



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 229
Wednesday, October 4, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, Thanksgiving is less than a week away, but this year Canadians have less to be thankful for. A report this morning found that half of all Canadians are prioritizing costs over nutrition. Families and parents in my riding and throughout the GTA have to make a choice between them or their kids going hungry.

This summer, while helping refugees, I met a young man who is not a refugee but a Canadian with a full-time job who still could not afford rent and food. When it came to food or a roof over his head, he chose food. He was forced to live out of his car and to use the showers at 129 Peter Street.

This is the reality many Canadians face. I am grateful to University Settlement and Scadding Court; my team and I will be helping them to put together Thanksgiving hampers.

Relying on charities and food banks is not sustainable. The federal government must finally act before more Canadians go hungry and lose their homes.

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INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ONE ACT PLAYS

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I attended the Newmarket International Festival of One Act Plays, which presented 12 amazing plays at the Old Town Hall in downtown Newmarket, bringing joy, entertainment and laughter to audiences. The International Festival of One Act

Plays has grown, taking on significance within the broader theatrical world, with 212 entries from around the world. I love the culture that it provides to our community. What could be better?

It also supports Inn from the Cold, a not-for-profit that is critical to supporting those in need, which truly defines the festival as a culturally rich experience that excites audiences and gives back to our community.

I thank Tom Pearson, president of the Very Useful Theatre Company, the writers, directors, sponsors and volunteers, and congratulate them on their well-deserved success.

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ERIC ROTER

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Eric Roter, 32, of Apsley passed on September 25, after a courageous battle with bipolar disorder. We are devastated by this loss, and completely unprepared. Eric has impacted the lives of so many people and to know Eric was to love him.

We struggled greatly with Eric and his battle with mental health. We faced roadblocks, and lacked resources every step of the way on the path to find him help.

That is an excerpt from Eric Roter's obituary. It is an absolute tragedy that shook my community.

Eric's sister Haley wrote this on Instagram, "I made calls and advocated for my brother up to the hour before he passed....When Eric went manic I called every crisis line for support. None was given...."

This must change. Everyone knows there is a crisis. The system failed Eric and his friends. We must prioritize mental health. We must fix this broken system.

* * *

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations.

I rise today to honour a remarkable young man, Bryce Freisen, son of John and Shelly, and big brother to Luke. I first met this remarkable young man when he and a friend volunteered with my election campaign in 2021.

Statements by Members

On his 12th birthday, as soon as he was eligible, Bryce joined the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets in Kitchener. He never looked back and rapidly progressed through the ranks of the sea cadets program. Bryce maintained near perfect attendance throughout, and went above and beyond for every activity, including food bank volunteering, recruiting, and supporting the Royal Canadian Legion during poppy sales. Last spring, he was selected to receive the top honour from the Royal Canadian Legion for exemplary service by a cadet.

In May 2023, he decided to pursue his dream, and on September 12 was sworn into the Canadian Armed Forces. He embarked on basic training in Saint-Jean, Quebec, on September 27.

I congratulate Bryce. I know how justifiably proud his family is of him.

* * *

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

LATIN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since we are celebrating Latin American Heritage Month this month, I want to acknowledge the contributions that several members of Longueuil's Latin American community have made in vital sectors for our region.

I am talking about people like Natalia Mejia, the president of Couture Porte-Bonheur, a manufacturer that is participating in the development of Quebec's textile industry by helping Quebec creators make their designs a reality.

I am also talking about Carolina Campos, a former constituency assistant, who has worked hard to promote integration and cultural sharing between Latin American and Quebec communities.

Then, there is Alvaro Cueto, Saint-Hubert borough president. He has been involved in Longueuil's community and civic life for many years through the organization of sporting events and citizen initiatives.

Today, I am proud to rise in the House to pay tribute to these individuals and to all members of the Latin American community in my riding whose presence and involvement make a real difference for everyone in Longueuil.

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NATIONAL NEWSPAPER WEEK

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on being elected.

Esteemed colleagues, this being National Newspaper Week, I would like to speak about Stéphane St-Amour's career at Courrier Laval. He contributed to this newspaper for 40 years despite the challenges he faced. Stéphane began as an arts and business reporter and went on to cover municipal politics in Laval. In the late 20th century, he brought to light dubious practices in municipal government to defend democracy, freedom of the press and access to information. Stéphane persevered at a time when journalists were

not as free to speak. He deserves to be commended for his dedication, even though it was not always met with success or praise.

I would like to thank him for his perseverance and his efforts to keep the people of Laval informed.

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[*English*]

THANKSGIVING

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we approach Thanksgiving weekend, I would like to share my gratitude with this House and all Canadians watching us.

First, I wish to express my profound appreciation to my family. Their support has been the cornerstone of my work as a member of Parliament. I also want to convey my thanks to my constituents. They work hard to raise their families, help their neighbours and make our communities a better place to live. Their commitment inspires me and I am forever grateful for the privilege to serve as their representative.

Additionally, I want to thank all my Conservative colleagues for continuing to stand together to build a future that reflects the values we hold dear. Separate thanks go to our staff members, who assist us in our communities every single day.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to express my appreciation to our Conservative leader and Canada's next prime minister for giving Canadians hope against all the despair in this country, which is so important this holiday season.

I thank my friends and wish them all a relaxing and joyful Thanksgiving.

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BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Together, we must do more when it comes to breast cancer prevention, early detection, treatment and support. Breast cancer is still the most commonly diagnosed cancer among Canadian women, and one in eight of us will be diagnosed in our lifetime.

Most of us in this House know someone who is one of those women, people like my sister, Jill, who was diagnosed in 2019 and now lives cancer free, and my friend, the member for Labrador.

While much progress has been made, there is much more to do. I thank those on the front lines doing life-saving research and all of the doctors, nurses, activists and health care professionals who are working with patients, survivors and families. I give a special shout-out to Jill and all those impacted by breast cancer.

• (1415)

HOUSE OF COMMONS PAGES

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me add my congratulations on your election. As Speaker, may you have the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job.

Like all of us in this chamber, you will be assisted by a bright and eager group of House of Commons pages. I welcome the new cohort to this place, and thank them for their willingness to be here, helping us to be our best selves and making this chamber effective and efficient.

These talented students have earned their place here through hard work, dedication and a commitment to public service. They are not our servants. They are making Canada a democracy that works. As we welcome them, we remember it is our responsibility to be respectful and kind, and to ensure they have the opportunity to learn, grow and make a meaningful contribution to the future of Canada.

As we begin this new session, let us remember all those who work in this chamber and outside it. Security officers, table officers and staff members make it safe and welcoming, ensuring our traditions are honoured. We thank them all.

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LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with Thanksgiving coming, the Liberals have in the past issued what they call “turkey talking points” as a guide to what they want families to discuss at the dinner table.

This year, their talking points should sound something like this: after eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, groceries, gas and home heating have become unaffordable because of their inflationary spending, the debt and the carbon tax. Housing costs are at 30-year highs, rent has doubled and young people have lost hope of ever owning a home. Three in five Canadians will be in financial trouble if interest rates increase. For many families, mortgage costs will double as renewals come due. Seven million Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, and 63% of Canadians spend what they make, while 30% spend more than they make each month. Violent crime is up 39% since 2015, and violent gun crime is up 101%. Finally, Canada has been humiliated and embarrassed on the world stage.

As Canadians gather this weekend, let us consider this one last “turkey talking point”: this is a Prime Minister who cannot be re-deemed at this point, he must be replaced. Oh and by the way, he is not worth the cost.

* * *

APRIL WINE

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I extend my congratulations to you once again.

When conversations are held in my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges and in every corner of our beautiful country about the giants of Canadian rock, April Wine’s unmistakable rhythm and sound reverberate powerfully. April Wine has woven itself into the

Statements by Members

fabric of our identity, capturing hearts across generations, with unforgettable tracks such as *Roller*, *Sign Of The Gypsy Queen* and *I Like To Rock*. April Wine’s story, marked by the sale of millions of albums, is not only one of chart-topping achievements but also one of tenacity, longevity, passion and, of course, Canadian pride.

Central to that sound is the unparalleled talent of Music Hall of Fame guitarist and vocalist Brian Greenway. A proud resident of my riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, he has been an integral part of the iconic rock band since 1977. For their decades of contribution to the tapestry of Canadian music, Brian and the members of April Wine received their star on Canada’s Walk of Fame this past Thursday, September 28. To April Wine and to Brian, whom I have the honour of hosting today in Ottawa, with his wife, I extend my heartfelt congratulations.

The Speaker: I would like to remind members not to engage in recognizing people who might be in the galleries. I think there are very good reasons why we should not do that.

The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

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CARBON TAX

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the current Liberal-NDP government is forcing a carbon tax on the farmer who grows the food and the trucker who ships the food. This is a tax on every single Canadian who needs to buy food. Now we learn that the Liberals want to quadruple the tax, putting an extra financial burden on the farming communities that feed this country by increasing the cost not only of producing food but also of shipping it.

Canadians know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. After eight years, his tax-and-spend agenda has resulted in constantly raiding the wallets of those struggling, leaving less money to buy basic necessities. Using the personal bank accounts of Canadians to fund vanity projects is not the way to run a government. The Liberals have proven that they have never stepped up, nor have they exhibited even a modicum of financial responsibility. They need to step aside and let in the Conservatives, who know how to take the reins. It is time to start listening to Canadians from coast to coast to coast and to cancel the carbon tax.

* * *

• (1420)

[Translation]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are at the end of their rope. Inflation is at an all-time high, and people are struggling to make ends meet.

Statements by Members

In my riding, food bank visits have increased by 40% to 50%. People are suffering. Quebeckers are having to find a second job to get by. Meanwhile, what does the government decide to do? It adds a carbon tax that increases everyone's cost of living. What is more, it has the Bloc's support.

Quebeckers are not buying it. The Bloc Québécois voted against repealing this tax on June 5 and claims it does not apply in Quebec. That is not true. Not only is the Bloc placing an additional burden on Quebeckers, but it also wants to add to it. The Bloc Québécois has stated loud and clear that it wants to drastically increase the carbon tax.

One thing is clear: Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly. Soon enough, Bloc members will have the chance to vote for our motion to repeal the tax. It remains to be seen whether they will listen to their Liberal partners or to Quebeckers.

* * *

RUTH GAGNON

Ms. Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House during Women's History Month to pay tribute to Ruth Gagnon, a leader in my riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount.

As the executive director of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Quebec, Ms. Gagnon has devoted 44 years of her life to supporting women in the criminal justice system in Quebec. This community organization based in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce helps women involved in the criminal justice system by offering crime prevention and reintegration programs.

Through her work, Ruth Gagnon helps hundreds of women regain their dignity every year. Her work is recognized by her peers, and now it is being recognized by the House.

* * *

[English]

RED DRESS ALERT

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People.

In the spring, the NDP led the call for the House to declare the continued loss of indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people as a Canada-wide emergency and to commit to providing immediate and substantial investment. This included the red dress alert, which would activate the public's assistance whenever an indigenous woman, girl or two-spirit person goes missing.

Families and organizations such as Sisters in Spirit and the Native Women's Association are calling on the federal government to invest in this alert system to save lives. This is a matter of life and death. There is no more time to wait.

The Liberals have not done enough to protect precious lives. The government continues to fall behind in enacting the calls for justice for indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse people.

Today, the NDP calls on the Liberal government again to take this emergency seriously and immediately act on the call for a national red dress alert.

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[Translation]

LOUISEVILLE BUCKWHEAT PANCAKE FESTIVAL

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Festival de la galette de sarrasin de Louiseville, Louiseville's legendary buckwheat pancake festival, is now in its 44th year. Over the past few days, I was thrilled to be inducted as an honorary member of the Confrérie des Sarrasins, the buckwheat brotherhood. I was delighted to pledge that I would faithfully promote this invaluable local product. The members of the Confrérie can rest assured that I will do them proud in promoting buckwheat and buckwheat products. I would like to thank the grand master of the Confrérie, Marc H. Plante, and festival director André Auger for giving me this honour, which I was lucky to share with the reeve of the Maskinongé RCM, Jean-Yves St-Arnaud.

I invite my colleagues to join us for the remainder of the festival and witness the climax of the celebrations at this Sunday's parade. As I now like to proclaim from the balcony at city hall every year, long live buckwheat country.

* * *

● (1425)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, housing costs have doubled. The average price of a house in Calgary is \$548,000. That is up 20% just from 2020. The average home in Canada now costs nearly double one in the United States, even though they house 10 times as many people on less land. The average rent in Calgary for one bedroom is \$1,718; for two bedrooms, it is \$2,121. This is up 17% year over year. Monthly mortgage payments on a typical home in Canada are now \$3,560. That is up by a gobsmacking 151% since the NDP-Liberal government took power.

Ash in my riding wrote, "it's starting to look like the most affordable and realistic option for me and many others would be moving to the United States". Inga says, "it pains me to see people, including immigrants...in such dire straits."

Residents in my riding know this: The Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

CHRIS SNOW

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to and commemorate the life of a remarkable Calgarian, Chris Snow. With his unwavering courage in the face of adversity and dedication to the Calgary Flames, Chris has been an inspiration to countless others and has left a lasting impact on our hearts.

Chris was the assistant general manager of the Calgary Flames. He embodied the spirit of resilience and determination throughout his life. His courageous battle against ALS was a testament to his unyielding strength. He faced this devastating disease with unwavering resolve, becoming a symbol of hope for those living with ALS and their families. Beyond the world of hockey, Chris's impact extended into the community.

Today, we also remember Chris as a loving husband to his wife, Kelsie, and a dedicated father to their two young children. His love and devotion to his family were evident in all aspects of his life, and his legacy of love and commitment will forever be cherished.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, eight long years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost of food. In today's news, we read that inflation is preventing Quebecers from eating as healthy as they should because of high grocery store prices. Sixty-three per cent of Canadians are afraid for their health because of the outrageous cost of groceries after eight years under this Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister keep his promise to lower the cost of groceries by Thanksgiving, which is this Monday, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, we introduced the affordable housing and groceries bill, which will incentivize the construction of more rental housing and increase competition, particularly among grocery stores. Instead of working with us to move this forward before Thanksgiving, the Conservative Party chose to obstruct debate because it has no plan for supporting Canadians. Actions speak louder than words. I am therefore asking all members of the House to work together to pass Bill C-56 as soon as possible.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to his coalition with the NDP, the Prime Minister has a majority and can push through any measure he wants. However, after eight years, the cost of food is going up. He is the one who promised a month ago to bring down the cost of groceries by Thanksgiving.

Will he keep his promise and lower the price of peas by 22%, the price of lettuce by 33%, the price of turkey by 37% and the price of potatoes by 74%?

He is the one who made the promise. Will he lower prices by Thanksgiving this Monday?

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition really wanted to get assistance out to Canadians quicker to help them with groceries and housing, he would not have obstructed our affordable housing and groceries bill. He would rather play political games and obstruct the business of the House than work with us to get Canadians the help they need.

We will continue to focus on providing assistance to Canadians and we will continue to be there for people to help with the cost of living.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is impossible for us to obstruct anything because we do not hold a majority. The Prime Minister's government does hold a majority, however, thanks to his coalition with the NDP. They can pass anything they want. However, all they have done is pass legislation to increase the carbon tax by 300% to 61¢ per litre.

Will the Prime Minister keep his promise to lower the cost of groceries before Thanksgiving?

He is the one who made that promise. Will he keep it, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we wanted to provide dental care to help Canadians, the Conservatives filibustered. The same thing happened with affordable child care. Now, they are obstructing the affordable housing and groceries bill. They are using parliamentary tricks to obstruct the process. The fact is that we can always count on the Conservatives to obstruct measures that help Canadians if they can get in some partisan attacks in the process.

On this side of the House, we remain focused on helping Canadians.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, all the Prime Minister can do is blame others for the exorbitant inflation that he has imposed on Canadians' food bills. He promised a month ago that, by Thanksgiving, food would be affordable. Yet, since that time, the CEO of Food Banks Canada has said that we have more Canadians than ever relying on assistance just to eat. A poll out just today shows that two-thirds of Canadians are actually afraid for their health, because they cannot buy nutritious food after eight years under the Prime Minister.

Will he keep his promise to deliver an affordable Thanksgiving dinner to Canadians, yes or no?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can see that the Leader of the Opposition is always ready to play political games. A few weeks ago, we moved forward with the affordable housing and groceries act, which will help build more rental homes and increase competition, including among the largest grocers. However, instead of working with us to move this forward before Thanksgiving, the Conservative opposition chose to obstruct debate around these measures. We are going to continue to stay focused on helping Canadians while they stay focused on playing political partisan games.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can pass any bill he wants anytime he wants because he has a majority in coalition with the NDP. That is why he promised a month ago that he would make food affordable by Thanksgiving in a big, blustery photo op.

My question for the Prime Minister is this: By this Monday, Thanksgiving, will he reverse the 22% inflation in the price of peas, the 33% inflation in the price of green salads, the 37% price inflation in the cost of frozen turkeys and the 74% price inflation for potatoes? Will he keep his word? Will he bring the prices down, yes or no?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see again that the Conservative opposition is always ready to fling attacks and make criticisms, but what they actually did was block our move to move forward on the affordable housing and groceries act. They obstructed debate last week by delaying it.

We want to move forward on this so we can help Canadians, but they stood against this act in the same way they stood against \$10-a-day child care, the same way they stood against the Canada child benefit, the same way they stood against dental care for Canadians who need it. We will keep helping people.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, Statistics Canada revealed that there are nearly 500,000 non-permanent residents in Quebec, an increase of more than 150,000 over last year.

Whether they are permanent or temporary residents, newcomers have the same needs as everyone else. They need a roof over their heads, they need to work, they need to interact with others and therefore, they need to learn our language. Children need to go to school. If they are sick, they need treatment like everyone else does.

Will the government review its targets to ensure that we can provide all these essential services for newcomers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is well aware, immigration is a jurisdiction shared by the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec. We are working together to bring in people to address the labour shortage and to continue to help spur economic growth,

while ensuring that the necessary investments are made to welcome and integrate these immigrants and teach them French.

We will always be there to work responsibly in partnership with the Government of Quebec.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's statement is clearly wishful thinking. To hear him tell it, being open to the world means welcoming newcomers because it is the nice thing to do. He seems to think it is okay if newcomers do not have a place to live or if housing prices are skyrocketing. He thinks it is okay if they do not integrate because they have not learned enough French. He does not seem to think it matters if they do not have access to basic services. Well, it does matter, and it is irresponsible on his part to think otherwise.

Will the Prime Minister review the immigration targets, taking into account our capacity to welcome newcomers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with my hon. colleague. I do not think that closing the door to newcomers is a solution.

We know we need more affordable housing. I agree. That is exactly why we announced measures like eliminating the GST on the construction of new rental apartments. We will continue to work with the provinces and municipalities to speed up approvals and build more housing faster to better accommodate people.

* * *

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is a bad day for Conservatives but a great day for the people of Manitoba. Premier-elect Wab Kinew ran a historic campaign and a hopeful campaign. He ran a campaign to defend a public universal health care system. Now they need a federal partner.

The Prime Minister—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Colleagues, I could not hear the question.

The hon. member for Burnaby South, from the top, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to repeat this.

Today is a bad day for Conservatives but a great day for the people of Manitoba. Premier-elect Wab Kinew ran a hopeful and historic campaign, a campaign to defend a public universal health care system, but now New Democrats need a federal partner.

The Prime Minister has called the privatization of health care innovation. Will the Prime Minister stop the flip-flop and come out clearly and say no to for-profit health care?

● (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree it is a good thing that Manitobans rejected the politics of fear, division and intolerance and moved forward with a progressive alternative. I look forward to working with the new Government of Manitoba on issues that matter deeply to Manitobans, whether it is building more housing, supporting on the path to reconciliation, fighting climate change or, mostly, moving forward on affordability for everyone.

