cause other problems that could in turn make the amendment less useful, even though it was well intentioned. I think the problem lies more in the application than in the intention.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by commending my colleague from Saint-Jean on her great speech.

I want to come back again to the amendment that removes the expression “as far as possible”. In her question to the minister and in her speech, my colleague reminded the House that, by now adopting an obligation of result, we risk ignoring the other criteria that should be considered. Could she remind the House of those other criteria and the harmful consequences that such an amendment could have?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I understand that clause 84 seeks to create a roster of people who could sit on various panels. Since we do not know in advance which judge may have to make representations before these panels for various types of misconduct, we would want to have a roster of people who have many different qualities, including being bilingual, because there may be French-speaking and English-speaking judges on the lists.

If we focus only on characteristics related to diversity, then other qualities and characteristics, such as bilingualism, may end up taking a back seat. That would mean that official languages will once again suffer, and, unfortunately, it will not be the first time that that has happened in the big federal system.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise at this late hour in Ottawa, where it is almost 11 p.m., to speak to the Senate amendments to Bill C-9.

I would like to start by saying hello to my constituents in New Westminster and Burnaby. In British Columbia it is almost 8 p.m. and so the sun is still up. I know that is also the case in the ridings of the member for Langley—Aldergrove, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country and my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley. For the people of British Columbia and for everyone listening to the debates in the House of Commons, we are in the thick of things. I know that there are some constituents listening and I applaud the fact that they are listening after supper to what is happening in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

The NDP will support Bill C-9 and the recommendation on the amendments. I will come back to that in more detail later. First of all, I am concerned that the Conservative Party is once again trying to block a bill. This has been going on in the House systematically for years. As I have said before, there are two blocks in the House: the Bloc Québécois and the block-all Conservative Party, which never misses a chance to block a bill, even the ones it says it supports.

We just heard an excellent speech by my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove who spoke about—

• (2255)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind members that, if they have something to say, they should be respecting the rules of the House and waiting until it is time for questions and comments.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I was just complimenting my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove by saying that he gave an excellent speech. He talked about the fact that the Conservatives support the bill and that they want it to be passed. After 50 years, it is time for us to make that change.

However, at the end of his speech, after spending 20 minutes talking about how important it is to pass the bill, he presented an amendment that is going to further delay the passage of the bill. I do not understand that contradiction at all.

What is more, earlier, the Conservatives voted against a motion to maintain the hybrid Parliament. However, today, they used the hybrid application 291 times to vote on the matter of a hybrid Parliament. I have to say that that includes the Bloc members as well. Together, they used the hybrid app 291 times to vote against the hybrid Parliament. That is another contradiction. I think that everyone can see that there is a problem here. Members are saying that they do not want a hybrid Parliament, but then they are using the hybrid application to vote against the hybrid Parliament. I will move on to another subject because Parliament already ruled on that.

Let us get back to Bill C-9. An amendment has been tabled that will further delay the passage of the bill, and that is unfortunate. The process has been lacking for 50 years. The public does not support it and it is not particularly clear that justice will be served through this process. Furthermore, it does not allow people to have more confidence in our justice system.

It has been 50 years. First, there were the promises from the former Harper regime, which wanted to amend this process. It did nothing, and that is not surprising. There were a lot of broken promises.

I spent 10 years in the House during the Harper regime, and we saw that regime's lack of respect for Parliament. We saw broken promises, including the promise to set up a process for judges and for complaints about the judicial system. We saw that time and time again.

Then the Liberals came to power and promised to do the same thing. It was put off. I think that the member for Saint-Jean said it well earlier. We ended up with a bill passed by the Senate, but it took years to get to that point. This evening, we believed that the bill would finally pass. There was a consensus. However, the consensus has just been broken again by the Conservative Party amendment.

We certainly support this process to modify the entire complaints process for the judicial system. We believe it is important to put this in place as quickly as possible. This means that we must vote. It seems to me that, once again, because of this party that blocks everything, the government will have to resort to a time allocation motion to pass the bill and bring the legislative process to a successful conclusion. Instead of going round in circles, we must pass this bill.

As all parties have said, including my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove, this bill is necessary. However, the Conservatives moved an amendment to further delay passage of this bill.

