



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# House of Commons Debates

Official Report  
(Hansard)

**Volume 151 No. 320**  
Wednesday, May 29, 2024

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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 29, 2024

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayer*

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• (1400)

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### ARTHUR IRVING

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, our community, the Atlantic region and Canada lost an extraordinary business leader. Irving Oil chairman emeritus, Arthur L. Irving passed away on May 13 at the age of 93. Arthur Irving was one of Canada's greatest entrepreneurs. Under his leadership, Irving Oil's Saint John Refinery grew to become the largest in Canada. He led the expansion of the business in the northeastern United States and, recently, Ireland. Today, Irving Oil employs more than 4,000 people, including 2,500 in Saint John. The company has been named one of Canada's top 100 employers for eight consecutive years.

Arthur Irving's legacy spans not only industry but also conservation and community. He served for 30 years on the board of directors of Ducks Unlimited and has provided transformational support, community health care and educational initiatives, as well as community infrastructure, throughout the region. His legacy is lasting in his commitment to making Atlantic Canada, Canada and our world a better place.

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[*Translation*]

### 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF A BELLECHASSE—LES ETCHEMINS—LÉVIS BUSINESS

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Prevost, a flagship located in Sainte-Claire in the Bellechasse RCM, is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

It all began when Eugène Prévost received an order for a wooden coach, a replica of which has been built for the 100th anniversary celebrations. Over the years, Mr. Prévost earned a reputation for his high-quality workmanship that will never fade. In fact, his reputation was such that, in 1943, the federal government placed an order with him for buses to transport soldiers and war factory workers.

Today, Prevost employs over 1,000 workers who build buses for cities, for superstars and even for political parties to use during election campaigns. This company has stood the test of time, as has the community where it was founded, Sainte-Claire, which is celebrating its 200th anniversary this year.

Congratulations to Eugène Prévost for his vision and congratulations to all of the artisans who make us so proud. I wish the president of Volvo Group Canada and Prevost, François Tremblay, and his team a happy 100th anniversary.

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• (1405)

[*English*]

### OTTAWA RACE WEEKEND

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you are, I am an avid runner. It brings me great joy today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Tamarack Ottawa Race Weekend.

Last weekend, thousands of people participated in the 50th season of the race weekend, running through this magnificent, beautiful capital city of ours, running along both the Ottawa and Gatineau sides of the Ottawa River. This is not only a run, but also a week-end-long festival of fitness, really encouraging Canadians to be active. People of all abilities are able to take part, even young kids running one- or two-kilometre races, not to mention the thousands of people running the marathon. It also raises money for important charities. Just last year, over a million dollars was raised.

I want to thank the staff and all the volunteers for making the race weekend such a success over the last 50 years.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***GISÈLE FORTIN**

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about an exceptional nine-year-old, the courageous Gisèle Fortin, who, for three years now, has devoted her Monday nights to mastering the art of karate. Gisèle faces a major challenge, because she has cerebral palsy that severely affects her legs.

With the unwavering support of her parents, Audrey Lapointe and Daniel Fortin, and her karate instructor Jean-François Laforge, Gisèle has strengthened her legs and overcome the obstacles associated with her condition. In April, Gisèle participated in the Quebec Open, one of Quebec's biggest karate competitions, where she took second place in the physical challenge category.

Having overcome obstacles and moments of doubt, Gisèle embodies the perseverance, discipline and determination of our people. To quote Xavier Dolan, Gisèle reminds us all that “anything is possible to anyone who dreams, dares, works and never gives up”.

Congratulations to Gisèle. Quebec stands with her.

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**SUPPORT FOR QUEBEC BUSINESSES**

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is investing in Quebec businesses through the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. Let me share a few good examples. In Lévis—Lotbinière we provided \$1 million so that J.L. Leclerc et Fils could improve productivity and transition to a green economy; in Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, we provided \$1 million so that Plate 2000 Inc. could expand while reducing its environmental impact; in Mégantic—L'Érable, we provided \$2 million to help Fruit d'Or increase production of its Quebec cranberries and blueberries; and in Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, we provided \$1.5 million to Diffusion Saguenay for a new immersive show.

Thanks to economic development agencies, we are supporting our businesses at a time when the Conservatives want to make cuts and bring back austerity. The Conservatives in Quebec should tell the businesses in their region that they want to cut financial support. We are going to make sure we create jobs and grow Quebec's economy.

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*[English]***FATHER'S DAY**

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, many people talk about toxic masculinity, but fewer celebrate the type of masculinity that lifts our nation up. We should recognize men who, day in and day out, without selfish motivation, go to work to be independent and contribute financially to their families; men who do the emotional labour of lovingly disciplining their kids, spending time with them and loving them enough to give them a stable home, no matter what that looks like; men who are humble in their power, who overcome their weaknesses and who sacrifice their own desires to support others; men who defend oth-

ers from harm; men who respect women; and men who teach their sons the importance of personal responsibility and earned respect.

As we prepare to celebrate Father's Day, I thank my husband, Jeff, for gifting our children with the greatest gift they could have gotten: one hell of a dad and role model. To the rest of the men out there who fit this bill or who are trying hard to get there as they walk through the trials of life, we see them, we give gratitude to them, and we wish them happy Father's Day.

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**LUPUS AWARENESS MONTH**

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, May is Lupus Awareness Month, and I am honoured to raise awareness for the one in every 1,000 Canadians living with this chronic autoimmune disease. Lupus, sometimes called “the disease of a thousand faces”, is characterized by its diverse symptoms, which makes diagnosing it a complex and lengthy process.

Lupus patients struggle with physical and psychological health impediments, impacting daily activities, employment and social relationships. Unforeseen costs, such as home modifications and medical transport, exacerbate financial stress. Access to health care is hindered by long waiting periods for specialists and medication costs. The disease's unpredictability further complicates matters. Often, disability policies do not recognize lupus, leaving patients vulnerable and unsupported.

It is for this reason that we must ensure equitable access to health care, treatment and supports for all Canadians living with lupus.

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• (1410)

**SPORTS-RELATED CONCUSSIONS**

**Ms. Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, millions of children worldwide suffer concussions every year while playing sports, increasing the likelihood of developing mental health problems and chronic traumatic encephalopathy. CTE is a debilitating disease that can cause sleep disorders, mental health issues and even dementia later in life.

Concussion Legacy Foundation Canada's “Stop Hitting Kids in the Head” campaign aims to raise awareness and to reform youth sports to limit the number of head impacts suffered by children before the age of 14.

*[Translation]*

They are in Ottawa today to raise awareness about these issues. We need to protect our children's future, not only so that they stay healthy, but also so that our future athletes are the best they can be.

*[English]*

I want to thank four-time Grey Cup champion Tim Fleiszer for his leadership on this very important issue.

*Statements by Members***HOUSING**

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, experts from almost every single industry and sector across this country have now had the time to read through the Liberal-NDP budget spending spree, and they are nearly unified in their condemnation, especially over housing.

At the human resources committee this Monday, Conservatives directly asked industry experts how likely it is for the government to hit its housing targets. The response was, “Not a chance.” The Prime Minister's refusal to address the housing crisis has real-world consequences. One mother was recently quoted in the media, suggesting, “we're having to choose between paying a bill or getting food, and that can be really hard. It makes things really difficult.... And I just don't see any end in sight.”

There is something the Prime Minister can do. He can allow his caucus a free vote on our common-sense Conservative housing plan to build homes, not bureaucracy. After nine years, the only question left is whether the Liberal-NDP government prioritizes practical public policy over partisan politics.

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**MARKHAM—UNIONVILLE OLYMPIC ATHLETE**

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with immense pride that I rise today to congratulate Markham's own Michelle Li on qualifying for the 2024 Olympic Games. Michelle Li is the most successful Canadian female badminton player ever, and her achievements have brought tremendous honour and pride to our community. Her journey from a local community centre to the world stage has been nothing short of inspirational; she is the first Canadian to win an individual gold medal in women's singles.

As we celebrate Asian Heritage Month, it is particularly fitting to recognize Michelle Li, whose heritage and success bring immense pride to Markham and to Canada. Her story is a powerful reminder of the diverse contributions that Canadians of Asian descent make to our nation.

I congratulate Michelle and wish her the best of luck in Paris. We are all cheering for her to make Canada proud.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, more Atlantic Canadians are hungry and homeless after nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister than ever before.

Folks back home are spending way too much of their family income just to put food on the table. According to the Salvation Army insights report, an astounding 87% of Atlantic Canadians are facing food insecurity. That is up by 13% in just seven months. Last year, the Salvation Army food bank in Gander supplied a record 3,742 households. Based on the past four months, that number will be close to 5,000 for 2024.

According to Salvation Army volunteers, there is a sharp increase in the number of seniors looking for assistance to put food

on their tables. Sadly, many of them once donated to the food bank and are now unable to do so as they barely have enough money to feed themselves. One thing is certain, the NDP-Liberal government is out of touch, and Atlantic Canadians are out of food and money.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it gets more and more obvious just how out of touch the NDP-Liberal government is. After nine years of the Prime Minister's high spending and tax hikes, Canadians can barely afford necessities. That does not matter to the NDP-Liberals, who want to hike the carbon tax by 23%, and they want to keep on raising it, year after year.

Only Conservatives understand that Canadians need a break. With summer approaching, people are trying to make plans to go out and see all the wonderful destinations we have to offer in south-west Saskatchewan, places like the Jean Louis Legare Regional Park in Willow Bunch, the Great Sand Hills in Leader or maybe Harvest Eatery in Shaunavon. That is why this summer we are calling for the removal of the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax and the GST on gasoline and diesel until Labour Day. An average of 35¢ a litre taken off gas prices would save Saskatchewan families up to \$850 this summer.

Even if the NDP-Liberals refuse to support this common-sense initiative, Canadians can be assured that after they vote in the carbon tax election, Conservatives will remove the carbon tax for good.

\* \* \*

**WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, four women put their names forward to run for the Conservative nomination in my riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. None of those women made it onto yesterday's ballot, but two men did. Really? This example is not the exception. It demonstrates a lack of support for women and women's rights throughout the Conservative Party, and it is just the tip of the iceberg.

*Statements by Members*

Recently, we saw the chairperson on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women summarily removed by the Conservative leader. Was she too progressive or too strong? There are so many anti-choice caucus members, and one recently shouted that women who get abortions are needing redemption, forgiveness and God. It is truly appalling. As well, the Conservatives' leader refuses to answer questions or to make a commitment to proactively defend access to abortion, instead, pointing to a written statement. This is not good enough.

Canadian women deserve a leader who does not just make hollow statements. We need and deserve a leader who proactively supports. Luckily, we have that leader and that party. I give thanks to our Prime Minister.

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**WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, society as a whole benefits when women and gender-diverse people reach parity in roles such as elected officials, policy-making and international relations. We know that as policy-makers, women prioritize issues that benefit society, including health care and education. When women take on roles as political leaders, they shape politics and bring forward often ignored issues like ending gender-based violence and expanding reproductive health. When women hold political power, governments are less likely to go to war and more likely to uphold human rights.

It is time for positive change. Women account for only 30% of those elected to Parliament. Today, I call on all members of the House to challenge existing colonial and patriarchal systems and to lift up women and gender-diverse individuals taking on vital roles in politics. When Parliament is representative of our communities, everyone benefits.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SAINTE-THÉRÈSE**

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Sainte-Thérèse, a city of art, culture and knowledge, is celebrating its 175th anniversary this year.

Since it was founded in 1849, the village has distinguished itself through arts and culture, including its piano factory and the many festivals it hosts every year. It is also known for producing and disseminating knowledge, having created the newspaper *La Voix des Mille-Îles* in 1937 and converted the seminary in Sainte-Thérèse to the invaluable Collège Lionel-Groulx in 1967, among other things.

Sainte-Thérèse is also home to many community organizations and small local businesses that are an integral part of its identity and vitality. I would like to salute all those who have contributed and continue to contribute to making Sainte-Thérèse a unique and exceptional city.

• (1420)

[English]

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the race to replace the Prime Minister is on, and global jet-setter Mark “carbon tax” Carney is leading the field. While hard-working families struggle with the cost of living, Carney has been busy cozying up to Liberal Party elites in luxury rooms far away from the everyday struggles of hard-working Canadians. The finance committee has called Carney to testify so that he can come clean with Canadians. The ball is now in his court. Will he have the courage to testify, or will he keep campaigning behind closed doors?

Canadians have a right to know how much he will increase the Prime Minister's carbon tax or why he could not name one cent of inflationary Liberal spending he would cut. Canadians need to know why Carney works for an investment firm that has \$20 billion invested in the PRC. Is it because he can make bigger profits, thanks to Beijing's lack of environmental and labour standards?

Carbon tax Carney attacks Canada's oil and gas sector when he needs to earn a vote, but his company invests billions in oil and gas projects in other countries when he needs to earn a buck. All this is to say that if the next Liberal leader wants to campaign for the job, the least he can do is come clean with Canadians, and show up and testify.

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**CANADIAN STEEL INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is steel day on the Hill, and I would like to welcome all those who have come to Ottawa today to support this very important industry. I was born and raised in this steel town, and that is why I am so proud that the government has consistently stood with steel workers in the steel industry. When I was first elected, Algoma Steel was in bankruptcy protection. Tenaris Tubes had a handful of people working there, and the blame was squarely laid at the former government's feet for inaction on cheap dumped steel. We turned things around. We introduced a new trade regime that has strengthened our steel industry, from 2016 on.

In 2024, in this year's budget, we have also announced the border service's new market watch unit, to monitor unfair trade practices, to increase trade transparency and to help the Canadian steel industry remain one of the best.

In 2018, when Donald Trump put 232 tariffs on, we stood strong. We will always have the steel industry workers' backs.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has had an epiphany. In an interview with *The Chronicle Herald*, a Halifax newspaper, he said that when people ask him for even more government money, he tells them that as soon as the government spends money, inflation rises by exactly the same amount.

Why did I not think of that? Spending more money than we have causes inflation.

Can these revelations coax him to admit that budgets do not balance themselves?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the challenge for the Conservative leader is that he failed to listen to the rest of the sentence or the interview, which explains why we decided to invest in services and support, like dental care, to help Canadians.

Two million seniors have registered for dental care. Since May 1, over 100,000 have already received dental care, and over 10,000 dentists have signed up.

The Conservative Party continues to oppose dental care and is still trying to discourage dentists from signing up. We are there to help Canadians.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, now I understand the logic.

If the government spends money sending cheques directly to Canadians, that causes inflation, but if it sends money to the federal bureaucracy, that does not cause bureaucracy, unless it comes with broken promises and a lack of services. It is true what the Prime Minister said. Spending money that we do not have causes inflation.

Will he acknowledge that it is time for a common-sense dollar-for-dollar plan to fix the budget and reduce inflation?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party invoked inflation to oppose our dental care plan for seniors and our investments to pay for dental care for the most vulnerable, who may not have been to a dentist in years, or even decades.

Is that inflation? No, it is help for Canadians who are struggling, who are having a hard time paying for groceries and who are worried about the cost of living. It is help that we are sending and that the Conservative Party is blocking at all costs. That is not being there for Canadians.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has had a revelation. In an interview with Halifax's *The Chronicle Herald*, he told how he responded to people asking for him to spend even more government money. He said, "As soon as you do that, inflation goes up by exactly [the

### Oral Questions

same] amount. Right." Right. Why did I not think of that? My goodness, spending money we do not have actually causes inflation.

In the middle of having epiphanies, has the Prime Minister also realized that budgets do not balance themselves?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party has been using that approach about concerns on inflation to stand against things like national food programs for kids or dental care for seniors. It has stood, objected and even campaigned against dental care for seniors over the past many months. We have delivered to over 100,000 seniors, of the two million who have already registered for dental care, the support that they had not gotten in years or even in decades. The Conservative leader stands against it with some made-up excuse around inflation, when delivering services delivers for Canadians.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister calls his own words a "made-up excuse". We cannot make this stuff up.

The Prime Minister said that when people ask him to "send [them] more benefits or send [them] an extra thousand dollars a month", he responds, "As soon as you do that, inflation goes up by exactly [the same] amount. Right."

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly why, over the past years, we have been focused on bringing down inflation by supporting Canadians, and it is working. For the past four months, inflation has been down in the Bank of Canada's target range, while we have continued to increase supports for Canadians; increase dental care for Canadians, which Conservatives have campaigned against; supports for seniors and supports for young people; and increased investments in child care, bringing child care fees down to \$10 a day. These are the investments we are making that do not add to inflation, but add to the well-being of Canadians as they are making ends meet. That is what we stand for.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister finally, for once, thought about monetary policy. He said, "As soon as you [spend more], inflation goes up by exactly the same amount. Right." He is right for once. However, repeating the same costly promises that he has already broken does not change that fundamental monetary rule.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that, yes, the economy is about numbers; that people pay their rent in numbers, their gas in numbers and their groceries in numbers; and that the numbers are too high?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me put in perspective the fundamental difference between Conservatives and the Liberal government. The macroeconomic situation of Canada is one of the best in the G7, one of the best in the world, and the independent credit rating agencies continue to give us AAA scores.

### Oral Questions

The federal government is doing well but Canadians need support, so we are choosing to deliver supports to Canadians with this solid fiscal position, supports such as dental care, a national food policy, national disability benefits and help for housing, which are investments and the kinds of supports for Canadians that the Leader of the Opposition has stood against every step of the way.

\* \* \*

• (1430)

[Translation]

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in order to put an end to the horrific violence that is devastating the Gaza Strip, can the government and the Prime Minister start by reiterating Canada's support for an immediate ceasefire and the free flow of medical, food and humanitarian aid throughout the Gaza Strip, but more importantly, support the Arab League in its call for the creation of an international peacekeeping force to be deployed to the occupied Palestinian territory until a functional Palestinian state is established?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are deeply concerned about the violence in Gaza and the devastating actions of the Israeli army in Rafah.

We continue to call for an immediate ceasefire, as we have been doing since December. We are calling for much more humanitarian aid to be delivered to the people of Gaza. We continue to work with our partners, allies and friends in the region to establish a process towards a two-state solution, with a secure and recognized Palestinian state.

Yes, we are working towards that.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not obliged to say yes or agree with me, but I would like to ask the question nonetheless.

Would he agree, and does he recognize, that establishing either short-term or sustainable peace in the Gaza Strip requires both a ceasefire and the involvement of an international peacekeeping force to intervene between the Hamas terrorists and the Israeli army?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been working for months with our G7 allies and other democracies around the world. We are also working with partners in the region, such as the governments of Egypt, Jordan and other countries. We are all committed to trying to find a solution, a way of getting back on track towards a two-state solution, which both Netanyahu and Hamas have rejected. We need to find a two-state solution as quickly as possible and we are continuing to work towards that goal, because it is necessary.

[English]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the women and children killed in Rafah cannot be forgotten. We cannot look away.

While the leader of the Conservative Party is a cheerleader for the brutal Netanyahu government, the Prime Minister is offering little more than thoughts and prayers. He could take action right now.

He could impose a two-way arms embargo. He could sanction Netanyahu's war cabinet.

Will the Prime Minister take concrete action today or will he keep on walking away?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are horrified by the civilian deaths caused by the Israeli strikes in Rafah. We need to see an end to the violence and the humanitarian tragedy that is ongoing, which is why we are continuing to put pressure on the Israeli government to cease its military operations in Rafah. That is why we are calling for more humanitarian aid to get in. That is why we have been calling for a ceasefire since December, including in votes at the UN, and we will continue to.

We need to see more humanitarian aid get in. We need to see hostages released. We need to see an end to the violence and a path toward a two-state solution once again.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what we need is a two-way arms embargo, now.

[Translation]

Yesterday, the Prime Minister said he was horrified by Netanyahu's strikes on Rafah and yet, when asked what he planned to do, he walked away. Today he could impose an arms embargo and sanction Netanyahu's war cabinet.

Will this Prime Minister finally take action to save lives or will he keep on walking away?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from day one we have been actively engaged in promoting and establishing peace and humanitarian aid. We are among the biggest UNRWA donor countries per capita in the world. We will continue to be there to help provide humanitarian care, medical aid, food and supplies.

We will also do the necessary work to continue to establish a path to a two-state solution, despite efforts by the Netanyahu government to undermine any possible two-state solution.

We will continue to be there and we will continue to seek peace.

\* \* \*

• (1435)

### HOUSING

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, because of the incompetence of the Prime Minister and the Liberal mayor of Montreal, the wait time for a building permit has doubled and rents have tripled.

In Ville-Marie, where the mayor is also in power, it takes 540 days to get a building permit. What is the Prime Minister doing? He is handing out another \$95 million to build his bureaucracy.

Why not impose financial penalties on municipal politicians who block housing starts?



*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, instead of attacking elected officials, as the Conservative leader is doing, we choose to invest in reducing red tape and speeding up the process.

That is what we are doing with our 179 housing accelerator agreements that we signed with municipalities across the country. This will deliver more housing more quickly. These are agreements that the Conservative leader plans to cancel.

That is not going to help Canadians get more housing faster. We certainly did not see that when he was the minister responsible for housing.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when I was the minister responsible, the cost of housing was half of what it is today.

The Prime Minister has not only doubled the cost of housing, he is spending money on growing the very bureaucracy that is blocking construction. I have a common-sense plan in Bill C-356, which we will be voting on this afternoon. We are going to cut construction taxes, sell federal land and buildings to build housing, and offer big bonuses to municipalities that allow more and faster housing construction.

Will he vote for more housing?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, unlike the member opposite, we have a solid approach that involves working in partnership with the municipalities and provinces to invest and to build more homes in the most comprehensive and ambitious way that this country has ever seen. When he was the minister responsible for housing under the Harper government, he created six affordable housing units for Canadians. That is not going to help. According to the experts who analyze these plans, the plan he is now proposing is extremely weak.

We have a concrete plan. He refuses to invest in helping Canadians.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when I was minister, we built nearly 200,000 houses and apartments. The average rent was \$973. That is half of what it is today.

Meanwhile, he is working in partnership with municipal officials to double the cost of housing. My common-sense plan requires municipalities to allow 15% more construction per year. If they exceed that percentage, they will receive a bonus. If they do not, they will be penalized. Why not pay for performance?

Will he vote for more bureaucracy or for more homes?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are leading efforts to address the housing crisis with an ambitious and achievable plan.

Let us talk about how housing experts have characterized his housing bill. They said it was an exceptionally weak response to the housing crisis and that it was full of loopholes. Perhaps that is why the Conservative leader has postponed the debate on his non-plan for several weeks.

The reality is that he does not want to have that debate, because when he was housing minister he lost 800,000 apartments and built only six.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when I was housing minister, we built almost 200,000 houses and apartments, with the average rent being \$973 for a one-bedroom apartment, but the Prime Minister is not worth the cost of housing, which has doubled nine years after he and the NDP took power. What is he doing about it? He is giving half a billion dollars to the Mayor of Toronto, who has just jacked up homebuilding taxes by 20%.

Why does the Prime Minister reward local government gatekeepers who block the homes that Canadians need?

● (1440)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are leading on the efforts to solve the housing crisis with a plan that is ambitious and concrete. Meanwhile, after having his housing bill panned by experts as being an “exceptionally weak response to the housing crisis, riddled with loopholes”, the Conservative leader has chosen to repeatedly delay debate in the House since October on his bill. That is because he just does not care. When he was minister, he lost 800,000 affordable apartments and built only six affordable homes.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, actually the number is closer to 200,000, but the Prime Minister has never been very good with numbers. The Prime Minister cites government-funded bureaucrats and Liberal academics to bolster his approach, which has doubled housing costs in just nine years, partly because he gives money to politicians and municipalities like Winnipeg, where they just blocked 2,000 homes right next to a government-funded transit station built for those homes.

Why will the Prime Minister not accept my common-sense plan to give bonuses to those municipalities that permit more building and penalties to those that stand in the way?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we criticize, rightly, the Leader of the Opposition, who when he was housing minister built only six affordable homes for Canadians across the country. It is understandable, because he was part of a government that took the federal government out of the building of affordable housing. It chose that the federal government would have nothing to do with housing across the country. Those 10 years of non-involvement of the federal government left echoes.

We have stepped up and invested in communities and invested in partnerships. We are getting the homes built. We are delivering for Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, housing costs have doubled since he became Prime Minister. They were half when I was housing minister. Housing costs have gone up 40% faster than wages, a bigger gap than in any other G7 country. Why is that? It is because the Prime Minister is building bureaucracy and not homes.

Why will he not accept my common-sense plan to require municipalities to permit 15% more building, sell off 6,000 federal buildings to build homes and cut taxes so builders can build?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just like when he was housing minister, the Leader of the Opposition's solution is to do less to help Canadians, to invest less in supporting municipalities as they build housing, and to get out of the way and leave Canadians to fend for themselves. That is his political philosophy. It is a political philosophy; it is just not the one that supports Canadians. It is not the one that is delivering for Canadians as we step up with the most ambitious and achievable housing plan this country has ever seen.

We will continue to be there to invest in housing accelerators. We will be there to continue to take the GST off purpose-built apartments. We will be there for Canadians.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in mid-March, the NDP had a very balanced motion passed in support of Palestine and the Liberals effectively struck out the part recognizing Palestinian statehood.

Today, as the Prime Minister himself says he supports a two-state solution, is he prepared to join the many countries that formally recognize the State of Palestine?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a credible path to lasting peace needs to be established very urgently. We oppose the efforts of the Netanyahu government to reject a two-state solution. At the same time, Hamas, a terrorist group, is currently controlling areas of Gaza, has not laid down its arms and has not released all the hostages.

Canada is prepared to recognize the State of Palestine at a time that is most conducive to establishing lasting peace, and not necessarily at the final stage of the process for negotiating a two-state solution.

• (1445)

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, neither wine nor vanilla yogurt are a solid foundation for international relations. Canada must plant its feet firmly on the ground and take a strong position.

Is now not the best time to promote peace, starting with recognizing the Palestinian state?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for decades, Canada's position has been very clear, and it continues to be very clear. The only solution for peace in the Middle East

is to have a secure and recognized Palestinian state alongside a secure and recognized Israeli state. This is the only way.

For a long time, our position was that recognizing the Palestinian state should come at the end of this process. Today, we have taken an important step by acknowledging that it is not necessarily at the end of this process that we will recognize the Palestinian state.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**HOUSING**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, “Not a chance” is what the president of the Residential Construction Council said when asked if the Prime Minister would keep his promise to build 3.9 million homes by 2031.

Let us hear it from the Prime Minister. To reach that target, he would have to build 550,000 homes per year, so will the Prime Minister hit the target of 550,000 homes this year, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is facing a housing crisis and we need to take real action towards it, which is what we have done with the most ambitious and achievable plan that this country has ever seen. However, that is not to say we have not had housing crises before, and it is not to say that we have not solved housing crises before. At the end of World War II, there was a need for massive new housing, and Canada stepped up and got that housing built. Indeed, when the boomers came of age, there was a need for massive housing. We made investments, and the federal government helped build housing across the country for boomers. We are doing that now as we build housing for every generation.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was a wonderful history lesson, except it did not answer the question.

The Prime Minister promised he would lower housing costs in 2015; he doubled them. He promised he would double homebuilding; it actually went down and is still dropping. Now he is promising 3.9 million brand new homes by 2031. That means he would have to build 550,000 this year and every year.

Once again, will the Prime Minister keep his promise to build 550,000 homes this year, yes or no?

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the leader opposite speaks of 2015. We took office with a commitment to getting the federal government back in the business of building housing. We launched a national housing strategy in 2017, which put 2.5 million Canadians into new or refurbished homes, and we have continued to invest ever since. We are building homes on public lands. We are converting underused federal offices into homes. We are taxing vacant land to incentivize construction. We are building apartments, and bringing rents down with top-ups to the apartment construction loan program. We are scaling up modular housing. We are also launching Canada Builds to lead a team Canada effort to build more homes and more.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the question was not how quickly the Prime Minister could read off talking points written for him by his staff. The question was whether he is going to break yet another housing promise. Remember, he promised he would lower housing costs; he doubled them. He promised he would double the number of homes built; they went down.

Now the Prime Minister is promising 3.9 million new homes by 2031. That means 550,000 new homes this and every year. Will he keep that promise, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's criticism is that there are too many measures in our housing plan. Housing should be solved by a simple, one-size-fits-all solution according to the Leader of the Opposition. That is perhaps how he managed to build only six affordable homes when he was the minister of housing.

We have a broad range of initiatives that are delivering on housing, like topping up the housing accelerator fund with \$400 million and a new \$6-billion Canada housing infrastructure fund to help communities build. We are leveraging transit funding to build more homes. We are launching a housing design catalogue. We are also incentivizing more skilled trade workers.

• (1450)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is announcing a catalogue. Come on, give him a round of applause. People cannot afford a home, they might end up in a tent and their rent has doubled, but they have a brand new catalogue.

Will the Prime Minister build 550,000 new homes, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the history lesson. Since he was the housing minister, he should know that the way we solved the housing crisis after World War II was by putting forward a catalogue of homes that builders could access to build extremely rapidly right across the country. Yes, that is one of the measures we are bringing back.

The Leader of the Opposition's mockery of concrete initiatives that are going to deliver for Canadians is exactly what is wrong with his approach. He would rather mock and insult than roll up his sleeves and get solutions built for Canadians.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, report after report has shown that women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces are not safe, and consecutive governments have failed to act urgently. Shamefully, a new report has revealed that 5% of women have been sexually attacked at their military colleges in the last 12 months. Justice Arbour was clear that now is the time to end the toxic culture that exists within these colleges. Women deserve a safe place to train and learn.

When will the Prime Minister act to protect the women who are the future generation of the Canadian Armed Forces?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we absolutely agree that the culture at the Royal Military College needs to change. That is why we took action. We appointed the Canadian Military Colleges Review Board last year to enable meaningful culture change at these institutions. No RMC cadet and no CAF member should ever be subject to harassment, discrimination or misconduct. The Minister of National Defence will not hesitate to implement the necessary changes to protect cadets and all officers.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last summer was brutal, what with all the wildfires, evacuations, heat waves and the smoke filling the air. In 20 years' time, however, we may look back on the summer of 2023 as the best of any that followed.

The coming summer will be even hotter. There will be more days of sweltering temperatures, more heat waves and more heat domes. The climate crisis is real, and the suffering of children and seniors is real. Can the Prime Minister get it into his head that continuing to support the oil industry is sheer madness?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will continue with this government's plan to fight climate change, which is the most ambitious plan that Canada has ever seen. The plan is working. Excluding the pandemic period, Canada's emissions have reached a 25-year low. We are the first federal government to be on track to meet its emissions reduction targets.

*Oral Questions*

This proves that we can reduce emissions, fight climate change, support Canadians and grow the economy at the same time. That is what we are going to continue to do to build a stronger, greener future for all Canadians.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thanks to the work of our government, Ontario is a leading manufacturing hub for the 21st century. Companies from across the world are choosing Ontario to build high-tech factories that are focused on delivering real climate action. The world knows that the economy of tomorrow needs to be built on sustainability because climate change is real. Evidently, the Conservative Party did not get the memo.

Can the Prime Minister tell this House more about what the government is doing to make Ontario a global leader in electric vehicle production?

● (1455)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the whole world is embracing an economy based on renewable energy and clean tech. The member for Vaughan—Woodbridge is right: Thanks to our bold investments, Ontario is now a global leader in EV production.

We have the number one EV battery supply chain in the world, thanks to investments from companies like Honda, Stellantis and Volkswagen. These are thousands of good jobs and billions of dollars invested in Ontario that the Conservative Party is opposing for no good reason. Shame on the Conservatives.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in a shocking article published in this morning's edition of *La Presse*, we read that children have to be escorted by the police whenever they leave their day care because of the homeless people in the area and the injection site next door. The day care director said, and I quote, "It is not right for kids to need a police escort when they go out for walks".

Why is the Prime Minister, with the support of the Bloc Québécois, putting our children in danger by allowing the use of drugs and by letting violent and repeat offenders out of jail and back on our streets?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, nurses, hospital staff, patients and all Canadians should feel safe at work, in hospitals.

Our government has invested billions of dollars in the health care system to ensure that Canadians have access to the best care possible.

The difference between us and the Conservative Party is that, while they are trying to criminalize the most vulnerable members of

our society who are battling drug addiction, we are rolling up our sleeves and working with all levels of government to resolve this crisis.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he did not hear the question, which was about day cares.

It is true that because of decriminalization in British Columbia, nurses had to breathe in crack cocaine and methamphetamine. However, right now I am talking about Montreal, where the Prime Minister's policies mean that violent criminals are walking free and drugs are being used on the street next to a day care.

I am going to ask the question again. Why will the Bloc and the Liberals not accept our common-sense plan to get rid of drugs and put criminals in jail?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what the Conservative leader is proposing is a throwback to the failed drug policies of the Harper years, which one of that government's top advisors even acknowledged was an appalling failure.

We will continue to be there to keep everyone safe, including children in child care, while using an approach rooted in compassion and public health that keeps people safe.

\* \* \*

**FINANCE**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think many Canadians would like to go back to a time when kids did not need police officers at their day care centres.

After nine years, the Liberal Bloc is not worth the cost. The Bloc Québécois voted in favour of \$500 billion in inflationary, bureaucratic and, yes, centralizing spending. This has left 60% of consumers saying that they are under stress.

When will the Liberal Bloc reverse its inflationary deficit and tax policies, which are hurting Quebeckers?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader just explained that his approach is austerity, and that is what causes Canadians to suffer.

We chose to invest in supporting Canadians. For example, we are helping seniors with a dental care program. Just since the beginning of May, this program has helped over 100,000 seniors across the country get dental care. This initiative helps reduce costs and provide care to vulnerable people.

The Conservatives consistently voted against it. They even tried to block it across the country. That is shameful.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to talk about austerity. I think that the Barnfield family of four in Calgary can tell him all about austerity, because that is what they are living right now because of his housing hell, his carbon taxes, and his inflation. They said, “we’re having to choose between paying a bill or getting food, and that can be really hard. It makes things really difficult.... And I just don’t see any end in sight.”

Will the Prime Minister accept our common-sense plan to axe the tax, fix the budget and build the homes, so that the Barnfield family, and so many others, can eat, heat and house themselves?

• (1500)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the Leader of the Opposition, who wants to take away the Canada carbon rebate cheques that arrive four times a year in the bank accounts of families like the Barnfield family.

Indeed, eight out of 10 Canadians, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, are better off with the Canada carbon rebate as we fight climate change with the price on pollution. Eight out of 10 Canadian families, from coast to coast, in the jurisdictions where the carbon price applies, are better off. That includes, most likely, the Barnfield family, and we will continue to be there for them.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, let us not misunderstand each other. I have the utmost respect for the State of Israel, but it is time for this to stop.

In that spirit, is the Prime Minister prepared to support the International Court of Justice and potentially the International Criminal Court in enforcing international law and commit to arresting anyone on Canadian soil who is named in an arrest warrant? Is he prepared to apply Canada’s sanctions regime to Israeli ministers who openly call for the commission of crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada supports the independent work of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. We are here to support the process and to ensure that everyone is adhering to international law, including to the decisions of these two courts. We are here to support the multilateral process that we have put in place to ensure compliance with international law.

We live under the rule of law and we always will.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is outlining a series of principles that seem very benevolent, yet he never seems to be willing to follow through by adopting and putting forward, in co-operation with like-minded countries and allies, a set of policies that will help force Israel to end the violence in Gaza.

Will he stop spouting empty words and start taking action? We have just sent him 10 proposals for doing just that.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if we want to respect international law and the rule of law, we have to respect the work of the institutions created to support and defend them. Yes, we support these institutions, but no, we are not going to skip steps and take it upon ourselves to anticipate the outcome of these courts’ decisions. On the contrary, we are going to wait and let them do their job. International law depends on it.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the Liberal Bloc is not worth the cost. Not only did the Bloc Québécois members vote in favour of \$500 billion in centralizing, bureaucratic and inflationary spending, but they also want to drastically increase the taxes on gasoline and diesel for Quebecers in the regions, unlike the Conservatives, who want to cut taxes. More specifically, we are proposing to give Quebecers a tax holiday, a break from taxes on gasoline and diesel.

Will the Prime Minister accept my common-sense plan to reduce the cost of gas by 17¢ a litre this summer?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader has a problem. His message is not getting through in Quebec. Quebecers do not want to hear his ideas about undoing the progress we have made in fighting climate change. That is something that Quebecers understand very well.

His solution is to attack the Bloc Québécois, attack members from Quebec and attack Quebecers themselves as he tries to undo our climate progress. That will fail because the Conservative leader does not understand Quebecers. In fact, he does not understand most Canadians, who know that climate change is real and that we need to—

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in power, the Bloc Québécois was nearly wiped out because we reduced the size of the federal government and allowed Quebecers to be autonomous. They were truly masters of their own house. However, the Bloc Québécois is back because of the centralist policies of this Prime Minister. That is why these two parties are working in full collaboration.

Will he finally agree to unite the country with a smaller federal government to create more space for Quebec and Quebecers?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if he knew his history, he would know that the Bloc Québécois exists because of the Conservative Party. However, setting that aside, let me point out that we will always be there to defend Quebecers. We will always be there to work—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order.

I invite the members who are continuing to have discussions to do so behind the curtains. I will ask the Prime Minister to start again from the beginning.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, after many months, we are finally seeing the Quebec Conservative caucus wake up, become indignant and speak up.

The reality is that when it comes time to talk about the environment, Quebec Conservatives are silent. When it comes time to talk about women's rights, Quebec Conservatives are silent. We have seen shameful behaviour from members of the Quebec Conservative caucus, who refuse to stand up for Quebec values. Instead, they are attacking other members from Quebec. It is shameful. They should apologize to all Quebecers.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he has gone off again. He is losing control. Why is he so angry? It is because he just learned that Quebecers and Quebec Liberals are abandoning him. Why is that? It is because there is a common-sense Conservative team that is going to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

The Prime Minister still has time to accept this common-sense plan and offer to cut costs so Quebecers can have tax-free holidays.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is true, sometimes I get carried away as a Quebecer when defending the values of my nation, my country, my values as a proud Quebecer and Canadian. I am here to defend the environment, to fight climate change, to protect values and women's rights. I will always be passionate about defending the fundamental rights of Canadians. That is what I am here to do.

Unfortunately, the Conservative Party continues to suggest that Quebecers turn back the clock, stop fighting climate change and backtrack on women's rights. This is not what Quebecers or other Canadians—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this government knows that climate action is not just necessary for the future of the planet; it is also how Canada remains competitive. Last year, \$2.4 trillion was invested in creating our net-zero economy.

Can the Prime Minister highlight some of the measures the government is taking to attract clean investment to Canada?

● (1510)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his question. He is right, the world is moving toward a greener economy. Canada remains competitive by attracting billions of dollars in renewable energy and clean technologies. It is already working. Companies are building new plants and creating thousands of well-paying jobs in Quebec and across the country.

The Conservative leader has no climate plan, so he has no economic plan. As he and the Conservative caucus try to bring Canada back to the Stone Age, we will remain focused on a stronger, greener and fairer economy for all generations.

\* \* \*

[English]

**TAXATION**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a common-sense plan to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. However, of course, the NDP is keeping the costly Prime Minister in office for another year and a half while people starve and are forced to live in tents. Those Canadians who have been able to hold on to their homes cannot afford a vacation, but maybe a staycation, so we are asking today that the Prime Minister vote for a motion we will introduce tomorrow, which will give Canadians a 35¢-a-litre gas tax break until Labour Day.

Will the Prime Minister axe the taxes so Canadians can have a staycation?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party is proposing to eliminate the Canada carbon rebate. This is a rebate that arrives four times a year in the pockets of Canadian families and that, according to experts, economists and the Parliamentary Budget Officer, puts more money in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadian families in the jurisdictions in which it applies. This is more money in people's pockets while we fight climate change with the most effective plan against climate change Canada has ever seen. This is what the Conservative leader continues to rally against: affordability and climate fighting.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course the Prime Minister is doing neither. After nine years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, and neither is his carbon tax, which the Parliamentary Budget Officer finds costs more to 60% of Canadians than they get back in phony rebates. Going into the summer, the Prime Minister plans to hike taxes again. Canadians need a break now more than ever.

*Oral Questions*

Can he put aside his wacko ideology long enough to give Canadians a break by axing all the taxes on fuel for summer vacation?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is not ideology to understand that fighting climate change and growing the economy while putting money in people's pockets is a good thing, because that is exactly what this government has done. Excluding the pandemic, our emissions are now the lowest they have been in 25 years because of our plan that prices pollution and puts more money back in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadian families. The fact that he refuses to understand that one does not have a plan for the economy if one does not have a plan to fight climate change is yet another proof of the fact that his approach is not going to succeed for Canadians.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he ranks 62nd out of 67 countries on fighting climate change. This is after he has brought in a 17¢-a-litre carbon tax, a tax that he wants to nearly quadruple up to 61¢ a litre if, God forbid, he is ever elected. We have two million people lined up at food banks. A quarter of Canadians are skipping meals because they cannot afford food. One in four adults is missing meals so they can feed their kids.

For God's sake, why will he not give Canadians a summer vacation from all his taxes and accept our common-sense plan?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader is not focused on affordability; he is focused on ending action on climate change. If he was so concerned about the price of gas, he would have a conversation with his friend, the Premier of Alberta, who just raised the gas tax by 13¢ a litre. Experts agree, including Premier Smith, that Canadians receive back more money from the Canada carbon rebate than they pay with the price on pollution. We are putting a price on pollution and putting more money back in the pockets of the middle class and people working hard to join it. That is joining the efforts we are doing on affordability, like dental care, support for child care and support for the middle class.

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● (1515)

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our Atlantic accords bill would allow for the development of offshore wind projects. By investing in renewable energy, we are investing in a future for Atlantic Canadians that is green and prosperous, one where we fight climate change and create jobs. The Conservatives are getting in the way of Atlantic Canada by opposing Bill C-49.

What is the government doing to ensure that Atlantic Canada can contribute to the green economy?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for St. John's East for her advocacy on behalf of all Atlantic Canadians. We are equipping Atlantic Canadians with the tools they need to thrive in the economy of tomorrow. Offshore wind alone is expected to bring \$1 trillion of investment by 2040. There is no common sense in opposing good-paying, cutting-edge Atlantic Canadian jobs. This is yet another example of the Conservatives blocking middle-class jobs because of their back-

ward ideology. While Conservative politicians pen angry op-eds against investing in the Atlantic, we will ensure Atlantic Canadians are not left behind.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, here in northern Manitoba, we have seen the wildfire season start much earlier because of climate change. Frontline forest firefighters are giving it their all, but they cannot do it alone. The military has had to help with firefighting operations across the country in the past, but now military leadership is warning that their capacity to help Canadians evacuate will be limited, calling that help “wickedly wasteful”. Let us be clear. We are facing a climate emergency, so if these domestic operations are not a priority for our military, then what is?

Can Canadians count on the government to call in the military when we need help?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am certain the member opposite did not mean to disparage the extraordinary women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces who continue to step up and show up for Canadians, as they did all through last summer, as they will through this summer, where and when needed.

We also recognize that wildfires are getting worse, that climate change is having more and more impact on floods, droughts and wildfires. We will continue to need to be there with the military, but also call on more resources from civil society and elsewhere to support in these times of emergency.

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[Translation]

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, we got some very bad news in my riding this year.

For several years now, Victoriaville, the centre of 39 municipalities in my riding, has been hosting Canada Day celebrations. For some unknown reason, and despite the work of the heritage minister's office, no funding will be allocated to help organize Canada Day. Despite the fact that the municipality and business people are involved, there will be no Canada Day celebrations in my riding on July 1.

What does the Prime Minister think about that?

*Government Orders*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am troubled by this information. We will certainly follow up to see what we can do.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast should be able to celebrate our Canada Day together, with all the community festivities that that entails.

I am very grateful to the member for raising this concern. We will follow up with his office.