We will continue to stand up for a public health care system, including with the \$200 billion in health accords that we are looking forward to signing with this new progressive government.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the campaign, Conservatives said they would never search the landfill for the bodies of murdered indigenous women. They were actually trying to score political points off a genocide. It is disgusting, and Manitobans spoke very clearly. They rejected these hateful, divisive Conservative politics.

Will the Prime Minister do everything in his power to make sure the landfill gets searched and put in place a red dress alert to save indigenous lives?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, words cannot express the grief and pain being felt by the Myran and Harris families, as well as the entire community of Winnipeg. They are looking to find healing and closure right now.

Our approach must be victim-centred, trauma-informed and indigenous-led to support healing. That is why today we announced \$740,000 in additional funding to explore in greater detail the next steps of a search. As we announced in our last budget, we are moving forward on a red dress alert as well.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister pretends that he is not in a majority coalition with the NDP when in fact he is. He can pass any law he wants at any time. That is why he promised a month ago that we would have an affordable Thanksgiving. I know it was a ridiculous promise. I hate to have to hold him to something so absurd after he caused prices to rise so quickly, but it was his promise.

Will he reverse the food price inflation he caused by Monday so that Canadians can have an affordable turkey dinner, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, times are difficult for Canadians right across the country, as they are difficult for people around the world. The war in Ukraine, the global inflation crisis and the after-effects of the pandemic have all caused real challenges. That is why, as a government, we have been there to support people, whether it is with grocery support or now with the affordable housing and groceries act. The problem is that the Conservatives chose to obstruct debate on that act, to delay it. We call on them to help us move forward on it to make sure that

Oral Questions

this Thanksgiving and future Thanksgivings are more affordable for Canadians.

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FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of excuses, inflationary debt and taxes, food prices and mortgage prices are raging out of control. In fact, mortgage payments are up 150%. When the government borrows money and competes with Canadians for their mortgage rates, it drives up the cost of lending.

Will the Prime Minister tell Canadians how much his government will borrow this year? How much?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, Conservatives continue to call for cuts to spending and cuts to supports for Canadians, while at the same time they say there is not enough access to housing. They put forward a plan, a private member's bill, to tackle the problem of housing affordability. The problem is that it will not build homes fast enough, it does not reach enough cities and it creates unnecessary bureaucracy, while cutting the accelerator fund and ripping up our agreements to build more homes with cities like London and others across the country.

On this side, we are actually linking public transit dollars to housing density, working with cities to ensure their housing proposals are ambitious and addressing the bureaucracies—

● (1445)

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was “How much?” See, when the government borrows billions of dollars out of the economy, it bids up interest rates. Those interest rates have already ballooned faster under the Prime Minister than under any other in monetary history.

Once again, how much will the government borrow from the economy this year? I want just the number, please.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition continues to talk down Canadians and talk down the Canadian economy, we are going to continue to put Canada's strong fiscal position in service of Canadians. Yes, it is a strong fiscal position. We have the lowest deficit in the G7, we have the best debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 and we are one of the three largest countries in the world with a AAA credit rating from the bond agencies.

Oral Questions

We have been there for Canadians and have been responsible stewards of the public purse, and that means we will continue to be able to support Canadians through these difficult times, including with the measures we have right now.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bond agencies he brags about are the same ones that were charged because they falsely claimed the subprime crisis would never happen in the United States of America.

Canadian households, after eight years of the Prime Minister, are more indebted than those in any other country in the entire G7. Interest rates have gone up faster than at any time in monetary history after eight years of the Prime Minister. All of this is driven by his massive addiction to borrowing.

The average barber or waitress knows how much they borrow. Does the Prime Minister, who is the head of a half-trillion-dollar government, even know how much he is borrowing out of the country this year?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see once again the Leader of the Opposition's tried and true tactic of attacking the facts when they do not suit his purposes.

The international bond rating agencies, like Moody's and S&P, have ranked the top economies as AAA economies: the United States, Germany and then Canada, some of the world's largest economies. They have said that our fiscal plan is sustainable, as we are there to support Canadians, as we demonstrate fiscal prudence and as we support Canadians through this difficult time.

He can rage war on experts and the facts and demonize them all he likes, but we will keep being there for Canadians, grounded in the facts.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he will not tell us the facts because he does not even know the facts.

This is a man who is going to borrow \$421 billion this year. If the government bought 421 billion apples, the price of apples would go up. When it borrows \$421 billion, the price of debt goes up in higher interest rates. That is why Canadians are paying 150% more on their mortgages.

How much will the government force Canadians to spend on national debt interest this year?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that Canadians will not be taking any condescending economics lessons from the Leader of the Opposition after he proposed to Canadians that a good way of avoiding inflation was to buy crypto. That was his economic counsel to Canadians. If they had followed it, they would have lost almost half of their life savings.

One can understand that we will not be taking any economics lessons from that guy.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should be taking economics lessons from everyone.

This is a guy who said that budgets balance themselves, right before he doubled the debt. This is a guy who said he does not think about monetary policy, right before he led interest rates to rise faster than at any time in Canadian history. This is a guy who, until I told him, did not even know how much he was borrowing out of the Canadian economy. This is a guy who has doubled the rent, doubled mortgage payments and doubled the needed down payment.

It is about time he took some lessons. Why does he not go to the library and do a little bit of studying?

● (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition continues to play his partisan games and focus on me, we are going to remain focused on Canadians.

We moved forward with an affordable groceries and affordable housing act that they have continued to obstruct and debate on. We have continued to deliver things for Canadians like dental care for low-income Canadians, which they stood against. We continue to deliver \$10-a-day child care in places across the country, which they campaigned against. They continue to campaign against the Canada child benefit.

We see that they are always there to make clever political arguments. They are never there to actually support Canadians like we are.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, a group of 25 doctors from the Montérégie region and the Eastern Townships gave a clear diagnosis: The housing crisis is jeopardizing Quebecers' health.

The Prime Minister continues to deny Quebec the \$900 million allocated for housing construction even as the housing crisis turns into a public health crisis. The guiding principle of medicine is "first, do no harm".

When will the Prime Minister stop obstructing housing construction and give the \$900 million to Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past few years, we have always been there to invest with Quebec in housing.

Oral Questions

We will continue to do so because the federal government has a role to play to ensure that affordable apartments and homes are built across the country, including in Quebec. I know that the Minister of Housing is currently working in collaboration with his counterpart in Quebec on a plan that works for Quebec, which will allow more housing to be built more quickly.

Housing is the responsibility of every level of government. We encourage them to address this issue urgently and in partnership.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not seem to understand that the housing crisis is also about some people having no other choice but to live in unsanitary conditions.

Others simply do not have a roof over their heads. They do not have the luxury of waiting for federal jurisdiction disputes to be resolved. They see no valid excuse for withholding the \$900 million earmarked for housing. They are right because there is truly no valid excuse.

When will the Prime Minister stop looking for excuses and finally give us our \$900 million?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that the Bloc Québécois continues to pick a fight when there is no fight to pick. We are working hand in hand with the Government of Quebec to address this housing crisis and to invest that \$900 million, and more, in the province of Quebec in partnership with the Government of Quebec.

The fact that we are working so well with Mr. Legault's government is good news for Quebeckers. Unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois is trying to make mischief and stir up trouble. That is unfortunate for Quebeckers. We will continue to let Quebeckers' principles and concerns guide everything we do.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is one good-news headline: "Apartment rents are on the verge of declining due to massive new supply". Unfortunately, that is a CNBC headline from the United States of America.

Here is a CBC headline from Canada: "Rent is going up more than \$100 a month right now". Another one, and the Prime Minister's favourite, is from the Toronto Star. It says that this year, we are having worse construction numbers than during the lockdown.

Why is construction up and rent down south of the border, when it is just the opposite here in Canada?

• (1455)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know we need to build more rental constructions more quickly. That is why we put forward a bill that would remove the GST from new rental constructions across the country on the federal side, and that is spurring thousands of new units to be built across the country. It is a very exciting measure.

Unfortunately, Conservatives have chosen to obstruct debate on that particular measure. Why will they not line up with Canadians? Why do they not see that building housing supply is going to help

Canadians right across the country? Why will they not line up with us and support Canadians across the country?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is the one who has been obstructing that promise for the last eight years since he made it. During that eight-year period, the average rent has doubled, mortgage payments have doubled and even down payments have doubled. It has been double trouble. After doubling the cost, he created a \$4-billion so-called accelerator to build homes.

How many homes have been completed?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, following a request from the Minister of Housing to scale up its ambition, Vaughan's city council passed a bold housing resolution to unlock even more affordable family-sized homes. That is a direct result of the housing accelerator fund.

This is a concrete example of how the federal government can lead and ensure more affordable housing options so our seniors, students and families can grow in their communities. We look forward to more municipalities joining us to ensure that all Canadians have a safe and affordable place to call home.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was not how many resolutions have been passed. We cannot live in a resolution. We cannot live in a photo-op. We cannot live in a press release or a promise. The Prime Minister created this fund a year and a half ago, promising to accelerate housing.

How many houses have been completed? By completed, I mean houses with walls, roofs and doors, and with people living in them.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's housing plan consists of wagging a finger at municipalities and saying they better build more homes or else. We have a better approach than that. We actually work with municipalities to build more homes, and we are seeing the results of that housing plan.

Recently, alongside British Columbia and the City of Vancouver, the member for Vancouver Centre announced the groundbreaking of the construction of 154 new affordable housing units close to transit in the heart of Davie Village. This will also house QMUNITY, a non-profit organization providing safe and secure services for individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, we cannot live in an announcement. We cannot live in a press release. We cannot live in the Prime Minister's talking points, which he is having so much trouble reading.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister is now presiding over a massive decline in home building. In fact, last year, Canada built fewer homes than in 1972. This year, housing starts are down 32%. By the way, to end the suspense, the number of homes that have been built by the so-called housing accelerator is zero, nothing.

When will the Prime Minister stop the talk, end the bureaucracy and finally get something built?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years, over two million families have gotten into homes because of our strategic investments in housing, and we just added to that with the housing accelerator fund that is moving forward to remove barriers and get more housing built faster.

That is exactly what we are doing with the city of London, for example, where Mayor Morgan said, “This is the most significant housing...investment in London's history”, and where over the next three years alone we will build over 2,000 additional housing units. We know this is a challenge that we need to solve together, and that is what we are going to do in partnership with municipalities.

● (1500)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2021, the Prime Minister made election promises to stop renovations and to deter unfair rent increases. Two years later, 500 renters in Toronto are on strike because of renovations and high rent increases, as well as poor conditions. Now, the Prime Minister and Liberal MPs for Toronto are nowhere to be seen. Those promises are meaningless.

How can the Prime Minister justify the broken promises to Canadian renters?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there consistently to partner with municipalities and provinces where they have been willing to improve conditions for renters, to support the building of new apartment complexes and to ensure availability of more affordable housing.

There has been a lot of progress made, but there is more to do. That is why we were so pleased to see the Government of Ontario join in with us on eliminating the GST on the construction of new rental apartment buildings. These are things that are going to make a big difference, and we will continue to work with our partners, including the mayor of Toronto, to make sure we are protecting renters.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not finished.

In Quebec, 25 doctors made a heartfelt plea: Their patients' health is getting worse because of the housing crisis. After eight years of the current government, the cost of rent has doubled. That is the Liberals' record.

Enough with the “could have, would have, should have”. When will the Prime Minister finally take this crisis seriously?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have worked hand in hand with the Government of Quebec for years to invest in housing. We are currently working on rolling

out our \$900-million investment to help with the housing crisis in Quebec.

We know that a lot of people are worried. That is why we are working in partnership with the Government of Quebec and every government across the country, hand in hand with our municipal and provincial partners. That is what we will continue to do.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Sisters in Spirit National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People. We honour the lives, memories and spirits of the too many indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people who are missing or have been murdered across Canada. As we see in Winnipeg with the Prairie Green landfill, where human remains of loved ones, victims of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, may lie, more work needs to be done.

Can the Prime Minister please explain what the Government of Canada is undertaking with Long Plain First Nation to address this heart-wrenching situation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard first-hand the grief and pain of the families and community, and our hearts are heavy, knowing how difficult this has been for them. They are looking to find healing and closure right now, and it is important that we support them in this process. That is why today, we announced \$740,000 in additional funding to explore in greater detail the next steps of a search. We will continue to work in partnership with indigenous leaders, families and survivors for a victim-centred, trauma-informed and indigenous-led approach to healing.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, eight years ago, the Prime Minister promised in his 2015 platform that he would “[repurpose] all available federal lands and buildings...at low cost for affordable housing in communities where there is a pressing need”.

Can the Prime Minister tell us how many homes have resulted from repurposing these buildings and lands?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2017, we moved forward with the national housing strategy, which was a direct response to the fact that, for 10 years, under the Conservatives, the federal government had removed itself from providing housing solutions for Canadians. Over the following years, around two million Canadians accessed new homes and new places to live because of the work of that national housing strategy, and we are continuing that work, working closely in partnership with municipalities and provinces, and doing things such as eliminating the GST on rental construction of new apartment buildings. These are things that would be accelerated if the Conservatives stopped blocking them in the House.

• (1505)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are happy to co-operate, but we are just looking for one little detail. There are 37,000 federal buildings representing 6.2 million square metres of space. The Prime Minister promised, eight years ago, that he would repurpose some of that space to create homes. How many have been created?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like I said, our national housing strategy has supported in the delivery of homes for close to two million Canadian families. We are going to continue to do the work necessary, working with partners in municipalities and provinces on delivering housing solutions.

One part of the solution is eliminating the GST on new rental construction, and that is something that the Conservatives could support right now if they were to stop obstructing and slowing down debate on the bill we put forward for Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a problem with the microphone. The Prime Minister did not hear the question.

There are 37,000 federal buildings, six million-plus square metres, that could be converted into housing, not to mention thousands of acres of federal land. The Prime Minister agreed that could be done because he promised it eight years ago. After eight years of doubling housing costs, can he tell us how many homes have been created by repurposing federal buildings and lands? I would like just the number, please.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past years, we have invested close to \$40 billion to build and renovate close to half a million homes. That is 500,000 homes.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not need to answer because my deputy leader did an Order Paper question and asked the government to tell us how many homes have resulted from repurposing land and buildings of the federal government. The number is 13. It is not 1,300, or 13,000, but 13 homes. That is two homes per year. How many millennia would it take then to build the 3.5 million homes we need for Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition continues to play rhetorical games, we are focused on building the range of solutions we are going to need to actually solve this housing crisis, which involves things such as removing GST from purpose-built rental construc-

tion; moving forward with the rental construction financing initiative, which we have been working on for a number of years now and delivering on; moving forward with the housing accelerator fund, with \$4 billion for municipalities like Vaughan, London and the Lower Mainland to build new homes; and continuing to work on making the rental market safer for all Canadians. These are things we will continue to do because Canadians are counting on all of us.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is hiring unilingual anglophone executives to fill high-ranking bilingual positions. Not only do these people not speak French, but they are also not taking French lessons. The RCMP is blatantly violating the Official Languages Act. When even the police break the law, there is a problem high up in the ranks.

Despite the reform of the Official Languages Act, there is still a culture of contempt for French within the federal government.

Will the Prime Minister remind the RCMP that it has to obey the law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. The principle of bilingualism is fundamental for this government, and we modernized the Official Languages Act with the coming into force of Bill C-13 this year.

We expect the RCMP to respect this principle and to hire bilingual staff to fill bilingual positions. I know that the Minister of Public Safety will be speaking with the RCMP commissioner directly this afternoon.

• (1510)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not very convincing.

This situation with the RCMP is a perfect example of the federal government's culture of contempt for French. The RCMP hiring unilingual anglophones is one thing. That these people are not taking French classes is another thing. The worst part is that no one even thought about requiring them to take classes. No one even thought about the optics and making an effort to enforce the legislation, not even after the fact, and not even to save face. That is a culture of contempt.

Does the Prime Minister get it now and will he intervene?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the Minister of Public Safety will speak directly with the commissioner of the RCMP this afternoon.

Oral Questions

We share this concern. We expect federal institutions like the RCMP to follow the Official Languages Act. That is what we will all expect.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long miserable years of the Prime Minister, he is not worth the cost of energy.

In Nova Scotia, 2,800 people have had their power cut off, and today, the Nova Scotia government reported that 37% of Nova Scotians now live in energy poverty because of the Prime Minister's carbon tax, which he now wants to quadruple, up to 61¢ a litre.

Will the Prime Minister at least let his Atlantic caucus have a free vote on our motion to axe the tax and bring home lower prices?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party refuses to understand that our plan to fight climate change is, above everything else, a plan on affordability.

Eight out of 10 Canadians are better off with this price on pollution in the jurisdictions where it has been brought in. This means that, even as we fight climate change, which is something Atlantic Canadians know all too well is important with hurricanes such as Fiona and the wildfires we saw this summer, we are putting more money back in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians.

This is how we fight climate change and support Canadians at the same time, while Conservatives want to take away cheques, such as the climate action incentive.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long, painful, costly years, this carbon tax is not worth the cost.

It is not just me saying it. The Liberal member for Avalon has said, "We're punishing the rural areas of our country and the most vulnerable people in our society." Other Liberal MPs like to go back to Atlantic Canada and say they disagree with the Prime Minister's plan to quadruple the carbon tax to 61¢ a litre. Unfortunately, they lose their spines when they get to the House of Commons.

Will the Prime Minister stop bullying them and let them have a free vote so we can pass our motion to axe the tax and bring home lower prices?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I spent a lot of time with rural Canadians this summer, and they were heartbroken over the wildfires that had devastated their communities, the record floods, the record heat waves and the droughts, which everyone—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, in all the conversations I have had with rural Canadians across the country this sum-

mer, they were devastated by the impacts of record wildfires, floods, droughts and heat waves.

They see the impact of climate change, and they know that we need to continue to fight climate change while putting money back in their pockets. That is exactly what our price on pollution does. That is what we are going to continue to do instead of eliminating—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hiding out and going surfing in Tofino does not count as spending time with rural Canadians.

Obviously the Prime Minister is not listening to what they have to say because, after eight years, his carbon tax is not worth the cost. He now wants to quadruple the tax to 61¢ a litre. Even the Liberal Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is calling on him to axe the tax. It agrees with me.

Will the Prime Minister listen to the Liberal Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and his own Liberal caucus from Atlantic Canada, and axe the tax?

• (1515)

The Speaker: Before the Prime Minister responds, I would like to inform colleagues that, in the week following the parliamentary break, the Speakers will be issuing some reflective guidelines as to the types of things that we should mention or not mention so as to not derange the House.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition speak to people in Stephenville, Newfoundland and Labrador, who are seeing historic investments from Germany, which is looking at them because of the investments in hydrogen, in the clean economy and offshore wind.

I suggest that he speak to his member from St. Thomas, Ontario, where the Volkswagen plant is going to land because of the historic leadership we have shown in clean electricity and drawing in innovation investments. Members have not heard the leader of the official opposition talk at all about the benefits of that investment in Volkswagen because he has no plans for the future of the economy.

* * *

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at a time when fighting climate change is a priority, Canadians from coast to coast are calling for concrete action concerning the development of new technology.

Oral Questions

Can the Prime Minister tell the House what the government is doing to promote the growth of green industries not only in Canada, but also in Quebec?

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

It just so happens that last week I had the pleasure of joining Premier Legault and the Minister of Innovation to announce the historic agreement with Northvolt. Our government is working tirelessly to attract investors to Canada so that we can create more jobs and drive economic growth across the country.

