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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 7, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

### ONLINE HARMS ACT

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-63, An Act to enact the online harms act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act and An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, I am very pleased today to speak to Bill C-63, the online harms act. I speak today not only as a minister and as a fellow parliamentarian, but also as a father, as a South Asian and as a Muslim Canadian.

There are a few moments in this place when our work becomes very personal, and this is one such moment for me. Let me explain why. I ran for office for a number of reasons in 2015. Chief among them was to fight against discrimination and to fight for equality in what I viewed as an increasingly polarized world. In recent years, we have seen that polarization deepen and that hatred fester, including at home here in Canada.

I would never have fathomed that in 2024, Canada would actually lead the G7 in the number of deaths attributable to Islamophobia. Among our allies, it is Canada that has experienced the most fatal attacks against Muslims in the G7. There have been 11. Those were 11 preventable deaths. I say “preventable” because in the trials of both the Quebec mosque shooter, who murdered six men on January 29, 2017, and the man who murdered four members of the Afzaal family in London, Ontario, the attackers admitted, in open court, to having been radicalized online. They admitted what so many of us have always known to be the case: Online hatred has real-world consequences.

Yesterday was the third anniversary of the attack on the Afzaal family, an attack described by the presiding judge as “a terrorist

act”. In memory of Talat, Salman, Yumna and Madiha, who lost their lives to an act of hatred on June 6, 2021, we are taking action.

Bill C-63, the online harms act, is a critical piece of that action. This bill is the product of years of work.

[*Translation*]

We held consultations for over four years. We talked to victims' groups, advocacy groups, international partners, people from the technology industry and the general public. We organized a nationwide consultation and held 19 national and regional round tables. We published a report about what we learned. We listened to the recommendations of our expert advisory group on online safety, a diverse think tank made up of experts who are respected across Canada. We were given valuable advice and gained a great deal of knowledge thanks to those consultations, and all of that informed the development of Bill C-63.

Many of our international partners, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, France and the European Union, have already done considerable legislative work to try to limit the risks of harmful content online. We learned from their experience and adapted the best parts of their most effective plans to the Canadian context.

• (1005)

[*English*]

We have also learned what did not work abroad, like the immediate takedown of all types of harmful content, originally done in Germany; or like the overbroad restriction on freedom of speech that was struck as unconstitutional in France. We are not repeating those errors here. Our approach is much more measured and reflects the critical importance of constitutionally protected free expression in Canada's democracy. What we learned from this extensive consultation was that the Internet and social media platforms can be a force for good in Canada and around the world. They have been a tool for activists to defend democracy. They are platforms for critical expression and for critical civic discourse. They make learning more accessible to everyone.

The Internet has made people across our vast world feel more connected to one another, but the internet also has a dark side. Last December, the RCMP warned of an alarming spike in online extremism among young people in Canada and the radicalization of youth online. We know that the online environment is especially dangerous for our most vulnerable. A recent study by Plan International found that 58% of girls have experienced harassment online.

*Government Orders*

Social media platforms are used to exploit and disseminate devastating messages with tragic consequences. This is because of one simple truth. For too long, the profits of platforms have come before the safety of users. Self-regulation has failed to keep our kids safe. Stories of tragedy have become far too common. There are tragic consequences, like the death of Amanda Todd, a 15-year-old Port Coquitlam student who died by suicide on October 10, 2012, after being exploited and extorted by more than 20 social media accounts. This relentless harassment started when Amanda was just 12 years old, in grade 7.

There was Carson Cleland last fall. He was the same age as my son at the time: 12 years old. Carson made a mistake. He shared an intimate image with someone whom he thought was a friend online, only to find himself caught up in a web of sextortion from which he could not extricate himself. Unable to turn to his parents, too ashamed to turn to his friends, Carson turned on himself. Carson is no longer with us, but he should be with us.

We need to do more to protect the Amanda Todds and the Carson Clelands of this country, and with this bill, we will. I met with the incredible people at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection earlier this year, and they told me that they receive 70 calls every single week from scared kids across Canada in situations like Amanda's and like Carson's.