• (2300)

[*English*]

There is no doubt that New Democrats support the modernization of the complaints process, no doubt at all. We also support aspects of the bill that allow for varied sanctions, such as counselling, continued education and other reprimands. With the current system, which is hopefully not going to continue for much longer, though with the delays that we are seeing provoked tonight, we will have to see about that, the current option is really only removal from the bench. That is why we believe that increasing public confidence in federal judges is absolutely essential, and we need a modernized complaints system.

We believe that this system could have been put into place already. We will recall that this was moving along and then, all of a sudden, the Prime Minister called what was, I think it is fair to say, an unnecessary election in the midst of COVID. At a time when Canadians were preoccupied with getting through COVID, the Liberals provoked an election. Canadians right across this country basically told parliamentarians to get back work, that they were going to give us the same Parliament we had before the Prime Minister called the unnecessary election.

That has caused further delays that have brought us to tonight, when we were hoping to see passage of the bill. That is obviously not to be because of the blocking amendment brought forward by the Conservatives. New Democrats believe there are many other aspects of the judicial system that we need to be tackling. My colleague, the NDP justice critic from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, has been extraordinarily eloquent about this. Yes, he worked on Bill C-9, and yes, he worked to improve it. He brought forward a number of amendments, which I will come back to in just a moment.

Government Orders

The reality is the member from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke had a tremendous influence over this bill moving forward and the quality of the bill. He sought to improve it at a number of different stages, but he has said, and he is right, that we need to move on to other things. There are other pressing issues, such as the opioid crisis and systemic racism in the judicial system. These are all things that need to be tackled, yet we are still dealing with Bill C-9, hopefully with not too many more delays.

Because it has taken so long, because COVID delayed it and because finally, after 50 years of moving it forward, a completely unnecessary election derailed it, we have finally gotten to the point where Bill C-9 was sent to committee. This is where the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke had substantial impacts. I am going to talk about the amendments that he brought forward at the committee stage that are very relevant to the recommendation we have tonight, which is to accept two Senate amendments and reject the rest. That was prior to the Conservative amendment that would delay all of this discussion, but I think there was substantial consensus around the idea that two of the Senate amendments should be brought forward.

What NDP members brought forward at committee is the following. First, there was an amendment that would have expanded the definition of “discrimination” in clause 12 of Bill C-9 by adding “or improper conduct that is substantially similar to discrimination” to the grounds which would have prevented dismissal at the screening stage in paragraph 90(3) of the act.

This concern, as we know, was brought to committee by the National Council of Canadian Muslims, which appeared as a witness because, in both the current process and under new provisions in Bill C-9, complaints could be dismissed without proper investigation at the initial stage because the behaviour does not meet a narrow legal definition of discrimination.

This was an important amendment brought forward by the member. As members would have heard when I asked the Minister of Justice just a few minutes ago, ultimately Liberals and Conservatives voted against that amendment, so it failed. It would have made a difference. We are talking about looking beyond the issue of judicial conduct to the issue of discrimination, which is fundamentally important, as the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke has said on so many occasions, and as has our leader, the member for Burnaby South, yet that amendment was rejected.

● (2305)

The second amendment that was brought forward added a requirement that when there is a decision to dismiss a complaint at the initial stage, both the decision and the reasons for dismissing that complaint would be conveyed to the complainant, instead of just a summary of the reasons. The complainant would receive both the decision and the reasons for the dismissal of the complaint.

This amendment was brought forward by my old colleague Craig Scott, who was a member of Parliament. He was a fantastic member of Parliament for Toronto—Danforth who took over after Jack Layton passed away. He is a law professor at Osgoode Hall Law School and he appeared as a witness on this study. He detailed for the committee that no such information was provided to him when he was a complainant proceeding through the judicial review pro-

cess. He had gone through the process and understood that information was not providing transparency. In other words, it was not leading to that growth in public confidence that is so critical in a democracy.

The amendment was aimed to provide openness and transparency and, as one of the high points of Parliament at the committee stage, all members of Parliament from all parties at the committee agreed to that amendment. It helped to improve the bill.

The third amendment that the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke tabled added a requirement that when a review panel made a decision on a complaint, both the decision and the full reasons would be given to the complainant. This added to what Craig Scott, the former NDP MP for Toronto—Danforth, brought forward.

Those two amendments, in series, helped to ensure that the bill would increase transparency, and this was important.