With this announcement, we are strengthening Quebec's position in the auto sector for the next 20, 30, 50 years and well beyond. It is the very first electric vehicle battery plant in Quebec. This is excellent news for Quebec and for Quebecers.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when one taxes the fuel of the farmers who make the food and the fuel of the truckers who ship the food, then one taxes all those who buy the food. After eight years, the Prime Minister's carbon tax is just not worth the cost, but he has not received the memo.

Now he wants to quadruple the tax to 61¢ a litre with firm support from the NDP. Both parties are motivated by greed, government greed, to take more and more money away from the poor and working class families who were hit hardest by this tax. Will they stop the greed and vote with us today to axe the tax so we can bring home lower prices?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. Leader of the Opposition refuses to understand is that one cannot have a plan for the future of the economy and jobs in this country if one does not also have a plan for the environment and to fight climate change.

That is what we have demonstrated over the past eight years, as we have seen emissions come down faster than any of our colleagues in the G7, as we continue to move forward in a way that both delivers affordability for families and jobs for the coming generations. These are the things that Canadians need for the future. That is what is our plan is delivering.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what they need is affordable food and energy with a policy that lowers emissions, like we did, rather than raising taxes, like he does. Emissions are actually up. That is the great irony. Emissions are rising under the Prime Minister, which proves that he and his carbon tax are not worth the cost.

After eight years, can he not see the pain and suffering in the many streets where people are lined up to go into food banks because of his tax? Will he do the honourable and compassionate thing and vote with us today to axe the tax?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. Leader of the Opposition continues to put forward is a plan to double down on oil and gas at a time when that is not

going to build the careers, the future or the innovation Canadians need.

I was pleased to meet with a number of Albertan business leaders last night to talk about how we are going to work with them, including in the oil and gas industry, to reduce emissions and build a brighter future that includes great jobs for Albertans and workers in the energy sector right across the country.

We have a plan to fight climate change and grow the economy for the future. The Conservative Party has none.

• (1520)

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing the Prime Minister has is a second carbon tax that will apply to Quebec, with the support of the Bloc Québécois. That party wants to collect Quebecers' money here in Ottawa with the federal government, while the leader of the Bloc Québécois is still on vacation. Why not burn some jet fuel?

Will the Prime Minister and his friend, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, cancel their travel plans and the carbon tax to protect the environment and Quebecers' wallets?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are discussing serious issues for Canadians, such as their future and their jobs. The leader of the Conservative Party continues to make personal attacks.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Decorum is very important in this House. I would like to remind my colleagues that only one person must rise to speak. It is important that we respect that. We must behave in a way that is worthy of this chamber.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we will always be there to support Canadians. We will always be there to work hand in hand with willing parties to build a stronger economy and protect the future of Canadians. That is what people expect. We take that very seriously in the House. Some members do not take this place seriously and would rather make personal attacks than engage in substantive debate. Canadians will be the judge of that.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Bloc Québécois, the New Democratic Party and the Green Party to build a stronger future for all Canadians, despite the Conservatives' games.

Business of Supply

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about the cost of housing. While the Conservatives are letting partisan politics get in the way of important legislation that would increase the number of affordable units built in Canada, our government is working side by side with cities and the provinces to increase the housing supply.

Can the Prime Minister share with this House some of the concrete actions taken in my community of Vaughan by the government to fight the housing crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the MP for Vaughan—Woodbridge for his hard work and his leadership. We are seeing the work of the housing accelerator fund in action. Yesterday, following a request from the Minister of Housing, Vaughan city council passed a bold housing resolution to unlock more affordable family-sized homes. We are excited to share that their plan has now been approved.

While the Leader of the Opposition's plan is to cut the accelerator fund, destroying the momentum we have built with cities like London and now Vaughan, we are going to continue to work to build more homes faster now.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the Conservatives love a history lesson, so let us go back in time to when the Conservatives were in power. Ground beef went up 128%, coffee went up 89% and bread went up by 60%, and the Conservatives' response was to give billions in tax giveaways to wealthy corporations. Now, after eight years of Liberals, food prices have also increased by 30%.

Now the Prime Minister's solution is to ask greedy CEOs nicely to stabilize their prices. When will he have the courage to take on the real problem, which is corporate greed?

● (1525)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian grocery bills are just too high. That is why we are taking immediate action.

We called the top CEOs to Ottawa to discuss how they can make groceries more affordable. Should they fail to show results, their inaction will have consequences. We are also moving forward on competition reforms, because we know increased competition is good for consumers. Unfortunately, the Conservative Party has chosen to obstruct debate on the competition reform bill, but we are going to continue to move forward, because that is what Canadians need.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, while the minister responsible for people with disabilities says it is going to be 18 more months until anyone receives the Canada disability

benefit, Canadians with disabilities continue to disproportionately live in poverty across the country.

Like me, the Prime Minister has never had the experience of living under the crushing weight of legislated poverty, but he can do something about it. He could immediately introduce the disability emergency response benefit, as the disability community has called for. Will he do it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree there is much more to be done in supporting Canadians with disabilities, but we have done a significant amount over the past years and we will continue to do so to address the ongoing barriers faced by persons living with disabilities.

We are focused on improving the lives of Canadians in the long term, and the historic Canada disability benefit is just one of the steps our government is taking. Our government is looking forward to doing the work directly with the disability community completely in the spirit of “Nothing about us without us.”

The Speaker: The member for Port Moody—Coquitlam is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to ask for unanimous consent to make my statement over. There was some accidental walking in front of my shot earlier today. I would like to do it again.

The Speaker: Is there consent?

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1530)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CARBON TAXES

The House resumed from September 28 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, September 28, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Carleton related to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

● (1540)

[Translation]

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

*(Division No. 416)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultatif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett

Business of Supply

Berthold	Bezan	Blair	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Bragdon	Blaney	Blois
Brassard	Brock	Boissonnault	Boulerice
Calkins	Caputo	Bradford	Brière
Carrie	Chambers	Brunelle-Duceppe	Carr
Chong	Cooper	Casey	Chabot
Dalton	Dancho	Chagger	Chahal
Davidson	Deltell	Champagne	Champoux
d'Entremont	Doherty	Chatel	Chen
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis	Cormier	Coteau
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Dabrusin	Damoff
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Davies	DeBellefeuille
Ferreri	Findlay	Desbiens	Desilets
Gallant	Généreux	Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Genuis	Gladu	Dhillon	Diab
Godin	Goodridge	Dong	Drouin
Gourde	Gray	Dubourg	Duclos
Hallan	Hoback	Duguid	Dzerowicz
Jeneroux	Kelly	Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Khanna	Kitchen	Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Kmiec	Kram	Fisher	Fonseca
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Fortier	Fortin
Kusie	Lake	Fragiskatos	Fraser
Lantsman	Lawrence	Freeland	Fry
Lehoux	Leslie	Gaheer	Gainey
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Garon	Garrison
Liepert	Lloyd	Gazan	Gerretsen
Lobb	Maguire	Gill	Gould
Majumdar	Martel	Green	Guilbeault
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)	Hajdu	Hanley
McDonald (Avalon)	McLean	Hardie	Hepfner
Melillo	Moore	Holland	Housefather
Morantz	Morrison	Hughes	Hussen
Motz	Muys	Hutchings	Iacono
Nater	Patzer	Idlout	Ien
Paul-Hus	Perkins	Jaczek	Johns
Poilievre	Redekopp	Joly	Jones
Reid	Rempel Garner	Jowhari	Julian
Richards	Roberts	Kelloway	Khalid
Rood	Ruff	Khera	Koutrakis
Scheer	Schmale	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Seeback	Shields	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Shipley	Small	Lametti	Lapointe
Soroka	Steinley	Larouche	Lattanzio
Stewart	Strahl	Lauzon	LeBlanc
Stubbs	Thomas	Lebouthillier	Lemire
Tochor	Tolmie	Lightbound	Long
Uppal	Van Popta	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Vecchio	Vidal	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Vien	Viersen	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Vis	Vuong	Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Wagantall	Warkentin	Masse	Mathysen
Waugh	Webber	May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Williams	Williamson	McQuinty	McKay
Zimmer — 119		McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra	Murray	Naqvi
Ali	Anand	Ng	Noormohamed
Anandasangaree	Angus	Normandin	O'Connell
Arseneault	Arya	Oliphant	O'Regan
Ashton	Atwin	Pauzé	Perron
Bachrach	Badawey	Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Bains	Baker	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Rayes	Robillard
Battiste	Beaulieu	Rodriguez	Rogers
Beech	Bendayan	Romanado	Sahota
Bennett	Bergeron	Sajjan	Saks
Bérubé	Bibeau	Samson	Sarai
Bittle	Blaikie	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia

Routine Proceedings

Schieffe	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Sorbara	Sousa
Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thompson
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi— 209	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Order. I would encourage members to continue their conversations outside the chamber.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 13 minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1545)

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a report on indigenous rights and justice, entitled “Indigenous Lobby Day 2023”, by the Canadian Labour Congress. It calls for safe drinking water for indigenous communities, immediate action on missing and murdered indigenous persons and honouring residential school children and their families. I ask for the consent of the House to table this report.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

[English]

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 11th report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, also known as the mighty OGGO, entitled “Travel Expenditures Related to the Office of the Governor General's Secretary since 2014”.

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

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a supplementary report to the report from the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

This supplementary report is the result of an unwillingness by the Liberal-NDP coalition to take firm action to rein in the outrageous spending by the Office of the Governor General, which demonstrates a callous disrespect for Canadian taxpayers through lavish spending on catering and clothing. It is timely given the news today that the Office of the Governor General has spent \$117,000 in dry cleaning since 2018. This should not be allowed to continue, let alone softly approved by a lack of action to end it.

The trust of Canadians must be restored in the role of the Governor General. The best way to do that is to take strong measures to address this overspending at the expense of Canadian taxpayers. That is why Conservatives are recommending the following: reforming the Governor General's pension to match the pension of an MP, as former governors general receive a pension of roughly \$150,000 per year regardless of the length of time in office; ending the clothing allowance; ending the expense account for former governors general; and legislating a requirement for the Office of the Governor General to publish on its website an annual report on its activities, including its financial statements, similar to that of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General of Australia.

The government must act to restore Canadians' trust in the institution of the Office of the Governor General.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a dissenting opinion concerning the Governor General's expenses.

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

It is agreed.

The hon. member.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a dissenting report on the Governor General's expenses. The recommendations in the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates' report are adequate, but they do not address the core of the problem or fix the root cause, in other words, the very role and function of the Governor General. In my dissenting report, I therefore propose to remedy the problem directly by calling on the federal government to abolish the position of Governor General.

* * *

● (1550)

[English]

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-358, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act (carbon pollution pricing).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to introduce my first private member's bill today. This bill, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, is quite simple in its objective. This is to remove the GST from the carbon tax. Removing a tax from a tax is just common sense.

While many Canadians would prefer to axe the carbon tax altogether, this is a common-sense interim measure to provide relief to millions of Canadians while we await a future Conservative government. With the carbon tax set to increase over the coming years, the GST collected on such a tax will increase with it. Given the current inflationary environment that is driving up the costs of everyday goods, there is no need for Canadians to be paying a tax on a tax.

I encourage members from all parties to support the swift passage of this common-sense bill to make life more affordable for all Canadians.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

PLASTIC WASTE

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise on behalf of residents of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon who are frustrated with Canada's handling of plastic waste. In 2020, the member for York—Simcoe tabled Bill C-204, which was passed by the House but died on the Order Paper when the last Parliament was dissolved. The bill would have banned the export of plastic waste for final disposal, but the Liberals prevented it from passing.

My constituents are calling upon the Government of Canada to toughen penalties for those who violate international laws on waste exports and to enact a ban on the export of plastic waste for final disposal. It is time for the Liberals to stop talking about protecting our environment and start doing something about it.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to rise in the House since your election; congratulations to you.

I have two petitions to present today. The first is from members of my community who are part of the Falun Gong community; they are bringing three asks to the attention of the government specifically. The first is that a resolution is passed to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime from systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs. The second is to amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting. The third is to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have also comes from members in my community. They draw to the attention of the government that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned us repeatedly of rising temperatures over the next two decades.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners indicate that we, as Canadians, are certainly feeling the impacts of climate change, including increased flooding, wildfires and extreme temperatures. They also draw to the House's attention that addressing the climate crisis requires drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and, in 2021, the federal government committed to cap and cut emissions from the oil and gas sector to achieve net zero by 2050.

They call on the government to move forward immediately with bold emissions caps for the oil and gas sector that are comprehensive in scope and realistic in achieving the necessary targets that Canada has set to reduce emissions by 2030.

● (1555)

AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my first opportunity to address you as Speaker. I send my heartfelt congratulations. I also congratulate you on your immediate approach just moments ago in getting through question period. I think your car is not yet dented.

The petition I am presenting today is about something I have not presented a petition on before. It is of real concern to residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands. There is a citizen campaign, and the short form of it is called “Stop Killer Robots”. Some may think it is not a real threat.

The petitioners point out that autonomous weapons systems, essentially using artificial intelligence to direct lethal weapons, are a growing concern—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We cannot see the member who is speaking.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands to restart about a third of the way through her petition.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague; it is nice to be seen, as well as heard, in this place.

The petition deals with a subject that I do not think has come up in this place before. It is the threat of autonomous weapons systems, or in other words, using artificial intelligence to direct weapons of war and using sensors more than human control.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to engage meaningfully in prohibiting the domestic development, importation and use of autonomous weapons systems, as well as those that do not allow for meaningful human control.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners ask the government to take an active leadership role in developing international rules and protocols, through the offices of the United Nations General Assembly, to block the use of what are called, colloquially, killer robots.

PAKISTAN

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your new role.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to present e-petition 4547 to the House of Commons. This petition was initiated by Regina resident Khurram Awan, and it has been signed by residents across the country.

The petition is regarding reports of politically motivated acts of violence in Pakistan following the arrest of former Pakistani prime minister, Imran Khan, and the postponement of general elections in that country, in violation of the country's constitution.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to explore the feasibility of imposing Magnitsky sanctions on members of the Pakistani military responsible for the violence.

The petitioners also call on the government to pressure the International Monetary Fund to make any loans to the Pakistani regime conditional on hosting free and fair elections.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to present this petition today in the House of Commons.

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

I rise today in support of not only Brooke from Nelson but also people from Kootenay—Columbia, Oshawa and across Canada. I present a petition with hundreds of signatures on proposed changes to natural health product regulations that the NDP-Liberal government have proposed to Health Canada.

We rely on health products every day as part of our proactive health care. Health Canada is proposing significant fees for importing, manufacturing and selling NHPs, as well as new labelling laws. This over-regulation would force people to seek products on-line and outside of Canada.

I stand with and support the natural health product industry and call on the Minister of Health to work with the industry to embrace modern labelling and cost recovery rates to reflect the scope of the industry.

• (1600)

CANNABIS FARMING EMISSIONS

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition from the residents of Parsons, British Columbia. Citizens from Parsons and across Canada call upon the government to include outdoor cannabis farming emissions as part of the 2023 Cannabis Act review and to require Health Canada to set rules for emission controls for outdoor cannabis farming.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you as well.

In my first petition, the individuals are recognizing the importance of owning firearms, and they are concerned about the impacts of hearing loss caused by the damaging noise levels of firearms and the need for noise reduction. These folks acknowledge that sound moderators are the only universally recognized health and safety device that is actually criminally prohibited in Canada. Moreover, the majority of G7 countries have recognized the health and safety benefits of sound moderators, allowing them for hunting, sport shooting and reducing noise pollution. The petitioners are calling on the government to allow legal firearms owners the option to purchase and use sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting activities.

I have another petition on firearms, and I have two more as well, so I will be concise.

I think this bears being repeated. The undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call upon the Government of Canada to cancel its plans to confiscate the firearms of law-abiding farmers, hunters and indigenous peoples and, instead, introduce common-sense firearms policies that keep guns out of the hands of dangerous criminals.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have an e-petition presented by a victim of violence. His name is Jeff Durham, and he lost his wife and daughter. He was able to gain over 500 signatures.

It is well established that the risk of violence against women increases when they are pregnant. Currently, a woman's pregnancy is not an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes in the Criminal Code of Canada. Addressing this legal void through sentencing that considers the vulnerable state of the pregnant woman is necessary in denouncing such crimes, and having appropriate sentences when violent crimes are committed against pregnant women is imperative to protecting their reproductive choice to have a child. The sentence should match the crime. As such, the undersigned citizens of Canada call upon the House of Commons to legislate the abuse of a pregnant woman and the infliction of harm on her child as an aggravating circumstance for sentencing purposes within the Criminal Code.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you will indulge me, there is one more quick petition, and it is in regard to the protection of charities.

The Liberal Party of Canada was elected on a promise to revoke charitable status for pro-life organizations, such as Crisis Pregnancy Centre, which counsels young women and saves countless lives every year. Revoking the charitable status of pro-life organizations is a first step toward even more tyrannical measures to eradicate the values and principles of Canadians and includes churches, which may be next.

Revoking the charitable status of pro-life organizations will result in an explosion in the number of abortions committed in Canada each year. Therefore, the undersigned hereby call upon members of Parliament to do everything in their power to prevent, block, organize against and vote against any effort by the government to revoke the charitable status of pro-life organizations in Canada.

IRAN

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here to present a petition on behalf of the Iranian community, which is still grieving from the hurt and pain caused by the brutal attack on flight PS752.

The victims of flight 752, their families and thousands of brave protesters in Iran, who continue to fight for freedom from the oppressive grip of the Iranian regime, deserve answers. It has been over three years now, and it is the responsibility of the current Canadian government to uphold justice, do its job and immediately undertake an independent criminal investigation into this attack.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment.

I rise for the 13th time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. Swan River and its people have been let down by the Liberal government, which has allowed crime to spiral out of control. Residents no longer feel comfortable walking outside at night, and for businesses, theft has become all too common. Members of this community told me how unsafe they feel, since crime has taken its toll on what was once a safe and welcoming community.

The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, which directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

• (1605)

PILOT LICENCES

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

The first petition I am presenting is on behalf of Canadian pilots, folks who are in training for their pilot licence. They are concerned about the fact they are having difficulty getting their licence as Transport Canada and Nav Canada have been less than helpful in scheduling these tests. They have been prevented from taking their examinations and receiving their certification. They note that schools across Canada are open and operating safely, but Transport Canada and Nav Canada are not putting forward solutions that allow them to take their exams in a timely fashion.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are asking the government to open these offices and create other facilities or mechanisms so students can write their exams and be able to receive their commercial pilot licence in a timely manner.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners. They recognize the importance to our Canadian society of owning firearms, but are concerned about the impacts of hearing loss caused from the damaging noise levels from the use of these firearms.

These petitioners acknowledge sound moderators are a universally accepted health and safety device, but they note that the device is criminally prohibited here in Canada. They also note we are the only G7 country that has not recognized the health and safety benefits of these devices. Allowing them for hunting, sport shooting and reducing noise pollution is something all our peer countries do but is illegal in Canada.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Canadian government to legalize the option to purchase and use sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting activities.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition comes from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about how Turkish, Pakistani and Bahraini officials have committed human rights abuses against thousands of Turks and Turkish Canadians, particularly eight current Turkish Canadians.

They are responsible for causing wrongful detentions of over 300,000 people around the world. Petitioners are calling on the Canadian government to closely monitor the human rights situation in Turkey and place sanctions on 12 Turkish officials who are responsible for these human rights violations against these current Canadians and the death of their friend Gokhan Acikkollu. They also call on the Turkish, Pakistani and Bahraini governments to end these violations in their countries.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues, I would like to congratulate you on your historic election as Speaker.

I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*English*]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

GROCERY PRICES

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in September, the Prime Minister held a photo op, a stunt with grocery CEOs of all of the major chains. He said to Canadians, and this was a promise, that they wanted something that would be felt by Canadians by Thanksgiving. He was talking about lowering the price of Thanksgiving dinner.