**The Speaker:** That concludes question period for today.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That this House express its outrage at the Israeli strikes that left many displaced people in Rafah dead—

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I am already hearing that there is no unanimous consent.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of all my colleagues, perhaps we should hear the motion before saying that we do not want to hear it?

**The Speaker:** I would like to remind members that it is important to have agreement from all political parties before seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion. It makes it easier to accept the motion and it makes more efficient use of the House's time.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

### CANADA—NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR ATLANTIC ACCORD IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed from May 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:20 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the member for Tobique—Mactaquac to the motion at third reading of Bill C-49.

Call in the members.

• (1530)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 787*)

### YEAS

#### Members

Aboultouf	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreesen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Généreux
Genus	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jivani	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Lawrence
Lehoux	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Mazier	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Perkins	Poillievre
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shipley
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 116

### NAYS

#### Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey



Bains  
Barron  
Battiste  
Beech  
Bérubé  
Bittle  
Blanchet  
Blaney  
Boissonnault  
Bradford  
Brunelle-Duceppe  
Carr  
Chabot  
Chahal  
Champoux  
Chen  
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)  
Cormier  
Dabrusin  
Davies  
Desilets  
Dhaliwal  
Diab  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Ehsassi  
Erskine-Smith  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Freeland  
Gaheer  
Garon  
Gaudreau  
Gerretsen  
Gould  
Guilbeault  
Hanley  
Hepfner  
Housefather  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Ien  
Johns  
Jowhari  
Kayabaga  
Khalid  
Kusmierczyk  
Lalonde  
Lamoureux  
Larouche  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Lightbound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
MacGregor  
Maloney  
Masse  
May (Cambridge)  
McDonald (Avalon)  
McKay  
McLeod  
Mendès  
Miao  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Naqvi  
Noormohamed  
O'Connell  
O'Regan  
Perron  
Powlowski  
Rayes

Baker  
Barsalou-Duval  
Beaulieu  
Bergeron  
Bibeau  
Blair  
Blanchette-Joncas  
Blois  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Cannings  
Casey  
Chagger  
Champagne  
Chatel  
Chiang  
Collins (Victoria)  
Coteau  
Damoff  
Desbiens  
Desjarlais  
Dhillon  
Dong  
Duclos  
Dzerowicz  
El-Khoury  
Fillmore  
Fonseca  
Fragiskatos  
Fry  
Gainey  
Garrison  
Gazan  
Gill  
Green  
Hajdu  
Hardie  
Holland  
Hughes  
Hutchings  
Idlout  
Jaczek  
Jones  
Julian  
Kelloway  
Khera  
Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lapointe  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lemire  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacDonald (Malpeque)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Martinez Ferrada  
Mathysen  
May (Saainich—Gulf Islands)  
McGuinty  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McPherson  
Mendicino  
Michaud  
Morrice  
Murray  
Ng  
Normandin  
Oliphant  
Pauzé  
Petitpas Taylor  
Qualtrough  
Robillard

Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Sahota  
Saks  
Sarai  
Scarpaleggia  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Singh  
Sousa  
St-Onge  
Tassi  
Therrien  
Trudeau  
Turnbull  
Van Bynen  
Vandal  
Vignola  
Virani  
Wilkinson  
Zahid  
Zuberi— 205

### Government Orders

Rogers  
Rota  
Sajjan  
Samson  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schiefke  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Sinclair-Desgagné  
Sorbara  
Ste-Marie  
Sudds  
Taylor Roy  
Thompson  
Trudel  
Valdez  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Villemure  
Weiler  
Yip  
Zarrillo

### PAIRED

#### Members

Bendayan  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Gallant  
Plamondon  
Drouin  
Fortin  
Joly  
Thériault— 8

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion.

[*Translation*]

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.

● (1535)

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

● (1545)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 788*)

### YEAS

#### Members

Aldag  
Ali  
Anandasangaree  
Arseneault  
Ashton  
Bachrach  
Bains  
Barron  
Beech  
Bittle  
Blaney  
Boissonnault  
Bradford  
Cannings  
Alghabra  
Anand  
Angus  
Arya  
Atwin  
Badawey  
Baker  
Battiste  
Bibeau  
Blair  
Blois  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Carr

*Government Orders*

Casey	Chagger	Zarrillo	Zuberi — 176
Chahal	Champagne		
Chatel	Chen		<b>NAYS</b>
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)		<b>Members</b>
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier		Aitchison
Coteau	Dabrusin	Aboultaif	Allison
Damoff	Davies	Albas	Baldinelli
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Arnold	Barrett
Dhillon	Diab	Barlow	Beaulieu
Dong	Dubourg	Barsalou-Duval	Berthold
Duclos	Duguid	Bergeron	Bezan
Dzerowicz	El-Khoury	Bérubé	Blanchette-Joncas
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore	Blanchet	Bragdon
Fisher	Fonseca	Block	Brock
Fortier	Fragiskatos	Brassard	Calkins
Fraser	Freeland	Brunelle-Duceppe	Carrie
Fry	Gaheer	Caputo	Chambers
Gainey	Garrison	Chabot	Chong
Gazan	Gerretsen	Champoux	Dalton
Gould	Green	Cooper	Davidson
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Dancho	Desbiens
Hanley	Hardie	Deltell	Doherty
Hepfner	Holland	Desilets	Dreeshen
Housefather	Hughes	Dowdall	Ellis
Hussen	Hutchings	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Iacono	Idlout	Epp	Fast
Ien	Jaczek	Falk (Provencher)	Findlay
Johns	Jones	Ferreri	Gaudreau
Jowhari	Julian	Garon	Genuis
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Généreux	Gladu
Khalid	Khera	Gill	Goodridge
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Godin	Gray
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Gourde	Hoback
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Hallan	Kelly
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Jivani	Kitchen
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Khanna	Kram
Lightbound	Long	Kniec	Kurek
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Kramp-Neuman	Lake
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Kusie	Larouche
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Lantsman	Lehoux
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada	Lawrence	Leslie
Masse	Mathysen	Lemire	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Lewis (Essex)	Lloyd
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	Liepert	Maguire
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Lobb	Martel
McLeod	McPherson	Majumdar	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Mendès	Mendicino	Mazier	Melillo
Miao	Miller	McLean	Moore
Morrice	Morrissey	Michaud	Morrison
Murray	Naqvi	Morantz	Muys
Ng	Noormohamed	Motz	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant	Nater	Paul-Hus
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor	Patzner	Perkins
Powlowski	Qualtrough	Patuzé	Poilievre
Robillard	Rodriguez	Perron	Redekopp
Rogers	Romanado	Rayes	Rempel Garner
Rota	Sahota	Reid	Roberts
Sajjan	Saks	Richards	Ruff
Samson	Sarai	Rood	Scheer
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke	Savard-Tremblay	Seeback
Serré	Sgro	Schmale	Shiple
Shanahan	Sheehan	Shields	Sinclair-Desgagné
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard	Soroka
Singh	Sorbara	Small	Ste-Marie
Sousa	St-Onge	Steinley	Strahl
Sudds	Tassi	Stewart	Therrien
Taylor Roy	Thompson	Stubbs	Tochor
Trudeau	Turnbull	Thomas	Trudel
Valdez	Van Bynen	Tolmie	Van Popta
van Koeverden	Vandal	Uppal	Vidal
Vandenbeld	Virani	Vecchio	Vignola
Weiler	Wilkinson	Vien	Vis
Yip	Zahid	Villemure	

Vuong  
Warkentin  
Webber  
Williamson

Wagantall  
Waugh  
Williams  
Zimmer— 144

**PAIRED**

Members

Bendayan  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Gallant  
Plamondon

Drouin  
Fortin  
Joly  
Thériault— 8

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.  
(Bill read the third time and passed)

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**FOOD AND DRUGS ACT**

The House resumed from May 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-368, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (natural health products), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-368 under Private Members' Business.

• (1555)

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

(Division No. 789)

**YEAS**

Members

Aboultarif  
Albas  
Angus  
Ashton  
Baldinelli  
Barrett  
Barsalou-Duval  
Bergeron  
Bérubé  
Blanchette-Joncas  
Block  
Bragdon  
Brock  
Calkins  
Caputo  
Chabot  
Champoux  
Collins (Victoria)  
Dalton  
Davidson  
Deltell  
Desilets  
Doherty  
Dreeschen  
Ellis  
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)  
Fast  
Findlay  
Garrison  
Gazan

Aitchison  
Allison  
Arnold  
Bachrach  
Barlow  
Barron  
Beaulieu  
Berthold  
Bezan  
Blaney  
Boulerice  
Brassard  
Brunelle-Duceppe  
Cannings  
Carrie  
Chambers  
Chong  
Cooper  
Dancho  
Davies  
Desbiens  
Desjarlais  
Dowdall  
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)  
Epp  
Falk (Provencher)  
Ferrerri  
Garon  
Gaudreau  
Généreux

Genuis  
Gladu  
Goodridge  
Gray  
Hallan  
Hughes  
Jeneroux  
Johns  
Kelly  
Kitchen  
Kram  
Kurek  
Kwan  
Lantsman  
Lawrence  
Lemire  
Lewis (Essex)  
Liepert  
Lobb  
Maguire  
Martel  
Mathysen  
Mazier  
McLean  
Melillo  
Moore  
Morrice  
Motz  
Nater  
Patzner  
Pauzé  
Perron  
Raves  
Reid  
Richards  
Rood  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schmale  
Shields  
Simard  
Singh  
Soroka  
Ste-Marie  
Strahl  
Therrien  
Tochor  
Trudel  
Van Popta  
Vidal  
Viersen  
Villemure  
Vuong  
Warkentin  
Webber  
Williamson  
Zimmer— 171

*Private Members' Business*

Gill  
Godin  
Gourde  
Green  
Hoback  
Idlout  
Jivani  
Julian  
Khanna  
Kmiec  
Kramp-Neuman  
Kusie  
Lake  
Larouche  
Lehoux  
Leslie  
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Lloyd  
MacGregor  
Majumdar  
Masse  
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
McCauley (Edmonton West)  
McPherson  
Michaud  
Morantz  
Morrison  
Muys  
Normandin  
Paul-Hus  
Perkins  
Poilievre  
Redekopp  
Rempel Garner  
Roberts  
Ruff  
Scheer  
Seeback  
Shiple  
Sinclair-Desgagné  
Small  
Steinley  
Stewart  
Stubbs  
Thomas  
Tolmie  
Uppal  
Vecchio  
Vien  
Vignola  
Vis  
Wagantall  
Waugh  
Williams  
Zarrillo

**NAYS**

Members

Aldag  
Ali  
Anandasangaree  
Arya  
Badawey  
Battiste  
Bibeau  
Blair  
Boissonnault  
Brière  
Casey  
Champagne  
Chen  
Alghabra  
Anand  
Arseneault  
Atwin  
Bains  
Beech  
Bittle  
Blois  
Bradford  
Carr  
Chahal  
Chatel  
Chiang

*Private Members' Business*

Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gerretsen
Gould	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Ien
Jaczek	Jones
Jowhari	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Kusmierczyk
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	Medicino
Miao	Miller
Morrissey	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara	Sousa
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zuberi — 146

**PAIRED**

## Members

Bendayan	Drouin
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Fortin
Gallant	Joly
Plamondon	Thériault — 8

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

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

● (1600)

**BUILDING HOMES NOT BUREAUCRACY ACT**

The House resumed from May 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-356, An Act respecting payments by Canada and requirements in respect of housing and to amend certain other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-356 under Private Members' Business.

● (1610)

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

(Division No. 790)

**YEAS**

## Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Jivani
Kelly	Khanna
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Majumdar
Martel	Mazier
McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Poilievre	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie

Uppal  
Vecchio  
Vien  
Vis  
Wagantall  
Waugh  
Williams  
Zimmer — 117

Van Popta  
Vidal  
Viersen  
Vuong  
Warkentin  
Webber  
Williamson

## NAYS

### Members

Aldag  
Ali  
Anandasangaree  
Arseneault  
Ashton  
Bachrach  
Bains  
Barron  
Battiste  
Beech  
Bérubé  
Bittle  
Blanchet  
Blaney  
Boissonnault  
Bradford  
Brunelle-Duceppe  
Carr  
Chabot  
Chahal  
Champoux  
Chen  
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)  
Cormier  
Dabrusin  
Davies  
Desilets  
Dhaliwal  
Diab  
Duclos  
Dzerowicz  
El-Khoury  
Fillmore  
Fonseca  
Fragiskatos  
Freeland  
Gaheer  
Garon  
Gaudreau  
Gerretsen  
Gould  
Guilbeault  
Hanley  
Hepfner  
Housefather  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Ien  
Johns  
Jowhari  
Kayabaga  
Khalid  
Kusmierczyk  
Lalonde  
Lamoureux  
Larouche  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Lightbound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)

Alghabra  
Anand  
Angus  
Arya  
Atwin  
Badawey  
Baker  
Barsalou-Duval  
Beaulieu  
Bergeron  
Bibeau  
Blair  
Blanchette-Joncas  
Blois  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Cannings  
Casey  
Chagger  
Champagne  
Chatel  
Chiang  
Collins (Victoria)  
Coteau  
Damoff  
Desbiens  
Desjarlais  
Dhillon  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Ehsassi  
Erskine-Smith  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fraser  
Fry  
Gaaney  
Garrison  
Gazan  
Gill  
Green  
Hajdu  
Hardie  
Holland  
Hughes  
Hutchings  
Idlout  
Jaczek  
Jones  
Julian  
Kelloway  
Khera  
Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lapointe  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lemire  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacDonald (Malpeque)

MacGregor  
Maloney  
Masse  
May (Cambridge)  
McDonald (Avalon)  
McKay  
McLeod  
Mendicino  
Michaud  
Morrice  
Murray  
Ng  
Normandin  
Oliphant  
Pauzé  
Petitpas Taylor  
Qualtrough  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Sahota  
Saks  
Sarai  
Scarpaleggia  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Singh  
Sousa  
St-Onge  
Tassi  
Therrien  
Trudeau  
Turnbull  
Van Bynen  
Vandal  
Vignola  
Virani  
Wilkinson  
Zahid  
Zuberi — 203

## Private Members' Business

MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Martinez Ferrada  
Mathysen  
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
McGuinty  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McPherson  
Miao  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Naqvi  
Noormohamed  
O'Connell  
O'Regan  
Perron  
Powlowski  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Rota  
Sajjan  
Samson  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schiefke  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Sinclair-Desgagné  
Sorbara  
Ste-Marie  
Sudds  
Taylor Roy  
Thompson  
Trudel  
Valdez  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Villemure  
Weiler  
Yip  
Zarrillo

## PAIRED

### Members

Bendayan  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Gallant  
Plamondon  
Drouin  
Fortin  
Joly  
Thériault — 8

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

\* \* \*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions and I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, during the debate on business of supply pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) later this day:

(a) the time provided for consideration of the Main Estimates in committee of the whole be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 16 periods of 15 minutes each;

(b) members rising to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that they will be dividing their time with another member; and

(c) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

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

*Routine Proceedings*

Hearing none, it is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Hearing none, the motion is carried.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 50 minutes.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

\* \* \*

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in relation to Bill C-322, an act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program.

The committee has studied the bill and, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(1), requests a 30-day extension to consider it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put, and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, June 5, 2024, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

\* \* \*

● (1615)

### PETITIONS

#### CANADA POST

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of residents of Langdon, a community of 7,000 people.

The petitioners note that they have been without a post office for a year and a half. Ninety per cent of residents surveyed said that they need a post office within the area. Currently, they have to drive 30 kilometres outside of their area to the nearest post office, which 90% say is much too far to drive to a post office.

For a year and a half these residents have been without a post office, which is much too long. They need a post office; a year and a half is too long.

### TAXATION

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to introduce today.

The first petition notes that Canadians are facing a cost of living crisis, with three in four people reporting that inflation is affecting their ability to meet day-to-day expenses, such as housing, food, transportation and clothing. They note that the workers' share of GDP has been eroding in Canada by falling real wages and the growing gap between labour productivity and compensation.

The petitioners call on this government to act immediately to close tax loopholes in offshore tax havens and implement an excess profits tax and use those revenues to address that cost of living crisis.

### REMOTE WORK

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition points out that remote work is a vital accommodation to help disabled individuals, especially those with mobility impairments, to stay in the workforce. The petitioners note that research shows that disabled individuals in the United States were 3.5% more likely to be employed than prepandemic, because of the increased availability of remote work. They point out that for people living with autism or ADHD, remote work makes it more likely they can participate and contribute their skills and talents.

The petitioners call on the government to introduce legislation to give employees the right to access remote work if their positions reasonably allow that.

### JUSTICE

**Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table my very first petition as member of Parliament for Durham on behalf of my constituents and Canadians across the country who are concerned about rising rates of auto theft. This petition is signed by Canadians who are concerned about Liberal bail policies, Bill C-75 and Bill C-5, and their enabling of repeat offenders to continue committing crimes in our community.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table petition e-4769, signed by 1,014 petitioners and sponsored by Chris Alemany from Port Alberni, British Columbia in my riding.

The petition calls on the Government of Canada to enact policy and budgetary resources to enable the Parliament of Canada to provide an open, trusted, federated social media presence for use by all members, senators, officers and other employees of Parliament as appropriate for communication to all Canadians.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioner cites that traditional social media spaces have become sources of considerable controversy, harassment, misinformation and strife; but that free, decentralized and federated alternatives are emerging. He cites that Parliament already provides a comprehensive suite of technical services such as email and web streaming to connect the people of Canada to their Parliament; that government, academic, corporate and individual entities around the world are creating their own social media presence using these same emerging technologies; and, last, that Parliament should control its own communications infrastructure to ensure that public servants within its walls can fulfill their mandates and reach every Canadian in an equitable and easy way because, as renowned Canadian media studies philosopher Marshall McLuhan said, “the medium is the message.”

## PLANT-BASED PROTEINS

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is regarding the consumption of plant-based proteins. This petition asks the Government of Canada to declare a meatless Monday in order to address the over-consumption of meat, which is linked to various health issues, including heart disease and obesity; and also states that the meat industry is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation and other environmental problems. Over 1,000 people signed that petition.

• (1620)

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is regarding climate change. The petitioners request that the House of Commons ensure that a taxonomy of sustainable finance in Canada is adopted and that it exclude all fossil fuel-related projects, including CCUS for oil and gas; that it be aligned with the Paris Agreement; that it require eligible projects or companies to have a science-based and credible climate transition plan; and, that it be linked to other regulation, such as fund-naming and securities regulation.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present a petition on behalf of folks who are concerned with the number of deaths across the country as a result of poisoned drugs, a crisis that is hitting my community particularly hard.

Petitioners note that they call on the Government of Canada to, first of all, declare a public health emergency with respect to overdose deaths. They look to have the government reframe this away from a criminal justice issue to a public health one. They call for a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to addressing this crisis and the root causes of poverty, addiction, housing and health care, among others; and, including in that multi-faceted approach the decriminalization of drugs. The petitioners go on to call for the government to specifically listen to and act on recommendations made not by politicians, but by social workers, frontline workers, nurses, doctors and those directly involved in the drug-using community.

## JUSTICE

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in which the petitioners

are calling for the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to be amended, so that convicted murderers, after serving their minimum sentence, would no longer be able to apply for parole year after year, as is presently the case; and, rather, that they would only be able to be considered for parole at the time of their automatic review. This is in recognition of the fact that the families of murder victims are traumatized by recurring parole hearings for convicted murderers whose likelihood of ever being released is close to nil.

## PAKISTAN

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to be able to stand in this place to present petitions signed by so many Canadians.

The first petition I would like to present today is signed by a number of constituents and Canadians who share the concern among Pakistani Canadians regarding political unrest and socio-economic turmoil in the country of Pakistan. There are concerns about the reports of politically motivated acts of violence and threats against opposition parties and their followers.

There is grave concern, further, about the recent arrest of former Pakistani prime minister, Imran Khan, and the steps being taken by the Pakistani military and its agents to limit participation in general elections by the former prime minister and Pakistan's largest opposition party.

The petitioners ask for the Government of Canada to take concrete steps to support democracy, support freedom and ensure that Canada does everything it can to support free and fair elections in the country of Pakistan.

## CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am pleased to be able to present on behalf of so many Canadians calls attention to the fact that in the 2021 Liberal Party platform, the Liberals promised to subject charitable organizations to a values test.

Petitioners highlight how this was done before, which targeted so many organizations that do good work in our communities and led to many organizations not being eligible for important funding.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status on a politically and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without the imposition of another “values test”. Further, the petitioners ask the House of Commons to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression. That just sounds like common sense to me.

*Routine Proceedings*

• (1625)

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 2532, 2533, 2536, 2540 and 2544.

[Text]

Question No. 2532—**Mr. Brad Redekopp:**

With regard to the government's response to Order Paper Question Q-2055, tabled in the House of Commons on January 29, 2024, and the table provided in Appendix A on pages 42-51, broken down by the criteria previously provided: (a) how many of those individuals are currently in Canada on valid permits; (b) how many of those individuals are currently in Canada but do not have valid permits or have expired permits; and (c) how many of those individuals are no longer in Canada?

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the information as requested is not systematically tracked at that level of detail. IRCC concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question would require a manual case-by-case comparison of information that is not possible in the time allotted. Additionally, as Canada does not have an exit control policy, there is no data available on the number of individuals currently in Canada who do not have a valid/expired permit or how many are no longer in Canada.

Question No. 2533—**Mr. Brad Redekopp:**

With regard to the government's response to Order Paper Question Q-2232, tabled in the House of Commons on March 18, 2024: (a) for the 410 individuals in the Canada Border Services Agency's response to part (e)(i), what are the specific offences that have deemed them inadmissible pursuant to s. 36(1)(a) or s. 36(2)(a) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, for having been convicted in Canada of a Criminal Code offence; and (b) for the 236 individuals in the Canada Border Services Agency's response to part (e)(ii), what are the specific (i) offences that have deemed them inadmissible pursuant to s. 36(1)(b) or s. 36(2)(b) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, for having been convicted in their country of origin of an equivalent charge to a Criminal Code offence, (ii) countries of origin where the convictions occurred?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the CBSA undertook a preliminary search in order to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the question and the amount of time that would be required to prepare a comprehensive response. The CBSA concluded that the level of detail of the information requested is not systematically tracked in a format that permits bulk extraction. As a result, producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question would require a manual collection and reconciliation of information that is not possible in the time allotted.

Question No. 2536—**Mr. Mark Strahl:**

With regard to the government's response to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) giving Canada a score of 64 out of 100 in a recent assessment: (a) what is the government's explanation for the decrease in Canada's score from 95 in 2005 to the latest score of 64; (b) on what date did Transport Canada receive the ICAO report; (c) what shortcomings were identified in the report; (d) what specific actions, if any, has the government taken to address each identified shortcoming; and (e) for each shortcoming in (c), by what date will each be brought up to standard?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada remains confident in the safety

of Canada's aviation system, and we take the audit results seriously. We welcome the opportunity to improve our system and increase our alignment with the International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO, a United Nations specialized agency, hosted in Canada.

The ICAO audit process, the aviation industry, and Canada's regulatory and oversight landscape have evolved significantly since 2005, when Canada was last audited. Canada has a long history as a key international player with a robust regulatory regime.

However, since Canada's last audit 18 years ago, the global aviation system has evolved significantly, becoming more technologically complex and interconnected. Although Transport Canada actively participates in various international civil aviation safety fora, the audit has shown that Canada needs to do a better job at aligning and monitoring changes to international standards, especially given the maturity of Canada's aviation safety regulatory regime.

Additionally, it is imperative for Transport Canada to improve its efforts in ensuring that the unique characteristics of Canada's domestic reality, i.e., large geography with many remote communities dependent on aviation for connectivity, are effectively accounted for when international standards are developed. By advocating for the inclusion of Canada's domestic reality in international standards, we can ensure that our aviation system continues to operate safely and efficiently, meeting the diverse needs of our nation while upholding global aviation standards.

Transport Canada received the final ICAO report on December 14, 2023. While Canada's score witnessed a decline, it is important to note that ICAO has not identified any serious safety issues with Canada's civil aviation system. The score is not a reflection of the safety of Canada's aviation system, but rather Canada's proficiency in conducting safety oversight of its regulated entities in alignment with ICAO's standards and recommended practices, SARPs.

Despite the decrease in score, Transport Canada's safety systems and processes continue to be effective, but there remains a need for refinement to ensure closer alignment with these international standards. The shortcomings largely fall under one of the following areas: organizational design and designated responsibilities, regulatory and operational alignment with ICAO SARPs, training, and documentation gaps and processes.



Government of Canada officials have worked closely with ICAO since its establishment in 1947, including through our responsibilities as the proud host state of ICAO. In continuing to foster this important partnership, Transport Canada officials have been diligently collaborating with ICAO to address audit report findings and corrective measures and ensure Canada's alignment to international aviation standards. Some measures have already been taken, including the creation of an ICAO compliance office, in February 2023, and a new civil aviation directive to inspectors and program manual related to ICAO compliance, in October 2023. Furthermore, TC is actively engaged in refining its internal policies and processes, clarifying regulatory ambiguities, and scrutinizing various surveillance procedures and checklists. This concerted effort aims to establish a consistent framework for oversight activities, effectively tackling findings that are pervasive across audit areas. Transport Canada is also committed to addressing regulatory changes aimed at harmonizing with international standards over the next five years. This will be accomplished through the well-established Canadian aviation regulation advisory council, CARAC, process, where the broader aviation safety stakeholder community is consulted. Additionally, Transport Canada recently undertook an internal realignment to enhance coordination and focus on international matters.

Transport Canada officials have also been proactively engaged with both domestic stakeholders and international counterparts to ensure transparency and clarity with regard to the findings of the ICAO report. The objective is to reassure stakeholders that Canadian air carriers remain steadfast in their commitment to robust safety management systems and uphold high safety standards. This effort will continue in the months and years to come.

**Question No. 2540—Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to the First Home Savings Account (FHSA): (a) how many accounts are currently active; (b) what is the total cumulative amount held in all accounts; (c) what is the average and median account balance; (d) how many accounts have a balance of over (i) \$1,000, (ii) \$5,000, (iii) \$10,000, (iv) \$20,000, in them; and (e) what is the breakdown of the number of FHSA accounts by the owner's income bracket?

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the CRA.

The CRA receives all information about the first home savings account, FHSA, through T4FHSA slips filed by financial institutions. Only slips and returns that have been processed by the CRA are included in these statistics.

It is important to note that the CRA considers each separate FHSA contract to be an "account." Because an individual can have multiple FHSA contracts, the information has been provided per FHSA holder. All figures relating to an "FHSA holder" are based on all FHSA contracts for that individual.

An active account is one where the account hasn't been marked as closed or has been marked as closed but the financial institution reported a balance greater than zero.

The following responses are based on the information returns filed and as processed by the CRA when the statistics were produced. While the information for this response was compiled in April 2024, please note that the date for which the most recent data is available for parts (a) to (e) is December 31, 2023.

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In response to part (a), as of December 31, 2023, there were 624,970 individuals with active FHSAs.

In response to part (b), as of December 31, 2023, the year-end fair market value of all active FHSAs was \$2.37 billion.

In response to part (c), as of December 31, 2023, the average balance for all active FHSA holders was \$3,792 and the median was \$2,040.

In response to part (d), as of December 31, 2023, there were (i) 66,120 active FHSA holders whose total balance, across all of their accounts, was from \$1,001 to \$5,000; (ii) 272,340 active FHSA holders whose total balance, across all of their accounts, was from \$5,001 to \$10,000; (iii) 920 active FHSA holders whose total balance, across all of their accounts, was from \$10,001 to \$20,000; and (iv) 50 active FHSA holders whose total balance, across all of their accounts, was \$20,001 or more.

In response to part (e), as of December 31, 2023, there were 194,220 active FHSA holders who had a taxable income of \$53,359 or less; 154,400 active FHSA holders who had a taxable income from \$53,360 to \$106,717; 25,210 active FHSA holders who had a taxable income from \$106,718 to \$165,430; 5,250 active FHSA holders who had a taxable income from \$165,431 to \$235,675; and 2,290 active FHSA holders who had a taxable income of more than \$235,675.

This information represents cases where the CRA was able to match the T4FHSA slip with an assessed T1 income tax and benefit return. This matching exercise was performed on April 20, 2024, before the general deadline for filing 2023 tax returns.

**Question No. 2544—Mr. Colin Carrie:**

With regard to Health Canada's (HC) approach when they suspect that a vaccine manufacturer has potentially adulterated their own product without appropriate disclosure to HC: (a) how does HC confirm that the potential adulteration exists; (b) does HC procure independent labs to assess the potential adulteration; (c) what measures are available to HC to ensure safety to Canadians and the environment in the event of a deception or adulteration of a therapeutic product under the Food and Drugs Act; (d) regarding the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccine, were any measures taken under the Food and Drugs Act or under any contract or other regulation with regard to the discovery in July 2023 of the SV40 enhancer/promoter sequences well after the full authorization of this vaccine; (e) if the answer to (d) is affirmative, what measures were taken; (f) if the answer to (d) is negative, why weren't measures taken; and (g) if the answer to (d) is negative, are measures being planned?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), Health Canada, HC, verifies that companies manufacturing vaccines destined for the Canadian market comply with Canada's high safety and quality requirements, whether the drug is manufactured domestically or abroad. Within Canada, all drug manufacturers are inspected by Health Canada. For foreign manufacturing sites, Health Canada conducts inspections or assesses inspection results from trusted international regulatory partners.

Health Canada is also committed to verifying signals and complaints regarding the safety, efficacy and quality of vaccines. When there is suspected non-compliance, the department takes steps to verify if non-compliance has occurred. Health Canada uses a variety of compliance and enforcement tools to monitor and verify that regulated parties comply with requirements, including on-site visits.

In response to (b), should Health Canada have any concerns surrounding a product, we may request samples from any lot and conduct in-house testing through the lot release program. Health Canada can request products for testing through this program when a product is being reviewed by the department prior to market authorization or at any time during the post-market stage.

The HC lot release program is fully independent of the manufacturer's testing and is one means used for ensuring the quality of vaccines released onto the Canadian market. Test methods used by the lot release program are validated, laboratory staff are qualified and trained, the laboratories and methods are accredited by the International Organization for Standardization, ISO, and results are reviewed by experienced HC evaluators familiar with the vaccine and test methods. Health Canada does not use third party or contract labs for the lot release of vaccines. All vaccine lot release laboratories in Health Canada currently have sufficient staff required for conducting the required test methods.

In response to (c), the primary objective of Health Canada's compliance and enforcement approach is to manage the risks to Canadians using the most appropriate level of intervention based on the risk posed to the general public.

When non-compliances are identified, we will take appropriate actions to protect the health and safety of Canadians. This can include requesting recalls, issuing risk communications to alert the public and/or suspending licences. Health Canada has the ability to order a product recall or require a product label change if serious health and safety risks are identified. The department takes compliance and enforcement actions in line with our compliance and enforcement policy, where actions are based on the specific facts of each case and appropriate for the situation.

Where appropriate, the department may conduct investigations, make referrals to law enforcement, and refer cases to the Public Prosecution Services of Canada, PPSC, for potential prosecution. The courts have the sole discretion to impose penalties. While monetary fines and penalties can be levied by the courts under the Food and Drugs Act as a result of prosecutions, health product compliance programs do not have the ability to issue administrative monetary penalties in the event of contraventions.

In response to (d), the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine is not considered adulterated. The SV40 promoter enhancer sequence was found to be a residual DNA fragment in the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. The fragment is inactive, has no functional role, and was measured to be consistently below the limit required by Health Canada and other international regulators. The Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine currently on the market is consistent with the product/process submitted to Health Canada for authorization. Therefore, no measures under the FDA were taken.

In response to (e), see response to (d).

\* \* \*

[English]

**QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if a revised response to Question No. 2495, originally tabled on May 22, and the government's responses to Questions Nos. 2526 to 2531, 2534, 2535, 2537 to 2539, 2541 to 2543 and 2545 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2495—**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:**

With regard to federal spending in the electoral district of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, broken down by fiscal year since 2018–19, inclusive: (a) what is the total amount for each fiscal year; (b) what is the detailed breakdown of the amounts in (a) by department, Crown corporation, agency or organization; and (c) what grants and contributions were made, broken down by funding source?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2526—**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to healthcare in Canada: (a) what is specifically included under universal health services; (b) has the scope of services included under universal health services changed since first implemented and, if so, (i) what are the changes, (ii) on what dates did these changes take place; (c) what are the specific services that are (i) funded publicly, (ii) not fully publicly funded; (d) what was the annual total health spending in Canada, broken down by year from 2010 to present; (e) what was the private total health spending in Canada since 2010 to present; (f) what, if any, publicly insured services are being offered for out-of-pocket pay, and, if relevant, what is the annual spending since 2010; (g) what was the annual per capita spending on health since 2010, and how does per capita spending compare to that of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries; (h) what was the private annual per capita spending on health since 2010; (i) what was the investment in homecare since 2010, and, for each investment, (i) how many more people were served, (ii) what was the average wait time from approval to service delivery, (iii) has the wait time from approval to service delivery changed; (j) what, if any, mechanisms have existed to hold provinces and territories accountable on how they spend the health transfer, and, if relevant, what is (i) the accountability mechanism, (ii) the date;

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(k) for each province and territory, what is the annual funding compared to the age-adjusted population growth since 2010; (l) for each province and territory, what is specifically included under universal health services; (m) for each province and territory, has the scope of services changed since universal health services were first implemented, and, if so, what are (i) the changes, (ii) the dates of the changes; (n) for each province and territory, what are the specific services that are (i) funded publicly, (ii) not fully publicly funded; (o) for each province and territory, what (i) is the percentage increase in healthcare service costs since the last health transfer, (ii) is the new negotiated health transfer, (iii) new services will the transfer buy for Canadians; (p) where does Canada rank with respect to amenable mortality among comparator countries, and (i) where have there been improvements, (ii) where specifically has there been a lack of improvement; (q) what does Canada spend on pharmaceuticals, and how does Canada rank among the OECD; (r) what are all of the pan-Canadian health benchmarks, and what is the target for each benchmark;

(s) for each benchmark, what is the percentage of patients receiving care within each of the pan-Canadian benchmarks, broken down by province and territory; (t) what is the percentage of patients receiving care within the benchmarks for (i) cataract removal, (ii) hip fracture repair, (iii) hip replacement, (iv) knee replacement, broken down by province and territory; (u) how does Canada rank with respect to service wait times for comparator countries, specifically to (i) see a general practitioner, (ii) see a specialist, (iii) be treated in an emergency department, (iv) receive advanced diagnostics, (v) receive elected surgical care; (v) what is the average wait time to (i) see a general practitioner, (ii) see a specialist, (iii) be treated in an emergency department, (iv) receive advanced diagnostics, (v) receive elected surgical care, in each province and territory; (w) how many people left an emergency department in 2022-23 without ever having been seen, broken down by province and territory; (x) what is the health and social services sector vacancy rate in each province and territory; (y) what is the physician supply gap in each province and territory and how does Canada rank against comparator countries; (z) in each province and territory, (i) what is the vacancy rate for nurses, (ii) what discipline has the highest vacancy rate;

(aa) broken down by province and territory, what percentage of Canadians lack a primary care provider; (bb) how does Canada rank on inequality in healthcare by income compared to other countries; (cc) what groups of Canadians have difficulty accessing primary care, and, for each group identified, how (i) is access to a general practitioner, (ii) is prescription use, (iii) is access to a specialist, (iv) are diagnostics, (v) is treatment, (vi) is morbidity, (vii) is mortality, impacted; (dd) in each province and territory, what percentage of cost is covered for prescription drugs outside (i) the hospital, (ii) homecare, (iii) non-physician mental health care; (ee) what percentage of income do Canadians in the lowest income quintile spend on their healthcare; (ff) what percentage of income do Canadians in the highest income quintile spend on their healthcare; (gg) broken down by province and territory, (i) how many more people were served with respect to long-term care since 2010 by each federal health transfer, (ii) what was the average wait time from approval to service delivery, (iii) has the wait time from approval to service delivery changed; (hh) broken down by province and territory, what percentage of hospital-bed days is designated to those awaiting long-term care; (ii) how does Canada rank with respect to comparator countries on (i) health outcome measures, (ii) patient-reported experience;

(jj) what specific data is collected at the federal level on medical errors, including, but not limited to, (i) patient harm, (ii) a foreign body left in after a procedure, (iii) obstetric trauma, (iv) postoperative pulmonary embolism after a hip replacement, (v) postoperative pulmonary embolism after a knee replacement, and how does this data compare internationally; (kk) what specific data is collected at the provincial and territorial level on (i) medical errors, (ii) patient harm; (ll) how does Canada rank with respect to comparator countries on (i) dental coverage, (ii) non-physician mental health care, (iii) vision?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2527—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to women's health in Canada and clinical research funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR): (a) how much did the government invest in women's health annually, from 2010 to present, and specifically, for the same time period, how much was invested in (i) aging, (ii) cardiovascular conditions, (iii) neurological conditions, and how did these investments compare to that of the United States; (b) how much did the CIHR invest in women's health annually, from 2010 to present, and specifically, for the same time period, how much was invested in (i) aging, (ii) cardiovascular conditions, (iii) neurological conditions, and how did these investments compare to that of the National Institutes of Health (NIH); (c) broken down by all common female-specific conditions, including, but

not limited to, endometriosis, fibroid tumours, pelvic inflammatory disease, and polycystic ovary syndrome, (i) what are the number of women impacted, (ii) what is the cost to the healthcare system, (iii) what are the effective diagnostics, if any, (iv) what are the effective treatments, if any, (v) is the condition under-researched, (vi) what is the annual investment since 2010, (vii) how does investment compare to that of the United States, (viii) what is the annual investment by CIHR since 2010, (ix) how does investment compare to that of the NIH;

(d) what annual investment has the government made since 2010 in (i) fertility, (ii) pregnancy, (iii) maternal health, (iv) reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, (v) breastfeeding, and how does investment compare to that of the United States; (e) what annual investment has the CIHR made since 2010 in (i) fertility, (ii) pregnancy, (iii) maternal health, (iv) reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, (v) breastfeeding, and how does investment compare to that of the NIH; (f) broken down by all specific female cancers including, but not limited to, cervical cancer, ovarian cancer, uterine cancer, vaginal cancer, (i) what is the number of women impacted, (ii) what is the cost to the healthcare system, (iii) what are the effective diagnostics, if any, (iv) what are the effective treatments, if any, (v) what is the average cancer stage at diagnosis, (vi) what is the annual investment by the government since 2010, (vii) how does investment compare to that of the United States, (viii) what is the annual investment by the CIHR since 2010, (ix) how does the investment compare with that of the NIH; (g) broken down by all specific conditions that disproportionately affect women including, but not limited to, autoimmune diseases, chronic pain, Alzheimer's disease, osteoporosis, and specific cancers, (i) what is the number of women affected, (ii) what is the cost to the health care system, (iii) what is the annual investment by the government since 2010, (iv) how does the investment compare to that of the United States, (v) what is the investment in research by the CIHR annually since 2010, (vi) how does the investment compare to that of the NIH; (h) what percentage of CIHR's budget is invested in the gender and health institute, and how does this percentage compare to each of the remaining institutes;

(i) does CIHR have a policy regarding the sex of animals used in pre-clinical research, and, if so, what are the details of the policy, including the date it came into effect; (j) does all CIHR-supported pre-clinical research require the use of female and male animals; (k) what percentage of CIHR's pre-clinical research uses female animals, and how is that percentage measured; (l) what percentage of CIHR's pre-clinical research reports on the sex of animal subjects, and how is it measured; (m) is it mandated that all CIHR-supported clinical research include women, and, if so, what (i) is the date of the mandate, (ii) is the policy, (iii) are the exceptions, (iv) are any requirements for analysis to include sex, gender, and intersectionality, (v) are any requirements for reporting on sex, gender, and intersectionality; (n) how specifically does CIHR track whether clinical research includes women, what are all questions on grant applications, and what questions and formulae are used to calculate the percentage of CIHR-supported clinical research involving women; (o) what percentage of CIHR-supported clinical research involves women; (p) what percentage of CIHR-funded research examines (i) sex, (ii) gender, (iii) intersectionality, and how are these measured; (q) what specific policies has CIHR put in place to ensure women of all ages and backgrounds are included in clinical research populations; (r) does CIHR provide support for research specifically focused on populations of women historically (i) under-represented, (ii) under-researched, (iii) under-reported, in clinical research, and, if so, what specific investment is made for each?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2528—Mr. James Bezan:**

With regard to the Defence Policy Update and the statement that “The government is projecting our defence spending to GDP ratio to reach 1.76% in 2029-30”: (a) what is the projected defence budget broken down by fiscal year from 2023-24 to 2029-30; (b) how much of that is allocated from the Defence Policy Update as a dollar value; (c) what is the projected GDP, broken down by fiscal year from 2023-24 to 2029-30; and (d) what is the projected defence spending to GDP ratio broken down by fiscal year from 2023-24 to 2029-30?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2529—Mr. Ben Lobb:**

With regard to government advertising during or connected to the Super Bowl, including the pre- and post-game broadcasts, on February 11, 2024: (a) what was the total amount spent on advertising; and (b) what is the breakdown of the spending by each advertisement, including a description of the contents, and by media outlet, along with when the advertisement ran (pre-game, during the game, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2530—Mr. Ben Lobb:**

With regard to government grant programs which are or have been administered by external parties or vendors since 2016: what are the details of all such programs, including, for each, the (i) name of the program, (ii) description or purpose of the program, (iii) amount of funding provided through the grants, (iv) number of grant recipients, (v) name of the external party or vendor that administered the program, (vi) amount paid to the external party or vendor for administering the program, (vii) reason the government outsourced the administration of the program?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2531—Mr. Sameer Zuberi:**

With regard to the Housing Accelerator Fund: (a) what is the total amount of funding allocated in Ontario, broken down by each municipality; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a), by type of housing funded?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2534—Mr. Brad Redekopp:**

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Settlement Program, the Resettlement Assistance Program, the Interim Housing Assistance Program, the International Migration Capacity Building Program, and the Francophone Immigration Support Program, for the fiscal years 2015-16 to 2023-24, broken down by program and by province and territory: (a) what organizations applied for grants, contributions or loans; (b) how much did they apply for on an annual basis; (c) how much did they receive on an annual basis; (d) how much of their funding did IRCC allocate to administrative costs on an annual basis; and (e) what were the actual administrative costs on an annual basis?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2535—Mr. John Barlow:**

With regard to the government’s online estimators: (a) what were the costs associated with developing and implementing the AgriStability estimator, in total and broken down by type of expense; (b) what are the details of all contracts signed by the government related to (a), including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) value, (iv) description of goods or services; (c) what were the costs associated with developing and implementing the Canada Carbon Rebate estimator, in total and broken down by type of expense; and (d) what are the details of all contracts signed by the government related to (c), including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) value, (iv) description of goods or services?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2537—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to the revocation of government security clearances between January 1, 2023, and April 11, 2024: (a) how many individuals have had their security clearances revoked for cause (and not as a result of retirement or resignation); (b) of the revocations in (a), how many were due to the individual spying or otherwise acting on behalf of a foreign government; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2538—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to the revocation of government security clearances for ministerial exempt staff, including those from the Office of the Prime Minister, between January 1, 2016, and April 11, 2024: (a) how many individuals have had their security clearances revoked for cause (and not as a result of retirement or resignation); and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by (i) year, (ii) minister whom they were working for at the time of revocation, (iii) reason for revocation?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2539—Mr. Gerald Soroka:**