There was discussion around the right of appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal. The member for Langley—Aldergrove raised that idea in his speech. The reality is that we now have a twofold system of appeals, as the Minister of Justice described in discussing the Senate amendments. In a very real sense, that has helped to provide for the appeal process without making it an unduly long process.

Let us come now to the heart of the matter, which is the issue of the Senate amendments. There are two amendments that the government has proposed accepting from the Senate. The first is removing the words “as far as possible”. The member for Saint-Jean talked about this a number of times during her speech.

It is from the section requiring panels that convene to investigate complaints to reflect the diversity of Canada. We support this amendment, as well as the Senate amendment that adds sexual misconduct to the list of complaints that may not be dismissed without a formal investigation.

Those are two amendments that the Senate has put in place that the government is proposing be retained and that the NDP supports as well.

There were a number of other amendments, including the amendments regarding the Federal Court of Appeal. As I mentioned, we now have a two-stage process for appeals, so the rejection of those Senate amendments, to our mind, seems to be a fair-minded approach.

● (2310)

[*Translation*]

The most important thing is that we have been going back and forth for several years. There has been no change in the complaints process for 50 years. Improvements are obviously needed. However, we have been going around in circles for three years now. At committee, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke managed to get the NDP amendments I just mentioned adopted to improve the original bill, which is extremely important. This contributed to the quality of the bill.

The bill was then referred to the Senate, which proposed a number of amendments that we can support.

Government Orders

As members know, supporting these two Senate amendments is a bitter pill for the NDP to swallow. Our official policy is actually to abolish the Senate, which is a second chamber made up of non-elected members, as New Zealand and a number of other countries have done. Senators have been appointed, and not elected, for years. I would say they do not have the same credibility as the members of the House of Commons.

Other countries have abolished their second chambers, but that is not just an international phenomenon. Some of these upper, unelected chambers have been abolished right here in Canada, including in Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario. It makes no sense for unelected people to make decisions that have consequences for a population without being accountable. As members of Parliament, we must be accountable.

When I make a decision, I have to be accountable to my electors in New Westminster—Burnaby. I hope that some of them are watching me this evening. Who are the senators accountable to? That is the big question. I know that this is concerning and I know that these questions are being reviewed. It is true that it is important.

Nonetheless, the NDP is voting in favour of these two amendments because they make sense, even though they originate from the Senate. The most important thing to the NDP is that the bill be adopted with the recommendations that the government proposed and that it be sent back to the Senate so that it can get the Senate's seal of approval. The process will then be complete and we will finally have an improved judicial complaints process.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member could expand on the issue of the importance of public confidence in the system. For me personally, that is one of the driving forces in terms of why Bill C-9 is of the utmost importance, among other things, and I hope to be able to expand on that shortly.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, public confidence comes from transparency. The member is absolutely right that public confidence comes from a process that people feel makes them heard and understood. That is why we would put all of these measures in place and, I would suggest, have varied sanctions.

Part of the problem with the existing system is that it only has one penalty, with the current option being removal from the bench. However, there is a tendency to take other issues that may not warrant removal from the bench less seriously, because there are fewer options available to ensure that those complaints are upheld. Part of the exercise of getting the bill through is to ensure improving public confidence by giving options so that a judge could have continuing education, other reprimands and counselling, all of which are appropriate where there has been judicial malfeasance.

• (2315)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's speech, but I could not help but notice that, throughout the night, the member being upset with us tabling an amendment.

Let me clear here. The member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke moved an amendment to the bill earlier in the process, which was removed by the government senators. We decided that we were going to retable it to bring it back, because we thought it was a good amendment, yet this member was actively speaking against us doing so. By doing so, he was actually speaking against his own colleague's amendment that he was so passionate about including into the bill, which is a little bit ridiculous.

The member kept on saying throughout his speech, in effect, that "We are doing all of this" and "We are doing that", but I could not help but wonder that he was speaking against his own colleague's amendment. When he says "we" is he referring to "we" as him and the government or him and his party? He has been speaking against his own colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, all night, because he does not want to accept the amendment we put forward, which is the same amendment that his own colleague put forward.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I like my colleague. He does engage in disinformation, and this is one of those examples.

What happened, of course, was that this was brought forward at committee by the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. It was not upheld at committee, and the reality is that there is now in place a twofold appeals process that the member is aware of and that the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke has endorsed. In terms of what needs to move forward from the Senate and what needs to be tucked away, it is very clear.