We have not heard anything from the Prime Minister on that commitment to Canadians. The Prime Minister has broken his promise.

Thanksgiving is Monday, which is less than five days away, and we want answers. Therefore, we are requesting an emergency debate.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I sincerely thank the hon. member for Thornhill for her remarks, but I do not find that the request meets the exigencies of the Standing Orders at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from September 20 consideration of the motion that Bill S-12, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker. I would also like to say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Langley—Aldergrove.

The last eight years have not been kind to Canadians, since the Liberal government took power, when it comes to safe streets, safe communities and crime. One only needs to look at the recent StatsCan release to see the drastic increase in crime in this country

since 2015. The numbers are absolutely staggering. Total violent crimes are up 39%; homicides are up 43%, up for the fourth year in a row; gang-related homicides are up 108%; violent gun crimes are up 101%, up for the eighth year in a row; aggravated assaults are up 24%; assaults with a weapon are up 61%; sexual assaults are up 71%; and sex crimes against children are up 126%.

That is the context when we look at Bill S-12, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act. That is the context by which we, as parliamentarians, addressing the fear in our communities around crime, around keeping Canadians safe, around protecting victims, look at Bill S-12.

Bill S-12 is due to be passed at all stages by October 28. This is a deadline that was put in place by the Supreme Court, when it gave the government 365 days to get this done, in response to a Supreme Court decision. Yet, here we are, with just 24 days left, to make sure that the national sex offender registry continues to be a critical resource for police to investigate and to prevent crime.

The last time the Liberal government had a court-imposed deadline to respond to decisions, around medical assistance in dying, we ended up, tragically, with a bill that would expand medical assistance in dying to Canadians living with mental illness. The government waited too long and rushed through legislation. That is, again, what is happening here.

I am going to focus my speech on amendments to the Sex Offender Information Registration Act as opposed to changes in the publication bans that were brought forward by our Conservative-led justice committee study on the federal government's obligation to victims of crime.

What is the sex offender registry? Conservatives will always stand up for victims and victims' rights. That leads me to these amendments to the Sex Offender Information Registration Act. The act was established in 2004 to help Canadian police authorities investigate crimes of a sexual nature by requiring the registration of certain information on sex offenders. To help police services investigate crimes of a sexual nature, the sex offender registry contains information such as the address and telephone numbers of offenders, a description of their physical appearance, the nature of the offence committed, and the age and gender of victims, and their relationship to the offender.

At the time, enrolment on the registry was up to the discretion of a judge. That discretion led to significant problems. The public safety committee review of the implementation of the sex offender registry in 2009 found glaring issues. The committee found that only 50% of sex offenders were required to register their information. This was happening for a number of reasons. An official from the Department of Public Safety told the committee at the time that with the pressure of time or workload, Crown attorneys would forget to ask for the order. The committee was also told that the order application rate varies widely by province and by territory. One witness stated that the absence of an automatic inclusion on the registry for all offenders convicted of sexual crimes has led to the inconsistent application of the law across the country.

The committee recommended to the government that the automatic registration of sex offenders would fix these holes in the legislation. In order to be effective, the national registry must be enforced consistently across the country.

• (1615)

I was proud to be part of the Conservative government that passed the Protecting Victims From Sex Offenders Act, introduced in 2010. That legislation passed with the support of all parties. The bill broadened the purpose of the sex offender registry by adding the purpose of helping police prevent crimes of a sexual nature in addition to enabling them to investigate those crimes.

We made sensible changes to strengthen the sex offender registry. For instance, we made registration automatic for convicted sex offenders. Our legislation also added the obligation to report any person ordered to serve an intermittent or conditional sentence. This is even more important today than it was then, because Liberal Bill C-5 now allows conditional sentences for crimes like sexual assault and Liberal Bill C-75 now allows bail to become more easily obtained by individuals charged with serious offences.

Conservatives also brought in the requirement of registered sex offenders to report the name of their employer or the person who engages them on a volunteer basis or retains them, and the type of work they do. Police should be aware if a sex offender is spending any amount of time with or in proximity to potential victims. We made these sensible amendments to the Sex Offender Information Registration Act to protect victims and to prevent crime.

On October 28, 2022, a split decision, five to four, of the Supreme Court found that the mandatory and lifetime registration on the sex offender registry was unconstitutional. The Liberals have simply accepted this decision. We have urged them to respond as forcefully as possible, and Bill S-12 does fall short of that.

I want to read from the dissenting judgment. It was a very strong dissent, in which it says:

...the exercise of discretion was the very problem that prompted Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to provide for automatic registration of sex offenders under the Sex Offender Information Registration Act... The evidence is clear that even low risk sex offenders, relative to the general criminal population, pose a heightened risk to commit another sexual offence.

That heightened risk is, by some counts, eight times the likelihood of someone with a prior conviction to reoffend. That is why incorporating and improving as many offenders as possible in the sex offender registry is so very important. We have seen how this

Government Orders

has played out before. When it was left simply to the judges to decide who needs to register with the registry, nearly 50% of offenders were never required to register. This is before we brought in mandatory registration.

Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. We can expect that individuals who certainly should be listed in the registry, even after the passage of Bill S-12, would be left out. We have to take every step to protect Canadians, to protect victims and to ensure that sex offenders are not given the opportunity to revictimize our communities.

After eight years of the Liberal government, the rate of violent crime is up 39%, police-reported sexual assaults are up 71% and sex crimes against children are up 126%. Canadians deserve so much better than this. I can think of no greater obligation for us as members of Parliament to enact laws that protect our communities and protect the safety of the most vulnerable. With legislation like Bill C-75 that has made bail so easy to get, legislation like Bill C-5 that has allowed for house arrest for sex offenders, Conservatives do not trust the government to take the necessary steps to protect Canadians. It has proven an inability to do that.

It is important that we pass Bill S-12, it is important that we respond to the Supreme Court decision and it is important that we go as far as possible to protect the most vulnerable. We look forward to the quick passage of this legislation. It is unfortunate that the government took so long to bring us to this point, but it is also important that we act expeditiously to protect Canadians.

• (1620)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP did a lot of work with groups like My Voice, My Choice, which talked about the rights of victims and having a process that allowed them to retain their power while going through very difficult times.

I wonder if the member could talk a bit more about the study that was done at committee. It had a unanimous report that was supportive of recommendation 11 to amend section 486.4 of the Criminal Code to allow victims of sexual assault to opt out of the publication ban and take back their agency. This has been long advocated for by victims' rights advocates. I wonder if the member could talk about why this is important and if he will support this bill, because it does exactly that.

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the work of My Voice, My Choice and its appearance at our justice committee.

Government Orders

As Conservatives, we initiated a study on the federal government's obligation to victims of crime. One of the many issues we heard around publication bans was about victims having the right to have their voice heard and taking back their agency, especially in the context of publication bans.

It was a unanimous finding of the committee that the government had been falling short on its obligation to victims of crime. We support measures that give a voice back to victims of crime. It is important that their voices be heard, and we support that every step of the way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is very pleased with Bill S-12. We are pleased with it because it puts the victims front and centre.

Does my Conservative colleague think that the government can and must interfere in parole decisions to move an inmate from a maximum security institution to a medium security institution? I am referring to the Paul Bernardo case, among others.

Is my colleague in favour of the government interfering in parole decisions?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, this legislation was a needed response to a Supreme Court decision, but I feel it could have gone further. It could have been tighter. There are a number of offences now that will not meet the threshold for inclusion in the registry, and there will be people who should have been included who will not be with the passage of this legislation.

Absolutely what happened with the issue around Bernardo's transfer is a travesty. It should have never happened. A witness came to us in our study on the government's obligation to victims of crime, and she said that in Canada we no longer have a justice system. We have a legal system, but not a justice system. I remember her words because I think of what happened with Bill C-75 to change our bail laws to create a revolving door that puts criminals back out on the streets. I think of the fact that Bill C-5 removed mandatory penalties for serious crimes against individuals. I also think of instances like the transfer that was put in place for Paul Bernardo. The government, by changing legislation, made that transfer inevitable. That is laid completely at the feet of the government. When it changed the law to put in a requirement that minimal holdings be implemented for each prisoner, it made that inevitable.

Absolutely we have a lot of work that needs to be done to protect our communities and to protect victims.

• (1625)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his contributions on justice issues.

I think we all share the perspective that we want to make Canada safer and make sure that the rights of victims are protected, and I think the legislation goes a long way toward doing that. I wonder whether my hon. friend would be willing to share his reflections on the amendments that were made by the Senate and whether he generally agrees with them or has some concerns, as I do, with some of them.

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to the justice committee. When we are seized with Bill C-21, we will look at those amendments, as I do share a concern around some of them.

It is one thing to say that we want Canadians to be safe. It is another thing to put in place the legislative measures to make sure that happens. I am committed to working with all parliamentarians, including the hon. member, to pass legislation that allows us to protect our streets, protect our communities and protect victims.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Electoral Reform; the hon. member for Mission—Mat-squi—Fraser Canyon, Health.

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are here today talking about a very uncomfortable topic: sexual crimes, the way we deal with offenders and the way we protect victims. We acknowledge as a society that sexual crimes are heinous or injurious and have long-lasting effects, sometimes for the rest of the life of the victim. We recognize that the majority of victims of sexual crimes are women and children. We also acknowledge as a society that, based on the data we have, many sexual offenders will reoffend.

The Liberal government under Prime Minister Martin back in 2004 brought in a new tool for law enforcement to give it investigative and preventative tools. The 2004 Sex Offender Information Registration Act created the national sex offender registry and gave the courts the power and authority to order that people convicted of a sexual crime have their name and further particulars added to this registry. It was intended to be an enforcement tool. It was not available to the public, only to police agencies. The bill passed through the House of Commons unanimously.

However, there was a problem with that legislation, as it left it to the discretion of judges to decide whether or not a person had to have their name added to the registry; it was not done automatically. Some more lenient judges felt that the sentence itself was enough punishment and that the offender did not have to have their name added to the registry. However, of course, the mistake there is that the registry was never intended as punishment but as an investigative and preventative tool. The result of leaving this to the discretion of the judges is that up to one-half of all convicted criminals did not have their names added to the national registry, which completely undermined the efficacy and usefulness of it as a tool. If half the data is missing, what good is the registry?

In 2011, the Harper government remedied that gap with legislation that would make registration to the national sex offender registry mandatory. The registration was to be tied to the duration of the sentence, and for people who were repeat offenders or who were charged with and convicted of more than one offence, it was a lifetime registration. That legislation passed unanimously.

Now fast-forward a decade to October 28, 2022, or 11 months and one week ago. In 2015, Eugene Ndhlovu was convicted of two counts of sexual assault and sentenced to six months in prison with three years of probation. His name was entered into the registry for life because of the two convictions. However, he challenged the validity of these two provisions of the Criminal Code, and the Alberta trial court agreed with him and declared those two provisions to be unconstitutional. The Alberta Court of Appeal reversed that decision, and it then went to the Supreme Court of Canada, which reinstated the original finding of the trial judge, with a declaration of invalidity.

It was a split five-four decision of the nine judges sitting on the Supreme Court of Canada. The majority had this to say about section 7 violations: “registration has a serious impact on the freedom of movement and of fundamental choices of people who are not at an increased risk of re-offending.” In other words, if even one person who was not a threat to public safety ended up on the registry because it was automatic, the whole regime was unconstitutional.

The minority of four judges took quite an opposite view. They said that the mandatory registration in the 2011 legislation “is appropriately tailored to its purpose of helping the police prevent and investigate sexual crimes”. They noted that the evidence before the trial judge was clear and that even low-risk sexual offenders, compared to the general prison population, posed a heightened risk of reoffending, at five to eight times more likely.

• (1630)

That was the data the SCC had. Based on that, the minority said this: “It is also clear that it cannot be reliably predicted at the time of sentencing which offenders will reoffend. In the face of that uncertain risk, Parliament was entitled to cast a wide net.” I am thankful to the Supreme Court minority for respecting and deferring to Parliament and the hard work we do in response to what we hear from the public.

It is often said that judicial review of legislation under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is not undemocratic, in that it does not attack parliamentary supremacy. Rather, academic scholars say that the judicial review process is better viewed as a dialogue between Parliament, which makes the law, and the courts, which review the law. Sometimes, as in this recent Supreme Court of Canada case, it feels very much like one-way dialogue, with the courts speaking and Parliament listening and obeying.

It is unfortunate that the four judges in the minority could not have convinced at least one more to come over to pay deference to Parliament. However, here we are having to deal with the majority decision, and we need to respond to that. We need to fix the law. We have been given one year to do it.

That brings me to the bill that is before us, Bill S-12, which has already been through the Senate. The Minister of Justice presented

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this bill to the House last week, saying it is Parliament's response to that court's decision. In reply to a speech given by my colleague, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, the Minister of Justice said, “we are enacting what we believe would be the strongest possible regime against sex offenders in compliance with the Supreme Court's [decision]”. In other words, our hands are tied and this is the best that we can do.

He might be right, but that leads me to another issue and that is the rush with which this is being pushed through Parliament. We have a deadline of October 28, which is 24 days from now or three and a half weeks, one week of which will be a constituency week. We will not even be here in Ottawa. How are we going to deal with such an important issue in that amount of time? It is urgent, of course, but we also have to get things right.

At committee yesterday, the Minister of Justice told us that social science supports the legislative intention of the drafters of this legislation. He might be right, but I would very much like to see that social science data. I would like to hear from experts in the field. I would ask the experts whether those convicted of a sexual offence are indeed five to eight times more likely to reoffend, as the minority had said in the Supreme Court decision.

Will there be time? This is important legislation, but it is also important that we get it right. We cannot miss the October 28 deadline, or the police will lose a very important investigative and preventative tool. If we are serious about being charter dialogue partners with the courts, this should have been before Parliament months ago. I blame the Liberal government for dragging its feet on this. It put us in this very difficult position.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to make a brief announcement. The help centre for victims of sexual assault, or CALACS, in Longueuil helps women move forward following a sexual assault. The centre also works on prevention.

On October 15, I will be running 10 kilometres to raise money for CALACS, to help fund a prevention campaign in schools. CALACS staff want to go into high schools and CEGEPs to talk to young women and explain how to prevent this. I just wanted to make that brief announcement. I think it is important.

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I have a question for my colleague. Unfortunately, women are still afraid of the justice system. In Quebec, it is estimated that only 5% of women who are victims of assault file a complaint. Even worse, out of 1,000 cases that do go to court, only three result in a conviction. That is appalling. The justice system is scaring women away. Even when cases do go to court, people are not convicted.

Does my colleague have any solutions to put forward?

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am going to donate to the cause, so I thank the member for that. It was good work.

The member is absolutely right that the vast majority of victims of sexual assault are women. He is also absolutely right that, as the member for Fundy Royal said, witnesses have told us that the justice system is a legal system and not really a justice system. We heard from witnesses at committee in our victims-of-crime study that they feel like they are on trial. When they are giving evidence under cross-examination about the sexual assault that happened against them, they feel like they are on trial. That is unfair and needs to be fixed.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member and I have an unfortunate situation in the Lower Mainland, which we represent, which is sextortion of children. Therefore, the timeliness of this could not be better, and it is important that we protect victims now to make sure that there are not victims in the future.

There was a study. The member said that they would like to see some data, but I understand that there was a study that came out of the justice and human rights committee, and that there was a unanimous recommendation, number 11 of that study, to amend section 486.4 of the Criminal Code to allow for victims of sexual assault to opt out of a publication ban and take back their agency. Given that this is an ask that has long been advocated by victims' rights groups, will my colleague in the Conservative Party vote to support the passing of this bill?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, there are good things in this bill. One of them is to give more voice to victims in publication bans, so we completely support that. However, we need to study the bill. It is too bad that it is going to be so rushed, but our committee is soon going to be seized with this topic. We have already started the investigation into the bill, and we will do the best that we can with it.

• (1640)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the current Liberal government, sex crime has nearly doubled to 82.5%. I would like to remind my colleague of an incident that happened in Alberta on September 16, 2021. Mchale Busch and her toddler son Noah McConnell were murdered by a sex offender who was in some strange way permitted, even though he was on the registry, to live anonymously and unknown in the apartment right next door in an apartment complex. They were killed on September 16, 2021 by that sex offender.

I would also like to remind him not only what the risk would be from the government's getting it wrong when it comes to the implementation of the sex offender registry, but also how important it is

to get the legislation and the implementation right. This is about lives and about protecting people who are otherwise revictimized all the time. If we do not get it right, there are serious consequences.

Does my colleague have any suggestions for the government regarding what it should change when it comes to this legislation, or should the changes actually be in how it is implemented?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, it is a great question that would take a lot of conversation to fully answer, but it goes to show us how important the sex offender registry is. It is a very useful tool for the police. It is not perfect, but it is another tool.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill S-12, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act. I will be splitting my time.

This bill makes extensive changes to Canada's sexual assault legislation and the role of the national sex offender registry, or NSOR, particularly those sections of the Criminal Code that were struck down by the Supreme Court, which ruled that they were unconstitutional. These sections required the mandatory registration of anyone found guilty of a sexual offence on the sex offender registry and the registration for life of anyone who committed more than one sexual offence. The bill was introduced in the Senate, and it has made its way through to second reading here in this place.

After eight years under the Prime Minister, sex-related crime has nearly doubled. In 2021, under the current government, the rate of sexual assaults went up by 18% from the year prior. With this pressing public safety concern, it is more important than ever for Canadians to be safe and protected from sexual offenders.

The national sex offender registry plays a key role for law enforcement to stay up to date regarding convicted sex offenders across the country. It also allows proper tools of investigation if an offender reoffends.

Although this legislation is a step toward protecting victims and the public, it needs to be strengthened with amendments. We must consider the fundamental issue at the heart of this debate: the safety and security of our citizens. We believe that, to protect our most vulnerable people, all sex offenders, regardless of the specifics of their cases, must be listed on the national sex offender registry.

Historically, the Conservative Party has taken a strong position regarding sentencing and enforcement related to sexual crimes. Our previous Conservative government introduced and passed Bill S-2, making it mandatory for those convicted of any sexual offence to be placed on the registry and for those convicted of two or more sexual crimes to be registered on the offender's list for life.

This was a significant change from the Sex Offender Information Registration Act, or SOIRA, put in place by the Liberal government under Paul Martin, in that enrolment on the registry was no longer at the discretion of the judge. This change was made to address concerns at that time that the registry's effectiveness was being compromised, given that nearly half of all convicted sex offenders were excluded.

At that time, the bill garnered support from all parties, enhancing public safety across Canada. Last year, the Supreme Court struck down the law in the Ndhlovu case ruling, deeming it unconstitutional.

In 2015, Eugene Ndhlovu pleaded guilty to two counts of sexual assault against two women, which took place at a house party in Edmonton in 2011. Prior to the ruling, with Harper's bill, Ndhlovu was automatically registered on the national sex offender registry for life.

After the Supreme Court deemed the ruling unconstitutional, he was dropped from the list. The courts gave the government one year to change the affected provisions. That was a year ago, and the deadline, which is the end of October, is fast approaching.

Sexual violence is a heinous and degrading form of violence that has devastating impacts on the victims. More specifically, we know that sexual assault is a gendered crime, with the majority of sexual crimes being committed against women and girls.

It seems to me that a so-called feminist government would have acted quickly in response to the Supreme Court's ruling. However, the Liberal government continued to drag its heels when protection for vulnerable victims was needed the most.

It no longer comes as a surprise, though, that we see the Liberal government repeatedly fail to act on measures of public safety. For example, and most notably, the Prime Minister did absolutely nothing to reverse the decision to transfer one of the worst serial killers in Canadian history, Paul Bernardo, to a lower-security prison.