As the father of two youngsters, this is very personal for me. As they grow up, my 10-year-old and 13-year-old boys spend more and more time on screens. I know that my wife and I are not alone in this parenting struggle. It is the same struggle that parents are facing around the country.

At this point, there is no turning back. Our children and teens are being exposed to literally everything online, and I feel a desperate need, Canadians feel a desperate need, to do a better job of protecting those kids online. That is precisely what we are going to do with this bill.

Bill C-63 is guided by four important objectives. It aims to reduce exposure to harmful content online, to empower and support users. Second, it would address and denounce the rise in hatred and hate crimes. Third, it would ensure that victims of hate have recourse to improved remedies, and fourth, it would strengthen the reporting of child sexual abuse material to enhance the criminal justice response to this heinous crime.

[*Translation*]

The online harms act will address seven types of harmful content based on categories established over more than four years of consultation.

[*English*]

Not all harms will be treated the same. Services will be required to quickly remove content that sexually victimizes a child or that revictimizes a survivor, as well as to remove what we call “revenge porn”, including sexual deepfakes. There is no place for this material on the Internet whatsoever.

For other types of content, like content that induces a child to self-harm or material that bullies a child, we are placing a duty on platforms to protect children. This means a new legislative and reg-

ulatory framework to ensure that social media platforms reduce exposure to harmful, exploitative content on their platforms. This means putting in place special protections for children. It also means that platforms will have to make sure that users have the tools and the resources they need to report harmful content.

To fulfill the duty to protect children, social media platforms will have to integrate age-appropriate design features to make their platforms safer for children to use. This could mean defaults for parental controls and warning labels for children. It could mean security settings for instant messaging for children, or it could mean safe-search settings.

Protecting our children is one of our most important duties that we undertake as lawmakers in this place. As a parent, it literally terrifies me that the most dangerous toys in my home, my children's screens, are not subject to any safety standards right now. This needs to change, and it would change with the passage of Bill C-63.

It is not only that children are subject to horrible sexual abuse and bullying online, but also that they are exposed to hate and hateful content, as are Internet users of all ages and all backgrounds, which is why Bill C-63 targets content that foments hatred and incitements to violence as well as incitements to terrorism. This bill would not require social media companies to take down this kind of harmful content; instead, the platforms would have to reduce exposure to it by creating a digital safety plan, disclosing to the digital safety commissioner what steps they are putting in place to reduce risk and reporting back on their progress.

The platforms would also be required to give users practical options for recourse, like tools to either flag or block certain harmful material from their own feeds. This is key to ensuring community safety, all the more so because they are backed by significant penalties for noncompliance. When I say “significant”, the penalties would be 6% of global revenue or \$10 million, whichever is higher, and in the instance of a contravention of an order from the digital safety commission, those would rise to 8% of global revenue or \$25 million, again, whichever is higher.

The online harms act is an important step towards a safer, more inclusive online environment, where social media platforms actively work to reduce the risk of user exposure to harmful content on their platforms and help to prevent its spread, and where, as a result, everyone in Canada can feel safer to express themselves openly. This is critical, because at the heart of this initiative, it is about promoting expression and participation in civic discourse that occurs online. We can think about Carla Beauvais and the sentiments she expressed when she stood right beside me when we tabled this legislation in February, and the amount of abuse she faced for voicing her concerns about the George Floyd incident in the United States, which cowered her and prevented her from participating online. We want her voice added to the civic discourse. Right now, it has been removed.

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

The online harms act will regulate social media services, the primary purpose of which is to enable users to share publicly accessible content, services that pose the greatest risk of exposing the greatest number of people to harmful content.

[*English*]

This means that the act would apply to social media platforms, such as Facebook, X and Instagram; user-uploaded adult content services, such as Pornhub; and livestreaming services, such as Twitch. However, it would not apply to any private communications, meaning private texts or direct private messaging on social media apps, such as Instagram or Facebook Messenger. It is critical to underscore, again, that this is a measured approach that does not follow the overreach seen in other countries we have studied, in terms of how they embarked upon this endeavour. The goal is to target the largest social media platforms, the places where the most people in Canada are spending their time online.