However, the problem we have in terms of moving legislation through is that the Conservatives are always putting forward amendments or motions that block legislation. They do not move it forward. In this particular case, given the length of time that this has taken and given the importance of the issue and of actually modernizing our judicial complaint process, when we were almost at the finish line, the Conservatives have drawn us back again. That is what I object to.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He said it: This bill has been in the works for a very long time and has been the subject of a lot of work, particularly by the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. The bill has been amended, improved and enhanced. The member is somewhat disappointed tonight to see yet another amendment from the Conservative side that risks delaying its adoption.

I just want to make sure that my colleague agrees with me that if the Senate had not interfered, the bill would have been passed already. We would not have had a Conservative amendment that further slowed the process. Basically, if it were not for the Senate, we would not be here having this discussion tonight.

Does my colleague agree with me that this step, unfortunately, may also have been too much?

Government Orders

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the member for Saint-Jean is right. It is true. That is why the NDP has been calling for the abolition of the Senate for decades.

We are talking about a Senate appointed by the Liberals and the Conservatives. We have seen the Senate block very worthwhile bills on several occasions. It is obvious that this process of sending bills to an institution that is not democratically elected is detrimental.

My colleague is quite right. In this case, the bill would have been adopted already had there not been this step. That is something to think about for Canadians who want to abolish the Senate.

• (2320)

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was troubled to hear the leader of the official opposition tell the national media that his party intends to use every opportunity to obstruct the work of the chamber and gum up the works of Canadian democracy. It makes it somewhat difficult to understand whether interventions in this place, at this late day in the session, are made in good faith or whether they are indeed part of this effort to slow down the work of our Parliament. Could my dear colleague reflect on Bill C-9 and offer his thoughts on what is going on here when it comes to the Conservatives' interventions?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley is an extraordinarily strong parliamentarian. Every time when he rises in the House to ask a question or to give a speech, I know that everyone listens to him very attentively because he represents his constituents, who inhabit a region as big as France, extremely well. It is just an enormous part of northern British Columbia. They are incredible communities with extraordinary representation. The member does incredible work, and I know that every weekend, he is down in another part of his riding, making sure that he is hearing his constituents.

The reality is that this does delay the bill, but we have seen Conservatives blocking dental care, blocking a grocery rebate that thousands of people in each of their ridings would benefit from and blocking affordable housing. All these things that the NDP is pushing the government to do, Conservatives try to block. Blocking dental care is incomprehensible to me. Eleven thousand people on average in a Conservative riding would benefit, including seniors, people with disabilities and families with youth under 18. Conservatives, including the member for Carleton, fought so that Canadians in those Conservative ridings would not have access to dental care. How does it make any sense at all to block something that is in the interests of their constituents?

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to set the record straight.

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby was suggesting that my colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands was spreading misinformation. I want to read into the record a quote from his colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, from December 9. This was after he came back from committee for third reading, when we voted unanimously. He said:

As for the appeal and the fact that the Bloc did not support my amendment to make it to the Federal Court of Appeal, I would just say again that the Supreme

Court is likely never going to hear an appeal regarding a judge's disciplinary complaint, because of the very high standard....

At that time, the member was still supporting the motion of the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, and we had a similar motion, to have one appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal. That is what his colleague stood for. We were expecting to have support from the NDP on this, because that is the way his colleague was speaking in December.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, it was the process that I felt was disinformation.

What we have is my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove, whom I respect a lot, quoting directly from Hansard. I will certainly look at that quote. I have no reason to doubt his quote. I know he is an honest person. I will look at the blues and come back to him in due time.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I start my comments on the bill, I want to recognize a terrible and tragic traffic accident that members might have already heard about. It was in Manitoba on the Trans-Canada Highway by Highway 5. A semi collided with a bus.

I do not know all the details, but as a result of that accident, 15 seniors have died and another 10 are in hospital. Which hospitals I could not say; what we do know is that there will be a very high fatality rate. Hopefully, those who are in hospital are able to recover. I would like to express my best wishes and prayers to the family and friends of the deceased and to the family and friends of those who are being taking care of.