With regard to the Public Health Agency of Canada’s procurement of ventilators from Canadian Emergency Ventilators Inc. in April 2020, and the subsequent sale of many of these ventilators as commodity code “9500 - Scrap metal” through the GC Surplus auction: (a) why were the ventilators classified and sold as scrap metal; (b) did the government offer these ventilators to the (i) provincial health authorities, (ii) National Emergency Strategic Stockpile, (iii) Department of National Defence, (iv) International Development section of Global Affairs Canada; (c) for each entity in (b) that received an offer, what reason was received by the government for the entity not accepting the ventilators; (d) for each entity in (b) that did not receive an offer, why did the government not offer the ventilators to them; (e) for the ventilators that have been disposed of to date, through either GC Surplus or other means, who was the recipient of the ventilators, what quantity did each recipient receive, and how much payment did the government receive; (f) have any of these ventilators ended up in private or for-profit health care entities, either in Canada or abroad, and, if so, what are the details; and (g) if the government does not know the answer to (f), why does the government not have that information?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2541—Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to the granting of government security clearances between January 1, 2023, and April 1, 2024: (a) how many individuals (i) applied for, (ii) were denied (not as a result of retirement or resignation), security clearances; (b) of the denials in (a), how many were due to the individual spying or otherwise acting on behalf of a foreign government; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity and level of clearance applied (secret or top secret)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2542—Mrs. Tracy Gray:**

With regard to the Canada Digital Adoption Program: (a) how many of the 29,532 businesses which applied to the Boost Your Business Technology Stream were successful and received funding; (b) what was the total amount of funding given to businesses through the Boost Your Business Technology Stream; (c) what is the breakdown of the \$13 million provided in the contribution agreement with Magnet for project implementation and administrative costs; (d) what are the details of third-party contractors who received money from the \$13 million, including, for each, (i) their name, (ii) the amount received, (iii) the goods or services provided; (e) what are the names of all third-party contractors who received funding through this project implementation and administrative cost stream; (f) what were the amounts paid to each third-party contractor who received funding through this project implementation and administrative cost stream; (g) what were the work descriptions of each third-party contractor who received funding through this project implementation and administrative cost stream; (h) what is the breakdown by school of the 1,954 students who were hired as of December 31, 2023, as E-commerce Advisors; (i) what is the breakdown of the advertising used to advertise these positions; (j) what were the work descriptions of these positions; (k) what is the breakdown by school of the 1,255 youth who were hired to support participating Canadian small and medium enterprises in the implementation of their digital adoption plans; (l) what is the breakdown of the advertising used to advertise these positions; (m) what were the work descriptions of these positions; (n) how many E-commerce Advisors and youths who were hired to support businesses with the implementation of their digital adoption plans were the same person; and (o) what is the breakdown by school of these individuals?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2543—Mrs. Tracy Gray:**

With regard to travel expenses related to the Benefits Delivery Modernization Programme, since January 1, 2017: (a) what is the total number of travel expenses filed; (b) what is the total cost of travel expenses filed; (c) what is the cost of travel expenses filed by public servants; (d) what is the cost of travel expenses filed by third-party contractors; (e) what is the cost of flights expensed by public servants; (f) what is the cost of lodgings expensed by public servants; (g) what is the cost of per diems expensed by public servants; (h) what is the cost of flights expensed by third-party contractors; (i) what is the cost of lodgings expensed by third-party contractors; (j) what is the cost of per diems expensed by third-party contractors; and (k) what is the breakdown of (a) to (j) by month and by quarter?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2545—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to cancer in Canada: (a) what are the top 10 cancers annually since 2010, broken down by province and territory, and, for each cancer, what is the (i) morbidity rate, (ii) mortality rate, (iii) five-year net survival rate; (b) how do the rates in (a)(i), (a)(ii), (a)(iii) compare to the United States; (c) for the rates in (a)(i) and (a)(ii), what is the (i) number of people affected, (ii) cost to the health care system, (iii) total investment compared to the United States; (d) are there any types of cancer on the rise in Canada, and, if so, what are they, broken down by province and territory; (e) what percentage of new patients are offered a diagnostic molecular test in Canada; (f) what percentage of patients are offered a clinical trial in Canada; (g) what percentage of patients are enrolled in a clinical trial in Canada; (h) how many clinical trials have been initiated in Canada annually since 2010; (i) what cancer prevention programs, by cancer type, are funded by the government; (j) how much has the government invested since 2010 in the top 10 cancers, broken down by (i) cancer diagnosis, (ii) treatment, (iii) research, (iv) prevention, (v) federal transfers, and the specific amount, (vi) direct investment in cancer programs, and the specific amount, (vii) research funding, and how does the total investment compare to the United States;

(k) how much has the government annually invested since 2010 in pediatric cancer, broken down by (i) diagnosis, (ii) treatment, (iii) research, (iv) prevention, (v) federal transfers, and the specific amount, (vi) direct investment in cancer programs, and the specific amount, (vii) research funding, and how does the total investment compare to the United States; (l) how much has the government invested since 2010 in rare cancer, broken down by (i) diagnosis, (ii) treatment, (iii) research, (iv) prevention, (v) federal transfers, and the specific amount, (vi) direct investment in cancer programs, and the specific amount, (vii) research funding, and how does the total investment compare to the United States; (m) does the Scientific Advisory Committee on Oncology Therapies still exist, and, if so, (i) what is its membership, (ii) when did it last meet, (iii) what was on the agenda of all meetings since 2019; (n) what is the average approval time for phased clinical trials for the top 10 cancers in Canada, broken down by (i) phase I clinical trials, (ii) phase II clinical trials, (iii) phase III clinical trials, (iv) phase IV clinical trials, and how do the approval times in (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) compare to the United States; (o) what percentage of Canadian children undergoing cancer treatment have access to a clinical trial; (p) what is the average approval time for phased clinical trials for rare cancers in Canada, broken down by (i) phase I clinical trials, (ii) phase II clinical trials, (iii) phase III clinical trials, (iv) phase IV clinical trials, and how do the approval times in (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) compare to the United States;

(q) how many new cancer treatments has Health Canada (HC) approved since 2010 and what percentage have been precision treatments; (r) what are all cancer drugs approved in Canada, and the dates of approval since 2010, broken down by the (i) date the drug was approved in the United States, (ii) provinces and territories where the drug is available, (iii) provinces and territories covering the entire drug cost, (iv) provinces and territories requiring patient payment, (v) additional cost per treatment; (s) how many new cancer treatments has HC approved since 2010 for the top 10 cancers, what percentage have been precision treatments and how do the approval rates and times compare to those in the United States; (t) how many new pediatric cancer treatments has HC approved since 2010 and what percentage have been precision treatments; (u) how many new rare cancer treatments has HC approved since 2010 and what percentage have been precision treatments; (v) on what date was the special access program for drugs first put in place, (i) how many applications have been made for chemotherapy drugs since its creation, (ii) how many times have approvals been made for chemotherapy drugs since its creation, (iii) what is the average approval wait time for a chemotherapy drug, (iv) is there a process for re-application, and, if so, what is the average approval time for re-application of a chemotherapy drug;

(w) what are the top 10 pediatric cancers since 2010 annually, broken down by province and territory, and, for each cancer, what is the (i) morbidity rate, (ii) mortality rate, (iii) five-year survival rate by stage, (iv) cost to the healthcare system; (x) for each rate in (w)(i) and (ii), what is the number of people affected; (y) what is the list of all rare cancers in Canada, how many people are affected by rare cancers, and what investments has the government made in their research; (z) what is the process for a clinician to access off-label chemotherapy options for a patient with a rare cancer, including (i) the average approval time, (ii) the re-approval process, and, if any, the average re-approval wait time, (iii) the approval success rate for application, (iv) if relevant, the approval success rate for re-application, (v) the approval success rate when a drug is already approved for use in another country; (aa) what is the average time to diagnosis for each of the (i) top 10 cancers, (ii) pediatric cancers, (iii) rare cancers, and what is the average cancer stage at diagnosis and the cost to the healthcare system, since 2010, broken down by province and territory; (bb) what was the average time to diagnosis for each of the (i) top 10 cancers, (ii) pediatric cancers, (iii) rare cancers, and what is the average cancer stage at diagnosis and the cost to the healthcare system, broken down by province and territory, and annually from 2019 to 2023;

(cc) how many people had to seek diagnosis outside of Canada due to either wait time or lack of diagnostic technology or procedure, and what was the cost to the healthcare system, broken down by province and territory annually since 2010; (dd) how many people had to seek treatment outside of Canada due to either wait time or lack of treatment that was available elsewhere, and what was the cost to the healthcare system, broken down by province and territory annually since 2010; (ee) how many people could not get a recommended chemotherapy because (i) they did not have health insurance, (ii) their health coverage did not cover a chemotherapy drug, (iii) their insurance covered only part of the drug cost, broken down by province and territory; (ff) broken down by province and territory, how many times has the federal special access program been accessed since its inception, (i) how many approvals have been made since its inception, (ii) what is the average approval time, (iii) is there a process for re-application, and, if so, what is the average approval time for re-application; (gg) what has each government invested in cancer treatment since 2010, broken down by province and territory; and (hh) how much has the Canadian Institutes of Health Research invested annually in cancer research since 2010, and specifically what has been invested in (i) the top 10 cancers, (ii) pediatric cancers, (iii) rare cancers, and how does this annual total investment compare to the United States?

(Return tabled)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***COUNTERING FOREIGN INTERFERENCE ACT**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-70, An Act respecting countering foreign interference, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-70, which will enable the government to take other measures against the growing threat of foreign interference.

The countering foreign interference act will strengthen the government's ability to detect and disrupt foreign interference and to better protect all Canadians against the threats posed by hostile states. As an open and free democracy, Canada has long been the target of hostile states that are seeking to obtain Canadian intelligence to defend or advance their own interests. Foreign interference is a deliberate attempt to undermine the fundamental values and freedoms that we cherish as Canadians and that are at the very core of our free and open society. By so doing, hostile states seek to promote their national interests to the detriment of our own.

*[English]*

Today, foreign interference poses one of the most important threats to our Canadian way of life, our economic prosperity, our national security and our sovereignty. As stated by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, "foreign interference threatens the fundamental values of our country" and our national security.

Over the years, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service has observed and investigated multiple instances of foreign states targeting Canada and Canadian interests. We know that foreign states target our country using any means possible. This includes, of course, human intelligence operations, state-sponsored or foreign-influenced media and sophisticated cyber-attacks to name just a few. These hostile actors also engage in other activities, such as spreading misinformation and disinformation to undermine public confidence in public institutions, in mainstream media or in electoral processes. How do they accomplish this? They do so by cultivating witting or, in some cases, unwitting individuals to assist them. This not only helps to achieve their aims, but also enables foreign states to operate with plausible deniability on Canadian soil.

We have also heard this recently at the public hearings of the Hogue commission, the Foreign Interference Commission, which was set up with the support of all recognized parties in the House. We heard from witnesses that some foreign state actors monitor, intimidate and harass diaspora communities in Canada. They attempt to silence dissidents and to promote narratives that are favourable to their own autocratic regimes. Members from diaspora communities testified that either they have directly experienced, or they know others who have experienced, the effects of foreign interference. This includes threats to them or to their families back home.

• (1630)

*[Translation]*

While traditional interference in human intelligence operations remains the greatest danger to Canada, interference through hostile cyber activities is of growing concern.

Thanks to the work of the security and intelligence community, we know that an increasing number of states have built and deployed programs dedicated to online influence as part of their day-to-day operations. For example, the 2022 CSIS public report indicates that foreign states "exploit social media to influence their intended targets. For example, state actors leverage it as a means to spread disinformation, divide public opinion and generally interfere in healthy public debate and [public] discourse."

Some foreign states are using these malicious activities to try and delegitimize the concept of democracy and other values that may run counter to their own ideological views.

These are fundamental values that we hold dear as Canadians and, of course, as parliamentarians.

*[English]*

Through their various attempts to influence Canadian elections and opinions, these hostile states seek to bias our policy development and our decision-making. In so doing, they also seek to divide Canadians and to sow discord in Canadian society. As parliamentarians, we all know that we are vulnerable to these very attempts as well.

As we have heard during many debates in the House on this topic, foreign interference is a non-partisan issue that is of deep concern to all parliamentarians. Indeed, foreign interference is a cross-cutting issue for all members of the House, not simply as parliamentarians, but as Canadians, and I want to thank the many colleagues in the House who have worked with me and who have talked to me about how we can collaborate, not only on this legislation, I hope, but on other issues as well that would strengthen our democracy and the ability of our security and intelligence agencies to protect Canadians.

These activities threaten the integrity of our political systems, democratic processes and social cohesion. While the threat of foreign interference is not new, these activities have increased in recent years, and as we know, all too well, they continue to grow. The former national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister, Jody Thomas, said, "We cannot paint an overly optimistic picture. Things change. Tools and methods change. Our adversaries adapt quickly and find innovative ways to interfere in our affairs".

With a quickly changing landscape, we must ensure that Canada is in a position to keep up with those who wish us harm, and we must ensure that we can hold accountable those individuals who threaten Canada, our national security or Canadian sovereignty.

[*Translation*]

All the examples I have given today show that this is a matter of the utmost urgency.

For all these reasons, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-70, an act respecting countering foreign interference for the first time. This new legislation will enable us to further strengthen Canada's tool kit against foreign interference. Combatting this threat while defending Canada's interests, values and principles is a top priority for our government and, I believe, for all parliamentarians. Transparency is a top priority in our government's approach to combatting foreign interference.

• (1635)

[*English*]

To further increase transparency, this legislation would create a foreign influence transparency registry. Through this registry, all individuals or entities who enter into an arrangement with a foreign principle and who undertake activities to influence a government or political process in Canada would be required to publicly register these activities. By registering, individuals and entities would be more transparent about their connections to foreign states, and this would obviously support Canada's national security objectives.

The goal of a foreign registry would be to promote transparency from all people who advocate on behalf of a foreign government or entity as well as accountability from those who would seek to do so in a non-transparent or clandestine way. Under Bill C-70, the government proposes to have Canada's registry overseen by an independent foreign influence transparency commissioner. This commissioner would be responsible for independently administering and promoting compliance with the act.

[*Translation*]

Foreign interference is a complex national security threat that requires a multi-faceted response.

We recognize that the registry is just one more tool to help Canada adopt an approach to combat this interference. A foreign influence registry would build on our government's long-standing and ongoing efforts to protect our democratic institutions from this threat.

[*English*]

CSIS continues to investigate threats and to advise the government on appropriate actions. Many members here today have benefited from briefings from CSIS officials, which continue to be held with different caucuses, both in this place and in the Senate. These briefings are delivered to all parties at the federal level, and we are working with provincial and municipal orders of government to ensure that the best practices and defensive postures can also be adopted by these legislators as well. The RCMP continues to play an important and effective role in investigating criminal offences related to foreign interference, including those targeting democratic institutions.

### *Government Orders*

To equip CSIS to combat emerging global threats and to keep pace with technological developments, further investments in intelligence capabilities and infrastructure are also being made. Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$655 million over eight years, and \$114 million ongoing, to CSIS to enhance its intelligence capabilities. The previous year's budget, budget 2023, also provided almost \$50 million to the RCMP to protect Canadians from harassment and intimidation by foreign actors, to increase its investigative capacity and to co-operate more proactively with communities that are obviously at the risk of being targeted.

I have a lot of confidence in the work that the RCMP and CSIS do with their partners across the country, but I think we can all do more to continue to support these brave women and men who serve our country in this important way. We have also made investments of \$5.5 million to build capacity in civil society partners to prevent disinformation, to promote democratic resilience and to raise awareness about foreign interference.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-70 is the result of consultations with Canadians. Obviously, that includes community organizations, diaspora communities, academics, the private sector, indigenous governments and provincial and territorial stakeholders.

One of the key themes emerging from these consultations was that a registry is no panacea. It has to combine other initiatives that strengthen Canada's response to foreign interference.

[*English*]

For example, targeted amendments to the CSIS Act would better equip the Government of Canada to build resilience and to counter modern threats that Canada and Canadians face. The CSIS Act was enacted in 1984 at a time when the prolific use and the expansion of technology may have meant someone had two fax machines: one for incoming faxes and one to send faxes. Today, digital technologies are part of every aspect of our lives and the critical infrastructure of our country. CSIS must be able to operate in a digital world that is constantly and rapidly changing.

*Government Orders*

This legislation would also increase CSIS's ability to be more agile and effective in investigations by introducing tailored warrants for specific investigative techniques. It would also enhance CSIS's capacity to collect and to use datasets. Among other changes, it would enable a broader disclosure of CSIS information to key partners outside the Government of Canada. With the appropriate safeguards, this information would help our partners, provincial governments, universities and the private sector to build resilience to emerging national security threats.

It is important to underscore that these legislative amendments would continue to respect Canadians' fundamental rights and freedoms, with strong review, oversight and transparency measures still in place and unchanged. Judicial oversight remains unchanged, including for all new authorities that we are asking Parliament to consider. These proposals have been developed while also considering the high expectation of privacy that the people of Canada properly have, including respecting all of their protections under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

The National Security and Intelligence Review Agency and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians also play an important role in the activities of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Some activities, like dataset collection and retention, are subject to review and approval by the intelligence commissioner as well.

While Canada may be no stranger to foreign interference, Canadians can rest assured that our government is using every tool at its disposal at every opportunity to protect them.

[*English*]

The government remains committed to enhancing a whole-of-society resilience against malicious foreign interference and hostile foreign state actors. We will do so through continued transparency and by upholding the confidence of Canadians in our democratic institutions.

This is, I hope, a moment when the House and our colleagues in the other place can come together to work in a non-partisan, constructive way to reinforce the legislative instruments that the national security agency should have to properly protect the national security of Canadians and to detect, disrupt and defeat attempts at foreign interference.

We think that the legislation would benefit from, obviously, the study in a committee of the House and in the other place. I have said to colleagues on both sides of the aisle here who have talked to me that we would work collaboratively with colleagues in terms of amendments that might strengthen the legislation. Canadians, I think, are expecting us to act in the national interest. It is certainly our intention to work in an collaborative way with all parties in the House and our colleagues in the other place to see whether we can take a significant step forward in terms of modernizing the legislative tool kit to counter foreign interference.

We are moving forward with clear hindsight and a clear-eyed view of the road ahead. I look forward to the debate in the House

and the discussion in committee. I look forward to working, obviously, with all those who are interested, in a constructive and positive way, so that we can reinforce national security institutions.

I will conclude by saying that it has been, for me, as the public safety minister, an extraordinary privilege to see the remarkable work done by the women and men who currently serve in CSIS, who work for the RCMP, who work at the public safety department and who work at the border services agency. These are agencies that are focused on national security and the security of Canadians.

They are doing very effective work to detect and disrupt foreign interference. They have worked with our government and will be happy to work with parliamentarians, of course, if there are ways that we can modernize and strengthen the legislative instruments that govern their important work. I think that today's discussion is an important start of that process.

● (1645)

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, part 2 of the bill would amend the Criminal Code to broaden the scope of the sabotage offence to include essential infrastructure such as transportation, information and telecommunication technology, water and waste water, energy, utilities, health care, food supply, government operations and financial infrastructure.

My simple question for the minister is this: Does the definition of essential infrastructure include, in his view, the construction of essential infrastructure?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for focusing on what we think is also an important element, strengthening the Criminal Code provisions, as he properly noted, around sabotage. We are obviously conscious of the fact that with respect to lawful and peaceful protests, there has to be an intent to harm as part of the criminal amendment we are suggesting.

From my perspective, if the attempt in the particular amendment is to strengthen protections for critical infrastructure, the building of that critical infrastructure, which is always a source of concern for national security institutions, should also properly be protected. I would be happy to work with the committee, should this legislation make it to committee, to find the right way to define that in the appropriate context.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of sending Bill C-70 to committee.



*Government Orders*

I heard the minister talk in his speech about the broad consultations with Canadians on this issue and his intention to work in a very inclusive manner with the opposition parties in the House. My colleague from Trois-Rivières introduced a similar bill to protect Quebec and Canada from foreign interference. There are two things that I feel are particularly important and should be included in Bill C-70.

One of them is that public office holders should not be allowed to work for a foreign government after they leave office, especially if their new job is to influence decision-makers on site. I wonder why that is not in the current bill.

The other thing we feel is very important and would be very interesting to debate in committee is two-party registration. Foreign agents must disclose their contact with public office holders in Canada. Should Canadian public office holders not also have to disclose their contact and relationships with foreign agents in the course of their duties?

I would like to hear the minister's opinion as to whether there are any amendments he would be open to supporting if the bill goes to committee.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Drummond, and I commend him and our Bloc Québécois colleagues for being open to working with the government to send the bill to committee so that we can look into exactly the kinds of issues that my colleague raised. Obviously, we took note of the bill introduced by our colleague from Trois-Rivières.

It seems perfectly reasonable to me to find a way to ensure that public office holders abide by the requirements set out in the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector and the Conflict of Interest Act after they leave office. We need to look at whether we can expand on that and cover working for foreign states.

However, it is important to note that many current public office holders, as part of their official duties, have completely appropriate relationships with the diplomatic corps, those who are accredited to Canada and who represent foreign countries.

I am no expert when it comes to finding the right balance so that foreign diplomats, who are accredited to serve their country in Canada, are able to do their work and so that government can have these types of international relationships, while increasing transparency when it comes to agents of foreign entities. I would be very open to examining this issue with our colleagues in committee at the right time. I am assuming and hoping that this bill will be sent to committee, where we can find the best way to resolve these completely appropriate issues raised by the member for Drummond.

• (1650)

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to let the minister know that the NDP will be supporting the bill at second reading. In fact, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security unanimously agreed to start a prestudy of the bill tomorrow morning because we do want to get important work under way.

I want to note a couple of things. First, the amendments to the CSIS Act, especially with respect to the dataset regime, follow a fairly scathing National Security and Intelligence Review Agency report that had found that CSIS had repeatedly breached the statutory authorities given to it with respect to handling datasets. Therefore, again, it is good to see legislation bringing analog laws up to speed in a digital age.

Second, I totally agree that foreign interference is very real. In fact, it has affected members of our caucus. That is publicly known and is something that we have to watch out for not only at the federal level but also at the provincial level and, indeed, at the municipal and indigenous levels.

Creating a registry is one thing, but I can only surmise that in Canada, as elsewhere in the world, there are serious clandestine efforts under way to do this kind of interference. I know that the actors are not going to be paying attention to a registry. Under existing laws, what success has Canada had, both in terms of charges and convictions against actors who are going to completely ignore this type of registry? We want to make sure that we are being effective on the whole spectrum of dealing with the problem.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I salute the committee's decision to do a prestudy. We think that is very positive and will help our colleagues on the committee be able to judge what amendments are appropriate and how to deal with what is a series of complex legislative amendments.

I certainly share the concern of our colleague from the NDP around the appropriate handling of the datasets to move a national security institution from an analog era to a digital era. That obviously comes with the required and appropriate safeguards that need to be increased. They need to be understood and applied by CSIS at all times. I am happy to work with the service and with colleagues in this place to make sure the understandable concern around the appropriate handling of the data, and the privacy rights of Canadians in particular, is respected.

I am glad the member acknowledged that members of the House from all caucuses have themselves been targeted or affected by foreign interference, and it is a source of concern for every member of the House.

I also note his question around clandestine work. It goes without saying that some people are prepared to take injurious actions against the national security of our country. Some of the briefings I have from CSIS officials give me perhaps a unique perspective, or a perspective that not many people can have, about the nature of the threat some of the hostile state actors present to the security of our country. Therefore, I take his comments around their desire to comply with a registry with the seriousness in which he made them. The committee may have reflections on how the penalties might be strengthened. We think they are significant and severe, but we, again, will work with parliamentarians in this regard.

*Government Orders*

The member's comments around how we disrupt and ultimately prosecute some of the very hostile, threatening actors who may be operating in Canada today are ones every government has struggled with. The ability to take intelligence information and turn it into evidence in a criminal trial is something Five Eyes partners struggle with. I have had those conversations with our colleagues from the Five Eyes community.

We are always looking at ways the RCMP, which would have the investigative authority in terms of criminal activity in Canada, is able to work with its partners. However, often the very intelligence information CSIS would get from partners comes with caveats; therefore, the ability to turn it into a criminal prosecution remains a challenge, but we are very much focused on what we can do in that regard as well.

**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 Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Correctional Service of Canada; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Diversity and Inclusion; the hon. member for Victoria, Oil and Gas Industry.

• (1655)

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for me to split my time with the member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their institutions to protect them from the malign threat activities of authoritarian states. Canadians expect the whole of the Government of Canada, including its intelligence agencies and law enforcement, to protect our elections and democratic institutions from the coercive, clandestine and corrupt foreign interference threat activities of authoritarian states. That is what Canadians expect, and that is why Canadians were so shocked when the extent of foreign interference in our democracy was revealed to Parliament and to the public.

Justice Hogue, who was leading the foreign interference public inquiry, concluded in the inquiry's initial report that “interference occurred in the last two general elections” and became so serious that it “diminished the ability of some voters to cast an informed vote”. She also concluded that foreign interference had a negative impact on the broader electoral ecosystem in the 2019 and 2021 elections, and that it undermined public confidence in Canadian democracy.

[*Translation*]

The government was slow to act on the advice from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and other national security bodies, who had identified these threatening activities years ago, before the two general elections that followed.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister was first warned in 2018 by the director of CSIS of the existential threat from foreign interference threat activities of the People's Republic of China here in Canada. National security agencies advised the government to introduce a range of

measures to counter these threats, including legislation. It took years for the government to introduce Bill C-70, an act respecting countering foreign interference, but finally it has been introduced. Let me outline our views on this bill.

The bill is divided into four parts. Part 1 proposes amendments to the CSIS Act. These amendments are the most significant changes to the act in decades. As my hon. colleague, the minister, pointed out, the CSIS Act was introduced in 1984, just after disco but before the introduction of the Internet, social media, smart phones and many other technologies. The amendments would allow CSIS to obtain preservation and production orders as well as warrants to obtain information, records or documents through a single attempt. They would allow CSIS to better collect, retain and analyze data for intelligence purposes. They would allow CSIS to collect foreign intelligence for the first time and would allow CSIS to disclose classified information outside of the government, to provinces, municipalities, universities and companies.

Part 2 would amend the Security of Information Act and the Criminal Code to create new foreign interference offences. The bill would create a new offence of up to life in prison for a person who commits any indictable offence under the Criminal Code or under any other act of Parliament at the direction of, for the benefit of or in association with a foreign entity. The bill would also create new offences for a person who engages in clandestine activities at the direction of, for the benefit of or in association with a foreign entity that is prejudicial to the safety or interests of Canada or to influence the exercise of a democratic right in Canada.

[*Translation*]

The bill facilitates foreign interference proceedings by eliminating the need for the Crown to demonstrate that the purpose of the foreign interference is to harm Canadian interests if the person who committed the offence or the victim has a link to Canada.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Finally, part 2 would amend the Criminal Code to broaden the offence of sabotage to include sabotage against essential infrastructure, which is defined as transportation, information and communication technology, water and waste water, energy and utilities, health care, food supply, government operations and financial infrastructure. Sabotage is defined as anyone who “interferes with access to essential infrastructure” or anyone who “causes an essential infrastructure to be lost, inoperable, unsafe or unfit for use” with the intent to “endanger the safety, security or defence of Canada” or the armed forces of an ally in Canada, or to cause “serious risk to the health or safety of the public”. As the minister pointed out earlier, the minister's view is that essential infrastructure includes the construction of essential infrastructure.

- (1700)

The sabotage offence provided for in the bill is punishable by up to 10 years in prison, and for greater certainty, part 2 makes it clear that it exempts legal advocacy, protest or dissent that does not intend to cause harm.

Part 3 would amend the Canada Evidence Act and would make consequential amendments to other acts to create a general scheme to deal with information related to foreign affairs, national defence or national security in Federal Court proceedings. It proposes amendments that would permit the appointment of a special counsel to protect the interests of non-governmental parties in those proceedings.

The fourth and final part of the bill would establish the foreign influence transparency and accountability act, which creates a foreign influence registry and a new foreign influence transparency commissioner. Any person under the direction of or in association with a foreign state or foreign government, or any entity controlled by that state or government, and who communicates with a public office holder, who communicates or disseminates information to the public about political or governmental processes, or who distributes money or items of value, or provides a service or the use of a facility, must register.

The bill would create an indictable offence of up to five years in prison and up to \$5 million in administrative monetary penalties for failing to register, for providing false or misleading information to the commissioner or for obstructing the commissioner's work. These are tough penalties for failing to register, and they will have a deterring effect on those thinking about acting on behalf of a foreign state or a foreign-controlled entity in a corrupt, coercive and clandestine manner.

For those who do act in such a manner and, as I expect, do not register, tools are available to law enforcement and other enforcement entities, such as the commissioner, to hold these individuals accountable for their activities, either through the new administrative monetary penalties of up to \$5 million, which have a much lower threshold for use, or through a referral to the appropriate police of jurisdiction for criminal prosecution.

The new foreign influence transparency commissioner would oversee a public registry containing information on individuals engaged in influence activities on behalf of a foreign principal. The

act provides that the commissioner is to provide reports to the public safety minister and Parliament. The commissioner is appointed by Governor in Council, effectively by the Prime Minister, after consultations with the leaders of the House of Commons and Senate. However, ultimately the decision to appoint the commissioner is a decision of the Prime Minister's alone.

In principle, we support Bill C-70. Now that it has finally been introduced, the government, the official opposition and other recognized parties in this House must work together to ensure that our democratic institutions and elections are protected from the threats of authoritarian states. Inaction and delay cannot continue. As Justice Hogue noted, the risk from the impacts of foreign interference will only increase as long as “sufficient protective measures to guard against it” are not taken.

As our general election draws closer and as the life of this Parliament draws to an end, time is running out to strengthen the confidence Canadians have in our elections through legislation.

*[Translation]*

That is why the Conservatives are proposing to work with the government and the other parties in the House to fast-track the adoption of Bill C-70 in the House of Commons and in committee, leaving enough time to implement foreign interference protection measures before the election.

*[English]*

Conservatives will work in good faith to ensure the rapid progress of Bill C-70 through the House while ensuring sufficient scrutiny of its provisions. We are willing to consider amendments to the bill, but we want it to pass.

The government has often asked the official opposition to work with it, and this is an instance in which we will.

- (1705)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice, and I am encouraged to hear, that the official opposition sees the merit of this bill. As the government and the minister have stated on many occasions, foreign interference is something we should all be concerned about. We are far more effective if we can act as one in many different ways.

I understand the member has not had the legislation for long, but does he have a sense of any amendments that he could see being made to the legislation or, on the whole, to the principles of the legislation, which he is quite prepared to see pass relatively quickly?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Mr. Speaker, I note that part 4 of the bill provides for the creation of a commissioner. That commissioner would be situated within the machinery of government, within the Department of Public Safety Canada, and would be appointed at the advice of the Prime Minister. An amendment that would perhaps strengthen the independence of that office would be to appoint the commissioner after the Prime Minister has consulted with leaders of the recognized parties in the House of Commons and the Senate and after resolutions have been adopted by both the House and Senate. Perhaps that amendment would strengthen the independence of the office.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his heartfelt speech, considering that he was the victim of interference or threats. It was a very interesting speech.

The bill will definitely be improved in committee. The Bloc Québécois had introduced a bill to improve the process. It included the principle of two-party registration. We also wanted the registry to include universities. Finally, it prohibited former public office holders from working on behalf of a foreign state for three years.

Does the member think these are worthwhile measures that would strengthen democracy and the security of our elections?

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Mr. Speaker, there are measures in this bill that will give CSIS the power to disclose classified information to universities, municipalities and provinces to ensure that they have the information they need to protect their interests. We support this measure. We think it is very important to give our national security agencies the power to do that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Canadian history is replete with examples where Canadians of different origin have had their loyalties questioned because of nothing more than their nationality. This includes Italian Canadians, Hungarian Canadians and of course the infamous example of the internment of Japanese Canadians, who had their loyalties questioned simply because of where their heritage came from.

As my hon. colleague pointed out, part 4 of this bill seeks to establish for the first time a registry of foreign influence. I know my hon. colleague is a strong proponent of free speech and making sure we have political freedom in this country. Does he think clause 113, which defines the criteria upon which the need to register is set forth, strikes the appropriate balance to make sure that we are truly catching those who are working at the behest of a foreign state or, for their own benefit, for a foreign state, as opposed to Canadians who are simply expressing their views that might or might not correspond with those of a different country?

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Mr. Speaker, my father came here in 1952 from Hong Kong as a Chinese immigrant, several years after the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed. However, even though that legislation had been repealed, the sentiments that underpinned it still remained in Canada.

We have to be acutely sensitive to diaspora communities. I note that this bill is agnostic when it comes to foreign states and foreign governments. It would require all persons to register, regardless of

the foreign entity or foreign principle they are acting on behalf of, in association with or at the direction of. It is a fair bill that would ensure there is greater sunlight and transparency, which also makes it an important tool to ensure that diaspora communities are not unfairly targeted. When information is made public, bad actors are made known and everyone else is understood to be innocent.

• (1710)

Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, which would see the bill voted on at third reading by Wednesday, June 12, at end of day.

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-70, an act respecting countering foreign interference, shall be disposed of as follows:

(a) at the expiry of the time provided for government orders later today, the bill would be deemed adopted at second reading and referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security;

(b) during the consideration of the bill by the committee: (1) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings; (2) the committee shall meet for extended hours on Monday, June 3; Tuesday, June 4; Wednesday, June 5; and Thursday, June 6, to gather evidence from witnesses; (3) the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Inter-governmental Affairs, the officials from the RCMP and CSIS, the national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister, the officials from the Department of Public Safety and other expert witnesses deemed relevant by the committee be invited to appear; (4) all amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 9 a.m. on Monday, June 10; (5) amendments filed by independent members shall be deemed to have been proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; (6) the committee shall meet at 3.30 p.m. on Monday, June 10—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am hearing “no”.

It sounded good until that point. I guess maybe the caucuses can go back and discuss that programming motion.

On the same point of order, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, that was not what was agreed to, but I am sure we will be presenting something similar in the coming hours.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to make it very clear that it was the NDP that said no to this very common-sense motion to get the legislation passed.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Mr. Speaker, we had good-faith conversations on this motion. We agreed, up to a certain point. If the Conservatives want to reword it, they will find that the NDP is going to be quite co-operative on this matter. I would like to put that on the record.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Speaker, we should probably take these discussions off-line so we can find out why the NDP members are opposed to having the bill passed by a certain date. That was the key part—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do not want to get too deeply into the discussion.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, when we have good-faith negotiations behind the scenes, we do not engage in partisan jabs such as that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is right. Let us continue the discussions.

In the meantime, let us go to the next speaker.

The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-70, an act respecting countering foreign interference. My colleague, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, has done a good job outlining some of the key measures provided for in the bill, which I will not repeat. Needless to say, on the whole, the measures and safeguards provided in the bill, including establishing new foreign interference-specific offences, as well as a foreign influence registry, are welcomed and, frankly, long overdue.

It is on that basis that Conservatives are committed to seeing the bill move through the legislative process expeditiously. It is disappointing to see that, in our efforts to do this, we were blocked by the NDP members, who seem to want to hold up the legislation. It is imperative that the bill move forward as quickly as possible; officials have indicated that it may take up to one year to fully implement the bill upon it receiving royal assent. We need to have these measures. We need to have these safeguards in place for the next election. Time is of the essence.

While the bill is welcomed, I must ask why it has taken the government so long to introduce legislation to counter foreign interference. For years, the Prime Minister has been warned by CSIS and other agencies about the threat of foreign interference. The fact is that foreign interference is on the rise; it threatens our sovereignty, our democracy, and the safety and security of Canadians, particularly those in diaspora communities.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly and very specifically been briefed about the most significant foreign interference state threat, namely, the Beijing-based Communist regime. As far back as 2017, the Prime Minister's national security and intelligence adviser briefed the Prime Minister that agents of Beijing were assisting Canadian candidates running for political offices. That was eight years ago; it has taken the government eight long years to finally come around to introducing legislation to counter that type of foreign interference.

In the 2019 election, four top Liberals who were closely connected to the Prime Minister received a classified CSIS briefing, warning them that one of the Liberal candidates, now the member for Don Valley North, was assisted by Beijing in winning the Liberal nomination in Don Valley North. One of the top Liberals who was

briefed, who had the requisite security clearance, informed the Prime Minister of the contents of that brief immediately, which was quite appropriate.

What did the Prime Minister do with that information? Let us think about it.

The Prime Minister is informed that there is CSIS intelligence that one of his candidates was being assisted by Beijing, presumably because Beijing viewed that individual as someone who would best advance Beijing's interests in Ottawa. Did the Prime Minister seek to inquire with CSIS to learn more about the situation and what intelligence it had? Did he ask any questions? No, the Prime Minister turned a blind eye, allowing that individual to stand as a candidate and to be elected to the House of Commons.

In her first report, Madam Justice Hogue concluded that there was no evidence that the Prime Minister asked any questions or provided for any follow-up. Even worse than that is the conclusion that Madam Justice Hogue drew, which is that the Prime Minister decided against disallowing that candidate on the basis of direct electoral consequences.

● (1715)

In other words, the Prime Minister put his political interests and the interests of the Liberal Party ahead of countering Beijing's interference in our elections and in our democracy. I would submit that this is a damning indictment of the Prime Minister by Madam Justice Hogue.

However, there is more. Following the 2019 election, the Prime Minister was repeatedly told by CSIS that Beijing interfered in the 2019 and 2021 elections. What did the Prime Minister do upon being briefed? Once again, the Prime Minister turned a blind eye, doing nothing. Worse than that, the Prime Minister sought to hide Beijing's interference, to cover it up. In contrast to the very advice that he had received from CSIS, that the policy of the Government of Canada to counter foreign interference ought to be based on sunlight and transparency and that the government should make foreign interference activities known to the public, the Prime Minister's policy was one of cover-up.

The degree of interference in the 2019 and 2021 elections ought not be minimized, but the Prime Minister has repeatedly attempted to do so. Members need not take my word for it. They can take the words of Madam Justice Hogue in her first report from the foreign interference inquiry. She concluded unequivocally that there was interference in the last two federal elections and that such interference was serious insofar as it “diminished the ability of some voters to cast an informed vote”. Although foreign interference did not change the overall result of the election, Madam Justice Hogue noted that it may have impacted the results in certain ridings and that this interference had a negative impact on the “broader electoral ecosystem”.

*Government Orders*

Those are very concerning findings. The fact is that the Prime Minister had been repeatedly briefed before the 2019 election, after the 2019 election and after the 2021 election but took no action and downplayed Beijing's interference after it was revealed, thanks to reports from *The Globe and Mail* and *Global News*. This demonstrates that the Prime Minister bears some level of responsibility for Beijing's attack on our democracy in the last two federal elections.

That brings us back to the timing of the proposed bill: Why have the Liberals finally seen fit to introduce legislation to counter foreign interference now? There is only one reason. It is that the Prime Minister got caught turning a blind eye to Beijing's interference and attempting to cover it up. Had he not been caught, the legislation would never have seen the light of day. This is demonstrated by the fact that the bill was introduced on the first sitting day following the issuance of Madam Justice Hogue's report. The Liberals knew that the report was going to be incredibly damaging to the government, which it most certainly was, and this was their way of providing political cover for themselves.

Therefore, while the bill is welcome, the government deserves absolutely no credit for having been dragged, kicking and screaming, to introduce it after the Prime Minister turned a blind eye to Beijing's interference in our elections. Under the Prime Minister's watch, foreign interference has increased, and it is part of the sad record of a failed Prime Minister.

• (1720)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is interesting to contrast the member's speech with that of the previous speaker, in terms of the content and substance within.

To the member across the way, I would say that international foreign interference is something that has been around for quite a while. It was around even when Stephen Harper was prime minister; I think that particular member worked for PMO or maybe one of those Conservative backbenches then. I am not 100% sure who it was, but he was affiliated. That particular prime minister did absolutely nothing. He just completely ignored the issue of foreign interference.

We take foreign interference seriously. In fact, if I were allowed more time, I would be able to expand on many of the things that we have done in addressing this particular issue. We have a minister who has put in a great deal of effort working with professional civil servants and others to ensure that we have the legislation that we have here today. By the way, I believe the member across the way supports the principles of it and will see it go to committee. Does the member have any ideas in terms of potential amendments to the legislation?

• (1725)

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, we will look at the bill and we will scrutinize it, but on the whole, the measures are welcome. However, that does not take away the fact that the bill has come too late. It has come as a result of the government's dragging its feet for years. The best that can be said of the Prime Minister, in terms of how he and his government have responded to foreign interference, is that he has been asleep at the switch. However, it may

be worse, because there is evidence that at times the Prime Minister has been complicit; he has gone along with Beijing's interference because it has benefited the Liberal Party, and that is really quite disgraceful.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would ask members to remain seated unless they have questions.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

[*English*]

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the bill has come very late in terms of implementing anything before the next election. What is the impact of what just happened here in the House, with the NDP's not being willing to advance the bill in a more speedy way?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, it really raises the question of whether the NDP is doing the dirty work of the government. It raises questions about whether the government is serious about actually moving the bill forward in time for the next election—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I think we see the problem with the Conservative caucus in understanding good-faith negotiations. One does not do what the member has just done.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member knows that we are not going to enter into that debate.

The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton can perhaps be more judicious.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government will be tested very shortly, and it has already in part failed the test, with what the NDP did moments ago. It has a choice. It can move the bill forward expeditiously. We support that. The bill does need to be passed. It does need to receive royal assent as soon as possible so the safeguards can be in place in the next election.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am just curious. This has been ongoing for a long time, the issue of foreign interference impacting our elections, impacting candidates, influencing elections and influencing candidates. How closely are the Americans monitoring what is going on in this country?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, I think our allies have increasingly become concerned that this country has been subjected to interference by the Beijing-based regime. In fact last week the U.S. Congress was scrutinizing the alarming national security breach at the Winnipeg lab, where agents of Beijing infiltrated our highest-security lab under the current government's watch. It was a massive national security failure that has drawn international concern.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in a few words, I would like my colleague to explain why the interference commissioner should be independent.

*Government Orders*

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question. The commissioner would be housed, as presented in the bill, within the department of public safety. There may be merits to that from a resource standpoint, but it is something that does need to be further considered at the committee stage, in terms of how the commissioner should be established and whether, in fact, the commissioner should be housed within the department of public safety or be independent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in small doses, candour can have a certain charm. It says that someone does not mean any harm. However, naivety is always a flaw because it stems from lack of judgment.

When it comes to foreign interference, the government has been very naive in recent years. This naivety is coupled with the government's standing flaw: pride. Pride prevents it from quickly admitting to and correcting its mistakes, and going so far as to hide what should be disclosed, even at the expense of the common good.

I am also pleased that Bill C-70 represents a change in direction. I will say right off the bat that the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-70, countering foreign interference act. With this bill, the government is telling us, or trying to tell us, that it has finally shaken its naivety. That is a good start.

As always at the federal level, there is concern that efficiency is not the government's priority. These are things that can and should be corrected in committee and will not change the principle of the bill. As I was saying, the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of Bill C-70 at second reading. We hope it will be sent to committee quickly. Once we get to committee, we will have to be vigilant and careful, because this bill deals with fundamental issues

In fact, there are three main reasons for moving this update of Canadian laws along. The first reason is the international situation. These are tense times. There is a new cold war—not entirely cold, but more complex, with more players. Russia and China are more aggressive. Influence campaigns, lobbying and disinformation campaigns are on the rise.

We saw this five years ago with the case of the two Michaels. In December 2018, at Washington's request, Canada arrested Meng Wanzhou, the CFO of telecoms giant Huawei. Rather than go after the Americans, China preferred to go after its defenceless little brother, Canada. In retaliation, the Chinese government arrested two Canadian citizens in China and took trade measures against Canadian and Quebec farmers—

• (1730)

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am hearing voices from both sides of the House. I would like to take this opportunity to say that my Liberal colleagues' conversations on the other side are quite loud. It might be worth reminding them to keep their voices down when a colleague is making a speech.

There is also something else that is causing a disruption. For some time now, there seems to be a speaker or earpiece that is

broadcasting the interpretation in English. I do not know whether it is in the chamber or in the gallery.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I believe it is indeed the listening devices. I will ask for someone to check whether any telephones are causing noise in the gallery. I hear it very distinctly here as well. I would also encourage members to keep their conversations low or, ideally, take them outside the House.