Some ask why Bill C-63 addresses both online harms and hate crimes, which can happen both on and off-line. I will explain this. Online dangers do not remain online. We are seeing a dramatic rise in hate crime across our country. According to Statistics Canada, the number of police-reported hate crimes increased by 83% between 2019 and 2022. B'nai Brith Canada reports an alarming 109% increase in anti-Semitic incidents from 2022 to 2023. In the wake of October 7, 2023, I have been hearing frequently from Jewish and Muslim groups, which are openly questioning whether it is safe to be openly Jewish or Muslim in Canada right now. This is not tenable. It should never be tolerated, yet hate-motivated violence keeps happening. People in Canada are telling us to act. It is up to us, as lawmakers, to do exactly that.

We must take concrete action to better protect all people in Canada from harms, both online and in our communities. We need better tools to deal with harmful content online that foments violence and destruction. Bill C-63 gives law enforcement these much-needed tools.

The Toronto Police Service has expressed their open support of Bill C-63 because they know it will make our communities safer. Members of the Afzaal family have expressed their open support for Bill C-63 because they know the Islamophobic hate that causes someone to kill starts somewhere, and it is often online.

### *Government Orders*

However, we know there is no single solution to the spread of hatred on and off-line. That is why the bill proposes a number of different tools to help stop the hate. It starts with the Criminal Code of Canada. Bill C-63 would amend the Criminal Code to better target hate crime and hate propaganda. It would do this in four important ways.

First, it would create a new hate crime offence. Law enforcement has asked us for this tool, so they can call a hate crime a hate crime when laying a charge, rather than as an afterthought at sentencing. This new offence will also help law enforcement track the actual number of hate-motivated crimes in Canada. That is why they have appealed to me to create a free-standing hate crime offence in a manner that replicates what already exists in 47 of the 50 states south of the border. A hate-motivated assault is not just an assault. It is a hate crime and should be recognized as such on the front end of a prosecution.

● (1015)

[*Translation*]

Second, Bill C-63 would increase sentences for the four existing hate speech offences. These are serious offences, and the sentences should reflect that.

Third, Bill C-63 would create a recognizance to keep the peace, which is specifically designed to prevent any of the four hate propaganda offences and the new hate crime offence from being committed.

This would be modelled on existing peace bonds, such as those used in domestic violence cases, and would require someone to have a reasonable fear that these offences would be committed. The threshold of “reasonable fear” is common to almost all peace bonds.

In addition, as some but not all peace bonds do, this would require the relevant attorney general to give consent before an application is made to a judge to impose a peace bond on a person. This ensures an extra layer of scrutiny in the process.

[*English*]

Finally, the bill would codify a definition of hatred for hate propaganda offences and for the new hate crime offence, based on the definition the Supreme Court of Canada created in its seminal decisions in *R. v. Keegstra* and in *Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission v. Whatcott*. The definition sets out not only what hatred is but also what it is not, thereby helping Canadians and law enforcement to better understand the scope of these offences.

*Government Orders*

The court has defined hate speech as content that expresses de-stestation or vilification of an individual or group on the basis of grounds such as race, national or ethnic origin, religion and sex. It only captures the most extreme and marginal type of expression, leaving the entirety of political and other discourse almost untouched. That is where one will find the category of content that some have called “awful but lawful”. This is the stuff that is offensive and ugly but is still permitted as constitutionally protected free expression under charter section 2(b). This category of content is not hate speech under the Supreme Court’s definition.

[*Translation*]

I want to make clear what Bill C-63 does not do. It does not undermine freedom of expression. It strengthens freedom of expression by allowing all people to participate safely in online discussions.

[*English*]

Bill C-63 would provide another tool as well. It would amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to define a new discriminatory practice of communicating hate speech online. The legislation makes clear that hate does not encompass content that merely discredits, humiliates, hurts or offends, but where hate speech does occur, there would be a mechanism through which an individual could ask that those expressions of hate be removed. The CHRA amendments are not designed to punish anyone. They would simply give Canadians a tool to get hate speech removed.

Finally, Bill C-63 would modernize and close loopholes in the mandatory reporting act. This would help law enforcement more effectively investigate child sex abuse and exploitation and bring perpetrators to justice, retaining information longer and ensuring that social media companies report CSAM to the RCMP.