As well, I compliment the first responders for the truly amazing work they do. They were very quick to get to the scene, whether SARS, ambulances, police or firefighters, and no doubt have contributed to saving lives. I just want to recognize that. I am sure my colleagues here this evening, and in fact all members of Parliament, share in the families' grief and wish them all the very best.

Having said that, allow me to share some thoughts on a very important piece of legislation and issue that all of us are very much aware of. This is legislation that would amend the Judges Act and create a new process, and one would think that there would be eagerness to see this legislation pass.

I thought it started off so well. I might be a bit biased, but I think that what the Minister of Justice had to say was very clear. A number of amendments have been brought forward by the Senate, and he provided detailed comments on the suggestions the Senate has put forward. I can honestly say that generally speaking, at times the Senate contributes to making legislation that comes through the House that much stronger, and to that extent makes it better for Canadians. I think it is quite encouraging when we get these amendments coming forward.

Government Orders

The Minister of Justice made comments, as I said. He explained why we can accept a couple of amendments and why we cannot accept some others. Then he went on to talk about the importance of the legislation and why it was important that we attempt to see quick passage of the legislation.

Right after that, when the member for Langley—Aldergrove, the critic, began his speech, I started to feel pretty encouraged by his opening remarks. He talked about how the legislation was good, saying that the Conservatives support it and that they saw the value in it when it was in here earlier.

The legislation has already gone through a number of steps. It was introduced quite a while ago. Members were already familiar with the legislation. It went to committee, and yes, there were some healthy discussions that took place at committee stage. Then it went through report stage and third reading and was passed, and off to the Senate it went.

• (2325)

If one followed some of that debate and discussion, one might have been of the opinion that the legislation had virtually unanimous support of the House. It is always a good thing when we get that kind of support. Then the member got to the tail end of his speech, and at the tail end of his speech, what does he say? In fairness to the member, he might have been slipped the amendment; I do not know. Maybe he created the amendment. Maybe the House leadership told him to remember what the leader says: speak, speak, speak and hold things up wherever he can. That is the essence of what the modern Conservative far-right party says today.

The member then indicated very clearly that he does not like the legislation to such a degree that he wants to see some amendments, so he moved an amendment. In all honesty, I was not really surprised, because the member was putting in place a sequence that we have seen the Conservatives do on many different pieces of legislation. There is, however, a bit of a difference on this legislation, because ultimately the member made it somewhat clear that they support its passage.

I thought maybe there was a chance the bill would pass here this evening after listening to the beginning of the comments. When he moved the amendment, I think he surprised a lot of people. It surprised me to a certain degree. I was a bit disappointed, because after all, as I said, the bill amends the Judges Act. In essence, it streamlines the review and investigation process. Think about that. Not only does that ensure there is a higher sense of equality, justice and so forth, but it also makes the system a bit more efficient. There is even money to be saved. Moving this particular amendment sends a message that it is similar to other pieces of legislation, and I get the sense that the only way we are going to have a chance at passing this legislation is if it is time allocated.

Once again, as a government, we have to go to the Bloc or the New Democrats to try to explain the behaviour of the Conservatives, which is not that tough nowadays it seems, to ensure that we can pass this legislation. It is the type of thing that we really cannot make up. Think of the types of things we have witnessed, like how they move amendments, and the type of voting we have witnessed.

I am kind of losing context of time, but a few hours ago or two hours ago, we had a vote on the hybrid motion. I know the NDP House leader made quick reference to it. It is a hard thing to resist. It really and truly is. Think about it. We had a vote on something the Conservatives oppose. They do not like the voting app and the hybrid system, so they voted against it.

An hon. member: Until they have to use it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is just as my colleague said: until they have to use it. They used it on the motion that I just finished talking about, the motion that says we want to enable members to vote by hybrid or vote using the voting application. Members would not believe that out of the 106 Conservatives who voted, 77 actually used the voting application to vote. I do not quite understand it. It is that Conservative logic. If we then fast-forward a couple of hours, what do we see? We see yet another amendment brought forward as a tactic to postpone the vote on this bill.

• (2330)

I asked the member for Langley—Aldergrove why he moved the amendment and I asked him how many Conservative members he would like to see speak now, and whether he could give us an indication. Members were here for the response from the member. He said his party had lots of members who want to be able to speak on the legislation.