The hon. government House leader on a point of order.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I apologize to the hon. member, but since his speech was already interrupted, I would like to request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the next sitting be 12 a.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, February 28, the request is deemed adopted.

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**COUNTERING FOREIGN INTERFERENCE ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-70, An Act respecting countering foreign interference, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond. All those voices were rather distracting.

As I was saying, the Chinese government arrested two Canadian citizens in China and took trade actions against Quebec and Canadian farmers, all to influence Canadian policy and force the government to give in. These dramatic actions, which were taken openly, constitute aggressive diplomacy. However, to be very clear, China also took more discreet measures and those are the types of measures that Bill C-70 seeks to counter.

Russia is saber rattling to mask its decline. China is in the final stages of its big project to transform an empire into a country. They are both projecting their power and need to weaken international resistance, hence the interference campaigns abroad, including in Canada. We need the necessary antibodies to prepare ourselves and to guard against that.

The second reason, in addition to the international situation, is the national situation. I am going to share a secret: Do not tell anyone, but an election is coming. I do not know when, but it is coming. Sometimes the leader of the NDP does this funny dance before he grovels or goes into bravado mode. His rhetoric suggests that there will be an election any day now. However, that is not the case. The reality is that we do not know for sure, but it could happen at any time. I am just joking around with my NDP friends, of course.

### *Government Orders*

On election day, the politicians keep quiet and the citizens do the talking. For that to happen, in order for citizens to speak freely, they cannot be targeted by pressure or interference. That is what democratic expression is all about. That said, an election is the ideal time for interference. It can be tempting for a foreign actor to try to replace a hawk with a dove, for example. It is therefore essential that we develop tools for countering foreign interference before the election period, and time is running out.

The third reason is the legislative situation. Canada does not currently have the antibodies to fight off the virus of foreign interference. There is no foreign agent registry, for example, and the various laws governing the operation of the intelligence agencies date back 40 years, before the digital age. Some of our members were not even born yet.

Those laws do not make it possible to analyze the huge amount of information that can be gathered today and process it within a useful time frame. Those laws do a poor job of protecting secret operational intelligence. Those laws do not adequately protect people against threats or intimidation by foreign states. The rules of the justice system have not struck a balance that allows for prosecution, a fair trial and the protection of sensitive intelligence. All of this is what Bill C-70 seeks to correct. That is why we support it in principle.

In practical terms, Bill C-70 amends four acts. Part 1 amends the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, which governs the organization better known as CSIS. The amendments clarify data collection and analysis, provide for preservation and production orders, and authorize new search and seizure powers. David Vigneault, director of CSIS, has long been calling for the act's modernization. It was enacted in 1984, before the Internet existed, and has not been amended since. Technology has obviously evolved, and such a legislative change is long overdue. According to David Vigneault, too many authorizations are required, including the approval of the Minister of Public Safety, to analyze the data and decide whether to retain, process or archive them.

In fact, here is the government's description of the Kafkaesque current process:

The totality of this process could require up to five separate submissions for review by the Minister, Intelligence Commissioner, and/or the Court, resulting in a delay of up to six to nine months before CSIS can exploit the data, by which time its intelligence value may have diminished significantly. If CSIS cannot evaluate and apply to retain the dataset within the statutory time limit, it is required to destroy all the data.

It could take six to nine months, but information can be sent instantaneously. Something is not right there. I would remind the House that the election period lasts five weeks. A six- to nine-month delay is not very helpful. That is not all. Currently, CSIS cannot share intelligence outside the federal government. Bill C-70 would allow that, which is very good. Once the bill comes into force, the provinces, municipalities and territories will be able to receive certain information.

• (1735)

Imagine for a moment that Hydro-Québec is the victim of foreign interference or espionage. CSIS could disclose certain information to Hydro-Québec to help the publicly owned corporation protect its critical information. The same goes for warrants under

the current CSIS legislation, which are not adapted to the digital age and can sometimes paralyze investigations.

All these aspects of Bill C-70 seem to be good ideas. We will have to look at it carefully in committee, because the devil is in the details.

We know that total security would require total surveillance. I do not think that we want to go that far.

The restrictions and silos that are paralyzing CSIS, and that this government wants to relax, are there for a reason. Much of this stems from the work of the McDonald commission that examined the RCMP's actions during the October crisis in Quebec. Members will recall the events of October 1970. We certainly remember. The federal government had imprisoned hundreds of people in Quebec, including politicians, intellectuals and artists, causing a true national trauma. In order for the federal government to regain Quebecers' trust, the Mulroney government replaced the War Measures Act with the Emergencies Act, which had much stricter limits. It eliminated the RCMP's intelligence role with the creation of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS. In doing so, it created a wall between intelligence and law enforcement, so as to limit abuses. Now these safeguards are preventing us from combatting foreign interference, and we are being asked to relax them. Okay, we understand that.

I repeat, the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-70 in principle, but not at the cost of civil liberties. This is an absolutely fundamental issue that demands the utmost vigilance on the part of legislators. We are in favour of passing the bill quickly at second reading, but we would be remiss if we did not conduct a serious study in committee. This must not be rushed through.

I would remind the House that the inefficiencies of the current legislation were designed to protect the people of Quebec from the excesses of the federal government. In light of the current rise in international tensions and the aggressiveness of certain countries, we must not diminish the protection our people enjoy from potential government abuses. Therefore, our work must be guided by a search for balance.

Bill C-70 also protects certain operational secrets. Again, this is a necessary safeguard against foreign states with hostile intentions. We should not weaken our democracy in the name of protecting it. We saw this happen with the Winnipeg lab incident and, 15 years ago, with the Afghan detainees.

It is very difficult for Parliament to exercise the oversight that it must exercise when it requires access to classified information, not to mention frequent overclassification—as we saw with the Winnipeg lab—which makes sometimes innocuous information secret and hard to obtain. Even the Hogue commission, which was set up to shed light on foreign interference and help counter it, has complained that it did not have access to all the documents it requested because the Prime Minister's Office was reluctant to release them.



*Government Orders*

Moreover, Bill C-70 seeks to better equip the justice system to fight foreign interference, so this bill sets out new offences that cover a broader range of harmful acts. It sets out new procedures that we hope will make it possible to prosecute offences, grant a fair trial and protect intelligence that would be harmful if disclosed.

Again, we are in favour of this in principle. However, these are fundamental issues of justice, and our work must be guided by a quest for balance. I repeat that a lot, because it is very important.

Bill C-70 will also eliminate the requirement to prove that a criminal act benefited a foreign state or harmed Canada. Simply put, intimidation by a foreign state could become punishable, even if it does not produce the desired result. We are talking about attempts here. That means it will be possible to charge people who intimidate Canadian citizens or their families. People who are originally from totalitarian countries are particularly vulnerable.

Bill C-70 also provides for consecutive sentences and even life imprisonment for certain offences. I understand the desire to impose harsher sentences, but listen to what the Canadian Civil Liberties Association had to say. It said, and I quote:

The availability of life imprisonment for certain offences introduced under Bill C-70 is disproportionate and excessive. For example, a person convicted of an indictable offence under the Criminal Code, even as minimal as theft under \$5,000, could be sentenced to life in prison if they acted for the benefit of a foreign entity.

• (1740)

I could cite numerous other examples of measures that will need to be closely scrutinized before they are approved or allowed to come into force.

I will end my speech by talking about the foreign agent registry. This registry should have been created a long time ago. The United States created theirs in 1930. Everyone agrees that a registry alone will not prevent foreign interference, but it is an essential tool to have in our tool box. The director of CSIS has said that a registry would be very useful. The European Union is currently working on a transparency register, and there are registries in other countries too. With a registry, it is easier to demonstrate that someone is working on behalf of a foreign state than to prove that the state interfered. Refusal to join the registry would become an offence in itself and it would be easier to punish than the crime of interference.

I am therefore pleased that the government is moving forward with the registry. It will improve the identification of people trying to influence public policy and of persons acting on behalf of a foreign state. I have spent a lot of time studying this topic. In fact, I drafted a bill to create this registry and I was about to introduce it before Bill C-70 was tabled. However, the registry put forward in Bill C-70 has gaps that I would like to try to fill in committee.

For example, although foreign agents are required to register, public office holders are not required to declare their interactions with foreign agents. The two-party registration of foreign agents and public office holders would allow for more thorough checks and enhance the registry's effectiveness. Furthermore, foreign agents have to report their contact with certain categories of people, but the list is too narrow to protect things like government-funded research activities, for example. In short, at committee stage, I intend to propose an expansion of the registry's scope to improve its effectiveness.

As a final point, I would like to take a closer look at the very concept of interference. Let us imagine, for example, that a foreign state sent a bunch of people to fill the room during a nomination to influence the choice of candidate. The foreign state would not have intervened directly with the government to influence public policy, but it would have obviously intervened in public political life. Would that situation be covered by the registry? I doubt it.

Another example is the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg. The Chinese agents working there had no desire to influence public policy. Rather, they wanted to monopolize the fruits of research paid for by Canadian taxpayers. Does Bill C-70 protect us from that? I doubt it.

I will conclude with a bit of a broader reflection. Protecting our constituents against interference is a profoundly democratic act. People have the right to control their political life and their social, economic and cultural development. This expression of democracy, which must be exercised freely, without undue pressure or interference, is fundamental to peoples' right to decide for themselves and assert their inalienable right to self-determination.

In committee, we will have disagreements on this or that clause of Bill C-70, but I think that all the members of the House are united on the need to protect the inalienable right of the Canadian people to control their development without foreign interference. Under Bill C-70, foreign states will be required to respect that right and stop interfering.

As long as we are requiring respect from others, we need to be honest about being respectful ourselves. Twenty-nine years ago, my people, the people of Quebec, were called to democratically exercise their own right to self-determination in a referendum on independence. What happened? Canada, the federal government, spent more on its campaign than the Yes and No camps combined in Quebec. That is serious interference. I am pleased to see that everyone in the House is, I note, unanimous in agreeing that interference in a people's choice is not good. We are making progress. We are getting somewhere.

I hope that the desire to protect Canadian democracy from foreign interference will engender the same respect for Quebec's democracy, because my people also need to be able to experience their democracy without interference.

*Government Orders*

• (1745)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, they are encouraging words from the Conservatives, and now from the Bloc, in terms of just how important it is that, collectively, as a group of elected parliamentarians, we have a responsibility not only to bring forward the legislation but also, as much as possible, to work together so that we can all get behind the legislation. The timing of it is of great importance. I am sure the member would also acknowledge that. International foreign interference is happening. It is very real and tangible. We all know that.

I would like to get the member's thoughts on a question I posed to the official opposition critic. Are there any amendments that he can think of, offhand, realizing we have not had the legislation for long, that he would like considered?

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his question. He always asks good questions.

Earlier, in my speech, I mentioned two-party registration, which I feel is a proven method. It has not been used for foreign agent registries, but it has for other registries. It allows for verification. If a foreign agent is not registered and the public office holder is registered, the discrepancy will be noticed. It would make the system more efficient. Two-party registration is a good thing from the word go.

I have a few comments to make on the independence of the interference commissioner. I would like us to work on that a little. I understand the organizational efficiency requirements, but at the same time, it makes me a little uncomfortable.

I think the scope of the legislation could be extended to universities that receive federal funding. In fact, I would like to be able to say that we can prevent what happened at the Winnipeg lab and that we can prevent the whole discussion we had to have about the Trudeau Foundation. I am not blaming anyone. I am only giving an example. However, I would like us to be able to avoid this sort of thing and, right now, I am not sure that the registry in its current form lends itself to this type of management.

I think we will have to work together to at least settle those things in advance. People seem to be very willing to work together.

• (1750)

[English]

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, with respect to the foreign influence registry, there are many details left to be determined by way of regulation, including with respect to setting out exactly what the scope of the administrative penalties would be that the commissioner could issue, as well as with respect to the contents of what one must disclose upon registering.

Does the member have concerns about the lack of some of those details being incorporated into the legislation and being left to regulation, or does he see it as a good thing?

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, a number of things are missing from the bill.

The first thing I will bring up has nothing to do with the individual, but rather the profile of the interference commissioner. Do we want a judge, like we do for the ethics commissioner? Do we want a legal expert? Do we want an ethicist? One never knows. What is the profile we are looking for? These things will be determined later, by regulation. I trust in that and I do not see any issue with it, but many details are still to be determined.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as usual, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague.

Last year, the NDP moved a motion to establish the Hogue commission to counter foreign interference. Every party except one supported that motion. We participated in negotiations all summer. We negotiated in good faith and it led to the implementation of the Hogue commission, led by Justice Hogue. Most of these elements were established by consensus.

I want to ask my colleague a question about the importance of all of the political parties working together. It is important that, rather than seeking partisan advantage, we really try to implement the best legislation possible, to implement the best tools to counter foreign interference. We must all work together, use the abilities of every member of the House and every recognized political party to create a bill that we can be proud of and that gives us all of the important tools without any shortcomings.

Does my colleague agree with that?

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question.

I do think we need to work together. Foreign interference is not a partisan issue, nor does it concern the colour of the government in power. It concerns greed, power and interference itself. Therefore, I think it is crucial that we work together. When we look at an issue like interference and sum up the activity, it becomes clear that there are more things that bring us together here than divide us.

I would like us to focus on what brings us together so that we can develop the best possible tool to protect ourselves from foreign interference.

• (1755)

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague from Trois-Rivières for his excellent speech. It is always a pleasure to listen to him. It is like a university lecture condensed into a speech, and we keep coming back for more. It is a nice change from some other speeches that tend to be more vague, with watered-down points.

*Government Orders*

Canada's national security policy dates back to 2004. This policy does not even include the words "China" and "Russia". The government wants to counter foreign interference while being manipulated. I think the government is going about it the wrong way, which demonstrates the need to update the national security policy specifically for the purpose of countering foreign interference.

My colleague mentioned the issue of naivety, which clearly no longer applies to this government now that it has introduced Bill C-70. However, there is the issue of transparency. When it was elected in 2015, the Liberal government promised to be transparent. With the Hogue commission, we are not seeing any transparency from the government of the day.

I would like my colleague from Trois-Rivières to explain the importance and necessity of having a transparent government when it comes to releasing documents to ensure public confidence in democratic institutions in order to counter foreign interference.

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his extremely relevant question. There can be no trust without transparency, and nothing is possible without trust. Let that be our starting point.

In the past, whether it was Mr. Johnston, the special rapporteur, or the Hogue commission, it certainly took a lot of effort to get the government to co-operate. It really took a lot of force and a lot of energy, and the government fought the process tooth and nail. That was unfortunate. It did not inspire trust.

As my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby said, these matters require co-operation. There can be no hypocrisy. We have to pull in the same direction, because interference is oblivious to party colours and partisanship. Interference works against all of us here, regardless of our political stripe.

This time, I hope and believe that the government will be a little less naive and more proactive, and that it will show the transparency we need to make fair decisions amid uncertainty.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I serve with the member for Trois-Rivières on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. I can say that he is well respected and hard-working.

I am concerned that this bill will not be passed before the next election. Does the member for Trois-Rivières agree with me, my Conservative colleagues and the members of all but one of the other parties that we need to pass this bill quickly, before the next election?

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil, with whom it is always a pleasure to work.

I have to say that I was not aware of the details of how the motion was drafted. I have read it, but I was not involved in its creation. However, it is essential that this legislation come into force before the next election. That is why we are prepared to put a lot of energy into it and put other projects on hold in order to move forward and be there. Yes, the law must be implemented before the next election.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would first like to say that the NDP supports this

bill at second reading. During my speech, I am going to propose a motion that all of the parties agreed on, in the hopes that everyone will act in good faith and adopt it. I will move this important motion about halfway through my speech.

As people know, the NDP worked hard when we learned about the allegations of foreign interference. Our leader, the member for Burnaby South, was the first to raise this issue in February 2023. He asked the government to establish an independent public commission of inquiry into foreign interference. The NDP first moved that motion at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and it was adopted. The NDP then moved the motion in the House and it was again adopted. Unfortunately, the government chose instead to appoint a special rapporteur on foreign interference.

Members will recall what happened next. On an opposition day, the NDP moved a motion that called on the government to remove the special rapporteur and establish an independent public commission of inquiry. This motion was adopted in Parliament by four of the five parties. It was supported by every party except for one. A few days later, the special rapporteur, who is an honest Canadian, worthy of his name and reputation, realized that most parliamentarians did not agree with the approach proposed by the government and so he stepped down. Then, all of the recognized parties in the House initiated discussions and negotiations in good faith. At the end of the summer of 2023, Justice Hogue was chosen to lead the public inquiry into foreign interference.

This shows that when we work in good faith we can make things happen. That is what we would like to see today. We would like to see all parties to work in good faith and adopt the motion we are presenting. This motion already has the support of all the parties. It should be said that it is a motion that will require a second motion in a few days.

In principle, we would like the bill to pass second reading. I do not think that anyone is against the idea of then asking the parliamentary committee studying the bill to welcome all the necessary witnesses as early as next week in order to advance this bill. We all agree that this bill must be passed before the next election.

All it would take to adopt this motion to allow the bill to be referred to a committee is the goodwill of all members. We will test that in a few minutes.

*Government Orders*

• (1800)

[English]

In a few minutes, I will be raising the motion that we have agreed to. It means the public safety committee would be called upon to hear witnesses next week, and it would have priority for resources, which is important. Following that testimony, we will look at the bill, which we all support in principle. Obviously, members want to hear from various witnesses, as they can make a difference, of course, to the amendments that may be needed for the bill. Then we can proceed with the second UC in the coming days.

There is a really clear path, again with good faith. That is what the NDP hopes to see in a few minutes.

We know about the bill. We know that there are four parts to it, and we believe that it needs—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Speaker, I hate to intervene, but I believe the member is misleading the House at this point, because there is no agreement among the parties on the motion that he says he is going to propose. If the member is willing, I would like to propose the unanimous consent motion moved by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, but I would caution him not to mislead the House.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have not heard the contents of the motion yet, but I understand what the hon. member is saying. I do not know whether the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby can clarify the agreement—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Order. I am speaking.

The hon. member can clarify whether there is an agreement on the motion that the hon. member wants to propose.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I will move the motion, then, in the same way that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills did.

What was agreed to, he read, and then he moved into parts that were not agreed to. I will read what he and other parties have already agreed to. We would then, from that moment on, move forward with the kind of committee resources that need to be allocated to treat the bill effectively.

I will read the UC motion: That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House—

**Some hon. members:** No.

• (1805)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member does not have unanimous consent to move the motion.

We will allow the hon. member to continue his speech.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are saying no to the motion that they presented to us. That is unbelievable.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. House leader of the official opposition is rising on a point of order.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Madam Speaker, the Conservatives proposed a unanimous consent motion to make sure the bill was passed with enough time for the various government departments to implement it. What the NDP is proposing is to not have an end date. We want the bill passed.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** That may be debate.

Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to read the motion to the end?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Order.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby would like to read the motion and move the motion.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, they cannot shut me down from reading the motion, but you do have the right to then ask whether or not members of the House agree to it.

I am in the middle of my speech, so they cannot shout down the motion. I am going to read it for the record, and Conservatives will tell us then whether they agree to the motion that they drafted.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Speaker, the point is that when the member started reading the motion, we had no indication of what that motion might be. We do not agree with whatever it is. He gave no indication of what motion he was proposing.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We will let the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby put on the record what the motion is, and then we can give unanimous consent or not.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, this is the motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-70, an act respecting countering foreign interference, shall be disposed of as follows:

(a) at the expiry of the time provided for government orders later today, the bill be deemed adopted at second reading and referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security;

*Government Orders*

(b) during the consideration of the bill by the committee: (1) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings; (2) the committee shall meet for extended hours on Monday, June 3; Tuesday, June 4; Wednesday, June 5; and Thursday, June 6, 2024, to gather evidence from witnesses; (3) the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, the officials from the RCMP and CSIS, the national security adviser to the Prime Minister, the officials from the Department of Public Safety and other expert witnesses deemed relevant by the committee be invited to appear; (4) all amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 9 a.m. on Monday, June 10, 2024; and (5) amendments filed by independent members shall be deemed to have been proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

This was drafted by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I hope it will receive unanimous consent.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to present the motion?

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member does not have unanimous consent.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I am flabbergasted about the bad faith of the Conservatives in the House. They draft something, there is agreement, and then they simply refuse to pass the motion that was agreed to.

I find it unbelievable that, when we are talking about something as important as foreign interference, Conservatives would play these partisan games. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills was very clear, in speaking to the media, that the Conservatives wanted to work with other parties to get the bill through the House.

The motion I just read, which was drafted by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, would allow us to do that. It would allow for the additional resources at committee next week. It would allow for the public safety committee to hear the witnesses that all parties wanted. It would allow for a deadline on amendments, which would mean the committee would finish with its witnesses on June 6, and then Monday, June 10, at 9 a.m. would be the deadline for amendments.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills drafted it. We agreed. The member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford agreed. We have other parties agreeing. Conservatives want to block what they drafted. I am flabbergasted. I have not seen this since the Harper regime, when there was bad faith constantly from the Conservative government. We could not negotiate. I would underscore—

• (1810)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Speaker, I am going to ask for unanimous consent to table the entirety of what the member for Wellington—Halton Hills proposed in his unanimous consent motion, and not half of it, which is what the member read. I propose to table that. I am seeking unanimous consent.

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member does not have unanimous consent.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I have worked in labour negotiations, as have members of my party, such as the members for Vancouver Kingsway, Port Moody—Coquitlam, Courtenay—Alberni and Nanaimo—Ladysmith. We have all been involved in negotiations. It is not rocket science. One drafts something up, and what is agreed to is what is put forward. The member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford very clearly indicated what we agreed to, which would advance the bill. Now Conservatives are playing with it. Why are they playing with foreign interference? Why are they not negotiating in good faith?

It is very simple. What was drafted at first had all of the elements the member for Wellington—Halton Hills wanted. I have just put forward all of the elements that we very clearly communicated that we agreed to. Now Conservatives are saying that they reject what was already agreed to by the other parties. It is Conservatives who are blocking the committee resources we need for next week. They are blocking us having a deadline for amendments.

I do not understand this at all, in part because my background, like that of many of my colleagues in the NDP, is to negotiate in good faith, where what is agreed to is what we move on to. We do not agree to something and then present something different. I am stunned by what I can only see as bad faith from Conservatives on this. They told Canadians that they wanted to move forward with the other parties. We have given our consent to what I just presented, which gives ample room for further negotiations, and Conservatives say, no, they are not even going to do that.

I have a few minutes left, Madam Speaker, and I want to flag to you that I will be presenting a second UC that would have second reading deemed adopted. That would mean, hopefully, that we would have good-faith negotiations from all parties to agree on the resources that would be needed for the committee next week. As was stated in the motion that was drafted by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, increased resources are necessary. That would require a resolution of the House. Again, it is not rocket science. We need to have a UC to move that through. We have the witnesses that all parties agreed to, including other expert witnesses deemed relevant by the committee, to be invited to appear. We have an amendment deadline of 9 a.m. on Monday, June 10. We also have that key provision that independent members need to have their amendments considered as well. Otherwise, as we have seen, it complicates the report stage of the bill. All of the elements are here, and Conservatives seem to be refusing it.

As I have a few minutes left, I will try one more time, and I cannot be shouted down.

The motion states:

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That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order, or usual practice of the House, Bill C-70, an act respecting countering foreign interference, shall be disposed of as follows:

(a) at the expiry of the time provided for government orders later today, the bill would be deemed adopted at second reading and referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security;

(b) during the consideration of the bill by the committee: (1) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings; (2) the committee shall meet for—

**Some hon. members:** No.

● (1815)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I have to advise the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby that we have already heard a no.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I do have the right to finish reading this, although I understand it has not been given unanimous consent.

I am going to read the rest of it for the record because Canadians need to hear this:

(b) during the consideration of the bill by the committee: (1) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings; (2) the committee shall meet for extended hours on Monday, June 3; Tuesday, June 4; Wednesday, June 5; and Thursday, June 6, to gather evidence from witnesses; (3) the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs, the officials from the RCMP and CSIS, the national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister, the officials from the Department of Public Safety and other expert witnesses deemed relevant by the committee be invited to appear; (4) all amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 9 a.m. on Monday, June 10; (5) amendments filed by independent members shall be deemed to have been proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

Conservatives drafted that motion, and Conservatives are now saying no. That is bad faith from any standpoint. They have obviously not been involved in labour negotiations or employer-employee negotiations before because, quite frankly, that would never pass muster. It is, quite frankly, profoundly disappointing that Conservatives are refusing to agree to what was proposed to us and what we agreed to.

Madam Speaker, if you could signal when I have one minute left, I would appreciate that because I am going to read a second unanimous consent motion that this bill be deemed adopted at second reading and referred to the standing committee. At least that would permit negotiations for a second UC to provide the committee resources we will need.

I am also profoundly disappointed. We did have good faith negotiations last summer, which resulted in the Hogue commission. There was no playing around. There was a sincere attempt by all recognized parties to work together. The result, I think, is something important. The Hogue commission has made a big difference already with the interim report that was issued by the justice. We

will see a final report at the end of this year that will also chart a path.

We have to take foreign interference seriously. As the member for Trois-Rivières has said very eloquently, we all have to work together on this. That means the kind of good-faith negotiations that allow us to work through the various stages, hear from the witnesses and improve the bill to resolve the legitimate concerns that people have. We all support the intent of the bill, the principle of the bill. We need to hear from witnesses, and we need to make sure, after hearing from witnesses, that we are able to move forward. That is why we proposed, twice, an amendment deadline of June 10 at 9 a.m., which would allow us to do just that.

This is not something that should be played around with and not something that folks should be partisan about. This is something where all parties need to work in good faith together. That is why I am proposing a second motion for unanimous consent. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders later today, Bill C-70, An Act respecting countering foreign interference, be deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee Public Safety and National Security.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, we are going to have to come back to the House now that we have adopted this at second reading, as we do not have the committee resources in place. There will have to be negotiations behind the scenes. I hope that those negotiations will not be distorted by any one party in the House and that all parties will work together. Foreign interference is a threat. We all need to work together in the interests of Canada.

● (1820)

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It being 6:20 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, Bill C-70, Countering Foreign Interference Act is deemed read a second time and referred to a committee.

[English]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### FOREIGN HOSTAGE TAKERS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed from December 1, 2023, consideration of the motion that Bill C-353, An Act to provide for the imposition of restrictive measures against foreign hostage takers and those who practice arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations and to make related amendments to the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let me begin tonight's discussion by saying that I appreciate the Conservative member of Parliament for Thornhill's interest in some very important international issues that are raised in this bill, Bill C-353.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has repeatedly said, we find ourselves amidst an international security crisis. This is evident in the events unfolding around the world, which have direct impact on Canadians' day-to-day lives. Among other things, the brutal, illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine by Putin is wreaking havoc on global food and fuel prices. In the midst of that, the Conservatives have been equivocal.

The conflict between Israel and Hamas is having devastating humanitarian impacts and is inflaming tensions at home. Again, the Conservatives have been equivocal. A race for resources critical to reducing carbon pollution and to addressing the existential threat of climate change are leading to coups and conflicts across the world, including in Africa. Again, the Conservatives have been worse than equivocal. Populism, autocratic regimes, political instability and extremist leaders are driving waves of irregular migration. The Conservatives have been have a blind eye toward that.

We have been kept safe at home for generations due to a system of rules and institutions, the international rules-based order, following in the legacy of great leaders like Lester B. Pearson, Pierre Trudeau and Brian Mulroney, and that is why the Minister of Foreign Affairs has made our government's foreign policy priorities clear. We will stand up for our values every day, protecting Canadians and their interests while defending our sovereignty, and at the same time, we will be pragmatic and will engage with a broad and diverse set of other countries to address these challenges and to work toward a more stable and secure world.

Turning to the proposal at hand, at first glance, the principles underpinning this bill, Bill C-353, seem commendable. A core responsibility of any government is to protect Canadians and to keep them safe, whether at home or abroad. Our objective in hostage situations is always to protect the lives of those who are in danger. Canada should be a leader in fighting for a world free of arbitrary detention as an instrument of political pressure or for leverage between states, yet once one gives this Conservative bill a careful read, concerns become very evident. However well-intentioned this proposal is, the bill has major problems. It would actually make it more dangerous for Canadians to live and to travel abroad. This bill would conflate arbitrary detention and hostage-taking. There are different ap-

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proaches and different issues that are required for each of these situations.

Bill C-353 would also fail to make the critical distinction between terrorists and criminal hostage-taking. The motivations, pressure points and risks, including of torture or death, vary greatly. Complex situations require sophisticated responses. Each case is unique and requires a response that is tailored to the situation so that we can maximize the likelihood that the victim will return home safely to be reunited with their family and loved ones. One size does not fit all, and that kind of mandate would simply hamper the work of the safety and security of Canadians abroad who may find themselves in trouble.

For example, sanctioning criminal groups for hostage-taking would make ransom payments by families illegal, hindering families' abilities to resolve cases quickly and privately. This bill would also mandate the sharing of information with families or with Parliament, which could undermine efforts to resolve cases safely. Family dynamics can also be complex, particularly when privacy is concerned. We Canadians have the right to decide for ourselves when personal information is to be shared, particularly in situations of vulnerability. This bill, Bill C-353, would dismiss the rights of the victims who may or may not want sensitive and even traumatizing information shared with their loved ones or with others. Sharing details of the victims' circumstances, which often include distressing information, can lead to undue distress for families and loved ones. It also risks increasing the chance that they could make rash or emotionally motivated decisions that put their loved ones in greater danger.

I have been involved in a number of these cases doing consular affairs. Our objective in hostage-taking cases is to protect the lives of the hostages, and putting details into the public domain can affect the safety of hostages. Public communications relating to hostages could potentially prolong the ordeal, further endangering their lives. As it is impossible to know what a hostage has told captors to protect themselves, the emergence of details to the contrary could heighten any danger that they are in. Furthermore, exposing government's efforts to negotiate release would allow the captors to gain critical information regarding negotiation tactics as well as oftentimes sensitive government operating procedures.

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• (1825)

A third issue is that the bill, Bill C-353, is largely unnecessary. Many of its proposed provisions reflect legislation and policies that our government has already put in place. We already have the strictest and the most robust sanctions regime in the world, which allows for the application of sanctions in the event of growths in systematic human rights violations. For example, we have used these tools, updated as recently as last year, to sanction Hamas leaders involved in the horrific October 7 terrorist attack against Israel. Similarly, our Criminal Code already prohibits dealing with terrorists and authorizes the freezing of assets. Consular officials also already share information with victims' families. However, there is an appropriate and necessary discretion to tailor what, how much and when to share in these circumstances.

A fourth concern that Bill C-353 raises is the various and diplomatic challenges it presents. The bill proposes the seizure of foreign government property in Canada, which is in direct conflict with international law and could expose Canada to legal action and even reprisals. What is more, expanding consular services to permanent residents, while perhaps laudable because we have human beings' lives at stake, other loosely defined eligible individuals would expose the Government of Canada to legal and diplomatic risks.

We are a signatory to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, and we hold that clearly. It outlines our responsibilities as well as other countries' responsibilities, and we need to fall in line with the Vienna Convention. Under this convention, countries do not have obligations to share information about non-Canadians with us, and we do not want to risk that quid pro quo being a problem for Canadians.

At best, we would be reliant on diplomatic goodwill. At worst, hostile states could perceive our efforts as interference, increasing the potential of harm faced by the Canadian victim or by any victim. This could even become an irritant with our allies in the event our interventions on behalf of one of their citizens who has Canadian permanent residency is at odds with their own attempts to resolve the situation. It is the responsibility of a government to maintain the protection of its citizens and to appeal for their well-being, and we respect that.

Finally, we are concerned that the Conservative bill, Bill C-353, would propose giving cash and preferential immigration treatment to terrorist groups like Hamas. Let me unpack that for a minute. The bill would actually give an ability to support groups like Hamas to try to solicit information leading to the release of people they have in captivity. This is more than worrisome.

The MP for Thornhill has said in the house recently that, "There is a reason that Canada has a long-standing policy of not negotiating with terrorists. It is that it rewards barbarism, and worse that it provides an incentive for that barbarism to continue and even escalate." I could not agree more.

Providing cash to terrorists and criminal organizations could flood our consular officials and security agencies with volumes of false and misleading information, and it is not in the best interests of Canadians. The bill's proposal that Canada offer cash and preferential immigration treatment to bad actors, such as gangs and ter-

rorist organizations like Hamas, could provide an incentive to take Canadians hostage so that they could be leveraged as a source of revenue. Again, the bill, Bill C-353, actually increases the likelihood that Canadians could be kidnapped.

In a global security crisis, we want to keep all Canadians safe. We have launched the arbitrary detention initiative. Country after country is signing on to that. We have modernized our consular operations bureau. We have appointed a senior official for hostage affairs. We will continue to do that work with 70 other countries and the European Union, which are part of it and which have endorsed Canada's declaration on arbitrary detention. It serves as a deterrent by raising the cost that such activity incurs.

We have also taken steps to ensure better support to victims by engaging international experts and NGOs, to improve our communications with, and support for, victims and to increase post-detention care.

• (1830)

In closing, our government does not support this bill. This bill, Bill C-353, would send cash to Boko Haram, Hamas, other terrorist organizations and criminal organizations. We will continue to look at it. We will continue to operate in good faith. We want to keep Canadians safe.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to be joining this debate with respect to Bill C-353, the foreign hostage takers accountability act.

Again, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise in the House and speak not only on behalf of my constituents, but also on behalf of a lot of friends of mine from the Middle East: Kurds, Persians and a lot of Chaldeans and Arab-Iraqis and Turks, whom I know are dissidents who live in our country. Many of them had the experience of being imprisoned or detained unlawfully by a group and some of them, unfortunately, by terrorist organizations operating in the Rojava region of Syria. In one case I know of, it was a journalist who was unlawfully detained in her own country at the time. Now, thankfully, she is in Canada, and she is a Canadian citizen here, and an author. I always refer to her as the "Robert Fife of Turkey" because she was the one who broke the story that the Turkish government was allowing arms, money and weapons to flow to ISIS organizations. She was unlawfully detained. She eventually became a Canadian citizen, here in Canada.



There are countless such examples, and if what we just heard from the parliamentary secretary were true, that all of this great work is happening and that it is functioning, then Huseyin Celil, who has been unlawfully detained in the PRC since 2006, would not be there; he would be safely in Canada as a Canadian citizen and would be allowed here with his family members and with his kids. Huseyin Celil has been in prison, like I said, since 2006. He was renditioned as a Canadian citizen out of Uzbekistan to the PRC and was falsely accused of a number of charges.

I believe that the main benefit of Bill C-353, and I want to thank the member for Thornhill for having tabled such legislation, is that it would be a way to dissuade and to deter organizations. The bill would take what is policy, some regulations, some ideas and some behaviour, by what the parliamentary secretary said, and would put it into legislation and would make it functional and usable in law so that family members would know that this would actually happen.

The bill, Bill C-353, is supported by a great number of organizations across the country. There are so many examples that we can point to of Canadians who have been unlawfully detained overseas or who have been imprisoned by terrorist organization, and what they are doing is just not working as well as it should. Therefore, to me, this is an improvement. It would not wipe out what the government has already started doing. In fact, much of that is referred to in the preamble of this private member's bill. It is a recognition that there are activities, and there are things going on, but we could do so much better. We could do more for Canadians, typically of dual citizenship.

I will say that as a Canadian of dual citizenship, I deeply care about this. I happen to be from a country that today is a democratic republic and has all the rights afforded to all types of citizens, but that was not the case pre-1989. I was born in a country that was a communist country at the time, and there were no equal rights for people. There was martial law for six years. There is a reason that my family is here and that we were allowed to leave during that same martial law. In that case, there would have been unlawful detention of dual citizens as well.

I want to focus on a few other Canadians because there is another recent case, as of 2021, of one young lady who disappeared in Tehran. Her name is Behnoush Bahraminia. She is a dual citizen of Canada and had been a Vancouver resident since 2013. She disappeared in Tehran on November 6, 2021. As a dual citizen of Canada and a young lady, her parents are still very worried as to her whereabouts. They have sufficient information, which they have shared in media reports in the past, that they believe she is being unlawfully detained by the Islamic regime in Tehran. We often refer to the IRGC as a terrorist organization. In fact, the House has twice now pronounced itself as labelling the IRGC as a terrorist organization. The government's position is that the Islamic regime is a state sponsor of terror. With the little bit of Farsi that I do know, *Sepah-e Pasdaran* should be listed as a terrorist organization. I just wanted to speak up on behalf of Behnoush.

I also want to speak up on behalf of Zahra Kazemi. Very famously, she was murdered in Evin prison. She was a Canadian, a Montrealer no less. She was perhaps a professor or taught as an instructor at the same university I used to go to, Concordia University. She was murdered in Evin prison. The police chief at the time of her

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murder, who gave excuses on national television in Iran, now lives in Canada, unfortunately. I know it is quite a surprise, but he does.

● (1835)

In that particular case, again, it is an example of regimes overseas that feel there is no accountability. They are never held accountable for their actions. That is why a piece of legislation like this is necessary.

The other one I wanted to mention, because the member for Thornhill mentioned it before as well, is the case of Saeed Malekpour, a Canadian permanent resident who, while visiting his ill father, was also arrested, again in Iran, and then was subject to the death penalty. In Farsi they call it *hokm-e 'edam*, which is very commonly spoken about, because it is so common in Iran for political opponents of the regime, regardless of whether they are foreign nationals, dual citizens or citizens of the Islamic republic, to be subjected to the death penalty almost on the whims of these courts. These are, of course, not legitimate judges with deep legal educations. These are typically members of the IRGC, or these are kangaroo courts that really do not care about the rules.

If the government labels the Islamic regime, the Islamic government of Tehran, as a terror organization, then rules like this would formalize how we treat them when they unlawfully detain or arrest our citizens. This is how we should treat this regime. This is not a friendly regime to us.

I am focusing most of my commentary on Iran because I have so many people I have come to know all across the country. I want to speak on their behalf, whether they are Baloch, Kurdish from Rojhelat, Persians, Azerbaijanis or the Arabs in the very deep south-west corner in Khuzestan and other provinces, who are continuously persecuted by a regime that took over in 1979. Many governments have come to know them as state sponsors of terror. After all, this is the same regime that arms and trains Hamas. This is the same regime that arms, trains and protects Hezbollah in Syria. This is the same regime that arms, trains and helps the other Hezbollah, in Syria, among other organizations that they support on the ground. This is why so often in the news there are IRGC generals and officers who die in air strikes, whether from drones or from jets, because they are operating freely in Syria, whether in Rojava, nearer to Damascus or nearer to the Turkish-Syrian border.

This is also the same regime that operates freely and has backed the Houthis in the civil war in Yemen. They have backed them perpetually. Now, the Houthis are attacking international shipping. This type of legislation targets regimes like the Islamic regime in Iran.

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I will also remind members that this is a regime that, for decades now, has been killing its political opponents, even in Europe. There are people like Qazi Muhammad, who was murdered in Iran, but there are many others whom they target, sometimes using diplomatic immunity for this type of purpose. Sometimes they use rendition as a tool to get back these people; and sometimes, as has happened now, they target Canadian permanent residents and Canadian citizens.

There are many human rights activists who have come to Canada and found a safe place of refuge here, who continue to fight for human rights in Iran, who are the target of this regime. Most famously in North America, although she is not a Canadian citizen, I think of Masih Alinejad, who was targeted by the regime to be renditioned back to Iran to face *hokm-e 'edam*, the death penalty.

I do have a Yiddish proverb, because I am speaking of Iran, which had a historically large Jewish community. It is not Yiddish in source, though. It is this: I hope what I have spoken here is that my eyes have spoken what I have seen. It is very important to me that we reflect on this particular issue. There are many diaspora groups in Canada who self-censor, who worry. They are afraid that a regime like Iran's is not held responsible when it takes hostages and when it picks on families. People are sometimes terrified of travelling back to Iran to go to a funeral or to go to a marriage. Even though they may have come here as economic immigrants, become Canadian citizens and joined our family, they are worried what the Islamic regime would do to them in a hostage-taking exercise like that.

It is a terrorist regime. It has terrorist organizations that are part of this large octopus of terrorism. Sometimes that image is seen in caricatures of the government. Legislation like Bill C-353, holding them accountable for hostage-taking, is absolutely necessary. It formalizes a lot of what the government has been doing and does a lot more.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to my colleague. We work together on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and I enjoy working with him a lot.

I prepared a short speech tonight. I hope people are ready. It is probably one of the best speeches I will ever give in the House.

When it comes to international relations, it is hard to look away, especially considering all the headlines that Canada has been making in recent months, if not years, but sadly, not always for the right reasons.

Since the Prime Minister presumptuously declared in 2015 that “Canada is back”, the country's image has been inconsistent at best, much to the consternation of the Bloc Québécois, I would add. Stuck as it is in the confines of a Canadian province, the Quebec nation is forced to endure the federal government's bungling.

The Bloc Québécois would like to see Canada make better diplomatic decisions. One thing is certain. I have every reason to believe that a sovereign Quebec would do better than Canada when it

comes to diplomacy. I would even venture to say that it would do much better. While Canada's international relations serve its oil interests, Quebec could make a distinct commitment to responsible nations to truly fight climate change. Quebec could also be given full authority to make its immigration policies as generous as possible, taking into account its integration capacity, and obtain a seat at the United Nations.

At the risk of repeating myself, the Bloc Québécois would like to see Canada make better diplomatic decisions. Canada's relationship with China has been on a roller coaster ride ever since Canada arrested Huawei's deputy chair and China arrested the two Michaels in retaliation. It took months of pressure from the Bloc Québécois and its parliamentarians to finally set up an independent public commission of inquiry into China's interference in the Canadian electoral process.

With Bill C-353, the Conservatives claim to want to protect Canadians being used by foreign states as hostages through baseless accusations. Obviously, not to name them, this refers to the situation of the two Michaels and the saga around the deputy chair of Huawei. In fact, this type of bill would never have prevented their arrest.

Bill C-353 was introduced by the Conservative member for Thornhill. According to my colleague, the bill “would strengthen Canada's ability to deter, minimize and resolve instances of hostage-taking by increasing governmental power to levy sanctions, by establishing a family liaison office and by providing incentives for foreign co-operation.”

More specifically, the purpose of the bill is, first, “to enable the Government of Canada to take restrictive measures against foreign nationals, foreign states and foreign entities that engage in hostage taking or arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations of Canadian nationals”; second, “to ensure that families of such hostages and detained individuals receive timely information and assistance”; and third, “to encourage individuals to cooperate with the Government of Canada to secure the release of such hostages and detained individuals.”

In general, the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-353, which is to seek ways to fight against arbitrary detentions. That is why the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of Bill C-353 at second reading so that it can be studied in committee.

However, we believe that in its current form, Bill C-353 is unworkable and could lead to abuses. It is therefore crucial that we study it and propose amendments, which is entirely understandable.

Bill C-353 attempts to provide a legislative solution to an extremely complex problem that requires thorough consideration. While many of the bill's provisions look good on paper, in reality many of them could have a negative effect. Bill C-353 is too broad and lacks appropriate judicial oversight. It grants sweeping powers to the minister without any real judicial checks and balances to prevent potential abuses by the Canadian government.

Despite a number of shortcomings that can and should be corrected, I must point out that Bill C-353 relies on co-operation in trying to obtain information leading to the release of hostages. In my opinion, co-operation is critical in matters involving security and, above all, human lives.

• (1845)

I never miss an opportunity to stress the importance of collaboration in the House. If, at times, my colleagues from the other parties and I have a difference of opinion, I always prefer to seek common ground and collaborate as best I can instead of engaging in partisanship.

In politics, there are issues where partisanship certainly has no place, including when it comes to human rights or, as we say in Quebec, international human rights, in addition to security issues for the families. That is all part of it.