• (1645)

If this legislation is not passed before the affected provisions expire, this could open the possibility of sex offenders escaping registration, all thanks to the Liberal government's incompetence. Unregistered sex offenders would not have to report annually to registration centres or declare changes in their residence, leaving the surrounding residents in the dark. Without proper identifiable provisions for previous sex offenders, they would be able to go back to life as normal. Survivors of these crimes would suffer as they live in fear, knowing their abusers are not being held accountable.

Conservatives believe all sex offenders must be listed on the NSOR and will work to ensure mandatory registration is in place for as many individuals convicted of sexual offences as possible. Four justices of the Supreme Court agree with our position, highlighting the pressing public safety concern that justifies this move.

In their dissent on the Ndhlovu case, they stated that the law was constitutional and accused the majority of cherry-picking examples to rationalize their flawed reasoning. In their minority written opinion, they stated, "The evidence is clear that even low risk sex of-

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fenders, relative to the general criminal population, pose a heightened risk to commit another sexual offence."

The previous system of judicial discretion, which was brought in 2004, already showed it was tremendously flawed, with data resulting in up to 50% of sex offenders staying off the registry.

Based on these justices' expert opinion, we recognize this is a pressing public safety concern, but our concerns extend beyond mandatory registration. There are other aspects of Bill S-12 that require careful consideration and potential amendments.

As my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul highlighted in her excellent speech, while there are some cases or circumstances where enrolment on the NSOR would be automatic, those that would be discretionary include, but are not limited to, sexual assault with a weapon, sexual exploitation of a person with a disability and aggravated sexual assault with the use of a firearm. Knowing there will be cases such as these that would not be automatically added, but would be discretionary, is deeply concerning given that the system, prior to 2011, resulted in up to half of sex offenders never being registered.

Furthermore, while the costs associated with increased sex offender registration may be negligible, we must also allocate the necessary resources to support law enforcement agencies in effectively monitoring and managing the registry.

In conclusion, Bill S-12 represents a significant step forward in responding to the Supreme Court's ruling and improving the criminal justice system's responsiveness to the needs of victims. However, it falls short on what is necessary to protect our communities adequately.

The Conservative Party of Canada believes all sex offenders must be listed on the national sex offender registry. The safety of our citizens, particularly women and children, who are disproportionately victimized by sexual offenders, must be our top priority.

I look forward to this bill going to committee, where I am sure all members will work together to strengthen Bill S-12 so victims of sexual crimes can have confidence in our justice system and to ensure the safety of our communities. Only through collective effort can we ensure our justice system serves the best interests of all Canadians.

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• (1650)

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I want to recognize a veteran in my riding who is 100 years old. I wish a happy birthday to Zach Bourque, who bravely fought for Canada and has recently celebrated his 100th birthday.

I am not allowed to point people out in the gallery, so I will not, but I also want to recognize that My Voice, My Choice is likely listening to this debate with great eagerness.

I thank my colleague for her speech. The unfortunate thing is that people who suffer sexual offences are often in a psychological life sentence, yet I do not believe we have seen the Liberal government act quickly with respect to sexual offences. I wonder if my colleague agrees with this, and what message that is sending to victims.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member, with tongue in cheek, said that people might be here or might not be here. I just need to remind all members that we should not be mentioning those who might be here watching. That is a full reminder to all members of the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his work on this issue. I listened to the speech he gave recently on this very topic.

I would simply say that the government has shown that it is not really taking this issue seriously. It waited six months to present this legislation. There was a Supreme Court ruling in October. The government introduced the legislation in April, and now here we are, in the eleventh hour, trying to quickly get this bill passed.

If the Liberals truly believed that this was a pressing issue, they would not have waited so long to present this legislation to address the Supreme Court's decision.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am a little concerned about the somewhat partisan aspect of this. I will provide an example. In 1988, young girls were assaulted by a man who was known to be violent and to have assaulted his own children. Those crimes still happened. That was in 1988. A lot of time has passed since then. Many governments have come and gone. Bills have been brought before parliamentarians, and yet here we are in 2023, still discussing this. We could put an end to partisanship and finally move things forward.

What does my colleague think of that?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and simply say that I reject the premise of the question about partisanship. We demonstrated, back in 2011, that we were taking this issue seriously when we introduced legislation to ensure that mandatory registration was in place.

I see the current government responding to the Supreme Court's ruling, and we are simply encouraging it to make sure that as many

convicted sex offenders as possible are on that registry to ensure that victims can rest assured that their community is safe.

• (1655)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for her intervention. I would be remiss to not acknowledge the great work that the member for Victoria did in addressing some of the issues in this bill.

Does the member agree that Bill S-12 balances the constitutional guaranteed rights of all Canadians and the need to maintain public safety?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I think that is absolutely the responsibility of all of us here in this place. It is to ensure that individual rights are balanced with the overall public safety of Canadians.

I suggest that this legislation, which is in response to a Supreme Court ruling, goes a long way, but I would also suggest that there should be amendments to this bill, as many of my colleagues have already pointed out. Those serving on the committee are going to have the opportunity to study this bill once it gets there, and make amendments to make it even better to ensure the very things she raised.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise in the House to speak to a bill on behalf of the fine residents of Brantford—Brant.

I know there are many victim advocacy groups that are watching this particular debate, not necessarily me, but certainly the debate itself. I know one such passionate group, My Voice, My Choice, would also be watching this and taking an active interest.

After eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, sex-related crime has nearly doubled up to 82.5%. This so-called feminist government has dragged its heels on this issue, and this legislation may not be passed before the effective provisions expire, which is 24 days from now, on October 28, 2023. The impact of that is that sex offenders could escape registration because of the Liberal government's complete incompetence.

Canada's Conservatives are supportive of this legislation, and I will say that at the outset, that would protect the public from sexual offenders, but the bill does not go far enough. Conservatives believe that all sex offenders must be listed on the national sex offender registry, and we would amend the legislation to ensure this. We know that women and children are disproportionately victimized by sexual offenders, and this bill would make it harder for law enforcement to prevent and investigate sexual offences.

It is important that I give a brief historical overview of this particular legislation in this area. The legislation known as SOIRA was first passed by the Liberal government in 2004, with all parties supporting it. It introduced the idea that registered sex offenders were required to report annually to registration centres, as well as declare any changes of residence, travel plans or changes. However, the enrolment on the registry was at the discretion of the prosecution, and the registry's efficacy was compromised by the exclusion of nearly half of all convicted sex offenders.

As a result, the Harper government, in 2011, introduced and passed Bill S-2 with unanimous support, which made inclusion in the registry mandatory for those convicted of any sexual offence and made inclusion for life mandatory for those convicted of multiple offences.

All of this was changed by the Supreme Court of Canada on October 28, 2022, in the *R. v. Ndhlovu* decision, which struck down two key sections of the Criminal Code. By way of facts, the accused, the offender, was 19 when he sexually assaulted two women at a party, resulting in two separate sexual offences for which he served six months in jail. He was added to the sex offender registry for life.

Now, by a five-four split decision, the court struck down the provisions that anyone found guilty of a sexual offence would be automatically registered. By a nine-zero decision, they also struck down the mandatory registration for life for those who commit more than one such offence.

What does Bill S-12 do to correct this? Bill S-12 would create judicial discretion to add offenders to the registry, one, in cases where child sex offenders are sentenced to two years or more in prison where the Crown proceeded by indictment, and, two, for any repeat offender who has previously been convicted of a sexual offence. The bill would allow judges the ability to impose lifetime registration for sexual offenders who are found guilty of more than one offence at the same time, if the offender poses a risk of reoffending, but that is with judicial discretion.

The bill focuses squarely on the offence of sexual assault. It is important that I spend a little time talking about the unique challenges of this offence. Sex assault is the most unreported violent crime in Canada. People with disabilities are at greater risk of victimization and are even less likely to engage with the criminal justice system. Class, ethnicity, religion, nation of origin, community, age, sexual orientation and gender identity may make reporting more difficult.

Sex assault usually occurs in private. It is a profound invasion of its victims' physical and psychological boundaries. In most cases, the perpetrator is known to the victim. The attack often leaves no outward injury, but can devastate its victims, who may suffer in isolation and often in silence.

Sex assault complainants and victims have long felt a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system's ability to protect them and to hold offenders accountable. Conviction rates have not improved, and the fear of revictimization during the course of the prosecution remains.

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• (1700)

Reporting rates of sexual offences to police hover around 5%, with 41% of those cases resulting in a charge being laid. Data for the last 35 years suggests that there is a significant statistical decline in conviction rates during the last 15 years. In Canada alone, that conviction rate went from 26.5% to 14%.

Another key feature of the bill relates to the rights of victims. Specifically, I am going to draw upon some material that I received from the victims advocacy group My Voice, My Choice:

Victim-complainants of sexual offences have the right to request a publication ban under section 486.4 of the [current state of the law].

The purpose of this type of publication is to encourage reporting and has the effect of providing victim complainants with protection from being publicly identified. There are considerable issues with respect to how victims and complainants are informed of their pub bans under that section and whether they are provided the necessary information about how to comply with the terms of the ban and eventually have it removed should they desire.

The material continues:

In reality, many prosecutors [such as myself during my time as a prosecutor,] ask the judge or justice for a section 486.4 publication ban upon the first appearance of the accused in court, long before a victim-complainant is involved and participates in proceedings.

I also want to share with the House the frustration many victims have with respect to this particular provision and also the penalties they are experiencing currently because of the publication ban.

In March 2021, a victim in Kitchener–Waterloo was charged, prosecuted and convicted of breaching the terms of her publication ban for emailing a court transcript to her close supporters. The conviction was later overturned on appeal due to a technicality, but this example shows how prosecutors do not understand the purpose of a section 486.4 ban.

Here is another case. In May of 2021, a victim in Ottawa asked her Crown attorney in court to remove the ban, but the prosecutor said that she was not sure of the process or policy, or if the Crown would consent to the removal. After asking the judge directly herself while in the sentencing hearing, the complainant was told that the judge was no longer functus and could not help. When a third Crown attorney eventually applied to have the publication ban removed, the defence attorney opposed the application and was permitted to make submissions as to why the ban should not be removed. She never consented to having a publication ban.

These are just a few examples of the frustrations victims have had across this country not only when trying to get advice and information from the Crown so they can participate in the process, but also when trying to remove the ban.

Lastly, I wish to talk about the dissenting opinion in the Supreme Court of Canada decision, because I think the language is really illustrative of the problem we have here. I am quoting from the dissent, which states that:

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But the exercise of discretion was the very problem that prompted Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to provide for automatic registration of sex offenders... (“SOIRA”). Specifically... The evidence is clear that even low risk sex offenders, relative to the general criminal population, pose a heightened risk to commit another sexual offence. It is also clear that it cannot be reliably predicted at the time of sentencing which offenders will reoffend. In the face of that uncertain risk, Parliament was entitled to cast a wide net.

It is in that particular wide net that we are asking for, by way of amendment, to include all those who are convicted of sex offences, particularly against children. There ought not to be a discretionary exercise by way of a justice.

Canada's Conservatives are supportive of legislation that will protect the public from sex offenders, but the bill does not go far enough. We believe all sex offenders must be listed on the registry and we would amend the legislation to ensure this. Conservatives would end the government's soft-on-crime approach and bring home safe streets for Canadians and particularly for the victims of sexual assault across this country.

• (1705)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brantford—Brant for bringing forward all of the knowledge he has and for supporting women who have been victims of violence. I had the opportunity to take him to the London Abused Women's Centre and do round tables with him. I really appreciate his advocacy on behalf of all victims of crime.

One of the biggest things when looking at victims of crime, and the member talked about this near the end of his speech and it was one thing that we really worked on at the status of women committee, is ensuring there is justice training. I am thinking of Keira's Law. We saw 53 different court orders and unfortunately still lost this young life because there was not really an understanding.

My question is this. There is a concern that things might slip through the cracks—I guess I answered my question—so why should there be mandatory reporting onto the sex offenders list?

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, my friend has hit the nail on the head. Mandatory training applies not only to judges who clearly need it. Clearly we have judges who do. I need only cite a number of cases from across this country where judges, particularly more experienced judges, have often relied upon some rape myths to try to establish the rationale as to why an individual was acquitted. Too many judges follow through with that trapped line of thinking, which is archaic, which is wrong and which completely revictimizes the victims. As such, training is essential, not only for justices, but Crown attorneys, defence counsel and all participants in the criminal justice system to ensure that victims are treated as fairly as the accused.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the speeches from my hon. colleague. It is a pleasure to join him in the justice committee.

I have a question related to his articulation of the argument for automatic registration for all sexual offenders. While I think we might agree with that proposition, did the court not strike down exactly that requirement in a recent case? How does the member propose to accomplish that to make it charter-compliant?

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, it is very simple: It is the notwithstanding clause. If I had a full 20-minute speech and an opportunity to share all the relevant details of the dissenting report, I would encourage my colleague to actually spend some time, because the language is so instructive on that particular question.

All sex offenders, particularly against children, pose a heightened risk to reoffend. The concern that we Conservatives had is that now, where Crowns can proceed by way of summary conviction as opposed to indictment, we would be giving that power to judges to do the right thing in the exercise of their discretion. We would be giving an opportunity for the sexual offender to justify why he ought not be registered, because his privacy may be invaded in some fashion, at the expense of the victim.

As such, I would encourage my friend to actually read the dissenting opinion. I am sure his opinion would be the same as mine, that all individuals convicted of sex offences, whether by indictment or by summary conviction, ought to be placed on the registry for the protection of the public.

• (1710)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I agree with the member that protecting victims is so important, and judges' discretion is not to be taken lightly. I wonder if the member can share more ideas on how we can ensure that judges' discretion is not too wide, so that we are ensuring a proper way to make sure that there are better protections for victims for public safety.

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, it is all about the supremacy of Parliament. The language in the dissenting report from the Supreme Court of Canada made it abundantly clear that this was the rationale behind the amendments made by Prime Minister Harper in 2011. To reflect upon that, it took the better part of 12 years before there was a successful charter challenge, which made its way all the up to the Supreme Court of Canada. That is quite telling, and I would again encourage my friend and colleague from the NDP to also review the dissenting opinion, because perhaps some of the answers she seeks are found in that opinion.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

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[English]

There has been a lot of debate on this topic. I would like to present something to all political parties that has not been discussed in this House, which I really feel needs to be considered at committee. This topic has not been addressed whatsoever and I fear that we are creating a loophole that could victimize a lot more women and a lot more public officials. I really hope that the government and the justice committee give consideration to this issue.

It was sort of addressed by my colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke when he started talking about additional offences that would cause somebody to be mandatorily added to the national sex offender registry, where he said that there would be two more offences added to a list for automatic registration. The first is sextortion offences, where so-called revenge porn is used by an ex against their partner who has left them and they are angry so they post intimate images without consent; the second is that any posting of intimate images without consent would result in automatic registration.

I am happy to be corrected, but I do not think in this bill that type of offence is automatic registration. I believe it is discretionary enrolment. That might be something in and of itself, if that's true, that the justice committee needs to correct. However, there is a bigger problem here. The definition that the Criminal Code would use to define “intimate image”, I believe, is stated as follows:

(2) In this section, intimate image means a visual recording of a person made by any means including a photographic, film or video recording,

- (a) in which the person is nude, is exposing his or her genital organs or anal region or her breasts or is engaged in explicit sexual activity;
- (b) in respect of which, at the time of the recording, there were circumstances that gave rise to a reasonable expectation of privacy; and
- (c) in respect of which the person depicted retains a reasonable expectation of privacy at the time the offence is committed.

The definition of “intimate image” would not change in this act, but the circumstances under which intimate images are produced have dramatically changed in the last year. I would like to draw the attention of all of my colleagues of all political parties to a brief that was written by the University of Western Ontario's violence against women and children unit. Brief 39, written in April 2021, talks about policy options for something called “non-consensual deepnudes and sexual deepfakes”.

If members are not familiar with these terms, every person in this House needs to be. In lay terms, what this means that if they or their children post something to social media, post a picture of themselves, there is now technology that is essentially like X-ray vision. Therefore, if they google something called “deepnude”, they see that it is a technology that actually scrubs the clothing off persons and posts that. That is problem number one. There is also software that superimposes an image, like someone's face, on top of somebody else's body. These are super convincing, incredibly real and hugely problematic.

In the U.S. in August, there were several articles that were posted; one called “Revenge Porn and Deep Fake Technology: The Latest Iteration of Online Abuse”. Some jurisdictions in the United States have enacted some form of revenge porn legislation. However, when they put this legislation through their respective legisla-

tures, it did not consider deepnudes or deepfakes because of the definition of an intimate image.

Going back to the definition in the Criminal Code of what an intimate image is, “there were circumstances that gave rise to a reasonable expectation of privacy” and, going forward, “the person depicted retains a reasonable expectation of privacy at the time the offence is committed.”

I can just see legions of lawyers working on behalf of deepnude apps and people who are generating these for profit, arguing that somebody, by posting their image online, abandons their right to privacy; and, therefore, because the definition of intimate image in the Criminal Code does not articulate specifically images that were generated using this new technology, they did not have a reasonable right to privacy.

• (1715)

I can guarantee that this is what is going to happen. Sometimes I feel like I am standing in the House and I am like Cassandra, doomed to know the future and nobody believes me. However, this is an instance where Parliament should not be rushing through legislation that has such an incredibly profound impact on women. This is how women are being abused now and this is how children are being abused, and our laws have not caught up.

Going back to the brief that I mentioned, I draw colleagues' attention to some of the policy options that Western University outlines. I will read the entire section:

1. Criminalize the production and distribution of non-consensual deepnudes and sexual deepfakes.

Currently, Canada has no law criminalizing non-consensual deepnudes and sexual deepfakes. There are other legal responses that individuals may be able to utilize like defamation...depending on the context.

However, it is not certain. In fact, my analysis shows that the tort of public disclosure of embarrassing private facts would not cover this situation. If we take this lack of law in Canada, which is hugely negligent and hugely behind the world, and add that the Supreme Court ruling has basically eliminated the mandatory listing of somebody on the registry, how are we disincentivizing people from creating deepfakes and deepnudes of their exes and putting them online? There is virtually no guarantee of criminal repercussion and no guarantee that they will be on the sexual offence registry. In fact, somebody might even be looking at creating a business off of this for those who are not smart enough to figure out how to do it themselves, and it is shockingly easy.

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I want members to picture themselves for a moment, just to drive this point home. We are in the middle of the next election campaign, and a member who is out door knocking looks at their phone and sees that they have been scrubbed by X-ray vision. It is all over the Internet for the next week. The member will not have any recourse because we have a legislative gap and we do not have the incentive to put someone on the national offender registry afterwards. Someone could have cost that member their career because of this information, and there is no repercussion for them afterwards. I am relating this to try to twig members' interest using self-interest, but we all understand the bigger implication here, which is the exploitation of children and women.

This is a powerful tool for abusive men to victimize women and their spouses. Women and spouses will very quickly, if they are not already, be under threat of this: "I am just going to scrub your clothes off", or "It doesn't matter if you don't send me your nudes; I'll just make them anyway." We know that is happening right now, and we know that it is happening to our kids with Snapchat and all of these other things. Half the time we do not even know what app our kids are on anymore. It is tough.

The other thing that this lack of law does is it makes it less possible for people to teach consent properly. We have to be able to educate our children and ourselves on what consent means. If the law has a giant gap in what artificial intelligence images are creating, then we have a problem.

This legislation and the review at the justice committee present our Parliament with an opportunity to address this issue in a meaningful way for the first time. Colleagues, I implore you, particularly members of the justice committee, that when the bill goes to committee, invite people who have expertise in this area so that we understand the prevalence of this situation and what some other jurisdictions are doing. Also, think about amending the definition of "intimate image" so that it specifically deals with deepfakes and deepnudes. We should be talking about it being illegal and immoral and saying that someone should end up on a sexual offence registry just like any other offender. I almost think it is worse for people to do this, just to be fair.