How many more days do we have until the normal session would come to an end? It is somewhat limited, but I have told the House leader that, personally, I do not mind. I enjoy being inside the chamber. I enjoy the debates. Honest to God, with hand on heart, I will come back in July, I do not mind, if the members opposite want to have debate. Having said that, I think there might be a number of members who would like to see the Conservatives stop with the games and the filibustering and recognize that part of being a responsible official opposition means allowing legislation to pass without having to incorporate time allocation.

An hon. member: It helps Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It does. It helps Canadians in a very real and tangible way.

An hon. member: This is the biggest audience you've had in a while.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, ever since the member from across the way walked back over. This legislation would help Canadians. In one of the questions I put across was the issue of public confidence.

The Minister of Justice and the parliamentary secretary on justice talk about the importance of public confidence in the system. It is important to recognize that, so when members say this legislation is in the best interest of Canadians, it is. It would make a real and tangible difference. Canadians want to see the independence of our whole judicial system, whether it is with policing, our courts or the process of our Crowns laying charges.

Around the world, Canada is recognized for our judicial system, and it is complemented by the fact that there are many checks in place to ensure that it is not politicized. We recognize that it is a joint responsibility, where we work with the provinces, territories and indigenous communities, to ensure we have a judicial system that has the confidence of the public.

I do not say that lightly, because there have been incidents where we have seen the need for reforms or changes. A good example of that is with the former leader of the Conservative Party, Rona Ambrose. God, I wish she came back.

Rona Ambrose had an idea to make changes that would impact our judicial system. It came about because of a number of judges who had made comments regarding gender discrimination, if I can put it that way. They offended a great number of people, and there was a genuine concern among the public and questions of confidence in the system. Rona Ambrose, the former leader of the Conservative Party, came up with the idea of instituting some sort of educational program. I cannot remember all the details, because this was a number of years ago, but government members, members of the Liberal caucus, saw the value in the principles of the legislation, and we actually embraced the idea.

● (2335)

When we did the consultations and canvassed our judicial system for its reflections on what was being proposed by the then leader of the Conservative Party, we found it had garnered wide support, much like Bill C-9. With that support, what did we eventually see? Yes, there was some frustration, but it was not coming from the government or the Liberal Party. In fact, caucus colleagues of mine often talked about how we could ensure that legislation saw the light of day. They wanted that legislation to pass.

We had the support of all members of the House, and it passed unanimously. There was no trickery or anything of that nature. No one said, "We'll pass this if you do this." There was no trading or bargaining process. We recognized the value of the legislation and agreed to get it passed through the system.

Interestingly enough, I believe a couple of provincial legislatures looked at this. My daughter raised the issue, and she is in the Manitoba legislature. They were looking at what we did here in Ottawa and how it could be potentially duplicated in provincial legislatures. That is how Ottawa can demonstrate leadership on an important issue.

If one understands and appreciates the sense of independence of our justice system, then factors in all of the work and effort that has gone into this piece of legislation getting to the point it is at today, one sees it has been a long journey, a journey that ultimately went through all forms of different stakeholders. The ones I emphasize are the courts, or those directly involved in courts, the judges.

There was consensus, a very broad consensus, that this is the type of legislation communities, including the judicial community, would accept and want to see passed. When the Minister of Justice talked about the legislation earlier, he made it very clear to everyone that this is legislation where there has been pressure coming from the outside, from the judicial community, suggesting that the legislation be passed as quickly as possible.

Government Orders

Interestingly enough, and it might have been at third reading, but I can recall talking about that previously. That is why I was encouraged, even back then, because the Conservatives did not seem to hesitate.

There are amendments and a number of things I am no doubt missing, but having said that, let me suggest to members opposite it is not written in stone. We could pass this legislation tonight, or at least get it to a stage at which it could be voted on. Let me put it that way because we cannot seek unanimous consent now, but we can at least get it to a stage where it could be voted on as early as tomorrow.

I would ask Conservatives to do what the Liberals did when Rona Ambrose brought forward a good idea, which was to recognize the idea for what it is and support our judicial system. Let us show the public we have confidence in the system, get behind the legislation and allow it to get to a point where we can pass it tomorrow. That can be done.

● (2340)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am sure members would remember when we were in Centre Block, when something similar with Standing Orders came about. It was basically because the Liberals did not get up on a Monday morning, and the NDP had put a motion together. They did not get enough people to pass it, so the Speaker then had to actually get the vote so we could expand that.