That is why the Bloc Québécois will support the bill at second reading. The Bloc will collaborate fully to improve the bill in committee for the good of hostages and arbitrarily detained individuals, and their families. To reiterate, we are referring the bill to committee because we support the bill in principle. We will vote and we think that it is a good idea to study the bill in committee. However, we must ensure that the study in committee goes well. We will need to make sure that there is no parliamentary obstruction to prevent the bill from going forward.

I think I said it: If human life and human rights were at issue, it would be a bit crazy to see a committee obstruct parliamentary business and get nothing done. I really hope that all my colleagues in the House will look at this bill, with its pros and cons, and see that the principle is very pertinent and that, among other things, human life is the focal point of this bill, as I was saying.

I am asking all my colleagues not only to support the principle of this bill, but also to ensure that, when it is studied at committee, we will work together, co-operate and, above all, avoid bickering over fundamental rights like human rights, the right to life and the right to security.

My colleagues are surely exhausted after hearing everything I have just said. I will conclude by thanking the member for Thornhill for bringing this bill before the House.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I caught the end of the brilliant speech given by my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean.

Like him, I support the principle of the bill before us, which was introduced by the member for Thornhill. We want to see it pass in principle, because I think it is well intentioned.

This bill seeks to fix a number of the problems noted in the past in hostage-taking situations. In principle, we welcome the initiative

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of our colleague from Thornhill. However, when we look at the various provisions of the bill, as my colleague mentioned a moment ago, we see that there are problems with enforcement. In the end, this could turn out to be a bad idea masquerading as a good one.

What matters to us is that the bill pass in principle so that it can be referred to committee and we can make the necessary amendments to try to improve it.

What is the problem? The problem is that we are biting off more than we can chew, as the saying goes. This bill seeks to resolve all sorts of problems by using the same blanket approach. However, not every situation is the same, similar or comparable, so we need different ways of resolving them. In that sense, I think that we need to avoid taking a one-size-fits-all approach. We need to avoid saying that we have a miracle solution that will apply in all cases. Unfortunately, that is what we have with this bill: a formula or framework that would have us solve the problem by applying the same process to every situation.

I am going to give a few examples to show that not all cases are the same, and that is why we need to be able to apply different measures to different cases.

I am personally associated with the case of the imprisonment of a dual British and Canadian national, William Sampson, now deceased. Some years ago, he was falsely accused by Saudi Arabia of committing an attack, along with British nationals and a Belgian national. Although he was innocent of the crime, he confessed under torture. This began a legal saga that included mistreatment, among other things. The problem in this particular case was the need to avoid attracting public attention as much as possible. In Saudi Arabia, it is imperative to avoid causing the royal family to lose face. If the royal family decided to be magnanimous toward a westerner who, in the public's mind, was guilty of wrongdoing, the gesture could obviously backfire on the royal family. As we know, the Saudi Arabian regime hinges on a delicate balance between Wahhabi Islamists and the royal family.

This is the kind of specific situation that we need to be able to take into account. We cannot say that we are going to apply same formula everywhere.

Another high-profile case in recent years involved the arbitrary imprisonment of two Canadian citizens. They were known as the two Michaels, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig. Their case was different in that moving it forward required talking it about it as much as possible. At least that is what the members of the two families told us.

• (1850)

In the case of William Sampson, family members were telling us not to talk about it and to keep it as quiet as possible so that the secret negotiations could continue.

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There have been different cases of hostage-taking by terrorist groups. There was former ambassador Fowler, who was held hostage for some time. According to public reports, a ransom was paid and he was released.

There is the more recent case of Édith Blais, who, along with her Italian spouse, was taken hostage. Again, there were negotiations involving the Italian government. It appears that, in that case, there may have been a desire to pay the ransom, but in the end the two were able to escape. She has recounted the whole saga in a book.

The circumstances of each of those four cases were very different, and the government cannot necessarily apply the same formula across the board. The government must have some latitude. The odd thing about this bill is that it gives the government a lot of latitude in some cases, maybe too much latitude. Perhaps the judiciary should be more involved. In other cases, the government is not really given any latitude.

For example, there is the idea that we should be open to paying a ransom. There is something extremely dangerous about that idea, because it would be like telling all the terrorist groups in the world that Canadians have a price. What is the price of a Canadian abroad? To what extent will the government be prepared to pay that price to get a hostage released? That said, we must also not get locked into a position where we say that we will never pay a ransom, because otherwise we will find ourselves in a situation where the lives of our fellow Canadians may be in danger.

We therefore need to give the government some latitude. I think that there are a lot of good intentions in this bill, but it seems that the road to hell is paved with good intentions and, as our colleagues say, the devil is in the details. When we look at the details of this bill, we see that there are problems. However, we do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. We want an opportunity to study the bill and improve it so that we can do better than we are doing now.

Our colleague from Thornhill put his finger on a problem. It is a fact that Canada's approach to hostage-taking and arbitrary imprisonment is not always the best or most effective, so we should be able to do better. However, I am not sure that the legislation that we have before us will necessarily enable us to respond appropriately to every situation.

Like my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean, I want to tell members of the House that the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the principle of this bill, so that we can examine it in committee and perhaps make amendments that could lead us to pass it at all the remaining stages.

If the required changes are not made, the Bloc Québécois cannot rule out withdrawing its support for this bill. That would be unfortunate because, as my colleague pointed out, it is, objectively speaking, a positive bill that seeks to improve things. It aims to enable us to intervene more effectively to preserve the life, security and health of Canadians and Quebeckers who might be held hostage by terrorist groups or by foreign governments.

That is what opens the door to the debate that I hope will allow us to improve this bill.

• (1855)

[English]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here to talk to Bill C-353.

There are a lot of moments in this place when I think about the specific challenge that we have as legislators. When we look at the human condition and what is happening in the world around us, we have to find a way to create legislation that will hopefully help and be supportive.

I will be supporting this piece of legislation to get it to committee, but I do have some concerns about it. What we need to do, of course, is the important work in committee to make sure that those concerns are addressed. Hopefully, we can see folks work together to make this the best possible bill.

This makes me think of my many years working with the newcomer community in the work that I did before being elected. I remember sitting with people who were facing the terror of having a loved one taken, not knowing what was happening to them and wondering every day whether that would be the day when they hear something that lets them know their loved one is safe. I think most of us cannot imagine what that reality would look like.

I think about the responsibility that someone who becomes an elected member of Parliament has when those things happen. We often have to sit powerless with our constituents and watch things unfold knowing that we are doing everything we can, and we still do not know what the outcome will be.

When I was reading through this particular bill, it really reminded me of a now dear friend from my riding. Her name is Jan. Hers is a completely different circumstance, but it resonates with me given the similarity.

I remember her chasing me down in a change room. One of the fun things about being a politician that I do not think people always hear about is that when we become public figures, sometimes we have the most interesting conversations in the oddest places. Jan's granddaughter was stolen. She was in another country and they were trying everything they could to get her home. It was terrifying for that family, because they did not know if she was safe and she was very young. I remember, in that moment, thinking to myself that if I was a grandmother having this experience, I would also follow somebody into a change room to make a difference for my loved one.

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I really appreciate deeply the intention of this bill, but I have some clear questions about providing PR for informants and their dependents. I think we really need to address the issue of exploitation and how we can keep these people safe in those circumstances. It is so important that when people are in a vulnerable state, when they are afraid and when they are stressed by political interference, unlike anything most Canadians ever experience, we keep them as safe as possible.

We need to be talking about sufficient supports for the families of victims. We need to make sure that when they are going through some of these vulnerable times, the supports are there. We may think they are there, but I can promise that a lot of the supports are not. People are left to wrestle with profound agony and pain, and the supports are not there to help them move forward.

We have to look at some of these important things. Which incentive programs would the minister create? Should hostage-taking and arbitrary detention be put together? There are some questions that I definitely have as we go through this process, and I look forward to having meaningful conversations and making sure that we have experts. Again and again in this place, one of the things that I am really grateful for as an MP is that we do not have to be experts. We can have experts come in, walk us through these really challenging things and provide feedback that helps us make really good decisions.

● (1900)

It makes me think of the work that I do in my riding, because one of the things I have been provided with is expertise from my own riding on particular issues. I learn so much from constituents as they guide me with their expertise. In these particular issues that are very complex and far-reaching, we need to make sure that there are no unintended consequences. What we do not want to see, of course, is legislation put in place, some serious unintended consequences happening, and then our being behind the ball trying to get that dealt with.

I think we are all very apprised of what is happening in Israel and in Palestine. There is a lot of agony and pain. It does remind me of my dear friend Mary, who fled Germany during the time of the Holocaust, how she survived and that so many of her family members did not. She told me that she did not believe in God anymore but that she still prayed for peace every day. When I look at the piece of legislation before us, I just think about her intention, what she did to help herself go through such a hard crisis, to lose so much.

I think we all have to remember that when we cannot find solutions that are peaceful, the price is far too high. Part of this, of course, is knowing that there are people who have been taken hostage and that someone is waiting again and again for when they are released, to hear their name. I was reading some articles about some people who have had their loved ones taken in Gaza as hostages. Every time people are released, they are holding their breath, hoping that their loved one's name is on the list. When we look at these things, I think we have to remember that we must do all we can to create peace and that we must do all we can to find safety for all people, and that we should pray for peace unceasingly.

I think the bill needs a bit of work. It needs a little bit of study. I think the experts will be very helpful. We know that there are some good recommendations from the New Democrats that date back to a foreign affairs study in 2018. The report was called "Strengthening the Canadian Consular Service Today and for the Future". It sought to prove instances of hostage-taking that have not been fully incorporated in the bill. We might be able to look at some of those things and hear from the experts.

Things like creating a mechanism to track the extent to which consular services meet service standards and meaningfully improving communications with families are absolutely key; we need to make sure that families are kept up to date as much as possible. This is the most terrifying period of their lives, most likely, and keeping them informed in a really practical way would make a big difference.

As for the decriminalization of private payment of ransom, I think of the people whom I love the most, and if I had a dollar to pay for their lives, I think I would do it. We need to really bring this back to the humanity.

I will be supporting the bill. New Democrats will be supporting the bill. We will hope to see some really good and strong work in committee to make it a stronger bill, to make sure that there are no unintended consequences that would have a poor impact on people who are facing these realities.

I just want to send my love out to everyone who has ever had this experience or is living through it right now. We have to remember, in all of the work that we do, that humanity is at the core of it. It is hard sometimes, when we are divided, to find our common humanity. I think it is important that we remember how human, how vulnerable and how scared people are, and not silence people but bring together the places where we can be human.

● (1905)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate many of the comments made this evening. I listened very closely to the parliamentary secretary, and a couple of thoughts crossed my mind. Sometimes I think we might be putting the cart ahead of the horse. Members of the Bloc and the NDP say that if the bill goes to committee, they have lots of concerns about what is in the legislation. The parliamentary secretary talked about what we have in place already and how the proposed legislation, Bill C-353, could in fact cause a harmful outcomes for hostages.

At the very least, what might have been nice would have been for a standing committee to look at the issue in its entirety and possibly come back to the House with recommendations as to how we might be able to give strength to the legislation and, ultimately, protect all the different interests that were highlighted by my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, who is responsible for public safety and deals with foreign affairs on so many occasions. He has done an outstanding job representing Canadians in many different types of situations.

*Private Members' Business*

When I look at the private member's bill before us, those are the types of concerns I have. I do not believe that we should send the bill to committee, based on the arguments that were presented. We need to recognize that we stand up, first and foremost, for Canadian values. We need to protect Canadians and their interests and work with other like-minded countries. We all want a more stable and secure world; that is one of the reasons Canada is working with allied countries in order to deal with some of these very complicated issues. Our laws, through time, are modified and given strength, which reflect our values, what other allied countries are doing and the best practices taking place.

There were a couple of things the parliamentary secretary referred to. One of them is how the bill would mandate the sharing of information. Information is so critically important and can be a deciding factor in many ways in the outcome of a hostage-taking situation. If there were certain legal mandates that compel information, that information could ultimately compromise a negotiation that is taking place. What we are really talking about is the lives of Canadians.

At the end of the day, I do not have any interest in being involved in high-stakes negotiations and having to deal with individuals who have taken hostages. We see this virtually every day on the news lately with regard to Hamas and what is taking place in the Middle East. I hear that if this particular legislation were to pass in the manner it is proposed today, we would be providing incentives for people kidnap or hold people as hostages as a way to derive cash or be given some sort of preferential treatment to come to Canada. That goes against what possibly even the member wanted to be in the legislation.

● (1910)

That is the reason I would say the legislation, on that one aspect in itself, raises a lot of flags, and we should all be concerned. When one talks about providing incentives for someone to ultimately kidnap or about providing information or mandating its being released, when it could ultimately compromise someone's life, I have a difficult time with that.

What I have not heard in any of the discussions and the debates I have listened to is anything that is very clear about how the legislation would help in a way that would not come back to hurt the victims and their families. There is a certain amount of discretion necessary in the releasing of information, as an example. We have to go out of our way to ensure that we are not providing any form of an incentive for people to be kidnapping Canadians or holding them as hostages.

● (1915)

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, all the comments over the course of the bill's presentation deserve more than five minutes, and I am glad that I will be able to do that at committee.

It is unfortunate that the member for Don Valley West did not read the bill or simply did not understand it, because none of those arguments are actually in the bill. Therefore, I will not bother with that.

I want to clarify that the bill was put forward not as a critique of the government or its existing policies but as a next step forward in the natural evolutionary development of laws that are necessary in the terrifying new reality of this world. This is something we are going to face, and the bill would sharpen existing mechanisms to meet the moment in our own country. In many cases, laws evolve from generalized existing provisions, which often fall short in contending with the evolution of the problem, to become more targeted. That is exactly what the bill would do.

Sometimes, our laws have been a product of motions or other declaratory statements that, to be effective, eventually had to find their way into specific laws. As a case in point, prior to 2001, there was no crime related to terrorist activity in our Criminal Code. However, in 2001, Canada passed the ATA, which recognized a whole new series of provisions related to terrorism, which would become one of the greatest challenges in our lifetime. Similarly, international law had only developed its own specialized terrorism provisions over the last decades, which it did for the same reasons: Terrorism had evolved, and the existing frameworks needed to be specifically recalibrated to address the enormity of the threat.

Often, when these newly targeted provisions are introduced, the question inevitably arises of whether they are really needed. The question came up here a couple of times. However, the House has often adopted a targeted approach to current problems as a first step in a long process of legislative development. In my opinion, it has done so correctly. This is actually what we do here. Therefore, whether we are dealing with terrorism, sexual assault, minority rights or drunk driving, our system has only benefited from more targeted legislation, which ensures that there is better prevention, deterrence and punishment.

Bill C-353 is actually premised on new hostage-related initiatives that are currently being undertaken by our government in an effort to improve Canada's capacity for dealing with the ravages of hostage diplomacy. This has, frankly, upended international world order, specifically, in the last number of months. It was the current government that actually took the step in launching the declaration. The bill before us would strengthen that and sharpen those tools. It would give the senior official for hostage affairs, a lead in consular services who is now concerned with this, more tools in order to do her job, or maybe his job in the future.

The bill would go a step further. It would legislate and impose consequences for perpetrators, create mechanisms for bringing our hostages home and provide better assistance for the families caught in these nightmare scenarios. There is certainly recognition, both by government and our allies that developed a robust legislative response to hostage-taking, that there is a new threat on the horizon, which needs to be addressed concretely.

Some in this chamber have asked whether the legislation would have prevented the hostage taking of the two Michaels. I am not sure. No bill is a silver bullet that would cover the plethora of contingencies or different kinds of cases. I will say, as was correctly noted by the senior official who was appointed in the Department of Foreign Affairs, or Global Affairs Canada, Julie Sunday, that no two hostage cases are the same. However, undoubtedly, in a multitude of scenarios, Bill C-353 would provide better tools to respond to a wide swath of possibilities. Obviously, they would do so in concert with other tools available to the government.

I look forward to seeing the bill go to the next stage at committee. I thank my colleagues in the Bloc and the NDP for actually reading it.

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

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.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 5, 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*]

### CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC):** Madam Speaker, several weeks ago, I asked a question about Red Seal training programs in correctional institutions. The answer seemed unsatisfactory, so I am providing further details today about issues that I think ought to be dealt with.

There is no question that proper training, in a trade for which there is a market demand, helps incarcerated individuals to find employment upon their release. There is also no doubt that, when a former inmate finds employment, it reduces recidivism.

This is why Corrections Canada follows a mandate of “assisting the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.”

The programs are reasonably understood to include educational programs, programs that give job skills and programs that allow individuals to become productive members of society, thus the terms “correctional” facilities and “penitentiaries”. It is the idea that one

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

is not being locked away forever but rather is being prepared, upon having done one's time, to be a productive member of society.

Our net results in Canada are singularly unimpressive. Offenders who have received training within our system have a recidivism rate that is no better than those who have not. To me, this suggests that our job training certification programs in our correctional institutions here in Canada must not be doing a very good job of giving our inmates verifiable, certifiable skills.

It is odd, then, to learn that our system has produced an impressive 112,000 vocational training certificates over four years, starting in 2020 and ending at the end of last year. With this in mind, I filed an Order Paper question about the details, and I received some interesting responses.

I asked: How many certificates have been issued, broken down by region, over the past five years? What are the top categories of certification? How many provincial apprenticeship programs are engaged? How many Red Seal apprenticeship programs are engaged?

I will tell members the depressing results. Out of 112,181 certificates issued in 2020 through 2023, only 64 were for actually achieving a certified vocational Red Seal-approved apprenticeship program. There were zero provincial apprenticeship programs outside of the Red Seal program. The most common vocational programs were for WHMIS, which is the workplace hazardous materials information system; for working at heights; and for ISO 9001 training, for a total of about 17,000 certificates.

I looked into this, and these certifications are not properly understood as being meaningful certifications. They are, in fact, just one-day programs. The WHMIS program can be purchased for \$7.95. That is not a very serious program.

I think this explains why, when I look to *Out of Bounds* magazine, a prisoner-published publication, I see the following comment from an inmate: “these generic skills don't qualify as job readiness skills on a resume. These are prerequisites of any job applicant in the same way appropriate dress and good personal hygiene are implicitly understood.” That is unsatisfactory.

Why is more not being done?

• (1925)

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House this evening to speak about the positive benefits offered by the Correctional Service of Canada's employment and employability programming.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Employment programs and services help build essential services and skills related to employment while connecting offenders with resources to assist them in finding community employment after release. The benefits associated with correctional programming have long been demonstrated. In fact, going back a decade, research has noted a direct connection between employment and positive reintegration results upon release.

We know that those inmates who participate in CORCAN employment programs while incarcerated are more likely to be granted parole and get jobs in their communities. Also, offenders under community supervision are less likely to return to crime. Without the holistic approach of the CORCAN program, offenders would not be in a good position to find employment.

In addition, community programming works to save Canadians money. The daily cost of maintaining the inmates in prison amounts to six figures annually. When an inmate can be safely returned to their community and find employment, they are working to support themselves financially. They are required to pay taxes, and they no longer incur, of course, a six-figure cost to the Canadian public. This is why I am very happy to note that there has been a year-over-year increase in the opportunities for inmates to undertake Correctional Service Canada programming.

In the fiscal year 2022-23, employment coordinators, including staff and contractors, directly assisted offenders under community supervision to obtain over 2,000 community job placements, and it is estimated that job placement levels will be maintained in 2023-24.

In 2022-23, on-the-job training opportunities were provided for over 2,600 offenders within one of CORCAN's five business lines, and in 2023-24, another 2,600 offenders benefited from the on-the-job training. I am proud to note that a total of over 16,000 vocational training certificates were earned by inmates of all backgrounds in 2022-23, and in 2023-24, there was a significant increase in vocational training, representing over 22,000 certificates.

In the apprenticeship program, offenders have the opportunity to register, accumulate hours and take block training to become Red Seal journeymen in a specific trade. Since September 2020, a total of 147 offenders participated in apprenticeship programs, of which 64 have completed their certification, with many of them continuing on.

Correctional Service Canada has formed partnerships directly with indigenous communities to further increase project availability and to provide indigenous offenders with additional job training.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Madam Speaker, amidst all that, the parliamentary secretary made the point in his final remark that I was trying to make: 64 individuals over a four-year period got Red Seal certification. I can work out the math myself. This is about 20 people or less per annum in their entire system. There are about 10,000 incarcerated individuals in Canada. That is pathetic. I know there are other things the government is doing, and they are helpful and useful in their own small way, but someone is not going to get a job if they do not have a definable skill with an objective external certification, and 64 out of 10,000 over a four-year period is a disaster of a program.

The parliamentary secretary is trying to talk about thousands of certificates for one-day programs. They are not useless, but they are not something that is going to get anyone a job. That is why our recidivism rate is no better for those who complete these programs than for those who do not.

● (1930)

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Madam Speaker, as stated, correctional interventions work to provide meaningful employment and employability program opportunities for offenders, increasing the likelihood of safe and successful reintegration. As part of this, CSC works with partners in the academic, private and not-for-profit sectors to access learning materials that mirror those available to the general public and to develop courses online with community employment standards.

These resulting vocational certificates are issued in most cases by a third party. This certificated work is to provide offenders with the support, referrals and services to address their employment needs and contribute to their ability to find and maintain employment. For Canadians, there are benefits to having safer communities: less repeated crime and additional workforce availability for inmates.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

**Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, on May 9, I asked the government if it was concerned that pro-Hamas entities in Canada are funnelling money to support an illegal encampment at the University of Toronto. Unfortunately, it is very sadly telling of the naïveté of the government that my question touching on an issue of public safety, of foreign interference and foreign financing of an illegal pro-terrorist occupation of a university campus was answered not by the Minister of Public Safety, not by the Minister of Global Affairs and not even by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, but by the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion.

Who is the Liberal government trying to include here? Is it Samidoun, which has been on B.C. campuses? This is a registered Canadian non-profit with a direct affiliation to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a listed terrorist organization since 2003. Is it Hamas or the IRGC, which murdered 55 Canadians on board flight PS752 and is able to continue to operate on Canadian soil with impunity because the government has been too cowardly to designate the IRGC as the terrorists they are? Who is the government trying to include?



*Adjournment Proceedings*

The encampments set up at university campuses across Canada are not representative of peaceful protests. In the case of the U of T encampment, it is an illegal occupation comprising mostly external demonstrators for hire who are not even students at the university. Moreover, the vitriolic, hate-filled comments and signs at this site are nothing but anti-Semitic propaganda aimed to intimidate and threaten legitimate U of T students.

We are seeing the normalization of hate and anti-Semitism. Students are being subjected to death threats and assaults. Just yesterday, I was at OCAD University with Samantha Kline. Samantha is suing OCAD because of its inaction. OCAD chose to turn a blind eye to the death threats that Samantha was receiving, and OCAD chose to ignore the threats of sexual violence toward Samantha's mother. I guess I should not have been surprised when I saw that a group claimed it was from OCAD and supported the illegal encampment at U of T. This is not normal, but it is rapidly becoming the new norm in our country.

These types of peaceful protests are anything but peaceful. They are certainly not a reflection of the Canada we aspire to be. Enough is enough. Governments at all levels must be seen to take action to restore the safety of our educational institutions and indeed our streets. These sham protests are being funded by shadowy pro-Hamas entities that are supporting a listed terrorist organization. Also, the government, in choosing to ignore violence, threats, anti-Semitic slogans and other forms of hate propaganda, is making a complete mockery of Canada's laws.

I want to ask the parliamentary secretary whether it is government policy to turn a blind eye to the violent protests abetted by Hamas supporters. If so, perhaps the government is unaware that when an ostrich sticks its head in the sand, its most vulnerable part sticks out.

I will ask this again. Is there any concern by the government over what is happening on our campuses and streets? Are there any investigations being conducted by the RCMP or our security service agencies? Also, what exactly does it take for mob rule to overtake the rule of law? How far will government go to ignore what is going on? If Canada supposedly has hate propaganda laws, what is required for such laws to be enforced? Is it the government's strategy to just duck its responsibility and pass the buck to other levels of government to handle until these sham protests go away, or does someone have to die before the government finally acts?

● (1935)

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for bringing up these important issues.

Standing up against hate is a fundamental Canadian principle that every member of the House stands firmly behind. We as a government also have this principle firmly embedded in our mission and mandate. It includes standing up against the recent rise of anti-Semitism. Everyone in this country has a right to live free of discrimination, no matter who they are.

[*Translation*]

Our government is taking meaningful measures to protect the Jewish communities from hate and discrimination. We have invested more than \$200 million in Canadian anti-racism strategies. Budget 2024 proposes \$173 million for Canada's very first action plan on combatting hate.

[*English*]

These programs provide crucial funding to support community projects that fight racism and hate. More than that, we must support work that is led by and shepherded by communities. It is through the work of intercultural and interfaith discussion that we find compassion and understanding for each other. It is by learning about one another that each of us is able to find common ground. Through this, we can also melt barriers. By promoting multiculturalism, we strengthen our society. That is what Canada is, and each and every member of the House stands firmly behind respect for diversity and addressing discrimination.

[*Translation*]

Canada's action plan on combatting hate is an important step toward a safer and more inclusive Canada.

[*English*]

Canada's action plan on combatting hate will support community outreach and law enforcement. It will tackle the rise in hate crimes. It will enhance community security. It will counter radicalization. It will increase support for victims.

To enhance our effort in combatting anti-Semitism, our government appointed Deborah Lyons as Canada's new special envoy on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting anti-Semitism. Engaging with communities on current issues and creating community-informed solutions are core aspects of the special envoy's mandate. To further support the special envoy in her work at home and abroad, we have increased her resources by an additional \$7.3 million. This money will help her in her work.

Canada is a multicultural society built on the principles of inclusion and respect for diversity. We have learned that our differences do not have to divide us. Our government remains steadfast in combatting all forms of hate, racism, discrimination, intolerance and, in particular, anti-Semitism. All of us in the House are united in that.

**Mr. Kevin Vuong:** Mr. Speaker, I have immense respect for the parliamentary secretary as a person, but citing the amount of money being thrown at the problem is not enough because we see the efficacy of this government's efforts. What it is doing is not good enough, and unfortunately, what it is doing is not working.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The safety and security of Canadians are first and foremost a responsibility of the Canadian government, yet one need only look at campuses across this country or speak to anyone from the Jewish community and, increasingly, non-Jewish Canadians to know that safety is top of mind for everyone, alongside the challenges of affordability and the cost of living. What this government is doing and continuing to propagate by sharing the same talking points is not going to make us any safer.

Is anyone investigating what is happening at these encampments and will the government take action? What will it take?

• (1940)

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Mr. Speaker, these are important matters. We must be discussing in the House the issues of discrimination, making sure that each and every Canadian is safe, secure and welcomed in each and every place in society.

Our government is committed to combatting hate in all its forms. We are committed to ensuring that everybody is safe at home, on the streets, in places of worship and in our communities. Budget 2024 proposes \$273.6 million to combat hate. This includes \$20.2 million for the hate crimes task force. It also includes \$25 million for anti-hate programming and promoting intercultural ties and community-based activities.

We have many initiatives that address discrimination and anti-Semitism. We are committed to supporting Canadians and the betterment of society.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep bending over backwards for their friends in oil and gas. The Globe and Mail has multiple sources confirming that the Minister of Finance was considering a windfall tax on oil and gas in this budget, but then backed down in the face of strong lobbying from oil patch executives and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

If anyone was wondering whose side the Liberals are on, they are clearly not on the side of Canadians, who are facing unprecedented climate disasters, with wildfires, flooding and multi-year droughts. They are clearly not on the side of future generations, which deserve a climate-safe future, a future where ecosystems are not collapsing, where our food systems are not threatened. They are not on the side of farmers or indigenous communities, who are on the front lines of the climate crisis. They are on the side of big oil and gas. When the oil and gas lobby asks, there is almost nothing the Liberals will not do. They will buy a pipeline. They will water down key climate policies. They even invited oil and gas CEOs to help them craft their climate plan. That is like inviting the fox to help design the henhouse.

Once again, when there is a sound policy to tax the excess profits of oil and gas companies, something that the majority of Canadians are in support of, to disincentivize price gouging and fund climate solutions that would make life more affordable for Canadians, the Liberals side with the CEOs, who are fuelling the climate crisis while raking in record profits. As for the Conservatives, they cannot even agree if climate change is real. Canadians are getting delays and disappointment with the Liberals, and climate change de-

nial with the Conservatives. Consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments have put us in the position we are in now, where we have missed every single climate target.

When will the government implement a windfall tax on oil and gas? It is time to choose: Will the Liberals stand with Canadian families or will they continue to side with big oil?

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in tonight's debate on this very important topic.

The member is correct in that we must act on transitioning Canadian industry towards a sustainable green economy as well as make sure that those who pollute pay their fair share.

This is generational: ensuring that we build the economy of the future, both with investments in key transitional sectors of the economy, as well as developing a fair tax base so that we are able to make these key investments in a fiscally responsible way.

Last month, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance announced bold actions in budget 2024 to build a fairer future. We firmly believe that, at a time when middle-class Canadians are struggling to get ahead, when their hard work is not paying off, it is necessary for the government to improve the fairness of Canada's tax system. This means asking the wealthiest Canadians to contribute a bit more so that we can make investments to ensure a fair chance for every generation.

Since taking office, we have reduced taxes for the middle class while implementing measures to ensure that the wealthiest individuals and corporations are contributing their fair share. One way we propose to do that is by increasing the inclusion rate on capital gains realized annually above \$250,000 by individuals and all capital gains realized by corporations and trusts from one-half to two-thirds effective June 25, 2024. Of course, principal residences will continue to be exempt from capital gains. It is expected that this new measure will generate more than \$19 billion in new revenues over the next five years. This is new money that will be available to help fund the green transition.

*Business of Supply*

We have also permanently increased the corporate income tax rate by 1.5% on bank and insurance company groups in Canada and introduced a one-time Canada recovery dividend of 15% on the largest bank and insurance company groups. In addition, we have introduced a 2% tax that applies on the net value of share buybacks by public corporations throughout the country, and we have implemented a luxury tax on private jets and luxury cars priced over \$100,000 and boats priced over \$250,000. To further increase fairness, our government proposed to modernize the alternative minimum tax to ensure that the wealthiest Canadians do not avoid paying their fair share through the significant use of deductions, credits and other tax preferences. This is just a small part of our plan.

Tax fairness is being coupled with creating an investment environment that will attract foreign investment in key sectors, which will help Canada grow into the next sustainable economy of the future. Canada is at the forefront of the global race to attract investment and seize the opportunities that the global transition to net zero presents.

I hope the member opposite saw the announcement our government made with Honda. The \$15-billion investment in Canada was made possible, not only by Honda, but in partnership and in line with our government's investment in the clean economy.

• (1945)

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Speaker, this week I met with members of the Mikisew Cree First Nation who have been calling for a health study for their community for decades. They are seeing rare forms of cancer in their community in unprecedented proportions that should be unheard of. The government could fund that health study, it could invest in protecting the communities impacted by the oil sands and by the corporate greed that we are seeing across this country, but it is choosing not to. It could be giving every low- and middle-income Canadian a heat pump, but it is choosing not to.

If the Liberals are choosing not to, because, as they are saying, there are fiscal restraints, well then tax the big oil and gas companies that are burning our planet, poisoning the water and fuelling the climate crisis that we are in. When will the government implement a tax on the biggest corporations, the big oil and gas companies?

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing.

Our government understands that it remains hard for many Canadians to make ends meet, and that is why we are still supporting those who need it most. As was clear in the 2024 budget, we remain committed to increasing tax fairness in Canada, as well as the investments in the most needed areas. Thanks to the actions we are taking, not only with respect to fairness, but as well by contributing and investing in those areas, Canadians can count on this government. They can count on our government to continue looking at ways to improve the fairness of the tax system and supporting Canadians who need it most. We are going to continue to make those investments based on the revenue that we are collecting and ensure that no one is left behind.

• (1950)

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn, and the House will now resolve itself into the committee of the whole to study all votes under Department of Health in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2024-25

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Department of Health in the main estimates, Mr. Greg Fergus in the chair)

**The Speaker:** The House is now in committee of the whole to consider all votes under Department of Health in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

[*English*]

Today's debate is a general one on all votes under the Department of Health. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

[*Translation*]

Each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time. This time may be used for both debate and for posing questions. Members wishing to use this time to make a speech have a maximum of 10 minutes, which leaves at least five minutes for questions to the minister. When a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used, in other words, how much time will be used for speeches and how much time will be used for questions and answers.

Also, pursuant to order made earlier today, members who wish to share their time with one or more members shall indicate this to the Chair, and the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

When the time is to be used for questions and comments, the minister's response should approximately reflect the time taken by the question, since this time will count toward the time allocated to the member.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the time provided for the debate tonight may be extended beyond four hours as needed to include a minimum of 16 periods of 15 minutes each. I also wish to indicate that, in committee of the whole, comments should be addressed to the Chair. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

We will now begin tonight's session, starting with the hon. member from Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start out by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Cumberland—Colchester and the member for South Surrey—White Rock.

I would like to direct all my questions to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

How many people die due to overdose in British Columbia every day, on average?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the national average since 2016 is 42,000 deaths. The average across the country is 22 deaths per day.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, six die every day in British Columbia.

What is the leading cause of death of British Columbian youth aged 10 to 18?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, according to current data, it is drug overdose.

• (1955)

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, what is the leading cause of death in British Columbia for those between 10 and 59?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, 86% of overdose deaths have been shown to be as a result of the illicit toxic drug supply.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, what is the percentage increase in overdose deaths in Canada after nine years?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, current data shows that 86% of overdose deaths are due to the toxic drug supply.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is 166%.

There are around 50 million safe supply hydromorphone pills prescribed in British Columbia every year. How many of those are acceptable to be diverted into the hands of drug dealers who are profiting off the death of Canadians?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, diversion is illegal in all parts of the country, including all prescribed medications.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, is the answer zero?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the member knows diversion is illegal.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, is the answer zero?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP has indicated there has been no increase in the data over the past decade.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, how much diversion is acceptable to the minister?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, zero is acceptable. It is illegal.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, has decriminalization been successful in British Columbia?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, yes, the number of people who have been arrested rather than being diverted to health services has—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, then why did the minister grant British Columbia's request to effectively ban public drug use in most places?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, we responded to B.C.'s request for an amendment.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, why did it take the minister 11 days to respond to their request?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, it was responsible action.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, why not just end it altogether?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, we require a full suite of tools to address the overdose crisis.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, how is the minister measuring success in B.C.'s decriminalization?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, we are measuring success by the decreased number of arrests and referrals to health services.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, leading addiction physicians from across Canada have written several letters demanding the minister make all safe supply programs witnessed and recovery-focused, or shut them down. Will the minister follow the advice from these experts?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I met with many experts, with different advice and many different opinions. We listened to them and took mitigation measures where needed, and we will continue to work to make sure it is safe.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, protocols have been put in place to allow so-called safe supply of fentanyl to children under 18 without parental consent or knowledge. Will the minister clearly stand against fentanyl ever being given recreationally to children, yes or no?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, no child has been prescribed fentanyl. Alternatives are prescribed through a relationship between a physician and their patient, and will be done under strict advisement.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, will you stand up against recreational fentanyl to children, yes or no?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The member should be directing her questions through you. She said, “Will you”, asking a question directly of the minister. Perhaps you could remind the House.

**The Speaker:** The member has done it effectively, and I am certain the hon. member did not mean much by it.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, will the minister stand up against recreational fentanyl to youth, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, recreational fentanyl is illegal, and we have law enforcement to do that.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has the power to say no to this. Will she, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, law enforcement places its role in the illegal toxic drug supply.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these questions will be directed to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions as well.

Is her government looking to fund the so-called safe supply of cocaine?

• (2000)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all medication is under the CDSA, with strict regulations.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, is the NDP-Liberal government looking at allowing the so-called safe supply of cocaine?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, prescribed alternatives are under the strict advisement of experts and physicians with their patients.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, is the NDP-Liberal government looking to fund the so-called safe supply of heroin?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, all medications are regulated under the CDSA, and prescriber models, per province, are in place.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, is the NDP-Liberal government looking at allowing the so-called safe supply of heroin?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, prescribed alternatives are a relationship between the physician and their patient. There are strict regulations around it.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, could the minister explain to Canadians what the company called Fair Price Pharma is?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, it is a private company in British Columbia.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, could the minister confirm or deny if this company, Fair Price Pharma, has a dealer's licence for heroin?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, it does not at this time.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, could the minister confirm or deny that Fair Price Pharma has an importation licence for heroin?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, we will have to refer to officials to answer that question.

**The Speaker:** I would like to let hon. members know that, when there is time used for consultation, it is not taken away from the time of the member to pose their questions.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell Canadians how much heroin Fair Price Pharma has imported into Canada?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, that is a question to refer to officials.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, oddly enough, the answer is 15 kilograms. Can the minister tell Canadians when this 15 kilograms of heroin was imported into Canada?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, this is a question for officials.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister would like to tell Canadians that it was in November 2021.

Could the minister tell us if the minister has ever met with someone named Perry Kendall?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I have not.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware that Perry Kendall is the founder of Fair Price Pharma?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I am not engaged with Fair Price Pharma, but to my knowledge, he is.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, does the minister believe heroin should be distributed via vending machines?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, no, I do not.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, does the minister believe the distribution of so-called safe supply via vending machines is indeed safe?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, there are strict mitigation rules around prescribed alternatives.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister did not hear the question, but could the minister tell Canadians if the minister believes that the distribution of so-called safe supply via vending machines is indeed safe?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, all prescribers are under strict regulatory bodies for medication and treatment to their patients.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, is this so-called safe supply via vending machines safe, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, high levels of regulatory risk mitigation are in place for all programs by prescribers.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell Canadians if the MySafe project received \$3.5 million in grants?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the funding to that project was discontinued.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister could confirm that \$3.5 million was indeed given to the MySafe project.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, it was funded for several years and then discontinued. The exact number would have to be referred to officials.

• (2005)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, could the minister confirm how many former B.C. health officials have gone on to found a pharmaceutical company aimed at drug dealing?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of that.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, does the minister believe that it is appropriate for former public health officials to profit off the distribution of drugs and selling to the government they used to work for?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I do not deal in hypotheticals.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my questions will all be for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Does the minister agree that hospitals should be safe places where patient care is a priority?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree that hospitals should be a safe place where patients receive care.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, a B.C. nurse was told not to breastfeed her child in case her milk was contaminated by drugs she was exposed to at work. As a parent, does the minister find this acceptable?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, parents want all places to be safe.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, five nurses on one shift were so sick that they had to be sent to emergency because of exposure to fentanyl smoke. Does the minister find this acceptable?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, all hospitals should be safe places for those who work there. We have passed legislation to protect health workers and provinces have the same responsibilities to regulate hospitals.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, would the minister say if nurses should be exposed to fentanyl smoke in the workplace, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, we have passed legislation to ensure workplace safety, including for hospitals, that is regulated by the province. We have ensured there is legislation for health workers to be safe.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, yet that did not happen under the minister in the exemption she granted to British Columbia.

Should nurses be exposed to meth smoke in their workplace, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the member well knows that health services are under the purview of provincial jurisdiction for safety and enforcement.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, it is in fact a combined jurisdiction.

Would the minister agree or not agree that nurses should be afraid they might be stabbed with a knife in their workplace?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I believe all members agree that workplaces, including hospitals, should be safe.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, a leaked B.C. Northern Health memo told nurses to stop confiscating weapons from patients and to permit the use of hard drugs in their rooms. Is the minister aware of this?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, hospitals and law enforcement are under provincial jurisdiction to ensure safe workplaces. We, of course, support the enforcement of safe workplaces for health workers.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, does the minister confirm or deny that she granted an exemption to the province of B.C., at the request of that government, to allow these kinds of hard drugs to be used in public places, including hospitals.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the request by B.C. for the subsection 56(1) exemption had a clear mandate of public safety and public health. That is how we work collaboratively with the B.C. government.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer my question. Did she in fact grant an exemption at the request of the B.C. government that allowed for hard drug use, unprescribed and unsupervised, in hospitals in British Columbia?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the B.C. exemption, which was requested by the province, has been amended, as per its request, to ensure that public safety is a top priority as well as ensuring public health services.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, when did the minister sign that exemption?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member needs to be clear about which amendment.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, when did the minister sign the exemption that allowed for hard drug use in public spaces, including hospitals, in British Columbia?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the exemption was signed under my predecessor.

• (2010)

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I introduced the safe hospitals act, which would ban the minister or any succeeding minister from allowing open, unprescribed and unsupervised hard drug use in hospitals.

Does the minister agree that this is common sense?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the commitment is to work collaboratively with provinces and territories, with their jurisdictions and the responsibilities under their purview, which include health services, safety and law enforcement.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to supporting the safe hospitals act, and if not, why not?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate.

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise. I am going to be splitting my time with the Minister for Mental Health and Addictions.

I want to start by simply thanking the officials who are here today, not only for their presence, but also for the incredible work that they do on behalf of Canadians every day. The Public Health Agency of Canada and, indeed, everyone at Health Canada did an extraordinary job during the pandemic, helping us have one of the best pandemic responses anywhere in the world, and they continue to help lead the way in overhauling our health system and meeting the challenges that confront a modern health system.

I speak of the pandemic, and that was a time that was so challenging for so many, particularly for those within the health workforce. I want to acknowledge, in particular, those within the Public Health Agency and within Health Canada. In that period of time, there was a lot of hope that, coming out of the pandemic would mean that things would be getting easier, but of course, the reality is that we had wait-lists, backlogs and burnout, which meant that, not only in Canada but also all over the world, there was an enormous amount of stress coming out of the pandemic. A lot of the weaknesses that existed in our health systems across the country, in the provinces and territories, were exposed, as they were all over the world. It is easy to see problems. We certainly hear a lot in the House about people reflecting a mirror on the problems of the day. That requires no skill or talent. It requires a simple ability of observation.

To imagine how we can move through the challenges that we are in to a better time, to a time that is better for the health of Canadians, to a time that is better for this country generally, requires a great deal of courage to jump into the unknown and imagine what can be done. The conversations that I have had with health ministers across the country, be they Conservative, New Democrat or Liberal, have been in a spirit of co-operation, of coming together to focus on solutions, to not focus on just observing what is wrong,

but on having the courage to imagine what could be right, in how we can make investments and do things together.

The federal government has pledged just a little less than \$200 billion to health care over the next 10 years. That has manifested itself in 26 agreements, signed in every province and every territory. Each of those agreements lays out a blueprint for how we deal with the challenges of primary care, making sure that folks get access to a doctor, making sure that seniors can age at home and age with dignity, that we have places for them when their health fails.

Building upon that, because we knew it was not enough, we looked upstream and took essential action. I want to thank the work that was done, particularly with the member for Vancouver Kingsway and the NDP House leader, the now health critic, to pave the way, along with our caucus, for a national plan on dental. We have seen that plan, which that the Conservative leader says is not real and does not exist, in just over three weeks, has already served 120,000 claims. That is over 100,000 seniors getting dental care, many times for the first time. We are also taking action on pharmacare to make sure that women have access to the medicine they need for their sexual and reproductive health and making sure that diabetes patients have access to the medication they need to keep themselves healthy.

Of course, this builds on the work that we did in Charlottetown on a digital charter, talking about data, interoperability and the ways that we can work together as jurisdictions to improve our health system.

In the last budget, we also saw essential action on school food to make sure that kids get the nutritious food they need. We are taking action on personal support workers and drugs for rare diseases. We have a strategy and are moving forward with agreements with provinces. We also, very importantly, through bulk purchasing, have seen more than \$3.4 billion each and every year saved in the cost of drugs for Canadians by taking collective action together.

• (2015)

**The Speaker:** Before I proceed to the member for Kingston and the Islands, I am going to presume or perhaps the member will make it clear that he is not going to expect that the minister has to respond in the time that it takes him to ask the question.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes, I was going to point that out, and I do not require the response to be limited to the amount of time of the question.