I am putting this on the record for future court challenges that might be looking at this parliamentary debate: The intent of this legislation should be to ensure that people who use artificial intelligence deepfake and deepnude technology to victimize women and children are on the sex offender registry. We should make that absolutely clear.

I will close by saying that this is why we need to review legislation. No member has talked about this. I hope the justice committee spends adequate time looking at all of these perils before this legislation is rammed through.

• (1720)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to hear from my friend from Calgary Nose Hill, who I have to applaud for founding the emerging technology caucus, which I am proud to co-chair with her. She calls herself Cassandra. I do not think that anybody believes that nobody understands or believes the prophecies she tells. I think she has a lot more credibility than that.

Can the hon. member give us an example of a couple witnesses she would ask us to call to committee to better understand the potential AI ramifications and the amendments we should be making in this area?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, Western University's brief has a pretty good outline of what some of the definitions of these are, and I would go back to it, as it has been thought about. I think there are two dozen references of other literature in there that I would draw my colleague's attention to.

I would ask colleagues on the justice committee to intersect with some of the work that is being done on the industry committee regarding Bill C-27, the artificial intelligence and data act, to ensure that our laws are harmonized as we move forward and make sure that is done in a way so women, others, people in public life and children are not victimized.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my friend and colleague from Calgary Nose Hill has also thought about this notion. We all know that a lie can spread around the world before the truth has a chance to put its pants on in the morning.

What I am getting at here is that it is not just the potential victimization of women and children, which is a horrible thing, but each and every one of us in this room has been seized with the conversation of foreign interference, especially in our electoral process.

Can members imagine a foreign state actor doing something like this during an election campaign to discredit or humiliate us in our democratic process? Does she have any thoughts on that?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, it is not a comfortable topic for me to discuss, but I have been victimized online. I try not to make debates about me in the House because I represent 120,000 other people.

However, if I saw something like this of me spreading and going viral online, through Telegram channels, WhatsApp or whatever, I think it would victimize me. It would devastate anyone in this place.

Certainly, there are people and agents who would like to undermine our democracy. This is war, and our legislature, our Parliament, has a chance to close the door to the actors on this. I encourage a rationed amendment to ensure that we are closing this loophole and that people who utilize technology to do this are not, as you say, Mr. Speaker, able to do indirectly what they cannot do directly.

It is up to Parliament to ensure that the spirit of this act captures that with regard to deepfakes and deepnudes.

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• (1725)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I only had a chance to look at our House notes and not the bill specifically, so I am not understanding the bulk of what the member spoke about on AI and consent, and why it is not mentioned or has not been discussed during the debate so far.

I do see that Bill S-12 talks about discretion being given to judges for those who are at risk of reoffending. Could the member speak more to what Bill S-12 needs to do to make sure that discretion is not widened so much so that public safety is made a concern? This is so we can do a better job at making sure that we are protecting victims.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member's sentiment.

Many colleagues in here have talked about how the bill does not have an adequate and comprehensive enough list of what should be included, in terms of convictions or areas of conviction, from a mandatory perspective on the national sex offender registry list. This is why it is so imperative for the justice committee to have a fulsome study. I think the area she mentioned is deeply important.

I would apply what she said to the concept that I brought forward. It is so easy to make these images. Somebody could do it thousands of times and never be put on a sex offender registry. It is not even a loophole. We could drive a bus through it. Let us patch that up at the justice committee to keep our kids and women safe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to take a few moments to acknowledge the passing last night of a passionate constituent of mine, Gilles Laperrière. He was a great hockey enthusiast, a volunteer, a founder and a builder. He was a recruiter for the Montreal Junior Canadiens back in the day. Largely thanks to him, Réjean Houle was able to get on the ice at the Montreal Forum, as were many other hockey players who have helped put Rouyn-Noranda on the map as a major incubator for the National Hockey League.

Gilles Laperrière was highly engaged. He was instrumental in forming the As de Rouyn-Noranda and the Citadelles de Rouyn-Noranda. For about 50 years, he looked after the Dave-Keon centre, Rouyn-Noranda's arena. He was the driving force behind the École du hockey du Nord-Ouest, which he co-founded with Laurent "Pit" Laflamme, someone I would also like to commend. When I was young, Gilles made it possible for me to see the Stanley Cup for the first time. It was brought there. He was also behind the arrival of the Huskies, who will be in Gatineau tonight. To honour him and show how important he was to the community, we named our mascot "Lappy", which was Gilles' nickname. I would like to recognize Gilles and offer my heartfelt condolences to his family, especially Émilie, Kevin, Zachary and Eliott.

I would also like to thank a new member of my team. I am fortunate to have a parliamentary intern here with me, Ahdithya Visweswaran, and I want to acknowledge her contribution.

I will now turn to Bill S-12, which aims to strengthen the national sex offender registry system and respond to last year's Supreme Court decision. The Bloc Québécois's commitment will go much further. We are prepared to work very hard to include provisions that protect victims' rights.

This bill tries to reinstate the automatic registration provisions that the Supreme Court struck down, while including certain conditions that allow judges to use their discretionary authority to order whether or not an offender should remain on the registry for life. The bill also addresses publication bans, sometimes imposed without the victims' knowledge, which currently prevent victims from publicly sharing their stories and messages. That is why I felt it was important to rise and speak today. I thank my colleague for Calgary Nose Hill for sharing her time with me. Although these publication bans are sometimes intended to protect the identity of the victims, they often have the opposite effect by protecting the identity of the assailants.

This afternoon, I was very fortunate to meet representatives from My Voice, My Choice: Kelly, Morrell, Brandy, Carrie and Jessica. I find these courageous women, these survivors, very inspiring because they are agents of change in areas where it is not often easy to speak out. They advocate for victims, asking that their wishes be prioritized and central to the decisions being made. It should be up to victims to choose whether or not to lift a publication ban under the current provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada.

While the Senate has taken an admirable first step, it is our responsibility as parliamentarians to build on the work already undertaken. To that end, we must consider the amendments proposed by survivors of sexual violence who are represented by My Voice, My Choice. Their personal experiences with sexual violence, the legal system and publication bans form the basis of the amendments they wish to see incorporated into this bill.

Survivors' calls to action are simple: Clarify that only victims of sexual offences and witnesses under the age of 18 are covered by a publication ban under section 486.4; ensure that prosecutors are directed by the judge to immediately inform the victim or witness of their right to request a publication ban; require prosecutors to present requests with the consent of the victim or witness and on their behalf; provide the victim or witness with a copy of the order once a publication ban is in place; prevent unwanted publication bans from being imposed on a victim or witness when the prosecutor or judge has been made aware of their wishes; allow for interim publication bans that can easily be lifted until the victim or witness makes their wishes known to the prosecutor or judge; clarify the process for modifying or revoking a publication ban, separate from the discretionary bans under section 486.5, by ensuring that the victim's interests take priority and that their freedom of expression is respected; broaden the limitations section to ensure that trusted persons and professionals are not criminalized for communicating information related to the identity of the victim or witness when providing support.

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● (1730)

Over the past year, I have met and heard from many victims of abuse and mistreatment, including some victims of sexual assault. I want to thank the athletes for the trust they placed in me. Their very moving accounts enabled us to give a voice to these athletes who, through no fault of their own, were victims of these toxic environments in sport. Their courage must absolutely be met by concrete action from parliamentarians in the House of Commons.

The culture of silence in the world of sport is often perceived as a given, which can have both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, it can strengthen athletes' concentration and foster a strong team spirit, since excessive communication can disrupt performance. On the other hand, this silence can sometimes mask problems such as harassment, discrimination and injuries.

It is essential to strike a balance between respecting this tradition and promoting a safe and fair sport environment where the athletes feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of reprisals. Publication bans for the victim complainants line up with everything found in the sports community to deal with reports by whistle-blowers, who are often the victims themselves. We need to measure the harm done to the victims and that is often what justice underestimates. We need to give the victims the choice to participate in this choice. We also need to ensure that the information is made available for making these choices.

The government gave the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, or OSIC, within the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, or the SDRCC, the mechanism for handling complaints in sport. There too, unfortunately, they rely on the status quo, voices are silenced and investigations are not launched when national sports organizations are suspected of using strategies for silencing the victims who are key to their organizations.

Need I mention the numerous independent investigations that have been conducted in the world of sport? I could list Hockey Canada, Canada Soccer, Gymnastics Canada, Volleyball Canada, Canoe Kayak Canada, Canada Artistic Swimming, Water Polo Canada, Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton, Athletics Canada, Cycling Canada and many more. How many more victims need to come forward to demand an independent public inquiry into the world of sport? I call on all of my colleagues to continue their hard work.

At a press conference on May 11, the Minister of Sport publicly expressed her government's commitment to an independent public inquiry into abuse and mistreatment in sport. Five months later, things seem to have stalled. Is the work of two parliamentary committees—whether the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage or the Standing Committee on the Status of Women—and the approval of the MPs who sit on those committees enough to ensure that this public inquiry will go ahead? The aim is to shed light on important aspects of the issue and give a voice to all those concerned about the future of sport.

All parliamentarians here in the House agreed to investigate the matter. The harm being done to victims and athletes must stop immediately. That is one of the things that Bill S-12 will accomplish, but we have a responsibility to go even further.

● (1735)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his speech and his work on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and its study of safety in sport.

Does he think that there are strong enough measures in this bill to discourage crimes against athletes?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for her question and for her committee work.

The work of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, like that of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, was done in collaboration. I think that shows what is best about Parliament, namely when all parliamentarians from each party come together because they have a desire for justice and a desire to improve sports. Sports are an important symbol in our culture. As such, we must go even further.

As part of this study, I was told about non-disclosure agreements. In my opinion, sport organizations abuse them. When we are presented with a particular situation, an independent organization, a so-called third party, is asked to investigate. They are told that a particular coach has allegedly abused a particular athlete. However, that athlete is not the only one who was abused and other victims are named. Those names are noted. The result, based on testimonies heard in committee, is that non-disclosure agreements will be reached with each of those individuals. Why? It is to protect the image of a sport federation instead of putting justice first. We will never be complicit in that.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, today being the national day of action for MMIWG, we know all too well that indigenous women, girls and two-spirit victims who have been taken or murdered do not get to tell their stories. When the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights supported the NDP's proposal to make a recommendation allowing victims the right to opt out of a publication ban, this was an important way to make sure victims can tell their story.

I wonder whether the member agrees that this kind of recommendation, which would help increase the understanding of how they got to that situation, is what would help make sure we have fewer victims of this nature.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Nunavut for her sensitivity to this issue.

Indeed, people cannot remain silent. Being a victim a first time is a tragedy, but what we see in the patterns is that victims are often victims a second time because they lose their name and their voice. That is totally unacceptable.

I think, if progress is to be made in this Parliament, it must also be possible to identify those victims. It must be possible to hear from them, to recognize them and to do all the upstream work to move toward true reconciliation.

Yes, the member can count on my support and that of the Bloc Québécois because there must be justice.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his wonderful, researched and thoughtful speech. It is nice to see that he has also heard from people who are very concerned by this issue.

I spoke earlier about something that affects me. I will ask my colleague a question because, clearly, women are still afraid of the justice system.

In Quebec, sexual assault help centres have published figures showing that only 5% of victims of sex crimes file complaints. Of the cases that go before the courts, only 3 of 1,000 lead to charges.

The justice system still scares people. Charges are not laid. Clearly, people are not paying for their crimes.

Does my colleague have any possible solutions that could be proposed to address this problem?

• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the hon. member to give a brief answer.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, it is difficult to be brief, but our system does have to be fair.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of this bill and of giving a voice to people who have been silenced. In my opinion, it will lay the foundation for a renewed justice system, because we will be renewing trust in our justice system. That is the foundation of democracy.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[English]

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

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

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Thursday, October 5, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

The hon. deputy House leader has a point of order.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it looks like we are really close to Private Members' Business, but if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:43 p.m. to start Private Members' Business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:43 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

The House resumed from May 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-319, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (amount of full pension), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, nearly a hundred years ago, Canada's first public pension plan was established. It was 1927, and the Old Age Pensions Act was enacted. The simple goal was to ensure that men and women aged 70 and over would have a basic income. Years later, in 1952, the Old Age Security Act came into force and replaced the act of 1927.

This important change marked the birth of a pension financed by our government. Like the population of Canada, the program has grown and evolved over the years. Canadians have grown, and so has the old age security program. It goes without saying that the old age security program has adapted to the needs of Canada's elderly population and continues to do so today.

As we all know already, we increased the old age security pension by 10% for seniors aged 75 and older. This officially came into effect last year. It was the first permanent increase to the OAS pension since 1973. It is giving older seniors greater financial security now and into the future.

Most importantly, it will continue to be indexed to inflation, so that it maintains its value over time. This increase was the smart thing to do, because many seniors aged 75 and over are facing greater financial vulnerability than younger seniors are.

As they get older, many seniors must deal with health issues. Illness appears, and that entails more expenses. Many seniors are not working much or even not at all.

Not everyone benefits from a pension plan from their employer. Moreover, let us not forget the risk of finding oneself alone following the loss of one's life partner. These are all situations that can deplete personal savings. The older we get, the more likely these situations are to happen.

For example, in 2018, among the population aged 65 to 74, more than three out of 10 Canadians had employment income. When we look at those aged 75 and older, it drops by more than half, for fewer than two out of 10 Canadians.

Private Members' Business

Now we have Bill C-319 before us. It is a great piece of legislation. However, it is clear to us that it is not in sync with the demographic information we have and that I have just given. OAS is a proven program, and so are the measures we have been taking to improve it.

Yes, the old age security program continues to evolve. This new system has been in preparation since at least 2021, even though we committed to it in our budget. It clearly became a priority in 2022, after almost two years of the pandemic, which made us acutely aware that it was high time to put in place a modernized platform for payment of benefits.

Here we are, in the middle of the modernization process. This is another reason that it is impossible for us to support Bill C-319, and I will explain.

It would not be possible to implement the bill within the specified time frame. Its implementation would require us to make complex modifications to the existing IT system. The entire essential deployment and stabilization of the old age security program on the modernized platform would then be compromised.

We cannot take such a risk. We cannot do anything that would jeopardize this modernization process.

As I said, this process is a priority. The OAS program keeps evolving, and we cannot jeopardize this evolution, this modernization. It is an integral part of the whole process we have undertaken since 2015 to improve Canadian seniors' financial security. Without a doubt, we have demonstrated how serious we are about supporting seniors.

We have an interesting debate today regarding old age security. It is a debate that allows us to see, once again, to what extent we are already taking the actions that must be taken to ensure the well-being of older Canadians.

Nearly a hundred years ago, Canada began laying the foundations of its retirement income system, and the old age security program was one of these foundations. Since then, the program has evolved to meet the needs of Canadians; today, we are ensuring that it continues to evolve in this way.

• (1745)

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise on behalf of the residents of King—Vaughan. Today, I am speaking on Bill C-319, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act.

First, let me start by stating that it is an honour to serve as the shadow minister for seniors. Seniors have built this country. They have defended democracy and freedom. They have started businesses, raised families and volunteered in the community. Seniors have led by example.

I was fortunate to have been raised by my grandmother and great-grandmother. I learned the most valuable life lessons in life: how to sun-dry my own tomatoes and make many Italian dishes, a tradition I continue today; the importance of lending a helping hand to neighbours who may be struggling; and how to save for a rainy day.

Grandparents are a vital part of the family. They teach us the importance of a strong work ethic, the value of a dollar and how to balance a budget, something of which the Prime Minister has absolutely no understanding. I owe my grandparents a debt of gratitude, and this Canadian government needs to treat seniors with respect.

The fastest-growing segment of the population is seniors. I am proud to say I have recently joined that demographic. By 2030, adults aged 65 or older will make up 23% of Canada's population, or 9.5 million.

One key element of this legislation proposes to increase the guaranteed income supplement earnings exemption. To be clear, this would not help everyone, but by increasing the GIS earnings exemption, we could help to alleviate some of these challenges for those who continue to work and ensure that more of our seniors are able to sustain a more comfortable and secure retirement. Conservatives oppose severe clawbacks of seniors' GIS benefits for those who can, want to and choose to work. Increasing the earnings exemption is only fair at a time when so many seniors need cost of living relief.

Seniors have dedicated their lives to the prosperity of this country. They have made incredible sacrifices, providing for their families and planning for the future. After spending a lifetime in the workforce and giving back to Canada, seniors should be able to retire on their savings and enjoy their golden years in peace and financial security.

After eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, this is no longer possible for so many Canadian seniors. In fact, more and more seniors are having to choose between medication, food or heating their homes. Every dollar they have put away for retirement is being threatened by endless Liberal-NDP tax increases that are raising the price of everything.

Conservatives believe that seniors who have worked hard and contributed to our society throughout their lives deserve to retire with dignity and financial security. However, many seniors are struggling to make ends meet and are facing the cost of living crisis the Liberal-NDP government has created. It is the responsibility of government to reward work, especially the work done by seniors. Labour force participation of seniors can bring value to organizations through experience and mentorship, help with succession planning and mitigate social isolation, if seniors want to, are able to and choose to work.

The Liberals' choice to disincentivize work also comes during a countrywide labour shortage. A recent Auditor General's report on pandemic programs clearly laid out how, as restrictions were lifted, the programs continued disproportionately and disincentivized work. "Help wanted" signs have become all too frequent a sight, as small businesses and not-for-profits become desperate for the manpower needed to provide their goods and services.

• (1750)

This is not the time to punish work. Common sense Conservatives believe that work should be rewarded. Why tax away seniors' incomes if they can and want to work? Seniors are integral in sharing their knowledge and expertise with younger workers through mentoring programs, internships or training opportunities. This can help develop the skills of the next generation of workers.

This past summer, I did a tour to hear from some seniors across the country. I met one group in Nova Scotia in a mentorship program that matches seniors with young Canadians. Everyone raved of the benefits they were rewarded through this experience, and I thank my colleague Dr. Ellis for joining me on that tour.

In my riding—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I was not sure if the member was referring to her colleague or talking about a different doctor. If the member was talking about her colleague, then she knows she is not to use the member's name.

• (1755)

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, I apologize.

In my riding, a young man named Alessandro and his mother Mary started a not-for-profit organization that provides free lawn maintenance and snow removal for seniors who cannot perform these functions themselves, either due to physical or financial issues. Liberal financial policies have led to higher inflation. This has been stated by the former governor of the Bank of Canada and the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Seniors' retirement income is simply not keeping up with the pace of the cost of living crisis, which is cutting into the savings of seniors. High inflation rates, interest rate hikes and the tripling of the carbon tax, which affects the price of groceries, gas and home heating, are the real record of the Liberal-NDP government on seniors. Many seniors feel increasingly isolated in their own towns and cities, and many have struggled with financial insecurities due to the record inflation.

According to a survey by the National Institute on Aging, 72% of Canadians age 70 years and older became more concerned about their financial well-being in the last few years. Inflation has risen to 4%, and the cost of groceries has gone up by 6.9% since last year. The price of housing continues to skyrocket, with mortgage costs up over 30%. The Liberal-NDP government hit Canadians with a double tax hike this year by raising the cost of its first carbon tax and then imposing a new second carbon tax on Canadians. In fact, Nova Scotians saw a 14% increase at the pump between June and July. We know that the Prime Minister continues to bring in his 61¢-a-litre tax. He will drive gas prices back to record highs. The Prime Minister's tax grabs are directly increasing the cost of gas and groceries, driving inflation higher.

In a country as prosperous as Canada, it is inexcusable that the heaviest burden of the government's failure is falling on the most vulnerable. Many seniors who live on fixed incomes have no other choice but to make sacrifices to get by. Some are being forced to postpone their retirement so they can make ends meet. Others are taking on new debt to cover the cost of housing, which has doubled under the Liberal-NDP government.