What happened then was that the Liberal Party decided to put together a motion to completely take away the role of the opposition. That was when we ended up with the "elbowgate" issue. The only reason that this motion stopped was because, for three days, people were going after the Prime Minister for his active role.

As the members—

● (2345)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, the member's comments actually have no relevance with respect to Bill C-9.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member's time for asking a question is up. I am sure the hon. parliamentary secretary could respond, if he so wishes.

I want to remind members that, when they are asking questions and giving speeches in the House, what they say should be relevant to what is before the House.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I apologize for that, but my reaction was to the time he took when he was speaking about the importance of Standing Orders. That was the relevance.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to put this on the record, I believe the member was referring to Bill C-10.

Government Orders

Virtually from the beginning, the Conservatives were all about trickery and the types of things they could do to play that destructive role. Nothing has changed. I am hoping that we will get a glimmer of hope this evening from some individuals saying that this is legislation they could support, that they do not have to continue to delay it and that they could respect what has taken place and look at it.

At the very least, the Conservatives could take into consideration what we did as a Liberal Party when the Conservatives proposed something with Rona Ambrose. There, we had unanimous consent; it was passed through.

I am suggesting that, out of respect for the process and so forth, this does not have to be one of the bills that the Conservatives are playing games on.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, does my colleague believe that a party should do what it says it is going to do?

For example, with Bill C-9, if a party says we have to adopt this bill immediately, and then offers a delaying amendment, is that consistent? In the same way, if we have a hybrid Parliament and a party votes against the hybrid Parliament, but votes overwhelmingly using the hybrid tools that they were just saying needed to end, is that consistent? Are these contradictions by the Conservative Party that Canadians need to know about?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, really and truly, we just cannot make this stuff up. We have to see it to believe it. The member is right on.

Canadians need to know just what the Conservatives are actually up to. The idea that out of 106 people in the Conservative Party, when it came time to vote to get rid of the voting app, 77 of them actually used the voting app that they want to get rid of.

It may be that or saying that they support Bill C-9 and want it to pass, but then they move an amendment. Traditionally, when the Conservatives have done that, what they are really saying is they want to talk and talk, as the leader of the Conservative Party said last week about the budget. He said he was going to speak until the Prime Minister changed the budget implementation bill. We did not change it, and four hours later, it passed. It is a game.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know there has been a lot of discussion about the last-minute amendment brought forward by the good member for Langley—Aldergrove, who is a very constructive member of the justice committee.

I must say that I am quite disappointed that this is now being used as a tool to delay the passage of a very important bill. As we know, Justice Wagner, the chief justice of Canada, has asked for the expeditious passage of Bill C-9. Could my friend and colleague comment on why it is so important that we get this passed before we rise?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think it is important to recognize the efforts and the judicial community as a whole. However, it is not just the judicial community. Ultimately, I believe it is about public confidence in the system. This streamlines the re-

view and investigation process replacing the judicial review that goes into Federal Courts into something that is far more effective. It has been recognized as that. It will save time, it will save money; it will assist in making sure that the public have confidence by adding, for example, a layperson to the process. It will ensure additional public confidence in our judicial system.

When we get a Supreme Court judge appealing to us to get it passed, I do not know why the Conservatives would want to continue to filibuster.

• (2350)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the Senate, the legal committee passed two very important amendments that the government rejected. These two amendments were supported by the Canadian Bar Association, which has 37,000 lawyers as members, the Advocates' Society and also the Canadian Superior Court Judges Association, which has 1,200 judges.

There is overwhelming support for the amendments that the government is rejecting. These are solid amendments that would provide a little more certainty and clarity around the entire process.

ISG senators, appointed by the Prime Minister, voted in favour of these amendments, yet the Liberal government is yanking those amendments from this bill. Why?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I understand that there are senators who actually supported the amendments but they had to originate from somewhere. My understanding, correct me if I am wrong, is that they originated from Conservative senators who caucus with the Conservative members of Parliament still. I suggest that maybe one is being influenced by the other. After all, the member even indicated that one of those amendments was introduced at committee stage. There might be something at play there. I do not know. I do not want to imply too much.