*Business of Supply*

I want to go back to the minister's comments about dental care specifically. During debates in this House as recently as just a couple of weeks ago, I had an exchange with a Conservative member who tried to tell me that only 41 dentists in the entire province of Ontario had signed up for the dental care program. In my riding alone, I know there are 61, so just in my riding the number surpassed the number that the Conservative member gave out. Can the minister inform the House as to how many dentists have signed up for the program throughout the country, and in Ontario? If the minister does not have the exact number, could he give the best estimate as per his last indication?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the member is right. We are seeing a really strong take-up across the country. In fact, we are now at nearly 40% of oral health providers having signed up, and that means more than 10,500 providers who are providing service every day. We are literally seeing thousands and thousands of seniors every single day getting care. Therefore, that 120,000 figure in just over three weeks is remarkable.

Before I turn it back to the member for his question, I would say that it is unfortunate. If members want to vote against it and do not want seniors to have dental care, that is their prerogative vote in this House. However, to malign the program and to actively call around and try to sabotage it and get providers to not participate is very contemptuous.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, that is a great segue to my next question, because I was going to provide some comments on this and then ask for the minister's take on this. It is one thing to be against a dental program, speak against it and vote against it, but it is an entirely different thing to actively root for a program to fail, a program that is going to support so many Canadians. That is unfortunately what we are seeing from Conservatives. They want the dental care program to fail and not provide these very important services. I am wondering if the minister can give his insight as to why the Conservatives are playing political games with this issue.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I very sincerely hope that the Conservative Party will change its position. If the Conservatives get the opportunity, as I am sure they do, like I do, to talk to people like Raphael who are getting oral health care for the first time in an extremely long time and hear what that does for their dignity and what it is going to mean for prevention, I hope this is something we can all get behind. At a minimum, I wish that the Conservatives would not give misinformation to providers. This program is simple to use. It is working effectively, and it is seeing people across the country get the care they need.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be speaking with the hon. members who are here today and to share the work that the health portfolio is doing to support Canadians' mental health and address the substance use and overdose crisis in this country. As the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, I believe wholeheartedly that a strong and resilient health care system is an essential part of Canada's social safety net. We must ensure that mental health is treated as a full and equal part of our health care system. Governments are meant to invest in people.

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am just back from a tour with the health committee to Vancouver, Calgary, Red Deer and Montreal. We heard from amazing organizations that are working tirelessly to help and support those who are using drugs. All parties were represented for the entire duration of the tour, except the Conservatives. It is a shame, because we heard that it is painful for frontline workers to hear that politicization is killing people. We have heard a lot of misinformation about safe consumption sites and harm reduction. Can the minister explain why these measures provide critical support to people who use drugs?

• (2020)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to note that in the initial part of this debate this evening, we heard very stigmatizing language from across the bench, with the insinuation that all people who suffer from substance use are violent and a threat to society and are essentially criminals. I do not understand why they are criminalizing people's loved ones when they need health care and health services.

Prescribed alternatives are done under the strict authorization of medical providers and health experts. It is a sacred relationship between a patient and their physician to move them toward a place of health. We need to open the door to safety for those who use substances and are struggling with addiction, and prescribed alternatives are just one tool of a robust set of tools. The opposition pits harm reduction against treatment rather than looking at a holistic and compassionate approach to those who use substances.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to share with the minister an email I got from a member of Moms Stop the Harm. It is too long to read in its entirety, but I wanted to give a couple of elements of the letter, and I am sure the minister has heard these stories before.

This mother said that after her son died, it was a very difficult time, and that she watched me give a response to the Conservatives, who were using, as the minister said, very hurtful language. Her son was 24 years old when he died, and she said, "How dare...politicians and so called experts tell us that our children are only worth something if they say no and go to treatment?"

I would like to ask minister this: Does she see harm reduction as part of that treatment continuum?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for her question; it is an important one.



*Business of Supply*

It should be very clear to everyone, and I say this to Canadians but I also say it to the benches, that harm reduction is health care. Providing key services to keep people alive so that we can steer them towards a safe journey towards treatment starts with compassion. It starts with a full suite of tools. There are international standards for this that include harm reduction as the key strategy. We have to approach this with compassion.

We only hear slogans from the Conservatives across the way on this. They do not see it as keeping loved ones alive, as the minister once said, one more day to keep them alive. Why will they not join on in evidence-based approaches to do that?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Mr. Speaker, this is the other thing that Ms. Last-Kolb wrote in her email to me. She said, “Every family I have met, [their] child died in a home, many in [their] family home or apartment where family helped care for them. The only family I know whose son was homelessness actually [overdosed] in treatment.”

I checked on this, because I was curious to see if her experience with her colleagues and peers in Moms Stop the Harm reflected the national data, and in fact it does. I did not realize this, but many or in fact the majority of overdoses happen to people in their homes.

I wonder if the minister could comment on why it is so important that we do not drive substance users to the shame of using alone and how, in fact, using stigmatizing language can actually do just that.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, again, it is so important that we take a compassionate and holistic approach to what is a public health crisis, not a criminal one.

The majority of overdose deaths are individuals dying alone. We need to be able to get them out of the shadows, out of the places where they are hiding, and get them to safety. We need to get them to harm reduction centres, whether it is safe consumption sites or drug checking, where they can be offered primary care, where they can be offered options, choices, so that they live.

When we use stigmatizing language, people turn in on themselves. They hate themselves. They need compassion. They need us to see them. We need to meet the moment with health services and compassion.

• (2025)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Mr. Speaker, as I was looking at the current statistics on who is dying from toxic drug poisoning here in this country, I was really surprised to find that two-thirds of them are young men. In fact, of those young men, 30% to 50% are employed in the skilled trades sector. It strikes me as ironic that the Leader of the Opposition speaks a lot about standing up for the workers, when in fact those very workers are being poisoned through a toxic drug supply.

Does the minister have anything to say about the world of unions and workplaces on this?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to say that we have met our workers on the front lines of the toxic drug supply with the “ease the burden” program, because we know

that we need to work with our workers to keep them alive and get them to health.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, every single year, the Quebec government allocates roughly 43% of its total budget to health care. If 43% is spent on health care, that means the other 57% of its entire budget has to cover all of its other government responsibilities, including education, the fight against poverty, housing construction, infrastructure, municipalities, support for businesses and so on. Members can see what I mean.

I wonder if the Minister of Health recalls that when the medicare system was first introduced over 50 years ago, the federal government covered 50% of all costs. Today, it is estimated that it covers about 23%.

Does the minister not think that the federal government is backing away from health care funding?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our health care system has changed enormously, and it requires all governments to work together in a spirit of co-operation. That is why the federal government has invested nearly \$200 billion in health care, including in Quebec, and not just for nurses, hospitals or doctors. We have also made other investments, including for dental care. It is important that we work together.

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Mr. Speaker, I sympathize with the minister. I am willing to talk about working together, but the numbers still speak for themselves. The federal government's share of health funding sits at just 23%.

There is a recurring phenomenon that has been very well documented in the Canadian federation, and that is the fiscal imbalance. The minister may have already read the report by Yves Séguin, a Liberal minister from Quebec, which covers this problem in depth. What is the fiscal imbalance? It means that the federal government's revenues tend to grow faster than its spending. The opposite is true for the provinces, whose spending tends to grow faster than its spending, particularly because of the explosion in health care costs.

The Conference Board analyses come to the same conclusion: If the federal government does not make massive investments in health care, the provinces' finances will not be sustainable come 2035. We will be getting the same type of report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer year after year, on an ongoing basis, indicating that if the federal government's share of health care costs is not increased, in the long term, by 2035, the provinces' finances will not be sustainable.

Does my colleague feel that the federal government is doing enough in terms of health transfers?

*Business of Supply*

• (2030)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the federal government covered more than 80% of the cost of the pandemic, an absolutely enormous cost. It was essential. This created an imbalance in the fiscal situations at the provincial and federal levels. Now, the provinces are in a good position to invest money in their systems. That is the case in Quebec. There is a decent health care plan in Quebec, which is a leader in many areas of health.

Given that we have invested nearly \$200 billion, I would say the money is there, but it is not just a question of money. It is a question of transformation, of changing the way health care services are made available. It is also very important to prevent illness. That is the motivation behind our dental care plan. Access to drugs is absolutely essential as well.

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Mr. Speaker, we cannot accept that kind of answer. The pandemic was a unique situation, something that happens once a century. The government's action cannot be based on the pandemic.

A recurring theme, however, is the federal government's failure to take responsibility for the problems in the health care system. At the end of his career, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien openly admitted that he was able to reduce health transfers without paying a political price. That happens all the time. The provincial governments are forced to make budget cuts and adopt austerity measures to manage their health care system, while the federal government can balance its budget on the backs of the provinces. That is what happened repeatedly under Paul Martin's Liberal government, which made \$2.5 billion in cuts in 1996 and 1997 and dismantled the entire health care system.

When my colleague talks about exceptional measures, like those that were implemented during COVID-19, I have a hard time believing him. What we need is for the federal government, which is rather absent these days, to recommit to the health care system.

I have a very simple question for my colleague. Does he agree that health falls under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, first the member opposite says that health is an exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec, then the member says that the government needs to do more in the health field. In my opinion, the member's position is a little strange.

The funds provided to each province are subject to a minimum annual increase of 5%. These funds are not reduced; they automatically increase by at least 5%. Additional amounts are also paid under agreements specifically designed to improve the situation.

The problem with our health care system is not money. It is really about transformation. In times of transformation, it is vitally important that we avoid picking fights. Picking fights is easy. The right thing to do is to work toward achieving results in a spirit of co-operation.

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Mr. Speaker, I see that my colleague is unfortunately trying to avoid the question, since he is not answering, but I will answer for him. Health is the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec.

He said earlier that it was not just about money. If it is not just about money, what is the federal government's purpose? All citizens of every province pay taxes to the federal government. A portion of these taxes is returned to the provinces through health transfers or transfers for social programs.

The problem is that the transfers are insufficient. They do not match the cost of the services we deliver. Not only that, but the federal government, which is not responsible for health, is interfering in the area of health without having jurisdiction over it. What I do know is that, with regard to health, the federal government has jurisdiction over indigenous people's health, military hospitals, Health Canada drug approvals and quarantines.

I would like my colleague to tell me how many national health policies or strategies there are. Do these policies or strategies involve anything other than prevention and awareness?

• (2035)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the federal government has a major role to play with the province of Quebec when it comes to health care. It is set out in our Constitution. It is important.

For example, there are common indicators in every agreement with each province and territory. Now Quebecers will be able to track the province's progress by consulting the data. Each year, there will be a report that tracks progress using common indicators. It is absolutely essential to be able to track progress using data. Personally, I feel that is very important.

It is also important to have the ability to share information and data with each government. When I speak with Quebecers, and with all Canadians across the country, I hear that they want results and co-operation. They do not want bickering or debates about jurisdiction.

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to remind the minister that a Leger poll showed that more than 80% of Quebecers feel it is important for the federal government to respect jurisdictional boundaries. Accusing others of picking fights is easy to do in politics. Every time someone raises an objection, it is enough to just say they are picking a fight.

I have a question for the minister. Can he tell me how many hospitals the federal government runs and how many surgeries it does in those hospitals? I would like to know.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, it is not the federal government's responsibility to run hospitals, but it is the federal government's responsibility to work with the Government of Quebec. It is odd. The member says that the federal government must give money and do more, but also that it must get out of health care. Those two things contradict each other. This is an obligation that we have across the country, not just with the Government of Quebec, but with every province and every administration—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Jonquière.

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting answer. The minister just said that the federal government does not run any hospitals. He just said that the federal government has no expertise in the procedures performed at hospitals. In his previous answer to me, however, he said that we need data on the procedures being done in hospitals. He wants data on something that is not within his purview. The only thing the minister should do is transfer the funds requested by the provinces.

I would like to remind him that, during the last negotiation, all of the provinces asked that health transfers increase from roughly 23% for all provinces to 35%, which did not happen. The fiscal imbalance and the problems caused by health care underfunding, including fewer nurses and frontline workers, will persist because the federal government is determined to do what it does best, which is to meddle in a jurisdiction that is none of its business and create programs that make for good PR, yet deliver no help to the people of Quebec or the provinces.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, we need nurses, doctors, dentists and all sorts of initiatives in health care. The member starts out by saying that, but then he asks that the government not take action and that it jump ship. It makes no sense.

The government also has a responsibility under the Canada Health Act. We are responsible for ensuring that people across the country, including Quebecers, can access the health care they need. The act is clear on this. It is our responsibility. We must not dictate priorities to the provinces, but we must work in a spirit of co-operation. That co-operation certainly exists with Quebec's minister of health. Mr. Dubé is very responsible.

I absolutely respect Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, but we have a shared responsibility and I respect that too.

● (2040)

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Mr. Speaker, it is really quite astonishing. The minister just said that he respects provincial jurisdictions. However, when it comes to pharmacare and dental care, the Quebec government has repeatedly said that these are inexcusable intrusions into Quebec's jurisdictions. Not only are these inexcusable and unenforceable intrusions into our areas of jurisdiction, but the government is going to create a need, only to turn around and underfund it in order to get out of this situation and balance its budget, as it constantly does when it comes to health transfers.

I get the impression that the minister might not grasp all the nuances involved in health care, including the fact that it is a provincial responsibility. The federal government's only job is to transfer the money without getting involved.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, one thing is absolutely unacceptable and that is the fact that, for many years, people across Quebec have not had access to dental care. If the Government of Quebec wants to manage that program, I have no problem with that. That is doable, but it is absolutely essential that everyone in Quebec be able to access dental care.

Why is the member opposite not working with me toward that goal? Minister Dubé had no problem with that. Why does the member have a problem with it?

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will not be sharing my time. I will mainly be directing my questions at the Minister of Health. My colleague from Courtenay—Alberni will ask the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions some questions later.

The minister just gave all Canadians some good news, I think. Some 120,000 seniors have already received dental care. How many of them are Quebecers?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is good news.

Quebec has the highest take-up rate in the country. That is absolutely amazing. That being said, the regional statistics are not available yet, but they will be soon.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to know the figures for British Columbia.

How many seniors have already received their membership cards and been approved for the program? Once again, how many of those people are in Quebec and how many are in British Columbia?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the take-up rate among dentists in British Columbia is quite high as well. I will check the figures for each region. I do not have them right now, but I will be able to provide that information soon.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Health have, on the ministry website, a count-up clock so that all Canadians can see the number of people who are taking advantage of this new program?

Of course, the NDP, having worked hard to get this to fruition, are very proud of the pickup that we have seen in the first few weeks.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, in the first order, I want to thank the member and his caucus for their extraordinary work on this. I think it is exactly what Canadians expect us to do: to work together and to get results.

*Business of Supply*

I think that is an excellent idea. It is something that we are investigating and something I know the member has raised with me before. I think it is important that Canadians be able to see those details in hard numbers.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, in some regions of the country, there have not been a sufficient number of dentists who have signed up for the program.

What steps are being taken to ensure, in rural and northern areas, that there are dentists available in the program?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we are doing is dispelling a lot of misinformation. Unfortunately, we have seen, in particular areas, Conservative misinformation and other misinformation. They have tried to say that there is a lot of administrative burden.

The good news is, when we get a few providers in a region, we see an explosion, because Canadians see that there was misinformation and that the program is easy to use.

● (2045)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, one of the implementation elements is a portal for dentists so that all dentists are eligible, and they can simply bill the program. There is a target date.

Will the ministry meet that date to ensure that all dentists are eligible for the program?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely. I think the progress, so far, has been really amazing. We have heard from so many providers that they want the portal that the member is talking about. The date of July 8 is going to be met. We are on track for it.

I think we are going to see a real lift in terms of the number of providers who participate and the number of people who get served.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, the pharmacare bill that the NDP also pushed for, which we are happy to see move out of committee and back into the House, should be out of the House within the next few days with the support, hopefully, of all members of Parliament.

Does the minister have a plan for negotiating with all provinces once the bill passes through the Senate and gets royal assent?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I want to particularly thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway for his work. It was a pleasure to work with him on this.

Absolutely. I have had conversations with every one of my provincial and territorial counterparts. It is my expectation that as soon as we get royal assent, we will be in a position to negotiate directly. I have already had early conversations with every jurisdiction.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, for provinces that sign agreements with the federal government to move ahead on pharmacare, what will be the earliest date that diabetes medication, and contraception medication and devices will be covered?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the good news is that the bill will be headed out of the House very soon. I hope it is going to get out of the Senate soon. It is my expectation that it would be certain-

ly this year that we would see the first drugs flowing. It really would depend on how fast we can get royal assent, but I want—

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

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I have some other questions that will not be as easy on minister. The first is the issue of keeping profit out of health care. Conservative premiers across the country have been trying to take advantage of the health care system to allow for-profit corporations to take over. Can the minister explain to Canadians what he is doing to stop Conservative premiers from strangling the health care system and allowing profit to take over?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the first thing is the interpretation letters that we need to issue, which I think will be critically important in helping to stem that. Second, we recognize that provinces may have taken some actions coming out of COVID to try to reduce burden but that we need to see the gaps closed and public systems protected. Under the Canada Health Act, we have made reductions in instances where private health care has been present, and we have the ability to do that in other places.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, in Ontario there is a Conservative Premier, Doug Ford. He has underspent his health budget by \$1.7 billion. The health care spending there is among the lowest in Canada. Hospital capacity has been shrinking and doctors and nurses have been getting burnt out. Patients are receiving terrible care in Ontario.

Can the minister tell the House why the Prime Minister was praising Doug Ford's approach on health care when things are getting so much worse in Ontario?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, in the first order, there is the government of Nova Scotia and there is the government of Manitoba, and I am sure there are going to be others, where elections get decided on health. I am sure Ontario will be no different.

My approach as health minister has been to try to focus on the positives. There are lots of places I disagree with my provincial counterparts, but one of the reasons that common indicators are so important is that we would be able to see in data how people are doing and get people to ask—

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

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, a Conservative Premier, Scott Moe, is taking advantage of loopholes the Liberals have failed to close that allow him to send patients to out-of-province, for-profit clinics to receive surgery. I simply want to know why the government and the minister do not close the loopholes that Conservatives are using.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I have talked with Minister Hindley in Saskatchewan, and we had a conversation about the essential nature of public care. That is where we have to be, and I want to see that done through collaboration and co-operation. I think that is the best way to get there. It is going to be the continued approach, but the Canada Health Act is my responsibility, obviously, to enforce, and keeping care public is essential.

● (2050)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to long-term care standards, with seniors living in long-term care homes, there were horrible effects during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seniors died from negligence. Families lost loved ones before they could say goodbye. Can the minister inform the House when Canadians can expect to see mandatory standards for the quality of care in long-term care homes?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, what happened in long-term care facilities across the country was devastating coming out of the pandemic, and that is one of the reasons that in our supply and confidence agreement, we have an agreement to move forward with the safe long-term care act. I look forward to working in an expeditious manner with the member opposite to realize its fulfillment.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I hope it would have the same impact as we have had on pharmacare and dental care.

More than 54% of long-term care homes in Canada are privately owned; 57% of long-term care homes in Ontario are for profit. New Democrats, as the minister knows, have committed to removing profit from long-term care because the health of vulnerable seniors should go ahead of profit. Will the minister commit to removing profit from long-term care so seniors get the best level of care possible?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I will agree that every senior has to be able to have access to the care they need. Our aging with dignity agreements have that at their core. That is what a very significant part of the spending on the tailored bilateral agreements was about. However, I certainly want to say that we want to continue to work with the member to make sure that it is affordable for every senior to be able to get the care that they need, ideally to age at home, and where that is not possible, to be able to go to a home they can afford.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the government promised to hire 50,000 new personal support workers. Records show so far that it has been a little over 9,000. Why has the government not put in place better wages and working conditions, and why have they not met the goal of 50,000 new PSWs?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, it is a very big priority for me to get an agreement on personal support workers signed with each and every province and territory. I hope to have more news on that soon, but it is an objective that I share with the member, a commitment we made and a commitment I intend to keep.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, now I will move on to women's health care. Abortion is health care, and the Liberals promised to expand access to sexual and reproductive health. Abortion care is still inaccessible for far too many women, especially in northern and rural communities.

Clinic 554 in Fredericton, the last remaining abortion clinic in New Brunswick, closed its doors earlier this year. Can the minister explain why the government failed to save Clinic 554 and what his government is doing to hold provinces accountable when they restrict abortion care? When will the government re-establish abortion care in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, of course abortion care is absolutely essential health care, and all women should have access to it no matter where they are in the country. There are still options in New Brunswick, but not enough of them. This is a conversation I have had with Minister Fitch with respect to the clinic that has been referenced. That is obviously under provincial jurisdiction, but there have been instances where we have withheld, because of actions taken on this issue, transfers under the Canada Health Act, but I would like to be able to fix this, again, with co-operation. It is essential that women have access to the care they need. Also, we talked about pharmacare and what we are doing—

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

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, if the New Brunswick government is not co-operating, what will the federal government do to re-establish abortion care in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, Minister Hindley is retiring and there will be a new health minister. I am talking to Minister Hindley and the incoming minister on that very matter.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Canadian women. One in eight women in Canada is expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer. Early detection, as the minister knows, can improve health outcomes and save lives. Breast cancer advocates and the Canadian Cancer Society have been advocating to lower the breast cancer screening age from 50 to 40. Will the minister commit to updating the screening guidelines so women are able to access critical early-stage diagnosis?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I have seen the same science that the member opposite has; it is very compelling, and it compels me that reducing the age to 40 and having early screening is highly effective. We are waiting for the release of a report tomorrow from an independent, arms-length body. Obviously there will then be a consultation period and we will be able to respond to that. However, we have to stay very close to science, and I see that seven provinces have now adopted the lower age standard, and I think that Canadians rightfully expect to see federal leadership.

*Business of Supply*

• (2055)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, first nations, Inuit and Métis people often do not have access to health care. As clinics in or near their communities are closed, folks in the far north are frequently required to fly south, often alone and often receiving health care in a language they may not understand. Can the minister explain why the government, including the Department of Indigenous Services, has not responded to the health care needs of indigenous peoples?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, responding to health needs in rural and remote communities is exceptionally challenging. I was just in Nunavut, where we were able to announce, with federal support, a new MRI machine that means that so many folks in Nunavut are not going to have to go south for that care. We still have a ton of work to do. There is a lot of opportunity and potential in remote medicine, and we have to make sure we use the existing potential workforce there for health issues.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, 71% of Canadians use natural health products, and many people felt unfairly blindsided by the Liberals' proposal to regulate them. We remember when Stephen Harper tried to force regulations on natural health products.

Can the minister tell Canadians what he is doing to ensure that people who use natural health products would continue to have access to safe and effective products?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, a private member's bill that was adopted today would have a disastrous impact. I hope the committee is taking a look at it. While we can recall a tube of lipstick or a head of lettuce that were contaminated, if a natural health product were contaminated with mould, mildew, feces, arsenic, salmonella or E. coli, the bill would stop our ability to pull it off the shelves. That is totally irresponsible and reckless. We need to make sure we put health first.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the dental care update.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to be participating in this particular debate. I believe that the government has made significant progress, of course with the support of the NDP, to provide more and more services to Canadians. Things like pharmacare and dental care, which I will speak about in a few moments, are long-overdue programs. In my opinion, they are things that I have always thought we should bring into our country and work on with provinces to develop.

I will start by talking about the recent slogan Conservatives have been using. The recycled slogan they are using is "common-sense Conservatives"; they are saying that the common-sense Conservatives will do this or the common-sense Conservatives will do that. They are clapping now.

I am from Ontario. I remember the common-sense revolution of the 1990s. That was Mike Harris's common-sense revolution, and those were dark days for health care in Ontario. Mike Harris slashed health care funding. Mike Harris closed hospitals in Ontario. Mike Harris tried for several years to close the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Kingston. The community fought for years against Mike Harris to reverse that. We were lucky because, unlike the vast majority of hospitals that he attempted to close, that one we were

able to save. The forward-thinking, progressive politicians of the day, one of whom shares the same last name with me, were successful in doing that. However, the reality is that it was not the case throughout the province.

The common-sense revolution was about cuts. It was about neo-liberalism. It was about removing social programs. The minister responsible for what was then called "welfare" actually came up with a welfare diet to tell people what they should eat if they were on welfare, because it is what they would be able to afford with their welfare payments. That is what the common-sense revolution was about, but perhaps the most damning part of Premier Harris's common-sense revolution is what happened in the later days of his premiership. Of course, I am referring to what happened in Walkerton.

Seven people died in Walkerton. As a result, it was widely noted that Mr. Harris's cuts and privatization of water testing, privatization of a lot of the things that rightfully belong within a health ministry and environment ministry that should not be left to the public, led to decreased testing. In Walkerton, Ontario, on one day when there was a very heavy downfall of rain, E. coli ended up in the water supply. That led to the deaths of seven people.

Conservatives applaud me when I say "common-sense Conservatives", but if people in Ontario were paying attention to politics in the 1990s, they knew what the common-sense revolution of Mike Harris was really all about. It was about removing government from absolutely everything possible and leaning on the private sector to provide the agencies responsible to ensure that we had the right protections. Obviously they failed.

Despite the fact that my Conservative colleagues will clap when I cite their new slogan "common-sense Conservatives", we in Ontario remember what the common-sense revolution of Conservatives was really all about. It was about cuts, about austerity and about privatization of services that should never have been in the hands of private companies, which led to seven deaths in Walkerton, Ontario.

Therefore I am very concerned when I hear Conservatives go on about common sense, including the has-been doctor who is heckling me at the back of the room over there, including—

• (2100)

**The Speaker:** I am going to ask the hon. member to withdraw the comment.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I am going to ask all members to please take a moment and pause. Let us get back to the proper way of conducting ourselves in this place, with decorum and respect for each other.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, while I talk about a very serious issue about what a Conservative premier did under the common-sense banner in Ontario and what it led to, which is the deaths of seven people, the Conservatives are heckling me and laughing at it. That is what the public should know.

As before, I will not ask the Speaker to limit the minister's time to the length of my question.

Does the minister share my concern that the common-sense Conservatives could very well end up going down the same path Mike Harris did in the 1990s?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes, I do share the concern the member has.

My friend and colleague points out that we have seen it a number of times. In fact, Newt Gingrich also talked about common sense and brought in some of the most disastrous criminal justice reforms that have ever been visited on the United States. He himself afterwards said that it was the greatest mistake of his political life and a dreadful mistake.

It is a terrible thing, when the world is complicated and difficult and is going through as much as it is, to pretend that there is a magic wand, as if all we have to do is take away people's carbon rebate and all the problems of the world will go away. That is the only solution I have heard from the other side. The Conservatives talk about cutting government spending, but they will not say where. We know they will not support dental care. We know they do not support pharmacare. What else are they going to cut?

The major investments we are making in health care are absolutely critical for making sure that our public health system is there for everybody. If we do not have a public health care system, what we wind up with is two tiers of care. The private system will go after the most profitable care, will go after the care that makes the most money, and the public system will be left with the most expensive care. It means that not only will care get more expensive, but those who are left and can only afford the public system will get deteriorating care. There will then be a migration of money and talent from the public system.

That is what we have seen all over the world. I have told this story before, but it bears mentioning again because it really reflects the question of what kind of country we want to live in.

I had the opportunity a couple of months ago to go away for the weekend with my partner. When we were down in the United States, we saw a man collapse. He had some sort of health event that caused him to fall to the ground unconscious. We went over to his side and called 911. When he came to and we told him not to worry because paramedics were on the way, his concern was not for his health; his concern was for how he was going to pay for his health. His concern was that he did not have enough money to deal with the health emergency in front of him. We could say that this is an American-only problem, but we have holes in our system we are trying to fix. We have diabetes patients who are saying they cannot adhere to their diabetes medication.

I will go one further. I met with Dr. Mehta in Scarborough. Dr. Mehta told me he has patients whom he tells, "If you follow this

regime of taking your medication and eating the right foods, you're going to stay healthy." He asked why he is even working as a doctor, because the people in front of him cannot get medication and cannot adhere to it. It means they are going to wind up with a cardiac event or stroke, or they are going to go blind or lose a limb. To me, that is not acceptable. Those are the consequences in front of us.

Either we step forward and continue to fill those gaps to make sure we are preventing bad outcomes or we use "common sense", which is to pretend snake oil and these solutions of slogans, which are nothing more than the sentences that are tweeted, are going to fix the complex problems we have. We have to meet the moment we are in with real solutions that are going to provide answers.

I am proud that we have health partners and health ministers across the country we can work with. They are putting aside the partisanship and saying, "Let's get it done." I wish we had an opposition party that would do the same.

● (2105)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to something that I heard the minister say earlier. I think it stems a bit from what he was saying toward the end of his first answer.

He said something very interesting. He said that observing a problem is easy; it is easy to see a problem. Dealing with a problem and coming up with solutions that require work is something completely different.

Can he expand on that?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I believe it was Teddy Roosevelt who observed that many people sit on the sidelines and cast criticism, and he noted how easy that is to do. It requires no talent or ability to sit from the sidelines and cast criticism, or to mock or attack those who try to make things better.

I think it is owed to every Canadian that every member in the House stands in their place and offers solutions. I can tell members that when it comes to health care, I have heard nothing. The only thing I have heard from the Conservatives is what they will not do. They will not do dental care. They will not do pharmacare. They have not said what they are going to do with the investments we are making elsewhere in the health system in mental health and other areas. What is their plan for those who are uninsured? What is their plan for those who are in need? What is their plan when 70% of chronic disease and illness in this country, most of the things that fill our hospitals, are preventable?

They have no plan. Their only plan is to criticize our action, to phone around and hope they can stop a dentist from participating so we do not get the political credit of a senior getting dental care. Then we wonder why people get cynical about our profession. This should be a place where we debate solutions, where we have, lined up against each other, two plans to make things better in this country.

*Business of Supply*

Their way has been tried. It's the idea of trickling things down, cutting taxes for the most affluent and crossing our fingers for everybody else. We recognized that Adam Smith's invisible hand was not enough. We learned it sometime around the 1800s. We need social safety nets. We need strong health care. We need to make sure that as people are competing and participating in our marketplaces, they are not allowed to fall through the cracks. That does not happen by doing nothing. It does not happen by cutting. It happens through hard work and the courage of action.

● (2110)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, on the topic of pharmacare specifically, one reason it is so critically important is that if we are going to have a health care program to support people and take care of people when they get to the hospital, which is part of the health care programs throughout the country, we may as well be taking care of them in the preventative stages. If we, as the minister alluded to, set up programs to help people take care of themselves, such as pharmacare and getting them access to the medicine they need, we can avoid having a lot of people end up in the hospital.

Likewise, when we look at these particular programs, we know they are not being fully used. A lot of people, especially seniors, up until recently, because they did not have access to the medicines they needed, may have been making very difficult decisions about whether they should take half the dose they were recommended instead of the full dose because they can save a bit of money there.

Can the minister explain and touch on why it is so critically important to make sure that people are taking the full doses they are prescribed, rather than trying to find ways to save money by reducing their doses?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, it is one of the most heart-wrenching things in the world. I can go back to my time at the Heart and Stroke when I headed its Ontario mission. I was the national director of children and youth, and I would see folks who had heart attacks and strokes because they did not have access to their diabetes medication and were not following a proper regime. As I mentioned, it can lead to all kinds of other terrible outcomes.

Adherence to these medicines is essential for their health. It is also essential as a matter of cost reduction. It is extraordinarily expensive to allow somebody to get into a catastrophic state. We need to get out of the business of crisis management in health care. We need to be up the stream preventing these things. The Public Health Agency of Canada has done extraordinary work, but we need to do a lot more work on prevention. The future in this country is avoiding illness before it ever happens and making sure that people live long, healthy and full lives by avoiding illness and disease and keeping our hospitals empty because the services are simply not needed.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will split my time three ways.

Fair Price Pharma is a company that got 15 kilograms of imported heroin licensed by Health Canada at some point. Has the minister met with the CEO, Perry Kendall?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have not

met with the CEO, but just to be clear, we have not granted a licence to Fair Price Pharma. It has not even applied.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, it is in possession of 15 kilograms of imported heroin as a result of a licence that was granted by Health Canada. Just to be clear, has anybody in the minister's office met with Perry Kendall?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I have not met with Perry Kendall.

I will say again that Fair Price Pharma has not applied for a licence, nor does it have one.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, has anybody in the minister's office met with Perry Kendall, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, no.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, has anybody in the office met with representatives from Fair Price Pharma?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, no.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, the lobby registry says that on September 15, 2023, representatives from the minister's office met with Fair Price Pharma. Can she tell the House if that is true or not?

● (2115)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, no one from my office has met with Fair Price Pharma.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, does the minister have any idea what is going on in her office and who has met with Fair Price Pharma?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, no one on my team has met with Fair Price Pharma.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, this is an Order Paper question for the government, so either the government is not being forthwith with the House or the minister has no idea what is going on in her office.

Has anybody from her ministry met with any representatives from Fair Price Pharma? I do not know how long we will have to do this for.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, my predecessor, then minister Bennett, met with Fair Price Pharma, but I am not sure what member of her team met with it.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, on September 15, 2023, the minister was occupying the office, and the government said that the participation in that meeting was by the minister's office.

Was she briefed about the meeting on September 15, 2023, when she was minister, with the representatives from Fair Price Pharma?



*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I believe I answered the question previously. I will reiterate that I have not met with Fair Price Pharma. If a member of my team has met with Fair Price Pharma, the member already has the answer.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, if the minister is not planning to fund the so-called safe supply of heroin, why is anybody in the ministry, her office or her predecessor's office meeting with Fair Price Pharma?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I have not met with Fair Price Pharma. Our prescribed alternative programs and the drugs distributed are paid for and prescribed by the provinces.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, we are clearly not getting a straight answer from the minister, so I will move on to something that she probably can answer and should answer.

She is a minister from Toronto. She had a failed experiment in British Columbia that she had to pull back because she was forced to by the radical NDP government there. Will she rule it out in Toronto for good, forever?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the member does not seem to appreciate the importance of collaborative work between the federal government and jurisdictions in addressing the overdose crisis. We will continue to work with all jurisdictions, as per their requests, on what we can do to save lives.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, it is a yes or no question. Is it yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the federal government will always work with its provincial and municipal partners to ensure that we—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Thornhill.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, I would like the record to show that, after the next election, if the Liberals are elected, they would legalize in Toronto in the same way as they did in British Columbia.

The minister basically just said yes.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, we do not work in hypotheticals; we work with facts.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my questions will be for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. To address the opioid crisis, the government launched a pilot project a few years ago. Could the minister tell us in which province this pilot project was carried out?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the question was not clear. Could I ask the member to repeat it? I will respect the time.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, which province requested a pilot project to deal with the opioid crisis?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the member well knows that B.C. requested an exemption.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is the province of British Columbia. Did the province make a request in recent weeks to review the terms of the pilot project, yes or no?

• (2120)

[*English*]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, from the outset, a commitment was made for the pilot program in British Columbia to be monitored, assessed and amended as needed. That is why it is a pilot program.

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** Before the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent resumes, I just want to let him know that the time required for interpretation is not deducted from his five minutes.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Could the minister tell us how many days her government took to respond to the request from the British Columbia government?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, it took 10 days.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, does the minister know how many people die on average every day in British Columbia as a result of this crisis?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, yes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, how many people die every day?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, it is six people.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, her government waited 10 days before saying yes to a completely legitimate and urgent request from the Government of British Columbia. Is the minister aware that at least 60 people died because these people and this government waited 10 days to say yes to British Columbia?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the member is misleading Canadians. People die of overdoses because of the illegal toxic drug supply. Decriminalization is simply one tool of many in order to direct people to health services rather than putting them through the justice system. I would think that he would not want to stigmatize or criminalize those who need health care.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, 2,546 people have died in British Columbia as a result of the opioid crisis. How many more people would it have taken for the government to act more quickly?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the government has dedicated over a billion dollars to this public health crisis, as opposed to the opposition. When it was in power, it cut two-thirds of the paltry \$60 million that it put toward saving lives.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, are Canadians right to worry that the government might apply this pilot project, which has cost the lives of more than 2,500 people, outside British Columbia?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to saving lives with a comprehensive strategy that considers every tool and resource available, working with jurisdictions.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, after 2,500 deaths, it seems to me that the government should have realized that the strategy was not working.

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, the member does not seem to be familiar with international jurisdictions that have also implemented decriminalization tools.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, I am the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, and I am very familiar with the province of Quebec. Quebecers do not want to experience the same tragedy that is occurring in British Columbia right now.

Will the minister stand up and say that she will never implement the pilot project in Quebec, yes or no?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working in partnership and collaboration with jurisdictions that wish to address this public health crisis with a robust set of tools, just as we have been committed to using evidence and expertise to save lives.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, 2,500 people have lost their lives because of the evidence and expertise behind this pilot project. Six people are dying every day.

What more will it take for the government to put a stop to this pilot project?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Every death is a tragedy, Mr. Speaker, but the people are dying from an illegal toxic drug supply, not decriminalization, which is a tool that has been used in such countries as Germany, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. If time allows, I will continue with the list.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, is the minister familiar with Maison Benoît-Labre in Montreal?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I am not.

**Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be directing my questions to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

In Belleville, Ontario, and surrounding Bay of Quinte, is there adequate funding and resources for addictions and essential addiction management?

• (2125)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, health is under the jurisdiction of the province, which was recently awarded over \$700 million towards mental health and substance use in our bilateral agreements.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware that Belleville, Ontario, reported 240 overdoses in just 11 weeks and 23 overdoses in a single day?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I am aware of that, and, as the member knows, I went to Belleville.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware that Belleville, Ontario, had two of these epidemic overdoses, not just one in February?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, I am aware of that, and Health Canada is working with the community.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware of the opioid mortality rate in the Belleville and Bay of Quinte region?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, federal jurisdiction deals with national data.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, does the minister know the opioid mortality rate in Ottawa, Toronto and North Bay?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, Ontario is one of the top three provinces with high overdose rates.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, the opioid mortality rate in Belleville, Ontario, is nearly double that of Ottawa, Toronto and North Bay. It was 250 deaths per 100,000 people in the first half of 2023, compared with 150 per 100,000 people for Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton. Does the minister find that acceptable?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, as I am sure every member in the House would agree, no death is acceptable. It is tragic and harmful to the families, loved ones and communities who lose people to overdose because of the toxic drug supply.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, can the minister state how many bed-based addiction treatment services are in the region?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, it is under the jurisdiction of the province to implement beds and treatment.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is zero. What is more, the number of opioid poisoning-related ER visits to Belleville General Hospital is more than three times higher than the five-year average. After nine years, there are no treatment facilities to bring our loved ones home drug-free.

What is the government's plan to fund and measure success for the crisis affecting Belleville?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, as mentioned before, over \$700 million has been allocated to the Province of Ontario for mental health and substance use in the coming years. That being said, in the 2024 budget, the ETF, the emergency transfer fund, offers \$150 million over three years to communities to seek additional assistance.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware of the number of Canadians in the Belleville region currently on a wait-list as they wait for addictions and concurrent disorder programs?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, it is under provincial jurisdiction to provide treatment health care.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is over 500 people. Does the minister think this is acceptable?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, no.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, can the minister state which government is responsible for the explosive growth of waiting lists, for mental health underfunding and for the simple fact that there are zero treatment beds in the entire Belleville region after nine years?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, that is why we signed a \$3.1-billion bilateral agreement with the Province of Ontario, with \$700 million allocated to mental health and substance use.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware of the average wait time for residential addiction treatment and supportive recovery programs?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, they vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is 75 days and 175 days, respectively.

On what date will Belleville get treatment beds, and what will be the measure of success for programs to aid in recovery?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions of Ontario.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Speaker, why do we have a federal minister for mental health and addictions if they are not working with the province to provide the House a date as to when we will be getting treatment programs for that city? That is under—

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Mr. Speaker, for an opposition member who says we should get out of the way of the provinces, I am surprised that he does not appreciate that health care is a jurisdictional purview of the province, and we should—

**The Speaker:** This brings the round of questioning to an end.

We will move to resuming debate and questions for the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities.

• (2130)

**Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be speaking for a bit before I direct some questions to the ministers.

No Canadian should have to choose between paying for prescription drugs or putting food on the table. Unfortunately, many are still forced to make this impossible decision. It is why our government continues to work with provinces, territories and stakeholders to ensure that Canadians have better access to the drugs they need. Today, I will be providing an overview of some of the work by first highlighting our latest announcement, which presents a significant step forward towards national pharmacare.

On February 29, the Minister of Health introduced Bill C-64, an act respecting pharmacare, which proposes the foundational principles of the first phase of a national universal pharmacare plan in Canada. Bill C-64 describes our government's work with provinces and territories to provide universal single-payer coverage for a number of contraception and diabetes medications. In parallel to this, our government announced its plans to establish a fund to support Canada's access to supplies that people living with diabetes require to manage and monitor their condition and administer their medication, such as syringes and glucose test strips. These are impactful initiatives that can positively change the lives of millions of Canadians.

For example, coverage for contraceptives will mean that Canadians of reproductive age, which is nearly one-quarter of Canada's population, will have better access to contraception and reproductive autonomy. This access will improve equality, help reduce the risks of unintended pregnancies and improve a woman's ability to plan for the future.

Cost has been identified by Canadian contraceptive care providers as the single most important barrier to access these medications. Bill C-64 would ensure that Canadians will have access to a suite of contraceptive drugs and devices.

Similarly, one in four Canadians with diabetes have reported not following their treatment plan due to cost. Improving access to diabetes medication will help improve the health of almost four million Canadians living with diabetes and reduce the risk of serious life-changing health complications. These complications include permanent effects to the health and well-being of a person with diabetes, such as heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and amputation.

*Business of Supply*

This bill also demonstrates our government's commitment to consulting widely on the way forward, including the need to work with provinces and territories, indigenous peoples and other partners and stakeholders. It includes four principles that the Minister of Health is to consider when collaborating with partners towards the implementation of national pharmacare. They are accessibility, affordability, appropriate use and universal coverage.

Bill C-64 would also provide that the new Canadian drug agency would work towards the development of a national formulary developing a national bulk purchasing strategy and supporting the publication of a pan-Canadian strategy regarding the appropriate use of prescription medications. It would also require the Minister of Health to establish a committee of experts to help make recommendations on the operation and financing of national, universal single-payer pharmacare in Canada. Together, these elements would inform the next key steps towards a national, universal pharmacare in Canada, building on the work already under way.

The work under way already includes the previously mentioned Canadian drug agency. The creation of the CDA was announced in December 2023 with an investment of over \$89 million over five years. Built from the existing Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, and in partnership with provinces and territories, the CDA will provide the dedicated leadership and coordination needed to make Canada's drug system more sustainable and better prepared for the future in helping Canadians achieve better health outcomes. Engagement with provinces, territories, partners and stakeholders will continue to be an important part of the agency's path forward.

In addition, our government launched the first-ever national strategy for drugs for rare diseases, as announced in March 2023. This investment of up to \$1.5 billion over three years will help increase access to and the affordability of drugs for rare diseases, with the aim of improving the health and quality of life of people living with rare diseases across the country. As part of this strategy, our government will create bilateral agreements with our provincial and territorial partners to make up \$1.4 billion over three years, with a focus on improving access to new emerging drugs that treat rare diseases. We will also support better access to existing drugs and activities directed at improving screening and early diagnosis for rare diseases. The aim of these efforts is to help people living with rare diseases across Canada obtain earlier access to treatments and a chance at a better quality of life.

● (2135)

Our government is now working with provinces and territories on these bilateral agreements, starting with jointly determining a small set of new and emerging drugs that would be cost-shared and covered in a consistent way across the country for the benefit of Canadians living with rare diseases. I am also excited to share with members an update on the excellent progress we are making with the Government of Prince Edward Island to improve access to medication for island residents.