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Let us do a little math. A couple who has contributed the full amount toward their CPP would receive a monthly benefit of just under \$2,700. We know that the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment is approximately \$2,100. That leaves them a little over \$500 per month for groceries, utilities, medication and any other essentials they will require.

I want to recap. Conservatives are committed to our seniors, and to ensure that they have the financial security and support they need to enjoy their retirement, we believe that increasing the guaranteed income supplement, the GIC earning exemption, is one step in reaching this goal. This would help seniors who are able to, choose to and want to work, such as through having a part-time job, to keep more of their money in their pockets without affecting other benefits. This increase would help—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up. I did give her the one-minute mark. I thought she was wrapping up, but as she went past it, I could not allow her to continue.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the previous member's speech. I never knew I was part of the government. I want to set the record straight, but I will also go a step further: We are not propping up the Liberals; we are using our leverage and bargaining power to force them to do things they never had the courage to do before.

I am pleased to rise to speak to a subject of tremendous importance to me and to all my colleagues in the NDP caucus. I am referring to the living conditions and quality of life of seniors in Montreal and across Quebec.

I congratulate and thank the member for Shefford for taking the initiative to introduce this bill, which will truly improve the lives of the people we represent and who are finding it very hard to make ends meet at the moment. Seniors are the population segment most affected by the rising cost of living because their incomes are stagnant. When someone's income is fixed or practically fixed and inflation is 7%, 8% or 10%, it shows and it hurts. We hear it a lot in our communities.

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Saturday was the International Day of Older Persons. I was lucky enough to take part in a march in my riding of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. It was organized by the Comité d'action pour la qualité de vie des aînés de La Petite-Patrie, a group working to improve local seniors' quality of life, and it ended in Montcalm Park. Afterwards, a number of seniors, mostly women, took to the stage to speak to elected officials from various levels of government about their reality and the fact that they face extremely difficult, impossible choices. They talked about the cost of food, housing, rent, home adaptations, health care, medication and many other things.

Seniors live on a fixed income that does not change, or barely changes, which results in poverty. If they do not have the good fortune of receiving income from a private pension plan and possibly from the defined benefit pension plan that enhances old age security, they are entitled to the guaranteed income supplement if they are poor enough. However, even then, the situation remains extremely difficult.

It is a travesty that a country as rich as ours, a G7 country where the average per capita income is so high, is abandoning these generations of Quebecers who built modern-day Quebec, the generation of people like Lesage, Lévesque, Parizeau, Bourassa. Today, these people are sometimes stuck in long-term care facilities, in private residences that cost an arm and a leg, where there are no services and they are isolated. As a progressive and a social democrat, this breaks my heart. I do not want to live in a society that looks the other way and allows this to happen.

I want to take this opportunity to speak on behalf of the women who addressed a crowd of hundreds in La Petite-Patrie on Saturday. I will share with the House their demands, which line up with the bill. There are seven demands and they are not very long.

First, they are calling for real home support, because that can make a big difference in a person's life, especially if they are isolated or have unfortunately lost their spouse.

There is currently more than a two-year wait to receive home care. Seniors want to age in their own homes, with their memories, and they need more help and support to do that. One thing that must be done is to ensure the quality and continuity of care, as well as to increase and protect funding, which currently accounts for an insufficient proportion of the budget envelope.

I see that as a perfectly legitimate, noble and understandable demand.

I would also like to commend the work of Dr. Réjean Hébert, who has spent years tackling the issue of home care, which is obviously related to health transfers in Quebec. We need to think about the priorities we want to set as a society to be able to take care of seniors in their own homes in order to have an impact on their quality of life.

Home care would also help relieve the pressure on hospitals. Why would a senior go to the emergency department when they could stay at home and be cared for by a nurse, social worker or personal support worker and avoid the endless lineups?

• (1800)

The second demand is better access to health care, again on the health theme.

Access to basic health care is still difficult, despite the fact that some services have returned to the [local community service centres]. Unfortunately, spots open up at a snail's pace, which forces seniors to travel outside their own neighbourhoods for simple blood tests. The wait for a new family doctor is very long, and it is unacceptable for a person aged 70 or more to be on a waiting list for several months [and sometimes even several years].

Again, this comes back to funding our public health care system. Access to basic services, tests or examinations can sometimes be very distressing and time-consuming for everyone. It is even more important for our seniors.

The third demand has a more human dimension. It is about being cared for with dignity. Seniors want “a doctor who takes the time to listen to their patients”. They want to be more than just a number. Health care is not a factory. Seniors are calling for the following:

To be treated with respect. Respect for the person's physical integrity. The right to end their days in dignity and respect. Better training for health care workers and first responders on proper treatment and compassion.

Once again, more training is needed. Health care workers also need to take a more humane approach where they are not always running from one patient to another, or one client to another, to use the current terminology.

There are still four more demands. The next has to do with 50,000 new social housing units.

The wait time for social housing is getting longer and longer. As a result, many seniors have to pay exorbitant amounts for rent because they are still waiting for a subsidized apartment. Access to housing should be a right, and Quebec needs to invest in buying or building new social housing units to meet the demand.

Once again, the federal government can collaborate. Today, we are paying the price for the years of disinvestment in social housing and housing co-operatives by the Liberals and the Conservatives. The situation is disastrous for everyone, including seniors.

Another demand is for an increase in old age pensions. The text reads as follows:

Senior women represent the poorest segment of Quebec's population. They should never have to choose between putting food on the table or being able to get to a doctor's appointment.

That is the reality. These are the agonizing choices that many seniors, including women, are facing right now.

This brings me to the heart of the bill before us today. For some ridiculous and absolutely inexplicable reason, the Liberals decided to increase old age security for people aged 75 and over, but they did absolutely nothing for people aged 65 to 74.

We have never seen this kind of discrimination or distinction before. People aged 65 to 74 have the same growing needs, and they are dealing with the same inflation, the same cost of living and the same housing crisis. Why would they have fewer needs than people aged 75 and over? Did the government just want to save money, so they decided that those individuals needed to find part-time work, which is a little harder for those aged 75 and over to do? To me, that is serious.

The Conservatives sought to raise the retirement age to 77, and now the Liberals are kind of playing the same game. They are telling people aged 65 and over that they need to take care of themselves because they have a little more autonomy and that the government will only take care of people aged 75 and over. I think that position is incoherent and really hard on our seniors aged 65 and over, who are suffering as a result.

Lots of people came to talk to me about this on Saturday in La Petite-Patrie. These individuals were experiencing this injustice and they asked me how I could explain it. I could not explain it. I would like to hear the members of the Liberal party in the House explain it. The NDP feels it is totally unacceptable to create two classes of seniors in our country.

There are lots of things we can do to help seniors. We need a universal public pharmacare program. I said universal and public, not a hybrid system. A lot of people are still falling through the cracks in the Quebec system. This plan is a step in the right direction when the alternative is nothing at all, but that is not what others, including Quebec unions or the Union des consommateurs, are calling for.

Seniors also need access to dental care. I am very proud that the NDP is forcing the Liberal government to make sure that, starting early next year, people 65 and over who earn less than \$70,000 a year, which includes the vast majority, will have access to dental care. The dentist will send the bill directly to the federal government. This will improve the health and finances of all our seniors in Quebec.

• (1805)

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-319, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act (amount of full pension).

This bill is intended to correct a mistake made by the government, a mistake that resulted in discrimination against people aged 65 to 74 and thus created two classes of seniors.

Yes, I will boldly speak about discrimination here, not only discrimination based on age, but also discrimination based on sex. I will therefore explain to the House why the government saw fit to adopt a doubly discriminatory measure. I will show that the government's arguments barely hold water. I will show that the measure in fact discriminates in two ways. Finally, I will explain why it is essential that this mistake be corrected.

When the government decided in 2019 to make an election promise to increase the pension for seniors 75 and over, it essentially had two arguments, only one of which was stated loud and clear.

The first argument, which is not often raised, was that the increase in life expectancy means that pensions are paid out over a

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longer period, which puts pressure on the pension fund and its fiscal capacity to cover the additional years of life, especially as there will be more old age security recipients than workers contributing to the fund as a result of an inverted age pyramid. This situation gives the government two choices: Raising workers' contributions, either by increasing the number of workers or the amounts paid by those workers, or reducing the amount paid to seniors every month.

Increasing the monthly amount of the pension for seniors aged 75 and over falls into the second category, as strange as that may seem. Indeed, refusing to increase the pension for those aged 65 to 74 is a roundabout way of reducing the monthly amount they are paid, given that they are on a fixed income while their expenses keep rising. Inflation is not fixed. A dollar today is not the same as a dollar five years ago. Their income is fixed, but the costs of meeting their basic needs are not.

The second argument, the one most commonly put forward, is that people aged 75 and over have higher health-related costs. These people may need help at home, including specialized care or help with housework or meal preparation. In short, according to the government, people aged 75 and over have expenses that those aged 65 to 74 do not have. That is true in some cases, but not always.

The government has made a massive generalization, forgetting that plenty of people aged 75 and over will never need home support or specialized care. It has also forgotten that plenty of people between the ages of 65 and 74 do need specialized care and home support. That has been completely erased from the government's reasoning. These people do not receive a penny, even though their needs are just as great, if not greater, than some people aged 75 and over.

The other argument that would, according to the government, justify an increase for those aged 75 and over is that seniors aged 65 to 74 are healthy enough to work and have an income that could meet the needs they or their spouse might eventually have. This is also true in some cases, but not always.

Those over the age of 65 who want to work quickly realize that they are paying out of their own pocket to do so. This is because they are taxed at a higher rate, one that is closer to the rate paid by single people, when they have paid taxes all their lives. What is more, if they earn a little too much money or a little more—and we are not talking about astronomical amounts here—their old age pension is reduced.

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• (1810)

We are talking here about double taxation that does nothing to encourage people to work. I would like to remind the House that the Century Initiative strongly suggested that the government encourage people between the ages of 65 and 74 to stay in the workforce. Is giving more money to people aged 75 and up another roundabout way to respond to this suggestion by the Century Initiative? One has to wonder.

As I said, those aged 65 and up who want to work and who are in good enough health to do so are held back by double taxation. Bill C-319 makes it possible for those people who want to work—and not everyone does—to do so and to earn more money before cuts are made to their old age pension. The bill would increase the exemption from \$5,000 to \$6,000. That is not a huge amount, but it can make all the difference for someone who does not have much income. In fact, \$6,000 is practically a bonanza for such people.

Seniors should never have to work if they do not want to, if they are not healthy enough to work. It should always be a choice. These individuals have worked their entire lives, whether they were paid on the job market or they volunteered. People always forget to include the value of volunteering. It is a lot of money. Rather than paying someone \$30, \$40 or \$50 to deliver meals, we can ask a volunteer to do it. At the same time, that volunteer helps another senior come out of isolation and ensure that the senior is in good shape. Volunteering is worth a fortune, but it is never counted in our calculations. It is invisible work.

At the beginning of my speech, I said that the government's measure to increase pensions for seniors aged 75 and over is discriminatory in two ways. It discriminates by age, and that is obvious, I think. When the old age security program was put in place, it was universal. When someone turned 65, they could start receiving their old age pension. It was universal.

Now they decide to create two categories of seniors. It is discriminatory because historically women are the ones who had lower incomes. They are the ones who often end up without an RRSP for a variety of reasons. I know a woman who had to cash in her RRSPs because she could no longer work at age 45 after a workplace accident. At 65, her RRSP was completely depleted and she was left with \$600 a month to live on with a \$400 rent to pay. She is still lucky that her rent is only \$400, but that leaves her with just \$200 for everything else.

Bill C-319 seeks to correct this mistake that was made by the government. Let us not forget that aging is a part of life. When we help our seniors live with dignity, live well and have social activities, essentially, we are helping our own children by extension. Eventually, they will be old, like us, and will need support. We never know what life has in store for us. Becoming a senior and having to skip meals or eat soda crackers for supper is not living with dignity.

• (1815)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to

rise today to participate in the second hour of the second reading debate on Bill C-319.

I would like to thank the member for Shefford for sponsoring this bill. It continues to spark important conversations. That is because we are constantly looking at how best to support older persons in Canada. Not everyone needs the same kind of help. Seniors themselves would agree.

To demonstrate my point, I give an example from Manchester, United Kingdom. A communications campaign in 2020 called “Valuable, not vulnerable” highlighted contributions of older people in the pandemic response. It featured those who performed jobs in person on the front lines, those who volunteered in their communities and those who took on caregiver roles. The campaign successfully countered the idea that an entire group should not be labelled as frail or vulnerable, and the slogan was picked up around the world, including here in Canada.

I bring this up because I want to underline that our government chose to raise the OAS pension for seniors 75 and over, and it was a good choice. It was based on data. It helped avoid lumping all seniors into the same category. As we know, the evidence tells us that seniors 75 and over are more likely to be vulnerable in certain circumstances. They are more likely to need more support.

As the Minister of Employment said to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, this policy step was a very big step. The decision to increase the OAS pension for older seniors was in recognition of the more precarious life circumstances that are known to happen more often at age 75 and upward.

Let us crunch the numbers to get a more detailed view. We know financial needs increase in this age group, and in 2020, more seniors aged 75 and over received the guaranteed income supplement compared to those 65 to 74. There are also more women in the 75 and over category than men. As well, there are more Canadians with a disability in that age group. According to the Canadian disability survey in 2017, 47% of seniors aged 75 and over had a disability, compared to 32% of those in the younger group. That is quite a jump.

That is why our government increased the OAS pension for seniors aged 75 and older. Budget 2021 provided a one-time payment of \$500 to OAS pensioners who were 75 or over as of June 2022. We then increased OAS payments for pensioners aged 75 and over by 10% on an ongoing basis as of July 2022. This policy has helped approximately 3.3 million seniors. They will receive more than \$800 extra over the first year of the increase, and the benefit, of course, is indexed, so it will continue to go up.

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I want to turn to another matter that has been commented on in this House and that we need to consider with Bill C-319. That is the critical work that is under way to modernize the IT infrastructure that supports the OAS program. Canada's IT infrastructure has been aging faster than the pace of repairs or replacements. By investing the time and money to fix this infrastructure, our government is ensuring key programs like the old age security program and employment insurance will continue to be delivered in the timely way Canadians deserve.

These system changes were spurred on by the pandemic. We realize a modernized benefits delivery platform is crucial so that we are able to target support when Canadians need it the most. We hope to ensure all Canadians are receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled.

The timelines for Bill C-319 do not take into account the ongoing work. If passed, the bill would require complex changes to the existing OAS legacy system that would in turn jeopardize the critical deployment and stabilization of OAS onto the new platform.

The benefits delivery modernization work has been under way since budget 2021 provided nearly \$650 million for Employment and Social Development Canada and Treasury Board Secretariat to undertake it. In this year's supplementary estimates (C), our government is planning for nearly \$1.3 billion in expenditures related to the workforce capacity for OAS and to modernize the IT infrastructure that hosts it.

As I mentioned, Bill C-319, if passed, would require various system changes to the legacy OAS system. The earliest recommended date to introduce policy changes that would require IT system changes is after September 2025, once the deployment of OAS onto the new system has been properly stabilized.

● (1820)

What is more, in October 2022, the then minister of families, children and social development confirmed that safely onboarding OAS is a number one priority. The Canadian population is aging. Seniors are the fastest-growing age group and we need to consider how best to support them, knowing that older Canadians are valuable and that some are vulnerable, just as we would find in any age group. Bill C-319 is not ideal. Our government already has a good plan to support older Canadians, and work is under way. In fact, we have been supporting seniors since 2015.

Most recently, in budget 2023, we introduced a one-time grocery rebate to help offset the rising cost of food for eligible seniors. In addition, budget 2023 provides funds to implement the Canadian dental care plan. This plan provides dental coverage for uninsured low- to medium-income Canadians, including seniors. This means that no Canadian will ever have to choose between taking care of their oral health and paying the bills at the end of the month. These measures are in addition to the steps already taken by our government, which include returning the age of eligibility for the OAS pension and the GIS to 65 from 67; enhancing the GIS for the lowest-income seniors, which benefited 900,000 seniors and contributed to lifting 45,000 seniors out of poverty; increasing the OAS pension by 10% for seniors aged 75 plus, based on good data; and, of course, indexing all our key benefits, so they keep pace with the cost of living and never decrease.

Supporting seniors has been and will always be a top priority for the government. Our seniors have built the country that we know and love today, and they are the backbone of Canadian society. We will always have our seniors' backs.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Shefford has five minutes for her right of reply.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, what can I say in five minutes to close out this second hour of debate at second reading of this important bill, Bill C-319? The text of the bill amends the Old Age Security Act to increase the amount of the full pension to which all pensioners aged 65 and over are entitled by 10%. It also amends the act to raise the exemption for a person's employment income or self-employed earnings that is taken into account in determining the amount of the guaranteed income supplement from \$5,000 to \$6,500.

I venture to call it "important" because that is what I have been hearing all summer. Yes, I admit that I set out on a mission this summer and travelled to all four corners of Quebec. I heard the discontent of some seniors and the despair of others, but above all, I heard people asking me to do everything in my power to ensure that the majority of MPs in the House vote in favour of Bill C-319.

First of all, let us not forget that, for years, the Bloc Québécois has made the condition of seniors one of its top priorities. Seniors were the people hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. They were among those who suffered the most and they continue to suffer the negative consequences of the pandemic: isolation, anxiety, financial hardship, and so on.

I do not want to paint an overly gloomy picture today. I repeat myself because I believe it: I want seniors to be treated with dignity, like the grey power they are. Right now, old age security benefits fall far short of offsetting the decline in purchasing power or the dramatic rise in housing and food costs.

With inflation rising sharply and quickly and with the shortage of labour and experienced workers, the Bloc Québécois remains focused on defending the interests and desire of some seniors to remain active on the labour market and contribute fully to the vitality of their community. This is why the Bloc Québécois has long been calling for an increase in the earnings exemption for seniors. It is vital that we adjust our public policies so that older Quebecers can maintain a dignified quality of life in the manner of their choosing.

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In May 2018, following an extensive pan-Canadian scan, the Department of Employment and Social Development published a document entitled “Promoting the labour force participation of older Canadians — Promising initiatives”. After identifying the harmful consequences of ageism in the workplace and the challenges faced by seniors, the study proposes a number of measures to facilitate the integration of experienced workers and encourage their participation in the workforce. Socializing in the workplace is beneficial for breaking out of isolation. Since life expectancy is steadily increasing, and more jobs are less demanding than in the past, let us make this happen.

We are also seeing the growing distress of small and medium-sized businesses that are desperately looking for workers, as well as the closure of many businesses and the devitalization of certain communities and regions. We must take action.

I find it hard to understand the choices the Liberal government has made since it came to power. At best, it has contented itself with half-hearted or ad hoc measures, as we saw during the pandemic. As previously mentioned, modest sums have been granted to date and one-time assistance was offered during the most difficult times of the pandemic. We appreciate these efforts, but we are clear about the indirect and very minimal effects of this hastily put together aid.

In budget 2021, the Liberal government increased old age security benefits for seniors over the age of 75. This delayed and ill-conceived measure created a new problem—a divide between seniors aged 65 to 74 and those aged 75 and over. The Bloc Québécois opposed this discrimination that would create two classes of seniors. Naturally, today's insecurity, economic context, loss of purchasing power and exponential increase in food and housing prices do not affect only the oldest recipients of OAS; they affect all recipients. This measure misses the mark by helping a minority of seniors. In 2021, there were nearly 2.8 million people 75 and over, compared to 3.7 million between the ages of 65 and 74. To date, nothing has been done to address this injustice. This bill seeks to end this discriminatory measure. The one-time \$500 cheque for people 75 and over in August 2021 did not fix anything.