What I do know is that the Senate does a lot of fine work and the Minister of Justice did address the issue of those that we will support, those we will not, and gave an explanation for all.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, just to hone in on one of the amendments that is being proposed by the Conservatives, which is with respect to leave to appeal to the Supreme Court, my understanding is that when there is a case involving a judge that is going forward, that leave is granted, but that is the law of the land. In all cases involving the Supreme Court, leave needs to be granted by the Supreme Court.

With the processes already in place to ensure there is due process, that is, the need to have safeguards for someone who is accused of misconduct, with the processes that we are putting forward, leave like any other case is not automatic. I know that is something that the Conservatives are quite insistent about.

I think it is clear that what we are trying to do is to streamline the process so that it does not cost excessive money and does not take an enormous amount of time for a resolution on a matter that involves the misconduct of a judge.

Government Orders

I am wondering if my colleague could comment on that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member was right when he commented about streamlining and making things more efficient. As I have said, there are even potential cost savings. This would also allow for an expanded disposition that could include anything from apologies to educational programming. It creates a better atmosphere in many ways.

Most importantly, given the independence of our courts and the position taken by some judges in support of the legislation, I would suggest that we accept that and move forward with the legislation.

• (2355)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are going to bring it home. For their home, our home, my home, let us bring it home.

To begin, it felt great to be sitting momentarily over on that side of the House. I know we will be there soon and I am looking forward to it.

There has been some discussion, and in the limited time left, I want to present the framework before we actually discuss the amendments. There has been some discussion as to whether we should be debating these amendments or just rubber-stamping them and going ahead.

I am going to read something. I do not normally do this and I normally speak without notes, but this time I think it is important that I get this right and read it word for word. An article states:

Our job as Official Opposition is to say, particularly when we agree with the principles of the legislation, “Here are amendments that will make the legislation stand up to scrutiny, and there are amendments that will actually make the legislation do what it purports to do.” The problem on the government side is they consistently refuse those amendments.

The amendments we are putting forward have actually been supported by many members of the judiciary. They are supportive. They say they support the legislation, and it says here that we should be able to bring the amendments forward, but according to this, the government of the day was stopping it.

The article continues:

Even when they make sense, even when they’re reinforced by the public and by experts, they systematically refuse all the amendments....

That is just what happened. Our amendments are being refused.

The article states, “...which is why they have a such a poor record in terms of product recall.” That is interesting.

Let us read some more about this. The article says:

So we like to make the case for those amendments. Of course, if the government were willing to co-operate, it would be in their interests...And if they said, first off, “Okay, here’s a piece of legislation; we know you support it in principle; we’re actually willing to work with you on amendments,” then I think it would be fair to say the approach would be different and we wouldn’t have to make the case in the House of Commons necessarily around those amendments because the government would be working with us.

It seems like we had many negotiations. The amendments were not put in place. That is exactly what is going on here.

Do members know who said that? It was the member for New Westminster—Burnaby. That is his quote.

I think my comments, when I am over there, might be used against me, but I do not think so. I do not think I will say the exact opposite when I am in a coalition as opposed to when I am in opposition.

Let us just continue. The article says, “The principle of this place is members are here to represent their ridings”. I could not agree more.

It continues, “They’re here to speak out on issues and they’re also here to offer suggestions to the government.” That is just like what we are trying to do right now.

Then it says, “Now, we have a government that doesn’t want those suggestions”.

Oh, my goodness; the government wants to bring in time allocation. How many times have we had time allocation in this Parliament so far? Number 40 is tomorrow. How many times did the NDP rail against the Harper government?

Mr. Peter Julian: You did it 150 times.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. This is not the time for cross-debate. The hon. member only has one minute before I cut him off, so I will let him continue on.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I will finish off with more of the quote. It says:

To say only 15 MPs are able to speak to all of your average bills, that is very clearly contravening what Canadians want to see here. They want to see vivid debate, they want to see a government that actually listens to the improvements that can be made to bills and they want to see their member of parliament being able to speak out. When you say only 15 can speak on this, or only 12 can speak on this, you’re disenfranchising all of those other ridings across the country....

I really believe my case is closed. I know our members have aptly talked about this, but there are two particular substantive amendments. This is not any type of minor thing; these are amendments that have been supported by the NDP. Some of them were brought to the floor by the NDP. We are standing strongly for these, one of which is to have judicial review—

• (2400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member will have to wait until the next time this matter is before the House. He will have 15 minutes to continue his speech.

[*Translation*]

It being midnight, pursuant to order made on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

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