Similar to the work under way for the drugs for rare diseases strategy, our work with P.E.I. will also inform the advancement of national pharmacare. Under the improving affordable access to prescriptions drugs program with P.E.I., those who experience the

most vulnerability, including uninsured island residents, seniors, and families with a high burden of medication costs, have seen immediate benefits, including improved access to medication and reduced copays.

Through this partnership, which includes a federal investment of \$35 million, P.E.I. has expanded access to over 100 medications to treat a variety of conditions, including heart disease, cancer, and MS. Last June, P.E.I. also reduced copays to \$5 for almost 60% of medications regularly used by island residents. Under their seniors' drug program, the family health benefit drug program, the generic drug program and the diabetes drug program, this program has led to island residents saving \$2.5 million in out-of-pocket costs so far.

Speaking to our efforts more broadly, we continue to work on regulatory innovation, including agile licensing for drugs to better support drug oversight, both before and after the sale, due to the evolving market. These updated regulations will improve safety, support economic growth, and benefit both Canadians and industry.

In closing, no one should struggle with paying for the prescription drugs they need. Our government will continue to work with provinces, territories and stakeholders on the pharmacare initiatives I have outlined and continue to work with parliamentarians in passing Bill C-64. By working together, we can realize our goal of achieving national pharmacare, which will benefit all Canadians.

My first question is directed to the Minister of Health. Before I was elected to this place, I was the chair of the board of an incredible organization, Quest Community Health Centre. I know, as the Minister of Health knows, that community health centres look to what is missing in communities to fill a void. One of those things in St. Catharines and, of course, across the world, although we can only help in our little corner, was the lack of access to dental care. The staff at Quest, led by Coletta McGrath and Jenny Stranges, was incredible. They were able to build a team of volunteer dentists and hygienists who came in to provide care for those who had not had treatment in decades, who use the emergency room as their dental care. Some would say that they would be a burden on the system, but they were just trying to get pain relief.

*Business of Supply*

I was able to get messages, as the chair, from people who were grateful for having received this service, who could smile again, who could go to job interviews, who could smile with their grandchildren. It is shocking that the Conservatives would deny this to Canadians

I was wondering if the Minister of Health could outline what the government is doing and what the progress of our dental care plan is. I do not need him to respond in the time allotted. I was hoping he could provide an update on the dental care plan.

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I want to thank the member for St. Catharines for his work and for his advocacy, in and out of public life. It is tragic when we see folks, who have not received the dental care that they need, wind up in an emergency room or wind up with an urgent health care situation that could have been avoided.

Two weeks ago, I was in rural New Brunswick talking to a dentist who said, “I know exactly who does not have coverage in my community. I know that, on some given Saturday, that person is going to wind up in an emergency room, and I am going to get a call to go in and give care urgently, pro bono, away from my family, to try to fix that situation, hoping that it is not grievous for that individual.” I think that the member is talking about a situation very similar in St. Catharines.

Not allowing people to have dental care is not just a matter of dignity, of somebody having a proud smile that makes them feel good about who they are and gives them confidence to be out in the world. It is fundamentally an issue of prevention. People who do not get good oral health care wind up with bad health outcomes. They cost our health system an inordinate amount of money. That is why I am so encouraged.

The member asked for an update, and I gave it to the House earlier. We have seen more than 120,000 claims and over 100,000 seniors in just over three weeks. We are seeing, as of July 8, a new portal. We already have 10,500-plus oral health professionals who have signed up to this plan. I think we are going to see a real growth in that number. We have seen two million seniors signed up. Next month, we are going to be opening it up to persons under 18 and folks with disability who are currently on a disability tax credit. It would mean that, by next year, everybody, all nine million Canadians who do not have oral health care, will have coverage.

One may ask why this was not done at the start of our health care system. Well, at the beginning, when we were starting so many decades ago with a national health care system in this country, it was thought that oral health was just a matter of cosmetics and that it was not essential health. Of course, science and data have evolved. We know that a myriad of diseases, illness and conditions is caused by lack of oral health. Oral health is health, and that is why it is so essential that we continue to make progress to make sure that every Canadian is covered.

● (2140)

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Madam Chair, I have been hearing a question to the Minister of Health again. I have been listening with interest throughout this debate, and I take the Conservatives at their word that they are concerned about the opioid crisis. They are seeing it in

their communities, as we are seeing it in all of our communities, affecting people across the community.

I went on a ride-along with my local fire department, and we got a call: vital signs absent. We raced down to Montebello Park. The image that burns into my brain is the legs of a resident of St. Catharines sticking out of the stall in the washroom in Montebello Park. Paramedics brought that person back, as paramedics, firefighters and first responders are heroically doing across the country.

However, I was wondering if the minister could comment on what we are hearing in response to what I believe is health care: addiction and mental health. I know the Conservatives say that it is health care, but what I am hearing is just a repackaged version of what we tried in the seventies, eighties and nineties, which was “Just say no”. The Minister of Health talked about Newt Gingrich and the common-sense revolution, the harsh law-and-order penalties. We have tried to solve this as a society, through—

**The Deputy Chair:** I will ask the minister to respond.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I want to thank the member for sharing what he is seeing in his own community. We are seeing this in communities across the country, and it is so important we meet the moment. A war on drugs is what the Conservatives are purporting to be the answer, with forced treatment and saying they care for their loved ones, but they want to criminalize people.

We need compassion. We need health care. We need a firm commitment to a comprehensive suite of tools that, yes, includes harm reduction. It is shameful to see there is such a lack of compassion on the other side of what it truly takes to invest in Canadians, to invest in families and to invest in communities to save lives in this overdose crisis.

We have put a billion dollars on this side of the House toward saving lives, and we will not stop. We are meeting this moment with our provincial jurisdictions. We are meeting the moment with our communities, with harm reduction, with treatment, with prevention and with care. On this side of the House, we care about Canadians.

● (2145)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Chair, I am splitting three ways, and my questions will be for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

*Business of Supply*

My colleagues have asked about a company called Fair Price Pharma, which is run by former B.C. public health officer Perry Kendall and a partner. Its business is selling heroin. The results of an Order Paper question show that in a two-year period leading up to December 13 of last year, the minister met with Fair Price Pharma on September 15, her predecessor met personally with Fair Price Pharma four times and that health officials met with it an additional seven times. That is a dozen meetings in two years, which is a lot of meetings for a minister and officials with one company in the heroin business.

What is being discussed in these 12 meetings between Liberals and this heroin company?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, to be clear, I, as Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, have not met with Fair Price Pharma. The September 15 meeting the member is referencing was actually a meeting of ISED, with another office and not my department. There were members of my staff who were present at that meeting, who were invited to listen in. To be clear, we meet with experts in this field. Dr. Kendall was joined by Dr. Schechter and other experts at those meetings, and we need to talk to experts, even if we do not agree with them.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Chair, this is not a dispassionate expert. This is someone who went from the public health world into selling heroin. Twelve meetings in two years is not normal even for an expert. Again I will ask, what is being discussed in these meetings? What is Fair Price Pharma asking the Liberal government for?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the Dr. Kendall the member is referencing was part of the B.C. government, not the federal government, just to be clear. As I mentioned before, those meetings were held at ISED, I did not attend those meetings and was not privy to the discussions around the table.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Chair, 12 meetings in two years. Four in-person meetings with this heroin company and the former minister. This new incoming minister must have been briefed on the nature of this close relationship and what was being discussed.

For a final time, why is the government meeting 12 times in two years with this heroin company? What is being discussed? What is Fair Price Pharma asking for?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the member across the way knows perfectly well the meetings were held at ISED. The member also knows I have not met with Fair Price Pharma. The member also knows my predecessor did meet with Fair Price Pharma.

That being said, what I do know is across the way they do not listen to many of the experts we need to listen to, including Moms Stop the Harm. I would love to know why the Leader of the Opposition refuses to meet with families who know what they need in their communities. We will meet with everyone. Why do the Conservatives not do that?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Chair, a lot of people want to hide their meetings with drug dealers, but I would have expected better from this minister.

What is the purpose of these 12 meetings with this corporate drug dealer?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I have answered this question already. He can keep asking it, but we will speak to all experts on what matters, and most importantly, to save lives; all tools and resources.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Chair, is the Government of Canada party to any contracts or agreements involving Fair Price Pharma?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, no.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Chair, will the minister demonstrate her point either way by releasing all contracts involved in safe supply?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, pharmaceutical contracts are the purview of the provinces in terms of prescribed alternatives.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Chair, we put forward a motion at the government operations committee asking for any contracts to which the federal government is a party. The Liberals have been filibustering to block the release of those contracts. If no contracts existed, I suspect Liberals would not be motivated to filibuster to block their release.

Will the minister agree to release any contracts to which the federal government is a party, involving these drug programs?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, federal funding toward prescribed alternative programs goes to the operations of the programs themselves.

As I have said, contracts with pharmaceutical companies for prescribed medications are between the province and those pharmaceutical companies. We support the implementation of programs.

● (2150)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Chair, there have been 12 meetings with a heroin-selling company. The government is refusing to release contracts involving the Government of Canada and corporate drug dealers.

Why will the minister not tell us what was discussed in those meetings, and why is the minister sitting on these contracts?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, as I have stated, but I will repeat for the benefit of the committee, contracts such as these are between provinces and these companies.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Madam Chair, my questions are for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

The minister's department approved an open drug use policy in public places, including parks and playgrounds in British Columbia, in 2023.

*Business of Supply*

Does the minister believe children seeing drug usage normalizes drug usage for children?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, we are committed to a compassionate approach to this public health crisis that is clearly anchored in public safety as well, but we need to understand that those who use drugs need to be directed to health care. Families and communities have a right to be safe wherever they are, parks—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, does the minister believe illicit drug supplies left in parks and playgrounds increases the risk of accidental overdoses of minors?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we are moving through this public health crisis with a strict lens on public safety and public health, and we will work with jurisdictions.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, the minister has confirmed tonight that the leading cause of death of children and teens, sadly, in British Columbia in 2023 is illicit drug toxicity, correct?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, yes, the toxic drug supply is costing us many lives in many communities, and it is absolutely tragic.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, in Campbell River, a major drug seizure was reported in February 2024 of having hydromorphone pills, with evidence suggesting they were diverted from government-funded supply.

Did the minister ask for a briefing on this?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, as I have stated before, both in the House and in this committee, the RCMP, based on the most recent data, has shown that there has been no increase in hydromorphone diversion in Canada over the last decade.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, is the minister concerned about diversion of government-funded drugs like this to children?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I think we are all concerned about diversion because it is illegal.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, is the minister aware that the drug seizure in Campbell River had fentanyl powder moulded into the shape of gummy bears and dinosaurs?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, all diversion is illegal and extremely concerning. This is why law enforcement is a key pillar of our strategy.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, does the minister not think these were targeting children?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, all diversion is illegal. We are concerned for all our children

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, is the minister taking action to stop these drugs from getting into the hands of children?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we continue to work with law enforcement and jurisdictions to ensure that diversion is mitigated.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, has the minister given any directives at all to stop these illicit drugs from getting into the hands of children?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we are working closely with public safety and criminal justice partners to ensure that diversion is mitigated.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, I think we should take that as a no.

September 2023, the minister received a letter from 17 addiction medicine doctors who said, “We are regularly seeing and hearing in our practices that diverted hydromorphone is causing harm to both adults and children.”

Does the minister agree with that statement?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I have both met and received letters from experts on their concerns, and this is why we have listened to them and taken their advice, and also listened to other experts to ensure that we create programs with jurisdictions that are safe.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, has the minister implemented any of the recommendations from the letter that I referenced?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, Health Canada has worked with prescribed alternative programs to ensure that protections are in place.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, has the minister taken any action to mitigate government-funded drugs being diverted into the black market?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, that is the role of law enforcement.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, has the minister taken any action to mitigate government-funded drugs from getting into the hands of children and teens?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the government funds programs. The provinces have contracts for the medications.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, government-funded drug policy protocols allow for prescribed fentanyl to minors without parental knowledge in B.C. Does the minister support this?

● (2155)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, to be clear, no child in B.C. has been prescribed fentanyl. I will leave it there.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, does the minister believe that there should be a minimum age for when youth can receive recreational fentanyl?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, no one should be receiving recreational fentanyl.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, does the minister believe that parental agreement should be required before their child is prescribed a dangerous drug like fentanyl?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, as the member well knows, the relationship between a physician and their patient is a sacred one.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Madam Chair, all my questions will be for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Why did the minister tell law enforcement that they are expected to do their jobs when the NDP-Liberals took away their ability to keep our communities safe from people using hard drugs in public?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, the member well knows that law enforcement falls under provincial jurisdiction, which also has the purview to enforce bylaws and best practices for law enforcement to keep communities safe.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, the deputy chief of the Vancouver Police stated on April 15 that their members require “tools so that they would be able to do their jobs when there are community concerns about problematic drug use.”

What resources did the minister give to law enforcement before deciding to legalize the use of hard drugs?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, this is why we made amendments to the B.C. exemption recently, with the understanding that law enforcement would be given clear direction on how to address public use.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, the answer is none.

Did the minister provide funding?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, law enforcement is under the jurisdiction of the provinces.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, why did the minister not provide funding?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, law enforcement is under the jurisdiction of the provinces.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, did the minister provide any training?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, law enforcement is a provincial matter.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, did the minister give them anything whatsoever to help them keep Canadians safe?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, law enforcement is a provincial jurisdiction.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, why does this NDP-Liberal coalition government value the lives and rights of people who use hard drugs in public over the safety and rights of law-abiding citizens?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, why do the Conservatives pit harm reduction against treatment instead of choosing a comprehensive, evidence-based, compassionate approach to address the overdose crisis and help those who need help?

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, another non-answer.

If the minister was at a beach with her family and someone lit up a crack pipe beside them, that would be totally fine, since that is their right. Is that correct?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the amendment entailed direction for public health and public safety in terms of public spaces.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, what about injecting heroin at a playground with children?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, again, the exemption allowed for releasing the decriminalization in public spaces.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, is it acceptable for youth to be directly exposed to people getting high on hard drugs?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we want to protect our youth.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, does the minister believe that recovery from addiction is always possible?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, it may take many pathways to get to recovery. That is why comprehensive approaches—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, is the minister satisfied with the current availability of drug rehabilitation and or treatment programs?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, those would be health services, which fall under the jurisdiction of provincial health services. We will always support them.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, the NDP-Liberal government has spent over \$100 million to date on so-called safe supply. How much is the government spending on beds in recovery centres?

● (2200)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, over \$200 billion in health care agreements include mental health and substance use supports. I would ask the member to ask each jurisdiction how much they are spending.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, again, how many beds would \$100 million have bought?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, that would be the purview of the health services of the province. I encourage him to ask his local jurisdiction.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen:** Madam Chair, has the minister heard the statement from the RCMP that nearly two-thirds of their detachments serve communities that do not have drug rehabilitation or treatment programs available?



*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, mental health services are part of the \$200 billion in bilateral agreements, and over 30% of those agreements are dedicated to mental health and substance use.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Madam Chair, it is always a pleasure, an honour and a privilege, of course, to rise in the House and to speak tonight at the committee of the whole to the main estimates.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak about dental care and the current work being done by our government to improve dental care or oral health care for all Canadians and approximately the nine million Canadians who we know do not have insurance, but who need to be able to visit their oral health care provider or dental care provider when they need to.

Although inflation is easing and interest rates have stabilized, many Canadians are still struggling with the cost of food, housing and other essentials. That leaves some people having to make difficult choices about how to spend their money. Sometimes important expenditures have to be put on hold, including dental care. Faced with difficult financial choices, too many Canadians have had to postpone or forego important dental care or procedures. This can have wide-reaching impacts, including more expensive treatments and worsening health outcomes.

To support the provinces and territories in the delivery of services, our government is committed to working together with them to improve health care for all Canadians. Underpinning these priorities is the principle that every Canadian should have access to health care services, regardless of who they are, where they live or their ability to pay. With this in mind, we are working on several fronts to expand access to key services, including making oral health care more available and more affordable for more Canadians. Having access to quality oral health care plays an important role in not only our oral hygiene, but also our overall health. Regular visits to the dentist can help reduce the risk of tooth decay, gum disease and a number of serious health issues, including stroke. Unfortunately, too many Canadians have been going without these regular checkups.

[*Translation*]

The information that we have from Statistics Canada indicates that there are many obstacles to oral health care, the main one being financial. One in four Canadians avoids going to a dental professional because of the cost. That is one-quarter of Canadians who have to make the difficult decision to go without dental care and whose health could be affected by that.

[*English*]

It bears repeating this in English to really drive the point home.

One in four Canadians, Madam Speaker, does not visit a dental provider because of cost. That is a fourth of Canadians who have had to make the difficult decision to go without dental care and whose health might be impacted because of it.

[*Translation*]

We know that cost is not the only thing preventing Canadians from accessing quality dental care. There are many other obstacles, such as living in a remote community, having limited mobility or

specific needs, cultural barriers and not being aware of the need for preventive care.

This also affects children. Tooth decay is the most common, yet preventable, childhood chronic disease, not just in Canada but around the world.

[*English*]

Our government is committed to improving access to dental care across the country. This is why it has made, and continues to make, significant investments in oral health care, which is an essential part of overall health. The first phase of our approach started in December 2022, when we launched the Canada dental benefit. Thus far, 439,000 children have benefited from this program, with applications open until June 30.

Budget 2023 announced an investment of over \$13 billion over five years, starting in 2023-24, and \$4.4 billion ongoing, to implement the new Canadian dental care plan, or the CDCP. By the time it is fully implemented, the CDCP is going to help make dental care more affordable for up to nine million Canadians who do not have access to dental insurance and who have an annual adjusted family net income of less than \$90,000.

In addition, May 1 marked a significant milestone in oral health care in Canada. The first million seniors covered under the CDCP were able to start receiving the dental care they need. A Newfoundlander and Labradorian was the very first senior to receive care where the costs were covered by the CDCP. That is exciting. An online application portal is now open for potentially eligible seniors, 65 years of age and above, to apply to the CDCP, and that is just the beginning.

• (2205)

Starting in June of this year, adults with a valid disability tax credit certificate and children under the age of 18 will be able to apply to the CDCP. As of 2025, all remaining eligible Canadians will be able to apply.

*Business of Supply*

This is the biggest social program in Canadian history, and we have been working with dental providers across the country to make it happen. This has been great work by all of us. We are proud to see that as of May 2, there are more than 7,500 providers, I think the number is actually more than 10,000 now, who have confirmed their participation in the CDCP and are now treating seniors who are eligible for the dental care plan. That number continues to increase every day. We are so grateful to these participating providers and to the providers who would rather not fully participate but who will still accept CDCP patients. We are happy that starting July 8, CDCP patients will be able to see any dental provider of their choice, as long as the provider agrees to directly bill Sun Life for services provided under the plan. This is to limit the out-of-pocket costs of dental care for their CDCP patients.

The CDCP will cover a wide range of oral health care services when recommended by a dental provider. This includes preventative care, such as scaling and cleaning, as well as other services, such as exams, x-rays, fillings, dentures and, yes, root canal treatments. The majority of services covered under the CDCP are now available. More will be added in November when services requiring pre-authorization, such as some kinds of dentures, crowns and major surgical procedures, will become available.

The CDCP is a national program being delivered and launched simultaneously in all provinces and territories to ensure equal opportunity for Canadians who do not have access to dental insurance, the nine million Canadians we know of.

Our government continues to engage with the provinces and territories on the interdependencies between the CDCP and the provincial and territorial publicly funded programs. Coverage will be coordinated not only to ensure there is no duplication, but also to ensure there are no gaps in oral health care. The important thing is that everyone, everywhere in the country, can receive equal dental care, no matter where they live.

[*Translation*]

Budget 2023 also announced \$250 million over three years, starting in 2025-26, and \$75 million ongoing to Health Canada to establish an oral health care access fund. The fund will complement the Canadian dental care plan by contributing to further reducing the obstacles preventing Canadians from accessing oral health care, including in rural and remote communities.

Health Canada will launch the first call for proposals under this fund this month. The call for proposals will give oral health training institutions an opportunity to present their ideas on how Health Canada funding might help them. For example, they may submit projects for addressing provider competency gaps that are contributing to obstacles to accessing care or for continuing to ensure that students receive the hands-on training they need to graduate.

A second call for proposals will be launched this summer. It will not be just about training institutions, it will focus on other obstacles to improving oral health care.

[*English*]

Budget 2023 proposes to provide \$23.1 million over two years, starting in 2023-24, to Statistics Canada, to collect data on oral health and access to dental care in Canada. These data are crucial in

helping governments devise policies that support access to dental care, that improve oral health outcomes for Canadians and that provide an effective work environment for oral health care workers.

In November 2023, Statistics Canada launched a collection of the Canadian Oral Health Survey. The aim is to collect information from Canadians on their oral health, including their ability to pay, challenges finding oral health services, experience with the oral health care system and care needs. Furthermore, Statistics Canada also launched the first survey of oral health care providers. Survey results will help us better understand the financial and operational characteristics of oral health care providers in Canada.

● (2210)

To the hon. Minister of Health, earlier last week, I visited a dental care provider in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, Vellore Corners Dentistry. I met Peter, an 80-year-old senior who had proudly showed me his dental care card and, for the first time in many years, was going to his dental care provider and was very happy.

Can the minister update us on the progress of enrolling seniors and oral health care providers into the CDCP?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I share my hon. colleague's excitement. Hearing about Peter getting care and about more than 120,000 seniors across the country getting the care they need has been one of the great and extraordinary privileges of my public life, to be able to talk to seniors who are getting care, in many instances for the first time in a very long time, and the pride that comes to them. I have talked earlier in the committee about the numbers, and the member in his speech mentioned that we are over 10,000. We are over 10,500 now, and the number continues to grow with that new portal opening on July 8.

I have talked in the House, as well, about when I was in Vanier meeting with denturists and talking to the seniors that they are meeting. In one instance, there was a woman who had the same pair of dentures in her mouth for 41 years. All that was left were plastic plates, which she used to crush food. Hearing that denturist talk about fitting, this week, a new pair of teeth in that woman's mouth and what that is going to mean to her sense of dignity and to her health is absolutely extraordinary.

Whether it is Peter or, just a few days ago, I saw Raphael getting care, this is happening, and we are going to make sure that we do the same thing for pharmacare.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Chair, one of the key attractions of the CDCP program, and I very much like the way we have implemented the program, is that it is using a benefits provider, Sun Life, which, as we know, is well established here in Canada, with literally tens of thousands of employees across this country. It is also now providing the flexibility, on July 8, to oral health care providers to actually direct-bill when a client comes in.

I wanted to ask the minister, in terms of the way that the program is being designed and laid out, how we are seeing the full ramp-up of oral health care providers joining the system and utilizing the program for their patients, and just how critical a piece of our overall health care system the CDCP program is.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, I remember meeting a hygienist a couple of weeks ago, and she said that she keeps looking for all the paperwork and the administration that she was told was going to be so hard to do and that she keeps looking behind her computer or waiting for somebody to come in and tell her she is doing something wrong because it has been nothing but easy.

In fact, she was saying to me that it is easier than the private insurance plans that she has been dealing with. That is a common refrain everywhere. We are hearing from providers that once they try it, they see just how easy it is. Part of the evidence is that once we get a few providers in a region, there is an explosion of providers as they talk to each other and they see just how easy this program is to work with. We almost have all denturists participating, which is fantastic, because that means that seniors are getting the dentures they need.

We have a really phenomenal uptake in hygienists. Hygienists are going to play such an important role, and I would really encourage people to consider using a hygienist because often, particularly in rural or remote places or in seniors' homes, hygienists can go directly to a population in need and can be able to serve them, and then simply refer them, if there is a need for a dentist. In a lot of instances, one does not even need to see a dentist. One just needs to get one's teeth cleaned. We are going to make sure that we are there for everybody as we continue to expand this plan. I am looking forward, next month, to seeing it open up to those under 18 and to persons with disabilities.

• (2215)

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Chair, it is just so exciting. When I drive up one of the regional roads in my riding in the city of Vaughan, Weston Road, there are three billboards put out by dentists. I took pictures of them and put them up on my communications material, pointing to dentists in my riding accepting the Canadian dental care—

**The Deputy Chair:** The time is up. I am going to give the hon. minister a couple of seconds to respond.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, I am so excited as well, and we are going to see more and more of that across the country. We are going to make sure everybody gets the oral health care they need.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with two other colleagues.

My questions are for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. After the spectacular failure of hard drug legalization in British Columbia, will the minister finally admit that this pilot project was sadly a fatal mistake?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, just to correct the member, decriminalization is about possession. It is not the legalization of illicit drugs.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, no matter what terms the minister uses, was this a pilot experiment that sadly turned fatal? Will she admit her mistake?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the pilot continues, I am happy to inform the member, with the amendments requested.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, can the minister tell us how many people have died since the possession of small quantities of hard drugs was legalized?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the numbers for the past year were about 2,500 in the province of B.C. from the toxic drug supply.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, is the minister aware of the City of Montreal's plans to urge the federal government to legalize simple possession of hard drugs?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we have received no such proposal from the City of Montreal, but we work with provincial and municipal jurisdictions.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, does the minister plan to say yes to the request made by Montreal's city council in 2021?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** As I have said before, Madam Chair, we do not deal in hypotheticals. We deal in evidence, facts and actual proposals.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, I have here the resolution adopted by Montreal's city council in which it makes this request.

*Business of Supply*

Is the minister aware that, in 2023, the mayor of Montreal personally reiterated her support for the legalization of hard drugs?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I am sure the mayor of Montreal has made many statements, and the city council is allowed to pass whatever resolutions it wishes, but at this time there is no proposal in front of Health Canada.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, does the minister intend to grant the City of Montreal's request and bring the same misery to Quebec that her Prime Minister created in British Columbia, yes or no?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** There is no request, Madam Chair. We do not deal in hypotheticals. We deal with evidence and facts on this side of the House.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, does the minister intend to say yes or no to a possible future request from the City of Montreal or the Province of Quebec? Does she intend to not authorize this type of pilot project in Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, does the member have a crystal ball such that he can anticipate there will be a proposal in front of the department for me to contemplate that question? I do not see one. Therefore, I—

**The Deputy Chair:** I want remind other members they are not to participate unless they have the floor.

The hon. member.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, is the minister aware of the criminal trafficking of the legal drugs provided free of charge to hard drug users?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** That is an odd question, Madam Chair.

• (2220)

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, I will repeat my question. Is the minister aware of the criminal trafficking of the legal drugs provided free of charge to hard drug users?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** If the member is referring to diversion, then he well knows that diversion is illegal, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, can the minister tell us where the money hard drug users are using to buy drugs is coming from?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** As mentioned earlier in the night, Madam Chair, prescribed alternatives are part of the prescribed—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, does the minister know about “crack alley” in Montreal?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I am sure there are many communities with drug-use issues.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, has the minister, who calls herself the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, ever been to Montreal to see first-hand the scope of the disaster caused by the use of hard drugs?

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I have been to Montreal and many communities across the country that are struggling with the drug overdose crisis.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, how is it then that the minister is unable to say no to the possible decriminalization of hard drugs in Montreal when, according to TVA Nouvelles, “around the [Cactus supervised injection site], psychosis, crack and crystal meth use, and the constant presence of drug dealers have become the norm”? Does the minister continue to claim—

**The Deputy Chair:** The minister for a brief response.

[English]

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, just so that we are clear, the Montreal mayor has said that such hypothetical allegations of her proposal for decriminalization are false.

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Madam Chair, how many nurses reported being physically assaulted last year?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, that would be provincial data with regard to the health workforce.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, it is 61%.

How many paramedics and firefighters have experienced workplace violence?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, to engage with and address that data, it is under provincial purview.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, it is 84%.

How many health care workers reported mental health issues last year?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, that is why we have created a nurses' tool kit for mental health.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, it is 92%. Almost 50% of them were assaulted 11 times or more.

How many nurses considered leaving their jobs?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we know that health workforce retention is an issue across the country due to burnout and other issues of—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, it is two-thirds.

Does the minister think violence in the workplace is acceptable?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we passed legislation on that. It is unacceptable, and no—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, has the minister read the recommendations of the 2019 HESA report on violence facing health care workers in Canada?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I did some time ago, but as the member would well know, my colleague, the Minister of Health, is addressing workforce safety.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, does the minister know how many of the recommendations have been acted on by her government?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, that would be an appropriate question for my colleague, the Minister of Health, who addresses the health care workforce.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, has the government targeted any funding for workplace violence prevention in health care?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, that would be under provincial jurisdiction, as the member well knows, but we are all encouraging safety in all workplaces.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, is the minister aware that my bill, Bill C-321, is a direct result of the 2019 HESA recommendations on workplace violence?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I am aware.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, can the minister tell the House how many days it has been since Bill C-321 was unanimously passed by the House of Commons?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** I am not aware of that, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, it has been 91 days.

Why is the government blocking passage of my bill in the Senate?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the Senate is independent. The other place has its own rules and timelines.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, can the minister tell us what she has done to ensure that Bill C-321 passes in the Senate quickly?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Chair, on a point of order, I completely appreciate that there is latitude to go beyond the scope of the estimates, but we are not even talking about the estimates now. We are talking about an individual private member's bill. The last three or four questions have been on it. This is a debate about the estimates with this particular department.

• (2225)

**The Deputy Chair:** Part of that is debate, but I want to remind the member that he is to address questions and comments through the Chair to the member in relation to the matter before the House.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, my bill would make it an aggravating factor during sentencing if the victim of an assault is a nurse or first responder. Can the minister tell this House what actions she can take to pass Bill C-321 today, tomorrow or anytime?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, it is unfortunate that the member is not familiar with the civics and processes of this place, because the Senate is independent, and therefore it works on its timelines and its decision-making process. I am sure they are having a robust debate on the bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** I want to remind the member that the questions are to be with respect to the estimates, so I just want him to ensure that his questions are pertaining to the estimates.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, I did ask how much money was in budget 2024 with respect to violence in the workplace.

**The Deputy Chair:** I want to remind the member that the time was stopped to ensure that his response was not going to be affected by the time. He has one minute and 11 seconds left.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, to the Minister of Health, would Bill C-64 provide for government-funded heart medications?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, no.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, would Bill C-64 provide for government-funded ALS medications?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, no.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, would Bill C-64 provide for government-funded asthma medications?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, no.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, would Bill C-64 provide for any government funding for any other rare diseases?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, drugs for rare diseases are under a separate action, and that money is available: \$1.5 billion will be spent.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Chair, the question was regarding Bill C-64.

*Business of Supply*

Can the Minister of Health tell us if Bill C-64 would provide for any government funding for any ailments other than diabetes?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, the intention of the bill is for diabetes and for contraception.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Chair, as a father of three, I empathize with many parents who worry about drugs. For instance, the Abbotsford Soccer Association decried, in an open letter, several safety issues related to drug paraphernalia, overdoses, vandalism and even rape at public fields.

Does the minister agree it is unacceptable for parents and coaches to have to sweep soccer fields for drug paraphernalia before the start of every game and practice?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, as a parent myself, I will say we are always concerned about public health and public safety for our children, our families and our communities, but we have committed to a public health approach that is compassionate with a firm lens on public safety as well. This is the work that we do comprehensively with all jurisdictions across the country.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, what action should parents take when they are exposed to drug paraphernalia at playgrounds and fields? Has the minister provided Canadians with a tool kit to deal with such situations?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, such actions would be under the bylaws and purview of local communities, municipalities and jurisdictions. However, we have the “Know More” opioids education program, which clearly addresses that.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, what would the minister say to parents who do not want to take their kids to parks, playgrounds or the beach for fear of exposure to dirty needles?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, of course this is unacceptable, and I lament the member to not stigmatize this but talk about how we save lives.

● (2230)

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, does the minister agree it is important to put up warning signs on beaches for fear of exposure?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, it would be for local municipalities or provincial jurisdictions to determine how they want to add that as a layer of enforcement.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, before decriminalization was implemented in B.C., did Health Canada conduct any studies on the impact of public drug use on children? If so, can the minister please provide such information to the House?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, decriminalization as a tool is one that is well used in many jurisdictions across the world.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, I will take that as a “no”.

When the minister decided to rescind the open drug use policy, was it because she heard, like me, that children were being exposed to hard drugs at schools and in parks?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, B.C. requested an amendment to its exemption and we worked with B.C., as we always have done

and will continue to do, to ensure that there is a balance between public health and public safety in all spaces.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, does the minister's decision account for the open and brazen use of drugs on B.C.'s public transit system?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, B.C.'s application was prepared with a myriad of experts in many fields, including chiefs of police, health experts and public safety experts. This is the work that we need to do collaboratively to address the problem.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, given that drug toxicity is the leading cause of death for children between the ages of 10 and 18, should schoolteachers and parents be trained on how to deal with overdoses?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I am happy to talk about the “Know More” opioids awareness program, which is what we have implemented in schools across this country, and continue to do, to help inform and educate.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, at the Mission legion, veterans clean up needles and confront crack smoking daily. Do veterans and legion volunteers need to be trained on overdose scenarios and public safety to keep their property safe and protect life?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I would like to talk about the training and distribution of naloxone kits that we have done across the country for many communities and institutions. There have been 1.5 million naloxone kits distributed by the federal government, and even more so through our provincial co-operation.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, B.C. businesses across the province have reported deteriorating public safety. The Surrey Board of Trade called it a “crime tax”. Does the minister agree with the Surrey Board of Trade that decriminalization is effectively a crime tax on small businesses?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we will address this overdose crisis with every tool we have available, because communities are asking us to do so. I would encourage the member to speak to his community, to local law enforcement and also to his local provincial jurisdiction on what work—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member has 19 seconds.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Chair, I would encourage the minister to visit the Abbotsford Soccer Association and address the fear that parents have due to the loss of public order caused by the government's policy. Will the minister meet with the Abbotsford Soccer Association?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we have met with many communities. Will the Leader of the Opposition meet with Moms Stop the Harm?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I will start by talking, and then I will have some questions for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. I will let you know at the outset that I do not expect you to limit the time for responses to the time of my questions, if you would allow that.

I talked, in my first intervention this evening, about the common-sense revolution of Mike Harris and what that did for health care. This time I want to talk about the war on drugs in the 1980s and how successful that was. The reason I want to do that is that it is very clear the Conservative approach to drug policy is very similar to the 1980s approach to the war on drugs.

I was probably between the ages of eight and let us say 12 during Nancy Reagan's big push for "Just Say No." It was Nancy Reagan, the First Lady of the United States, President Reagan's wife, who was leading the charge on the new-found approach to dealing with drugs, which was to just say no. How hard is it? All one has to do is just say no, and it is done. One does not have to worry about any of the problems that are associated with drugs.

That was, on the surface, what the issue was about, and that is, on the surface, how the Conservatives want to approach the current epidemics and issues with drug usage. However, under the surface of the war on drugs, something else was going on, which was a war against particular individuals in society who were being cast as problematic individuals who could not abide by the law. They were cast as people who were utilizing drugs based on just their own desire to do so, even though, according to the war on drugs, they could have stopped at any time they wanted. We all know that is not true.

What it did was that it took a policy approach of criminalizing to the maximum degree possible. In the United States, three strikes of simple possession of marijuana in some states would land someone in prison. There were situations where vast numbers of people were rounded up and incarcerated as a result of drug usage, quite often because it was something they could not control. For an individual who has an addiction, it is not as simple as to just say, "No, I do not want that."

I speak as somebody who has experience of having lived with somebody with an addiction, somebody who is no longer with us. She passed away. When I was a city councillor in the city of Kingston, my partner at the time, whom I lived with, was addicted to alcohol. Ultimately she ended up dying as a result of her addiction.

One might ask why she did not just stop drinking. It is that simple, is it not? I remember having numerous conversations with her about it. I remember her going into the hospital, Kingston General Hospital, which would hold someone for 72 hours before letting them out. I remember her trying repeatedly on her own, and going to special places where people would try to help her with her addiction. It did not matter. She kept going back to the place of using in order to support her addiction because it provided a certain level of comfort and because it was helping her deal with other problems she had previously had in her life. It was mental health.

At the core of the issue is how one treats an addiction. Does one treat an addiction for the mental health crisis that it is, or does one treat it as a criminal offence and treat it how Conservatives want to treat mental health and addictions, which is by telling people that all they have to do is just say no, and if they do not, that they are going to go to prison? That is the approach of the Conservatives. It is a failed approach and an approach we know does not work.

• (2235)

My friend Kate, my partner at the time, is no longer with us. She eventually ended up getting to a point where she passed away, and she had been deceased for over a week before anybody discovered her. Because of the addictions that she had, she had pushed everybody out of her life.

We can approach this by just asking why Kate did not just say no and stop drinking. We can ask why these drug users will not just stop using; it is that easy. Otherwise, we can treat it as the real problem it is. We can treat addictions as the real issues and the real mental health challenges that they are.

I know first-hand that trying to cut people off is never the solution, and it never works. That is why I am very proud to sit on a side of the House that treats mental health and addictions as the real health challenges that they are.

I am very concerned when I hear Conservatives harking back to the days of Nancy Reagan as though that approach could work today when it did not work before. It is really important that we do things from an evidence-based approach, which is why I am glad to see our government and the minister, in particular, doing that.

I have some questions for the minister that I would like to turn to now.

Conservatives talk about investing in treatment, but they cut two-thirds of drug treatment funds when they were last in government.

Let us talk about what saves lives, such as safe consumption sites. There is a safe consumption site in Kingston. We have not had an overdose crisis similar to the one that my neighbouring community in Belleville witnessed recently. I like to think it is because there was a safe consumption site in Kingston. We also have other health care services, such as prevention, treatment and harm reduction.

Can the minister please tell us about how we are supporting life-saving actions instead of slogans?

*Business of Supply*

● (2240)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, on the other side of the House, they roll out slogans that are literally written on the back of a napkin, rather than talking to experts or speaking to families and communities about what truly needs to be done to address this crisis. Their solution is criminalizing their loved ones. To that, I say that we cannot arrest our way out of a health crisis, and we are in a health crisis. People are dying and families are losing loved ones. We have to open the door for those loved ones who are struggling with addiction. They cannot just snap their fingers and get there. We need to give them a pathway to safety, one that is compassionate and based on evidence.

We know that safe consumption sites save lives. Over 55,000 overdoses have been overturned at safe consumption sites. That is 55,000 lives saved and over 471,000 referrals from safe consumption sites to treatment options. Those 471,000 lives were given a pathway to make better choices for themselves, to get help with their addiction. We cannot look away. Safe consumption sites in communities that are well managed and well resourced mean that we are meeting people where they are. We are not judging them, not stigmatizing them, not telling them to go to a back alley to shoot up and die. Rather, we would say, "Come on inside. Let me help you. Let's talk about it. I see you in your struggle."

On that side of the House, they pit harm reduction against treatment. This is not an either-or debate. This is about saving lives. We have all lost someone. I have lost a dear friend to an overdose, someone who I knew all my life. Every resource was made available to him, and he died alone, leaving two beautiful children and a wife behind.

I am a mother. I worry about my kids. We all worry about our young people. That is why prevention is so important. That is why we have the no opioids program and the ease the burden program for our tradespeople. We are doing the work with jurisdictions in every community that we can. If anyone wants help in this country, we are there for them. That is why we have the ETF of \$150 million in budget 2024. That is \$150 million over the next three years for communities, indigenous communities and municipalities that need our help. On top of that, there is \$200 billion in bilateral agreements, where over 30% on average is for mental health and substance use. This is on top of the health transfers because there is not one silver bullet to this.

Treatment is not the only answer. We have to get people to treatment. We cannot treat someone if they are dead. We cannot treat someone if they are dying at home alone, in a back alley, or on the streets of many communities in this country. We are losing people because there is a toxic, poisoned drug supply. That is where enforcement comes in with our pillars, and that is why we work with law enforcement. However, law enforcement is asking us to stand up in our communities to work with evidence, to work with experts, to work with peer support workers, outreach workers and health care workers to save lives.

It is uncomfortable to see someone struggle with addiction. Seeing someone in their most vulnerable and worst moment is painful, but on this side of the House, a comprehensive approach says that

even if it is hard, even if it is uncomfortable, even if it is difficult, we do not look away. We meet the moment. We meet the challenge. We have spent a billion dollars since 2017, as opposed to the two-third cuts that were put in place under the previous government.

We know that it is not just about throwing money at this. It is about building the systems that we need with provincial partners who are responsible for health because this is a public health crisis. This is not a criminal one. That is why we put into place bills such as Bill C-5, to ensure that we are moving people out of the criminal justice system into health care and into supportive environments. Why is that? It is because we care.

● (2245)

Governments are meant to invest in their people. That is what we do on this side of the House: We invest in people. We do not cut. We do not look away. We say we are going to find the tools so that people can live one more day, and we can show them a pathway forward and a way to get the health care they need. Someone will address that wound. Someone will lead them to the supports that they need, but we have to invest in them.

Harm reduction is a key part of that process. To pit harm reduction against treatment is to say it is either-or, it is all or nothing, it is black or white, and it just takes treatment. It means that they are not seeing the person in front of them and the health and services they need. On this side of the House, for every single one of us who has lost a loved one to this opioid crisis and who wants communities and young people to be safe, we need to invest in a strategy that we know works. That is prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery and, yes, enforcement too. Public safety and public health go hand in hand.

We will not look away. I will not look away from the people who know we can save their lives, whether it is with naloxone kits, drug checking or safe consumption sites. We know that, when we close safe consumption sites, overdose deaths go up because people go back into the shadows. We want to bring people into the light. We want them to know that they are going to see another day and that we are investing in them because they matter.

That is the work we are doing. That is what I invite every member of the House to stand up for and support. The Nimbyism, the slogans, the fear and the stigma we are seeing on the other side will just put people back in the shadows. I want us to see the light.



*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Chair, my questions will be for the Minister of Health, through you.

As the critic for agriculture, agri-food and supply management, that is what I will talk about. I will begin with questions about the Pest Management Regulatory Agency.

In registering phytosanitary products, people in the sector are hoping for more efficiency and more transparency on the part of the agency. No one doubts the fundamental independence of the agency's scientists, or the precautionary principle, which is incredibly important and must be maintained. However, communication leaves something to be desired. The delays are extremely long. When people in the agricultural sector receive responses, they are extremely short and lacking in detail, which prevents any collaboration and any dialogue.

I would like to know how the minister sees the communication between the agency and the stakeholders.

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, it is very important to ensure that communication is quick and effective, but it is also very important to ensure quality and health at the same time.

I can certainly work with my hon. colleague and with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to ensure prompt communication with stakeholders. It is important. We must ensure that the process is as quick as possible. In the meantime, we must also ensure quality and health.

● (2250)

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Chair, times are tough right now due to climate change. Even scientists at the agency are concerned about emerging diseases caused by climate change and globalized markets. As the minister just mentioned, we need to be more efficient. At the same time, we need to ensure Canada's food resilience. That is fundamental.

While we have a duty to take precautions, we also have a duty to prevent plant diseases so that we can supply our population with food. In terms of reciprocal standards, I would like to know how the minister can explain the two specific examples I am about to give.

Last year, the formulation for linuron, a product used in growing carrots, was altered slightly. Canada's registration process was so slow that we almost ended up in a situation where our producers could not produce, and where we would have to import carrots from producers in the United States using the very same product. The concern here is efficiency.

Turning now to beets, nortron was not approved this year. It was put forward as a replacement for another product that there was an issue with. nortron's application for approval was submitted 12 years ago. I do not think that is a reasonable timeline for a response. The application was not approved. I would like to remind the House that we are not calling into question the independence of the scientists or the precautionary principle, but 12 years seems rather ridiculous to me.

Does the minister have a plan to increase transparency, communication and efficiency at the agency?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, it is essential that we modernize our system in general and more specifically in the area about which the member asked questions.

The member is right. With climate change, there are many changes happening around the world, particularly in the food industry. I am very concerned about that. It is essential that we modernize our system and ensure that it is efficient. At the same time, we need to ensure quality and protect public health. We need to find a balance between the two.