In closing, Bill C-319 will improve the financial situation of seniors and eliminate the age discrimination that currently exists. Seniors who live on a fixed income are having trouble paying their bills because their daily expenses are going up faster than their pension benefits. Other than the increase to index it to inflation, the full OAS for seniors aged 65 to 74 remains unchanged at \$666.83 a month. Who can live on that?

The Bloc Québécois is calling for an increase in old age security for all seniors aged 65 and up, and has even pointed out that the government is discriminating against people aged 65 to 74.

I would like to say one last thing. The RQRA, Afeas, AREQ, AQRP and FADOQ, all of these Quebec organizations, and Quebecers and Canadians are calling for this bill. Seniors are watching us and asking us not to make them pay the price of partisanship.

• (1830)

I invite my colleagues to take action for the dignity of seniors. I will see them on October 18 for the vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 18, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, on September 20, I rose to ask a question about how the carbon tax is impacting farmers. The minister responded by suggesting that somehow the carbon tax will stop natural disasters, which occur in this country and all around the world. The fact of the matter is this: The carbon tax has not done that, and that is because we live in a global environment where the carbon emissions from other countries, such as the carbon emissions of China, impact whether or not there are large carbon emissions going on in the world.

There is no such thing as a carbon dome covering and protecting Canada so that somehow if we reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while countries like China continue to put out more than double our total output in their year-over-year increases, the carbon tax is going to protect us. It is not going to protect us, and in fact it makes the cost of everything more expensive.

Farmers at the International Plowing Match were telling me that this is a huge challenge. However, what makes it worse is that when I raised this question, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment suggested that farmers are exempt from the carbon tax and stated that they do not pay a carbon tax, even to dry grain. Then, when I suggested that he was wrong, he accused me of spreading misinformation. That is outrageous, because he is absolutely wrong. Farmers do pay a carbon tax to dry grain. Farmers do pay carbon taxes on all the inputs on the farm. The only thing they do not pay a carbon tax on is purple gas, which is exempt. However, the trucker who brings in that purple gas pays a carbon tax on the gas they use.

The parliamentary secretary is so woefully uninformed on his file that it is embarrassing. To accuse me of spreading misinformation when he did not know what he was talking about is deeply shameful, and the member should apologize.

If he spent five seconds talking to a farmer instead of blustering here in the House of Commons, he would know that farmers pay a carbon tax to dry grain. If they did not pay a carbon tax, why would Bill C-234 to eliminate the carbon tax from farm fuels be in the Senate? Why would the Parliamentary Budget Officer say that Bill C-234 would save farmers \$1 billion?

The parliamentary secretary's lack of information and his audacity to accuse me of misinformation are exactly the reason we are in a mess in this country. The Liberals do not have a clue about what they are talking about.

• (1835)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the follow-up from my colleague. I am capable of coming into the House and having an honest and open conversation without accusing my colleague of being shameful or anything like that. I hope we can carry on forthwith in that regard.

I thank my colleague again for voicing the concerns of farmers, who are crucial, as I mentioned in my answer back then. I also live in a rural riding. I talk to farmers regularly. They feed our cities. They boost our economy and they create jobs. I enjoy going to the farmers market on Saturdays and eating the fresh produce they produce. Canada's agriculture sector is a pillar of rural communities like Dufferin—Caledon and Milton. It is a vital part of our economy, and the food supplied to urban centres comes from there. Our economy greatly benefits from this sector, and it is crucial that we do more to support our farmers.

The real reason we are here is that my colleague is really proud of a Facebook post that he put up, where he accused me of giving up. I just want to make it clear that I am not giving up on fighting climate change or on countering misinformation in this place. I was forced to sit down halfway through my response to his question that day in question period, because the Conservatives were making so much noise heckling me that the Speaker stood up and told me to sit back down, so I did. I am not going to give up. I will follow instructions from the Speaker, but I will always stand up for truth and for science, and I will continue to fight climate change.

I will also say that all members of the House ran in the last election on a commitment to price carbon. The member has a short memory if he does not recall on what basis he was asking his constituents to send him to Ottawa. Erin O'Toole ran on a commitment to price carbon. That is why many members of Dufferin—Caledon's community voted for that member, because he claimed to care about climate change, as farmers in our region do.

I am not willing to give up fighting climate change just because there are countries with larger carbon footprints. Indeed, that is not how to measure a carbon footprint. We can measure them per capita, and Canadians have an extraordinarily high per capita carbon footprint. We need to do more to lower those emissions and that re-

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liance on fossil fuels. That is one of the reasons why we have a carbon price in Canada, because a carbon price is a proven methodology, a market-based instrument. It is actually a very conservative methodology to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and drive innovation in the energy sector.

With respect to the member's accusation that I do not know my facts, many farm fuels are exempt. I am well aware of the recent bill's efforts to change some of the regulations around propane and natural gas for grain drying, but I am not here to say I know more about this than other people, certainly not more than farmers, who are the experts in their operations. I am happy to see that the bill has the support it requires to go forward. Nonetheless, my family are apple farmers, and the fuel on that farm is exempt from the price on carbon, as are many other products that farmers use to produce food.

That also leads me to my next point of what is driving inflation and higher costs at the grocery stores. It is mostly climate change. This is not a refutable concept. When we talk to farmers, they talk about how all the rain they expect over a month or even a season sometimes now falls over a 24-hour period, and then it does not rain at all for two months. We also have fruit- and vegetable-producing regions that have suffered wildfires.

The member opposite is being very disingenuous when he suggests that the minister has stood up to suggest that a carbon price is going to eliminate natural disasters. That is absolutely not what the minister said, and that is not what any person has said with respect to why a carbon price is important. A carbon price will reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, demonstrating that we can build our economy forward in a green and sustainable manner. It is disingenuous for the member to suggest that a carbon price is just going to end floods, fires and extreme weather.

We rely on science on this side of the House, and I hope the member will come on board as well.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I just want to perhaps put the words the member said the last time we debated this directly to him. He said that farm fuels are mostly fossil fuels and they are exempt from the carbon price. He said, "The member opposite mentioned grain drying. The farm fuel exemption applies to the gas that people use for drying grain as well. The spread of misinformation on that side is rampant."

Adjournment Proceedings

In fact, the only thing on a farm that is exempt from the carbon tax is purple gas. The member should know that. One does pay a carbon tax to dry grain. That causes an increase in the cost of grain. The fact that all the inputs on a farm, like fertilizer, which is subject to a carbon tax, come from oil and gas increases the price of food.

Will he just finally admit that the carbon tax is causing food inflation?

• (1840)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, we do not need to go back and forth in arguing what our opinions are on this matter; there are actual economists in this country who are measuring these things. The member can go consult that data on how the carbon price impacts food inflation and the cost of groceries. The reality is that it is climate change that is driving food inflation. Any farmer will tell us that climate change is having an impact on their productions.

I did look at the member's Facebook when I was tagged in the post where he accused me of giving up. I once again want to say that I am not giving up on fighting climate change and I am not giving up on standing up for science, facts and evidence, but I am also kind of concerned, because throughout the thread a lot of the people who were commenting on that Facebook post by the member for Dufferin—Caledon were saying that climate change is a hoax and that it is not true. One person said they were a farmer and climate change is not real.

It is that kind of misinformation that we need to stand up against, and it is that member who is allowing it to occur on his social media. He is encouraging it by liking those posts and promoting those posts. That is shameful, and the member ought to apologize.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, over 1,800 times, the Prime Minister promised in the 2015 election that it would be the last election under a winner-takes-all first-past-the-post system. I probably do not need to bore anyone with the details to know that this promise was not kept. It is obvious that politics got in the way.

Why does that matter? First, it is because promises matter for Canadians across the country to have trust in our democracy, particularly promises as significant as that one. Second, it is because winner-takes-all first-past-the-post systems dramatically distort the results and the interests of Canadians. As just one example, in Ontario's last general election, the current party that now has 100% of the power at Queen's Park only earned around 17% of the popular vote. What a massive distortion that first-past-the-post continually leads to, time and time again. Quebec's most recent election is just another example.

Another reason it matters is that it has been proven, time and again, that first-past-the-post is not appropriate for Canada. In fact, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, when she spoke on this same topic last night and joined in this advocacy as she has for so many years calling for electoral reform, pointed out that eight times, since 1921, this House or various law commissions have studied the issue, found that first-past-the-post does not fit well for

us and recommended we do something differently. We are going to continue this advocacy.

Here is what is in the works: Earlier this year I introduced a motion, working with Fair Vote Canada, to call for a citizens' assembly on electoral reform to take the politics out of it and to have regular Canadians come together like a jury to get expert opinion. This would be a randomized group, and it would then make recommendations back to parliamentarians. This approach is supported by 76% of Canadians.

Fair Vote Canada volunteers then went out across the country and met with MPs and spoke to them about the importance of following this intention from Canadians and supporting this motion. We were allowed up to 20 joint seconds in this place on a motion. Thanks to the work of those volunteers, MPs from the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party joint-seconded to fill up that list. In fact, Fair Vote had to create a separate website to show all of the MPs who wanted to be known for their support. There are almost 40 now, including the parliamentary secretary who is with us here this evening.

The Liberal Party itself then had a convention earlier this year where it also endorsed the idea, through the grassroots volunteers of that party. I asked the Prime Minister shortly after, in light of all this, if his opinion has changed. At the time, it had not. His answer was kind of, "my way, or the highway". Until we had consensus on a winner-take-all ranked ballot, he was not interested in moving ahead at the time.

The good news, though, is that while a vote on the motion I had brought forward would not happen for some time still, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith took it upon herself to bring this motion forward. She had drawn a much better number in our lottery system for private members' motions, and there will be a vote on it.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is this: Will there be a change in focus from his party to now support this really important motion?

• (1845)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is nice to be in the House tonight to talk to my friend and colleague from Kitchener Centre. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the importance of democratic reform in Canada.

The Government of Canada is committed to strengthening Canada's democratic institutions.

Adjournment Proceedings

Our electoral system, the fundamental rules determining how votes are translated into seats in the House of Commons, is one of the most foundational pieces of our democracy and it is also one of the strongest in the world. Among many things, it provides Canadians with a direct connection to their member of Parliament, who must work with every one of their constituents to develop national policy and make political decisions while engaging and remaining accountable back home in an increasingly digitally connected Canada.

Our current first-past-the-post system is not perfect. Certainly, no system is, but it has served Canada well for over 150 years and continues to advance the democratic values that Canadians want reflected in their system of government. It includes strong, local representation, stability and accountability.

How Canadians vote and how we govern ourselves are fundamentally important and they impact us all. Given this, this government's view has been very clear. Any major reforms to the electoral system should not be imposed on Canadians but, rather, they would require the broad support of Canadians. That is hard to achieve because, as the member stated, only 17% of Ontarians actually voted in favour of the premier. I think that was the number that he provided. It is tough to get people to the polls.

We all have that challenge every election. What we do during the period of an election is go out to our supporters and make sure that they vote. Voter turnout is actually pretty low. It is higher for federal elections than it is for other levels of government. In Canada, it can be challenging to get people to engage. That apathy is something that we all have to challenge a little bit.

As the member stated, I am a signatory to the idea of having a national assembly on democratic reform, to pursue some type of better representation. I am also fairly of the opinion, personally, that it should not include more unelected people, more people who do not know exactly who their representative is.

I think it is very relevant to my community that they know exactly how to find me. Just before I was here, I was in my office over at the Valour building and a member of my community reached out over Facebook Messenger and I just gave them a call. We chatted for 20 minutes. He knows exactly who his member of Parliament is and that is very important to the integrity of our electoral system. I can be accountable, I can be reassuring and I can make sure that his voice is heard in here.

However, some systems of proportional representation would have members of the House who do not directly have a constituency, as members of the Senate do. I have concerns about the lack of accountability. My concerns extend to both a future potential unelected House of Commons as well as, quite frankly, an unelected other place.

Given this and all of these things, our government has been very clear that we are not of the view that a new system ought to be imposed on people. After the 2015 election, our government consulted very broadly with Canadians. Many members of this chamber held town halls in their own riding on this topic and we heard a myriad of ideas and concerns, which is important throughout that engagement. However, no clear preference or consensus emerged.

Therefore, the government decided not to proceed at that time. I think that is where the utility of a citizens assembly could be really effective. I had a great conversation recently with Fair Vote Canada. I am supportive of the notion of Canadians coming together to talk about how our electoral process and system of governing could be enhanced.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I want to start by pausing on this point about any kind of reform being imposed. This notion to me is not a fair argument to start with because that is what elections are for.

Promises are made, people are voted for and those promises are meant to be followed through on. I think that is a really important promise from the 2015 campaign. Not to belabour that point, I really appreciate the support of the parliamentary secretary for this motion calling for a citizens assembly. He knows, like I do, that we are going to need a lot more support across all sides, including from the governing party.

Can I hear more about what he is going to do to build that kind of support?

● (1850)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, I think most members of the House of Commons have their own strong views on this. This really comes down to how we arrive in our current place of work. Every community is very different. I think of, given the diversity of Canada's landscape, how different a riding like Kitchener Centre is from the Assistant Deputy Speaker's riding on Manitoulin Island, a place that I love to visit, which I did not make it to this summer but I hope to next year. Those two ridings are really different. The systems by which one does one's work in those two communities are very different.

To answer the question clearly, how am I going to encourage more discussion? I am going to stay open and honest on the subject. I am going to meet with my constituents and talk to my colleagues here in the House of Commons about how we can create a more robust democratic institution here in Canada.

HEALTH

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I hope you will not mind indulging me for one quick moment. On Monday, my oma, at 96 years of age, passed away. She left an amazing legacy: 14 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren. She was a constant in my life and just an absolutely wonderful human being.

Adjournment Proceedings

In May, I highlighted how the NDP-Liberal government has failed to uphold its duty to protect children in the agreement signed with the Province of British Columbia to decriminalize possession of illicit drugs. I asked the former minister of mental health and addictions why her government had not done more to protect children. Countless times, needles and other drug paraphernalia have been found on school grounds and in other areas frequented by children, like parks, and specifically Mill Lake in Abbotsford.

Earlier that same day, during debate on an opposition motion related to the opioids crisis, I told this House about the time my son's day care had to be closed because paraphernalia had been left behind on the property in front of its entrance way. What was the minister's response to me in question period that day? She stated, and I quote, "The exemption we have approved in British Columbia specifically states that playgrounds and areas attached to schools and day cares are not exempt and must be enforced."

Unfortunately, while true, this ignores the fact that the current government provided no resources for local health authorities and law enforcement to contain these dangerous drugs and protect communities. While the government did amend its agreement with B.C. last month to broaden the scope of areas where these substances are banned, it begs the question of whether these rules will actually be enforced.

In 2022, a record 2,383 British Columbians needlessly died from an illicit drug overdose. In 2023, we are on pace to surpass that figure. Those British Columbians and the thousands more like them across Canada deserve timely access to treatment and recovery services. Instead, the government has focused on making access to dangerous drugs easier without addressing treatment.

The tragic story of Kamilah Sword from Coquitlam highlights how easy these drugs are to access for children. She was 14 when she died of an overdose of the very drug the current government encourages to be dispersed. Students in the area told the National Post at the time that some as young as 11 were abusing this drug, hydro-morphone, and that a tablet could be bought for just \$5 to \$10 in their community. The reckless and irresponsible implementation of the current government's drug handout program has had tragic and deadly consequences for many Canadian youth.

Therefore, will the government finally uphold its obligation to protect children under the agreement with the Province of B.C. and will it finally deliver the treatment and recovery services that are so desperately needed in my province and should be tied to any such agreement in the first place?

• (1855)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague. This crisis is having a tragic and unrelenting toll on Canadians, their families and communities.

There are four pillars, recognized internationally, that are necessary for a successful substance use strategy, and they are ir-refutable. These pillars are well-established in the medical community. I am not a doctor. The member is not a doctor. We ought to

listen to science and experts when it comes to something so critical as protecting the lives of our most vulnerable community members. The four pillars are prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement.

Our government is committed to a comprehensive approach that implements policies and supports in all four of these essential areas. To address this public health crisis, we have to use all the tools we have, including innovative approaches, such as granting the province of British Columbia an exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. That is a democratic approach.

B.C. asked for the three-year, time-limited exemption, which began January 2023. We take the safety of all Canadians seriously, and that is why, from the beginning, we have approached this from both a public health and a public safety perspective. This exemption will be continuously monitored, assessed and adjusted if needed. B.C. requested this exemption because of the stigma that criminalization produces.

Criminalization kills people. People are dying because they fear the repercussions of asking for help. The fact is that people who use substances need support, not judgment. They need community, not isolation. They need empathy and understanding, not stigma.

Local governments do have tools and bylaws they can use to amend and address any unintended consequences or concerns that their communities are experiencing. Local governments know their communities, their needs and what works best for them. Addressing the ongoing public health crisis while maintaining the safety of all Canadians is essential.

To ensure the safety of children and youth in B.C., this exemption does not apply on elementary and secondary school premises, nor licensed child care facilities, on playgrounds, at spray pools, at wading pools or at skate parks. We need to be careful of the potential for recriminalizing personal possession among some of the most vulnerable people who use drugs in our communities.

We are committed to continuing our work with British Columbia to find solutions, but to find solutions, we must first understand the many different factors that drive substance use. That must include addressing mental health. Prevention, treatment and harm-reduction measures all have a role to play, as do actions that reduce stigma and provide continued access to health and social supports for individuals.

Let me quote the Vancouver police department, which said, “Police can now focus on those doing the most harm in this crisis — persons and organized crime groups who import, manufacture and distribute these toxic substances.” They are not aware of any incidents in Vancouver in which safe supply has been trafficked to youth, a response that is contrary to the assertion made by the Leader of the Opposition in a much maligned video, which was, frankly, disgusting. There are media reports that have made it into the House of Commons that are further stigmatizing individuals and communities.

I want to know if the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon would commit to something tonight. The Fraser House Society in his riding is receiving federal funding to create podcasts for men in the trades to provide tools and information on pain, trauma and substance use, while enhancing awareness, decreasing stigma and encouraging shared lived experiences.

Is the member ready to commit to publicly meeting with those individuals? They have answers, insight and perspective that may help the member further understand the very complex nature of the illness that is addiction. I have met with survivors of addiction, with people who have recovered from addiction and people who require this help, and he should too.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, my office is right beside Haven in the Hollow, and I see every day the impacts of the approach taken by the government.

At the end of the day, I believe that all of us in the House have one thing in common, and that is that we do not want to see people die. I firmly believe that, but the actions taken by the government were irresponsible because none of the four pillars that my colleague from Milton mentioned, which are prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement, are tied to the agreement with the province of British Columbia. Since the implementation of those actions, all we have seen is an increase in the number of deaths.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would be pleased to meet with the group he mentioned. I would also encourage him to come to Vancouver and come to the Fraser Valley, where it is a fact that we do not have treatment options available for people who want to get clean, who want to restart their lives and who want to have a fighting chance at breaking addiction. The government is not supportive of those actions.

• (1900)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, it is categorically false that the government has not supported recovery options. That is absolutely not the case.

Harm reduction services are a vital part of a comprehensive, compassionate and collaborative public health approach to problematic substance use, which includes prevention, enforcement, treatment and additional social and health supports.

I appreciate the invitation from my colleague, but, tragically, Milton and the GTA are also experiencing an opioid crisis. However, there is harm reduction that occurs in my riding. I have met with pharmacists who assist people living with addiction to get the services and the treatment they require so that they can continue their lives and their journey toward a drug-free life.

There are a lot of people in the Lower Mainland whom I would encourage my colleague to meet with. Furthering the stigma attached to people who use substances is not a solution to saving their lives.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:01 p.m.)

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