I really appreciated the fact that, in his question, the member emphasized respect for the independence of the people who make these decisions. I want to work with the member on this issue.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Chair, I have a suggestion. It might even be a possible solution. It would involve recognizing what is being done in other countries, and perhaps partnering with other countries. A private member's bill has been introduced, Bill C-359, which proposes taking into consideration the fact that a given product has been approved in two different jurisdictions recognized by Canada in order to develop a system that might be faster. I am just tossing ideas around. Obviously, the Bloc Québécois will be there to collaborate, always with a view to maintaining the precautionary principle, the sovereignty of the decision-making process and the independence of the scientists.

I have one last question, which has to do with regulating tolerated thresholds in products. I say this in a constructive spirit to improve communication. How does the minister explain increasing the threshold for fludioxonil on beet roots for products imported from the United States last year, when, the year before, an increase in thresholds for glyphosate and fungicides in berries was announced during the summer construction holiday?

This news was released on Friday afternoon to keep it under the radar. I would not call that an attitude of openness, transparency and communication. It also spreads fear among the public. I would like my colleague to comment on that, and assure me that this summer, during the construction holiday, we will not be in for another nasty surprise.

● (2255)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, first of all, it is absolutely vital that we find ways to modernize our system and ensure that processes become faster and more efficient. I agree with that. I want to work with the Bloc Québécois member on that issue.

When it comes to other issues and communication, we can work together on those with officials and departments. Maybe we could have a conversation to discuss these issues in more detail, considering how specific they are.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Chair, I hope that we will not have any nasty surprises over the summer holidays. That is good.

*Business of Supply*

Now I want to talk about the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA. Right now there is a major problem in the duck industry, 80% of which is concentrated in Quebec. As for duck liver, 100% of that industry is in Quebec.

Again, this agency is not collaborating. I would also point out to the minister that the two agencies I am talking about, the PMRA and the CFIA, do not seem to be in regular communication with one another. We often see things like that in government institutions, and it is a big problem.

Currently, people involved in duck farming need to import breeding stock from France, where there has been a massive vaccination program. There is one supplier who does not vaccinate. Again, while we fully respect scientific decisions, there is a solution available. This has been dragging on for months. The CFIA seems to be closed to the idea of collaborating.

Could the minister make a commitment to people in the industry to look at this issue and try to move it forward quickly to resolve the situation and protect the industry?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, that is entirely reasonable. I will work with the member opposite on this issue.

I agree. It is really important to ensure that there is collaboration. We can assess this issue and I will speak with the member as soon as possible.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Chair, we are always reasonable. This means that several meetings will be needed.

Still in the duck industry, it is extremely difficult for our producers to export to Japan, Taiwan and China at this time because of avian flu outbreaks. Producers now have to certify the absence of avian flu in their area.

We are currently in a period without any avian flu outbreaks. However, Japan, China and Taiwan, in particular, are requesting documents from the CRA. The CRA has so far refused to provide them. Apparently it considers them too voluminous. It is rather surprising that a Canadian government agency would consider documents too voluminous.

Could the government also step in on this? At this time, our producers cannot export their products. Meanwhile, ducks are arriving from Thailand, Hungary and France, and, according to our producers, this is not always done in accordance with our national standards.

I would like a brief response from the minister on this.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, we are so proud of the quality of our product in Quebec and across Canada. It is really important to ensure that the quality is maintained.

Regarding avian flu, the situation is good right now, fortunately for the animals, but also for the population in general. We will continue to monitor the situation. I will certainly work with the member on the issue of exporting our product.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Speaker, I will try to pick up the pace a bit. I still have a lot of material to get through.

Could the minister tell me how much progress has been made toward the implementation of the DNA testing that was developed by chicken farmers to detect chicken that is brought across the border falsely declared as spent fowl? This has been a problem for several years. The farmers developed the test, and it is effective. It would be very easy for the CFIA to incorporate it at inspection sites. I would like the minister to talk to me about that.

Would it also be possible to endorse these farmers' animal welfare program with CFIA certification? That is something else that might be very easy to do. It is a simple annual audit. This is a request from the industry.

• (2300)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, there are lots of questions and lots of details.

These questions are really important. I will send a response as soon as possible with all the details.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Chair, when it comes to front-of-package labelling, the minister is aware of the situation, because I spoke to him recently. I want to talk to him about the cranberry situation. It is a healthy fruit, but it often has added sugar. Sugar is added because, once the fruit is dried, it has a bitter taste that needs to be balanced out. Cranberry farmers are really worried about seeing their products labelled as if they were just candy, as if they contained a lot of sugar.

Is the minister prepared to consider some sort of interim or exceptional measure? Could he explain to me why, when people in the industry proposed something like France's Nutri-Score system, which assigns each food the letter A, B, C, D or E and which would assign cranberries a B or C rather than an E, the CFIA did not take that into account?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, it is so important for consumers to be able to get information from the label. Generally speaking, there is too much sugar in our food and that is problematic. It is important for everyone in the country to have this information, especially when it comes to added sugar, which is not naturally present in food. Eating too much sugar leads to a lot of illnesses. It is a major threat to the general health of people across the country. We need to make the information accessible so that people can see it and make a choice.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Chair, is the date for implementing this measure, which is scheduled for January 1, 2026, set in stone or can there be an extension for some suppliers who have a lot of packages in stock and would suffer significant losses? The minister can simply give me a quick yes or no answer.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, we have discussed this issue with the industry at great length, and the conversation will continue. Personally, I think it is important now that label information be made available to the public at large.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Chair, I am going to talk about one final subsidiary issue.

*Business of Supply*

I would like us to talk about people affected by thalidomide. A recent announcement extended the coverage period. I was very pleased to hear that, because there are people who were affected by that.

I would like the minister to tell me whether he thinks everyone will be covered. If a few exceptional cases should come to light involving people with substantial evidence, will he agree to cover those exceptions?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, the situation concerns me deeply and I will be providing more information soon. It takes a lot of time. Unfortunately, I am not prepared to answer that question right now.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Chair, as I begin this evening, I want to recognize that both ministers have been, for over three hours now, providing answers of substance to all parliamentarians, and I appreciate them for that.

I would like to start by following up on a letter I sent to the Minister of Health. We had a conversation about a month ago about renewing investments for support and training for HIV self-testing kits. As a reminder to the minister, in my community, the AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and Area recently expanded its services to Guelph Wellington and, for over the past year, has supported over 600 people in testing for HIV. Of the people engaged, 94% requested assistance from a peer worker to ensure they understood and completed the test correctly.

While the test kits remain available, the funding for support from a peer worker had ended. When we last spoke, the minister shared that he was planning to look into this. Can he share if the federal government will resume funding for the support of these self-test kits and, if so, when?

• (2305)

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I appreciate the continued conversation on this topic and the member's very earnest advocacy. It is an area in which we know that, when folks get tested, we can get them the drugs they need. It becomes a very manageable condition rather than what it had been in the past, which was a death sentence. It is totally remarkable for me to be able to talk with folks and see the transformation they can have.

In the first order, in the pilot project, the test kits will continue, as I have mentioned. As for the support around them, we are continuing to look at how that might be possible. Obviously, there is provincial jurisdiction and provincial partners need to be coming to the table with their own action in this space. We really need to make sure that people get tested. That is not just a federal responsibility.

These kits will continue to be available. We are looking at how we might have supports around that. This was a pilot project, and we are helping provinces, but they really need to be stepping up as well.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Madam Chair, would the minister or a member of his team be open to accept a meeting with ACCKWA to hear

directly from it about how important the support is for these test kits?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, I would absolutely welcome that. There is one thing I could say really quickly. The member could give me more time, if he chooses, so I can get back to this. If he wants to give me a little more time on that piece, I have something else to add.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Madam Chair, I need to move to the next question.

My next question is on a concerning limitation in Bill C-64 brought to me by a senior in my community. The bill, of course, is designed to provide coverage for specific prescription drugs and products intended for contraception and the treatment of diabetes. My concern and that of this constituent is that critical equipment to administer medication and monitor blood sugar levels for people with diabetes, like real-time continuous glucose monitoring devices, is not included. Instead, the Health Canada website states, "the federal government is announcing its intention to establish a fund to support access to diabetes devices and supplies."

Glucose monitoring devices cost between \$2,000 and \$6,000 per year and are a crucial part of diabetes management. While providing insulin is an important measure and the Greens support it wholeheartedly, I am concerned that this senior is still on the hook for hundreds of dollars a month for this essential tool in managing her diabetes, even with the passage, once we get there, of Bill C-64.

Will the minister commit to establishing this fund to ensure that glucose monitoring devices required by diabetics will be covered across the country, and if so, by when?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, I think the fund is established specifically for that purpose. It is going to vary province to province, but what I want to see for those in need who are in income insecure situations is that we have the ability to do that.

Now that I have a chance, I will go back to the other issue. One thing to note about sexual health and contraceptives is that we are having conversations in the pharma space, like the one I am having with Manitoba, because it is really taking leadership there, to see how we can spread and increase the action around sexual health. To me, that certainly includes action on AIDS.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Madam Chair, I am encouraged to hear that on both fronts. I appreciate that.

I would like to tell the minister about another constituent of mine, Noor Ayesha. Noor is battling an incurable rare cancer. For it, she requires an oral drug. The name is Pemazyre. It has been approved by Health Canada but is not recommended by the Canadian drug agency for public coverage. Noor's oncologist recommends that she take this drug to help her live longer, but it costs \$800 U.S. per tablet and has to be taken daily. It is a cost of over \$15,000 U.S. per month.

*Business of Supply*

Here is what Dr. Jennifer Knox, a medical oncologist at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and professor of medicine at the University of Toronto, had to say about Pemazyre: “this drug represents real progress, a key scientific and clinical advancement.” Noor's family has had to turn to starting a GoFundMe to help her fight cancer and live longer because the Canadian drug agency has not recommended Pemazyre for coverage.

What steps is the government taking to address this gap between Health Canada's approval of rare cancer drugs and the CDA's recommendations for public coverage in order to ensure that patients like Noor can access the treatment they need without prohibitive costs?

• (2310)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, in the first order, I want to say to the member and to Noor and her family how sorry I am that she is going through this, and how dreadfully difficult it would be to get that diagnosis and live with that condition and then have to worry about medication on top of it.

We do have action on drugs for rare diseases. We are negotiating now with provinces to try to identify what drugs we can look at to help folks who have a rare condition and need rare drugs so they can get help dealing with these extraordinary costs. One of the reasons it is so important that we take the collective action we are taking with pharmacare and take these steps is that we need to get to a world where everybody gets the medication they need and they are not in the kind of situation that the member described Noor is in.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Madam Chair, can the minister share more about what can be done in working with provinces and territories to address this seeming gap? The issue, it seems, is that Noor cannot access the drug because it is approved by Health Canada but not listed by the Canadian drug agency as recommended for public coverage.

Can he share more, just briefly, about what can be done in working with provinces and territories to address this?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, given the level of specificity, perhaps the member could send me the details and I can get back to him directly. I want to be precise and I want to dig into the specific circumstances that relate to that exact drug. It is a very fair question. I want to do that for both him and Noor.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Madam Chair, absolutely, I would be happy to do that. I appreciate the specificity.

I would next like to ask about Dylan and Kim. They are two of many parents in my community who have shared with me what it is like to raise a child living with CF. In their case, it is their son Jackson. As we know, kids like Jackson need expensive medication, such as Trikafta, which can significantly improve their quality of life. However, given the high cost of Trikafta and other CF drugs, many families struggle to afford it unless they are covered by private insurance. Those with access only have it because of private insurance through their employer. It often means that the value of this coverage is actually more than the person makes in terms of their salary. Of course, no child should go without essential treatment because of their family's financial constraints.

Can the minister share when the government plans to move forward with the pharmacare program that would include drugs such as Trikafta and maybe, at minimum, require private insurers to cover the drugs that public plans do? I understand this is already the case in Quebec and something CF Canada is calling for.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, first of all, for Dylan and Kim, I appreciate the member's advocacy. I cannot imagine how difficult that circumstance is, and that is exactly what we want to shut down. This is precisely why we are acting on pharmacare.

One very important question we have is about which model to use. We have a pilot in P.E.I. that is working very well, which is based on a fill-in-the-gaps model. The model that Bill C-64 is based on is a universal model. We are now looking at those two models in a real-world setting to see which one is best to use as a delivery mechanism for all drugs. We have a committee that will be looking at that over the next year, which will really paint that path forward.

These are very active matters of consideration, and this is one of the reasons it is so important that we establish that bedrock, which is the legislative foundation for pharmacare in Bill C-64, and take this action. In this way, we can make sure that we get to help families such as that of Dylan and Kim. That is envisioned in Bill C-64, and very much in my heart and in my mind as we are working on this.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Madam Chair, as the minister likely knows, because the word “pharmacare” is restricted to contraceptives and diabetes, I hesitate to use it at this point. I know that is the minister's vision for where he wants it to go. However, I am thinking about parents, such as Dylan and Kim, who want to understand more about when this could be expanded to them. Could we at least hear the minister's aspiration for when he would look to see that expansion in place?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, I would say that our health care system has always been iterative. We have built it out a piece at a time. However, one of the most frustrating things for me, as health minister, is to go to different parts of the country and hear stories of things that we could do on a preventative basis and are not doing. I mean, we could talk about Iqaluit. I was up talking with Inuit leaders about tuberculosis outbreaks there. There are things that we still have happening—

• (2315)

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Madam Chair, I would love to continue that conversation with the minister.

*Business of Supply*

As the minister knows, Canada also has one of the highest rates of MS in the world, with more than 90,000 Canadians living with this disease. Of course, while the cause is still unknown, emerging research has highlighted the potential for significant advancements in the prevention of MS.

I have heard directly from constituents that they want to see the Government of Canada commit \$15 million to fund MS research in partnership with MS Canada, focusing on prevention, repair and regeneration.

I understand that the minister also met with MS Canada earlier this month. Can he share what it will take for the government to commit these funds?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, I am extremely happy to see that, in the last budget, we responded to the Bouchard report and will be putting major money into research. I think it is \$2.5 billion, generally a very significant portion for health research. Through the Canadian Institute for Health Research, we funded an enormous amount of research into MS.

The member is absolutely right: Canada is a leader, unfortunately, when it comes to MS, so we also need to be a leader in research. When I look at these investments, I certainly hope that this independent agency will be taking a look at these requests and deepening our commitments in research. However, those dollars in the budget are absolutely essential to that end.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Madam Chair, I appreciate the minister for meeting with representatives from MS Canada. It is best that he hear from them directly rather than from me, but it also good to know that there are parliamentarians on all sides who are keen to see the investment made potentially, for example, in the next fall economic statement.

I would like to turn to a question for the Minister of Mental Health.

There are two local mental health service providers in my community, Thresholds and the CMHA Waterloo Wellington, which have been struggling for months to secure funding for a mental health emergency room to provide appropriate care for people in crisis and to alleviate the strain on overcrowded emergency rooms. There has not been government funding available, so they have had to open this summer using their own budgets, and they have about three months' worth of staffing support available to demonstrate how critical the support is. Of course the provincial government also needs to step up.

Given the urgency and the critical need for this kind of facility, I would like to hear what the minister believes are the immediate actions the federal government could take to support these kinds of local initiatives and ensure that people in crisis have access to the care they need without overburdening the emergency rooms.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I know that the member is such a staunch advocate for mental health and for helping those who use substances in our communities.

I do not think there is a quick fix to getting our health systems to incorporate mental health in the full spectrum of care. That is why

we are taking an integrated approach through the bilateral agreements. As I mentioned earlier in the evening, just for example, in Ontario, \$700 million of its \$3.1 billion bilateral agreement is going toward mental health and substance use.

We have to move the needle. We are not there yet. Community service organizations have been the bedrock of providing mental health services in the gap that we see across jurisdictions. That being said, this is exactly why programs like the youth mental health fund are being put into place in budget 2024, but there are no quick fixes.

We are moving mental health into the health care systems. We are seeing, for the first time ever, that there are mental health ministers in nearly every jurisdiction across this country, which shows us that there is a prioritization to work collaboratively. I am happy to meet with the member to talk about what is going on in his own community with regard to the CMHA. Local CMHAs do terrific work, and I would be happy to discuss.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Madam Chair, today the minister stood by her failed decriminalization project in British Columbia after being forced to walk it back. Last week, she voted against ruling out the expansion of drug decriminalization everywhere else in Canada. Will the minister unequivocally commit today to never expanding her insane decriminalization policy from B.C. to anywhere else?

• (2320)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Sadly, Madam Chair, I have to say again that the stigmatized language from the other side of the House is highly disturbing.

Decriminalization is one tool of many in addressing the overdose crisis. It exists in jurisdictions around the world, such as Switzerland, Portugal and Spain, and we know it is an important tool that we need to use. I really wish the member would look at the evidence and the facts rather than use rhetoric.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Madam Chair, the failed experiment in British Columbia was walked back by the minister herself after she was forced to do it due to a request from B.C. because of so many deaths. Will she rule it out for her own city, in Toronto?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, as the member well knows, we have said no to the Toronto proposal. Again, she seems to ignore the many stakeholders and evidence supporting a full use of tools to address the overdose crisis. People are dying because of street drugs; they are not dying because of decriminalization.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Madam Chair, will the minister say no to Toronto forever?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we do not deal with hypotheticals on this side of the House; we deal with facts. I wish the member would actually engage in an evidence-based conversation on what a comprehensive strategy to addressing the overdose crisis looks like.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Madam Chair, it is not a hypothetical; it is a yes or no question. Will the minister rule out decriminalization for Toronto going forward?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the member is misleading Canadians. The proposal has already been rejected. There is no new application on the books, and we do not deal with what-ifs and what-abouts. We deal—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Thornhill.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Madam Chair, it is a very simple question. The people of Toronto have watched crack being smoked in hospitals and people shooting up in parks, next to children.

Will the minister say no to decriminalization in Toronto going forward? It is a yes or no question.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the current proposal was rejected.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Madam Chair, it is a yes or no question. Yes or no, will the minister rule out decriminalization for Toronto, for Montreal and for Halifax? I will even expand the question for her.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, there are currently no proposals put before Health Canada for those jurisdictions.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Madam Chair, we are aware that the proposal from Toronto was rejected.

If the Liberals win the next election, will the minister commit to never decriminalizing illegal drugs in Toronto?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, just like the member does not have a crystal ball of what will happen in the next election, we do not have a crystal ball on what jurisdictions will need and what they will ask the federal government to collaborate with them on in addressing the overdose crisis.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Madam Chair, the minister was asked, yes or no, whether she will commit to never decriminalizing illegal drugs in Toronto as she did with her failed, insane drug policy in British Columbia. She was asked whether she is not going to bring it forward in Toronto, and she cannot answer the question. I am going to give her one more opportunity: Will the minister commit to never decriminalizing drugs, going forward, in Toronto?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I would kindly ask the member to check her language in the stigmatization of those who need our help in addressing substance use and addictions.

On this side of the House, we deal with facts, with experts, with evidence and with health care systems, and we will continue to work—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Thornhill.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Madam Speaker, I am going to ask this one last time tonight: Will the minister commit to not decriminalizing illegal drugs in Toronto going forward? The people of Toronto

want to know what she is going to do in her own community, because she has already let down B.C.

• (2325)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the City of Toronto knows that it needs health care services from the province and that it needs to work collaboratively with all levels of government to save lives and address those people who use substances.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Madam Chair, is diversion being tracked?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, according to DASA, it is being tracked, and the RCMP—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, how is diversion being tracked?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, DASA assists us in tracking diversion.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, B.C. is looking to add chemical tracers to its safe supply. Will the government make tracers required in all safe supply across this country?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, that would have to be in discussion with pharmaceutical companies, but as the member mentioned earlier, counterfeits of drugs are being made in the illegal market to look like real drugs, so it would be challenging.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, the government funds the so-called safe supply programs. It could make it mandatory to put tracers into the drugs. Will the government do it, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the member fails to recognize that in the illicit toxic drug supply, counterfeits of prescribed drugs and prescribed alternatives are on the illicit market, so it is difficult to—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, the minister is making arguments as to why tracers are absolutely required in a government-funded safe supply.

Will she commit to putting tracers in the safe supply the government is funding, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the member is misleading in her assessment that putting tracers in will mitigate diversion. It is one of many tools, but counterfeit illicit drug supplies will also be an issue, and she has not addressed that in terms of enforcement.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, the minister is actively enabling illegal drug trafficking by not employing every tool available to fight drug diversion.

Why will the minister not add tracers to drugs?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we have not currently received such a request. However, as I mentioned, that would be a collaborative work with pharmaceutical companies, prescribers and provinces. At this point in time, there is no request before us.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, will the minister ask her colleagues to increase penalties for diversion?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, enforcement is a key part of addressing illicit toxic drugs.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Will you ask your colleagues to increase penalties?

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member needs to address all questions and comments through the Chair.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, will the minister ask her colleagues to increase penalties for diversion, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, they do not listen to chiefs of police from across the country who are saying that decriminalization is an important tool.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, I am asking very simply about increased penalties for people caught diverting drugs, illegal drugs.

Will the minister commit today to asking her colleagues to look at increasing those penalties, yes or no?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, diversion is illegal. The member well knows it, and law enforcement is doing everything it can and has the tools available to it to address diversion.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, we know shipping containers are not being scanned for cars.

Are they being scanned for drugs?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, that would be a question to the Minister of Public Safety. However, we are in conversation.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, has the minister advocated for increased drug screening at our ports?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we work with all levels of government and law enforcement to address diversion.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, what about at our borders?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, as I mentioned, it is at all levels of enforcement.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, what about precursor chemicals?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, precursor chemicals are part of the synthetic components we see—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, what has been done to actually ban these precursor chemicals?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, working through the trilateral fentanyl group and with other countries, we are addressing it.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, the RCMP clearly asked us at committee, and it stated that many precursor chemicals were not illegal, despite it asking for it. When will the minister act to ban these precursor chemicals?

• (2330)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, unfortunately the member does not recognize that many of the pain management medications used in hospitals and medical facilities are part of these components, and we have to move carefully to make sure we are addressing all issues.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Chair, people are dying.

When will they take action and act to ban these precursor chemicals to prevent drugs from being circulated in our communities?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, people are dying, and it is absolutely tragic.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Minister, when did your government fully commit to so-called—

**The Deputy Chair:** I will remind the hon. member to address questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the minister.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, when did the government fully commit to safe supply?

**The Deputy Chair:** Again, the hon. member is addressing the question directly to the minister. He should address it through the Chair. Maybe he could put the word “the” in front of the word “minister”. That might work.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, to the minister, when did the NDP-Liberal government fully commit to so-called safe supply?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, we have had a comprehensive program since 2017 looking at all option tools and resources to address the toxic drug supply.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, since 2020, when the government fully committed to safe supply, how many Canadians have died from overdose?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, sadly, we have lost 42,000 Canadians due to overdose, but 86% of overdose deaths in the last set of data was from the illicit toxic drug supply, not—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, what was the average street price of Dilaudid in Ottawa before so-called safe supply was introduced?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I do not have that number. I am happy to get it for the member, but I am sure he will tell me.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, I am quite happy to educate the minister that it was \$25 before so-called safe supply was introduced. Perhaps the minister might know what the so-called safe supply has done to reduce the street price of Dilaudid. Maybe the minister could tell us what it is now. It was \$25. What is it now?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I am aware that the street price of diverted hydromorphone has lowered in many jurisdictions across the country, but we see that the majority of overdose deaths are because of illicit fentanyl and not due to the drug that he is referring to.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, those people who really care about this issue know that the street price for Dilaudid has reduced from about \$25 to \$1 to \$2 per tablet, shockingly.

I wonder if the minister could tell Canadians this: Has the import and supply of heroin ever been allowed in Canada?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Yes, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, I wonder if the minister could answer this for Canadians: Has heroin been legally imported in Canada in the last five years?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, as a physician, the member should well know that heroin is used in the standard practice of medicine in terms of pain management.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, oddly enough, I did have a pain clinic for 15 years, and that is not true.

Anyway, that being said, did Fair Price Pharma import 15 kilograms of heroin into Canada in November 2021?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, just to correct the record, it is true that heroin is used in medical practice. However, no, Health Canada did not import 15 kilograms of heroin.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, has any private firm been granted a dealer's licence to legally possess, produce, sell and distribute opium or heroin in Canada?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, there are licence-holders who can import for research purposes.

• (2335)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, that is not what I asked, but “legally possess, produce, sell and distribute opium and heroin in Canada”, were the words. Yes or no.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, as mentioned, they have been licensed for research purposes, so the answer would be no.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, Canadians should know that Sunshine Earth Labs was granted such a dealer's licence in January 2023. Has any private firm been licensed to legally produce, sell or distribute cocaine in Canada?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** No, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, that is absolutely untrue. Sunshine Earth Labs was granted a license in November 2022.

How about Ecstasy?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Again, Madam Chair, Health Canada licences are for research purposes only.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, that is untrue. In January 2024, they were allowed to manufacture up to 20 kilograms of Ecstasy.

How many applications for a dealer's licence are currently pending?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I would be more than happy to get back to the member with an exact answer from officials.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Chair, would the minister reject further licences for MDMA, or Ecstasy, cocaine and heroin?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, as heroin, as mentioned before, is used for medical purposes, we cannot withhold those licences. However, we will continue to work to ensure there are strict regulatory mechanisms in place.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Madam Chair, it is such an opportunity to speak tonight in this important conversation about health care and health outcomes in this country. I have been listening all night to the questions and answers on a broad range of health-related issues, and the pattern of questions from the Conservative Party members all have a similar theme.

On the one hand, Conservative members have questioned the federal government about investments that they feel have not been ambitious enough, like the member of Parliament for Bay of Quinte, who implied that the federal government has not spent enough to help the Province of Ontario deliver effective treatment for substance use disorders, yet he has voted against every measure to support the over \$600 million to Ontario to do exactly that. No wonder Premier Ford is worried about what a Conservative federal government would do if they were elected.

It is important that the federal government continues to support communities across the country, yet, despite their rhetoric, it is clear that the members opposite do not support any of the measures that doctors, community health providers, law enforcement professionals, researchers or even other orders of government say are critically important to save lives and to help people reach toward the light of recovery.



*Business of Supply*

However, people like Carolyn Karle in Thunder Bay, who lost her daughter Dayna almost a year into Dayna's recovery, know that recovery is fragile and that compassion, love and ongoing support are what it takes to recover from substance use addiction. Her daughter Dayna relapsed on alcohol one night, took one dose of a substance that she thought was cocaine and died of an opioid overdose that night, in her own bedroom, like the majority of people who die of opioid overdose: alone. This devastating tragedy left her mother determined to help others who struggle with substance use disorder, a condition that far too many of us know is chronic and reoccurring, but treatable.

Lest we think it is only substance use disorder treatment that the Conservatives are opposing, they have also voted en bloc against pharmacare and the Canadian dental care plan. No matter what Canadians need or ask for, Conservatives' main response is that they are on their own, yet Canadians have always believed in taking care of each other. Indeed, if we ask Canadians what they think sets our country apart from others, many will say it is our public health care system.

That is the difference here. We see an ongoing pattern of attack on the health of Canadians who need the most help, those who cannot afford medication, those who have lived with dental pain and decay for years, those who need care for their sons and daughters to keep them alive another day as they strive to heal from the burden and trauma of substance use, yet what I still hear, despite the Conservatives' insistence on abandoning each other, is a deep and abiding love by Canadians of their neighbours, friends and community members. It is what I love the most about this country: a deep commitment to each other that sets us apart from many other places in the world.

The questions tonight have ranged from ill-informed, like the member for Souris—Moose Mountain, who failed to understand the jurisdictional right and responsibility of provinces to improve health care, to the many others, including the member for Thornhill, who implied that the government should not ever meet with diverse experts, companies and stakeholders. As a member of Parliament and a minister, it is my job to hear diverse perspectives, even the ones I do not agree with, on a range of issues. This line of questioning implies some stakeholders should be shut out from their representatives because we do not agree with them. By the way, it is indicative of the record under the previous Harper government.

In my former role as health promotion planner in Thunder Bay, I was the author of a grant proposal to Health Canada. Stephen Harper was the prime minister and Leona Aglukkaq was the health minister. Thunder Bay wanted to develop a drug strategy that would help coordinate its efforts to reduce substance-related harms. The funding program prohibited proposals that included harmful alcohol or opioid use. Imagine that. It was the two most harmful substances that constituents in Thunder Bay and around Canada were facing, and the then Conservative government refused projects across the country that dealt with any of them. We lost a decade in this work, as the leadership on opioid use was missing. To treat substance use and reduce related harms for people and communities, there really is not one silver bullet.

• (2340)

The Thunder Bay drug strategy was modelled on evidence and advice that says to save lives and reduce harm to people and communities, the four pillars of prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction must be in place. Indeed, our community added a fifth, housing, because it became clear that a place to call home was the foundation of healing. I note that Conservative members have voted against housing measures as well.

Last fall, our government launched the renewed Canadian drugs and substances strategy, which offers a comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate and evidence-based drug policy. Using the advice of the Canadian drugs and substances strategy, informed by the cross-section of professionals needed to address this issue, the Government of Canada announced over \$1 billion in funding, including almost \$600 million, through Health Canada's substance use and addictions program. This money supports community-based treatment, harm reduction, prevention and stigma reduction. That is money going directly to the front line of supporting people and their families to heal. The money funds research and surveillance initiatives and supports stronger law enforcement capacity to address illegal drug production and trafficking.

Despite the concern that some Conservative members have raised tonight about enforcement and safety, like the member for Cariboo—Prince George, and the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, Conservative members have consistently voted against funding support for enforcement activities. I guess they do not believe in putting the money where their mouths are.

Tonight, we have heard recriminations about not doing enough to save lives. In 2016, there was only one supervised consumption site in Canada and Stephen Harper tried over and over to shut it down. Thankfully, the courts agreed that the lives of drug users matter too. Since then, our focus on life-saving means that we have approved 41 of these sites in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec. At these sites there are workers, who, I have to say, are really amazing, hard workers. They are on the front lines of witnessing suffering. I want to take a moment to thank them right now for that incredibly gruelling work. These workers have prevented more than 53,000 overdoses, with close to 4.5 million visits. That is a lot of people who want to live that these Conservative members say do not matter.

*Business of Supply*

From substance use treatment to dental care, to coverage for birth control and diabetes medication, to support for provinces and territories to bolster their health care systems over and over, the Conservative members vote against. It is hard not to see these questions tonight as being cynical. Canadians have always rallied around each other and taken care of each other. The idea that some lives do not matter, that our children do not deserve absolutely any measure that saves lives, is opposite to the Canadian way.

I have these questions for the ministers. First, to the Minister of Health, can you share why diabetes medication was chosen as one of the first medications to be covered by the national pharmacare plan?

• (2345)

**The Deputy Chair:** I want to remind the hon. minister that she is to address questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the minister.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, it is precisely because diabetes is a precursor illness, that diabetes, when improperly managed, leads to heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney failure and amputation. It is unfortunately right now costing, as of the latest estimate, from 2018, \$28 billion to our health system. It is estimated in a 10-year period to increase to \$37 billion.

We have to turn the tide. We need to make sure that people are effectively managing their diabetes so that we do not get those bad outcomes, so that it costs the system less. Fundamentally, it really is an issue of prevention.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Chair, my second question is about a shelter I ran in Thunder Bay, It offered a needle exchange program supported by the local health unit. We wanted to help with the program's goals of reducing HIV and hepatitis C transmission, and collect used needles more safely.

Can the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions share why, despite the attack of federal Conservative members, provinces, including those with Conservative premiers, continue to fund this essential public health measure?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I thank the Minister of Indigenous Services for her compassion. It is so important for us to remember what it means to be Canadian right now. We hold each other together, and we are holding each other through many challenging things right now, including the tragic lives lost through the overdose crisis. This is where we step up and throw everything we have got at it.

What is amazing about harm reduction and needle exchange is that it is not new. It has been around as an evidence-based, proven way to meet people where they are at, to open the door for them to come inside and get help. When people offer an extended hand and say to come on inside and ask what someone needs, what is the first thing someone needs? They need a clean needle. Let us talk about why they are using that needle. Let us talk about how we get them to a healthier place. Harm reduction is nothing new.

On the other side of the bench, they stigmatize. They talk about this in terms of their loved ones being criminals, that they should go back to dark corners and hide what they are struggling with, hide their struggle with substance use and the disease of addiction. We know that needle exchanges and safe consumption sites bring people into health care. They walk into that place. We are not just talking about saving lives. We are talking about getting them the health services they need with the compassion and care that they deserve.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Chair, contraceptives are not universally accessible, despite being a mainstay of reproductive choice. I cannot imagine my life if I had not been able to choose when I would have children, and yet Conservative members of Parliament have voted against this measure, as well as many of them being greenlit by anti-choice organizations. Women are depending on the Canadian government to protect their freedom.

How will this coverage help?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, I thank my friend and colleague for her advocacy in this space, both in her public and private life. The truth is that it is very frustrating, beyond frustrating, to watch some of the members across the way who hold three positions simultaneously. First, they are against choice. They believe that a woman should not have autonomy over her own body and make a choice with respect to abortion. Second, they are voting against women being able to have access to the contraceptive medicine they need to be able to make their own choice about their body and when they would start a family. Third, they will not speak openly or honestly about sex or sexual education.

If one is against all three of those things, then, plainly stated, one is against a woman's sexual freedom or health generally. We know that misinformation and stigma is disastrous. We also know that for too many women who do not have the means, they are forced into a circumstance, to use contraceptives that are available and are cheaper, but less effective. To give a very clear example, oral contraceptives have a failure rate of 9%. We know that an IUD has a failure rate of 0.2% but so many women cannot make the choice to have an IUD because it is too expensive, which means that they lose, in many instances, control over when they start their family. That is fundamentally about freedom. In my view, it is fundamentally wrong. I hope that the action we are taking here is seen as complementary to our action generally, to make sure that women have control over their sexual health and their reproductive freedom.

*Business of Supply*

• (2350)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Chair, my last question would be for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. I would like to hear her thoughts about the stigmatization of people who use substances other than alcohol, yet the attitude of many Conservative members around further liberalization of alcohol use—

**The Deputy Chair:** We are out of time but I will allow the hon. minister to respond briefly.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we know that stigma will put people back into the dark shadows, using alone and dying alone, which is why we need to do everything we can to break stigma, open doors and bring them into the light.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Chair, we know that Health Canada is introducing major regulatory changes under an outdated and broken self-care framework. This has an impact on 54,000 jobs in a \$5.5-billion industry. The Canadian Health Food Association has asked for a simple meeting with the Minister of Health, and he refuses to meet with them. Can he explain to them why?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I meet with all kinds of organizations. In terms of natural health products, it is exceptionally important to make sure that we protect Canadians and that we protect the integrity of the Canadian brand, which is exactly what we are doing with natural health products.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, no one is disputing that, but it is important that the minister sit down and meet with these leaders. It has a huge impact on these employees, their customers and these business owners.

Has the Minister of Health considered that people with disabilities need to undergo two rigorous application processes to access disability benefits from both the provincial government and the federal government? Why can the federal government not accept the provincial government's applicants for disability benefits?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, I hope to talk to the hon. member on the first order, about natural health products, because the bill that was voted on today would remove our ability to recall contaminated products, such as products contaminated with fibre-glass or E. coli or feces. That is extremely concerning, and hopefully the member will be reconsidering that position as the bill moves to committee.

In terms of the other item, I would be happy to follow up with the member.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, we can follow up right now.

For many applicants for the disability tax credit, the application process takes a significant mental and physical load. They often require visits to doctors and government offices, which are rejected after all that work. This is having a huge impact on physicians at a time when we are having a doctor shortage.

Does the minister believe that the government has a responsibility to make the application process as easy as possible, and could this mean sharing information with provincial governments to avoid this overlap?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Chair, again, I will come back to this, because it is not my ministry that is responsible for that appli-

cation process; it resides elsewhere. Having said that, yes, writ large across government, we want to make processes easier and more streamlined and reduce administrative burden.

I would be happy to work with the member, not just on this issue, which is not within my purview, but on all issues as it relates to administrative burden.

• (2355)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has said that the government is “meeting the moment” when it comes to the toxic drug crisis. However, over 42,000 Canadians have died. I cannot see that as meeting the moment. Honestly, I see that the government still does not have a plan and does not have a timeline on how it is going to tackle this issue. How many more people need to die before the Liberals declare a public health emergency?

I will say this right now: The stigma starts right here. In responding to the toxic drug crisis, the government has spent less than 1% of what it spent in responding to COVID-19. Why?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I want to thank the member for his compassionate, consistent and relentless advocacy on what is a public health crisis.

We have put over a billion dollars into addressing the overdose crisis in this country. We continue to invest through SUAP, through the emergency treatment fund in budget 2024, and also through \$200 billion in bilateral agreements, of which over 30%, on average, across provinces and territories is going to mental health and substance use. We need to work with the health systems in the jurisdictions, because this is not a quick fix; it is a long game.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, that is not “meeting the moment”. That is not responding to a health emergency. We look to Portugal on how it responded to a health emergency, and it treated it as that.

The federal government controls to whom and how supervised consumption services are provided. These services remain unavailable in most locations across the country, especially in more rural and remote locations. When will this government get rid of the red tape and ensure these services are available and funded nationally?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, can we do more? Yes, we can always do more, which is why we are making the investments we are making at this time. However, let me be clear that the appropriate mechanism to address the ongoing overdose crisis is not the Emergencies Act. We cannot address it that way. It is pervasive. It requires longer-term sustained supports. That is not the right mechanism for saving lives.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, the member does not need to declare an emergency, then; she needs to act like it is an emergency. That is what we are looking for. That is what the moms and families who have lost loved ones are looking for, or those who are struggling and the families that are impacted.

We know that across the country, indigenous peoples, first nations, Inuit and Métis communities feel like they are being left out of the government's response to the toxic drug crisis. They are seeing their communities suffer from loss and increased crime. In fact, last week, Alberta announced that first nations and Métis people represent 20% of all apparent unintended opioid deaths despite representing only 3.4% of the population.

Can the minister tell this House how Health Canada is working with Indigenous Services Canada and indigenous leadership across the country to take a health care-focused approach to the toxic drug crisis? Is the minister willing to intervene if Conservative premiers like Danielle Smith and Scott Moe let preventable deaths from toxic drug poisoning continue at this rate?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I am going to push back a bit here, because the renewed CDSS is our plan for addressing the crisis. In it, we talk about a holistic and interdepartmental approach, which means I will be working with my colleagues the Minister of Indigenous Services and the housing minister. We know that we need to pull all the threads together to address this crisis.

There is no one-stop fix for this. The Conservatives would like to think it is treatment and treatment only, and forced treatment at that. However, the truth is that we need many tools in the tool box to address this, and it will take time because the drug crisis is not new. We need sustained, long-term strategies, which is exactly what the CDSS is about. It is why we're investing \$150 million in an emergency treatment fund right now and why the SUAP, which has funded over 380 projects in communities across this country, will continue to do this work.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, when COVID-19 arrived in this country, we put out a plan to get vaccines to people. We moved and mobilized quickly. We worked through jurisdictional overlap overnight to literally save lives. However, the government is not doing that when it comes to this crisis because of stigma. Is the minister aware that over 20 years of peer-reviewed research shows that safe consumption sites save lives and increase access to treatment?

We heard from the deputy commissioner of the RCMP that they want more safe consumption sites, not fewer. Is the minister aware that with the surge of overdose deaths in Lethbridge, Alberta, since the closure of its safe consumption site, they have tripled? It has triple the death rate of British Columbia per capita. In Regina, where we do not have a safe consumption site, it is double that of Saskatoon. Also, HIV rates are impacted when we do not have harm reduction. Saskatchewan has 19 HIV cases per 100,000. To compare that to the second-most, it is Alberta, at 4.2.

It is out of control. Will the minister intervene?

• (2400)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I am the last person who has to be convinced that safe consumption sites are important.

Since 2017, with 41 safe consumption sites across this country, we have reversed 55 overdose deaths. We have seen over 4.6 million visits, and we have had over 417,000 referrals to treatment. We know they matter. That is why we work with communities to get them in place. However, health service delivery is in provincial jurisdiction. We can use a hammer and a nail, or we can work collaboratively to move all boats along and have the tide rise. We have to work with our provincial partners.

We are not all on the same page on this. I agree with him that the numbers in Alberta are tragic, but at the same time, we need to work together as much as we can because the bottom line is that we want to save lives. This is our goal. Our priority is a comprehensive strategy of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, agreeing is not good enough. Safe consumption sites are frozen in Ontario. The government is not delivering them in those places in Alberta that I talked about.

Is the minister aware that in 2008, all nine judges of the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the federal Conservative health minister's attempt to close Insite went against the country's Charter of Rights and Freedoms by threatening the safety and lives of the people who needed to use it?

What has changed for the minister? I want to know. Do we need to do this again? Is this what needs to happen, given that the minister is saying that she cannot do anything as it is outside her jurisdiction?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, quite the contrary. It is not that we cannot do anything; we are a key part of the approval process to enable safe consumption sites to be established in communities, and we continue to do that work. We are fully committed to doing that work. We know harm reduction is health care. We know safe consumption sites are health care and we will continue to support the opening of safe consumption sites.

With respect to Ontario, I speak to my counterpart Minister Tiberio quite regularly about the report on safe consumption sites, but we need to work together. This is how we will combat this.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, does the minister think it is appropriate for Alberta to levy a \$10,000-per-day fine against people for providing life-saving first aid by operating informal overdose protection sites?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we are working to make it as easy as possible for communities to be able to access supports to be able to set up the sites that they need.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, does the minister see that this is really a province that is implementing a de facto criminalization of medical practices?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, as I just said, we will work with communities to streamline the process of opening safe consumption sites as much as we can.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, the federal government should be asserting its jurisdiction and not allowing provinces to threaten draconian penalties on people trying to save lives during a worsening overdose crisis.

My question for the minister is this: When will her government act to ensure that treatment services for substance use are subject to proper regulation and oversight, and are part of Canada's public health care system, rather than a for-profit Wild West of unregulated, unaccountable and possibly dangerous private companies?

• (2405)

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, we are in complete agreement that treatment services are health care services and that there need to be standards in place. Each provincial jurisdiction does have, although it is not equal across the board, standards in place.

Can we do more to set national standards for this? This is why we have reintroduced the expert advisory panel, to be able to look at the crisis in a renewed way to see where we need to do more.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, during Mental Health Week earlier this month, the Prime Minister stated, "We're making sure that all Canadians have access to the mental health care they need, no matter where they live or what they do. That means making sure that mental health is a full and equal part of our health care system."

In the absence of a dedicated and permanent Canada mental health transfer with accompanying legislation, provinces and territories are under no obligation to ensure that the delivery of mental health and substance use health services is on par with the delivery of physical health services.

How do the federal government and the minister intend to address the exclusion of mental health and substance use health services from the Canada Health Act? How do the minister and her government intend to ensure Canadians have access to the mental health and substance use health supports they need?

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, the \$200 billion in bilateral agreements that the Minister of Health and I signed with all 13 provinces and territories this past year had clear guidelines with respect to the integrators and targets they needed to set in the commitments they set out in their work plans.

As mentioned previously, on average, over 30% of funding went toward mental health and substance use services. We see the expansion of the integrated youth services, IYS, in jurisdictions across the country and the provinces taking them on and understanding their value when it comes to addressing prevention and mental health supports. We will continue—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member. There are 38 seconds left.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Chair, we know that housing is integral in supporting people with substance use disorder. The government announced \$250 million for emergency funding in the budget. That could create tiny homes in communities like Port Alberni and we could trust the province to support wraparound supports and the city to provide land. How quickly can the government get that money out the door? It is an urgent situation, an emergency.

**Hon. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Chair, I would not want to speak for the Minister of Housing, but from what we can see in the announcements that have been rolling out across the country, and with our firm commitment to speed up housing, including complex-need housing, I am encouraged by the work we are doing to see housing built.

**The Deputy Chair:** It being 12:07 a.m., pursuant to order made earlier today and Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. The committee will now rise.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:08 a.m.)



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