There is broad support for the online harms act. When I introduced the legislation in February, I was proud to have at my side the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and the National Council of Canadian Muslims. Those two groups have had vast differences in recent months, but on the need to fight hatred online, they are united. The same unity has been expressed by both Deborah Lyons, the special envoy on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting anti-Semitism, and Amira Elghawaby, the special representative on combatting Islamophobia.

The time to combat all forms of online hate is now. Hatred that festers online can result in real-world violence. I am always open to good-faith suggestions on how to improve the bill. I look forward to following along with the study of the legislation at the committee stage. I have a fundamental duty to uphold the charter protection of free expression and to protect all Canadians from harm. I take both duties very seriously.

Some have urged me to split Bill C-63 in two, dealing only with the provisions that stop sexually exploitative material from spreading and throwing away measures that combat hate. To these people, I say that I would not be doing my job as minister if I failed to address the rampant hatred on online platforms. It is my job to protect all Canadians from harm. That means kids and adults. People are pleading for relief from the spread of hate. It is time we acted.

Bill C-63 is a comprehensive response to online harms and the dangerous hate we are seeing spreading in our communities. We have a duty to protect our children in the real world. We must take decisive action to protect them online as well, where the dangers can be just as pernicious, if not more so. Such action starts with passing Bill C-63.

• (1020)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the bill has received widespread condemnation from groups of all political stripes because it forces Canadians to make unnecessary trade-offs between their security and their charter rights. As well, the bill would force much-needed reforms into a long, onerous regulatory process with no clear end in sight. There are people watching this today who will fear deepfaked intimate images being used to harass and bully them in their high schools.

The government could have made a small amendment to the Criminal Code to update existing laws to protect Canadians in the digital age, but it has chosen this onerous, widely panned approach instead of protecting Canadians’ rights. Why?

**Hon. Arif Virani:** Mr. Speaker, I would say categorically that this is a misconstruction of the legislation and what it would do. This legislation would uphold freedom of expression. Freedom of speech in this country, as of right now, does not include hateful speech. That is protected against in the physical world. We are transposing that protection into the online world to directly address the needs of the very people that she just mentioned in those schools in Alberta.

With respect to deepfakes, we are taking an additional step by entrenching that language in the legislation. That was done intentionally because deepfakes are being used against children, adolescents and adults to silence them. I know the member is a strong advocate for women’s empowerment and women’s voices in civic discourse. Deepfakes are being used right now against Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Prime Minister Meloni in Italy.

Regardless of one’s views of their political positions, etc., the point is that when the leader of a G7 country is being limited in terms of their ability to participate in civic and political discourse via deepfakes, we need to take action. We are taking that action in a comprehensive bill and a comprehensive measure that would address and empower freedom of expression rather than limiting it.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois believes that Bill C-63 tackles two major online scourges and that it is time for us, as legislators, to take action to stamp them out.

*Government Orders*

The Bloc Québécois strongly supports part 1 of the bill, in other words, all provisions related to addressing child pornography and the communication of pornographic content without consent. As we see it, this part is self-evident. It has garnered such strong consensus that we told the minister, through our critic, the member for Rivière-du-Nord, that we not only support it, but we were also prepared to accept and pass part 1 quickly and facilitate its passage.

As for part 2, however, we have some reservations. We consider it reasonable to debate this part in committee. The minister can accuse other political parties of playing politics with part 2, but not the Bloc Québécois. We sincerely believe that part 2 needs to be debated. We have questions. We have doubts. I think our role calls on us to get to the bottom of things.

That is why we have asked the minister—and why we are asking him again today—to split Bill C-63 in two, so that we can pass part 1 quickly and implement it, and set part 2 aside for legislative and debate-related purposes.

● (1025)

**Hon. Arif Virani:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for her question, and I appreciate the position of the Bloc Québécois

I want to emphasize three points.

First, the aspect that affects children also affects teens and adults. In other words, hatred is a problem for children, teenagers and adults. Hatred is not exclusive to any particular age. That is the first thing.

Second, the member is suggesting that a comprehensive study is needed, with witnesses and consultations, to see if we can improve the bill. I could not agree more, but it is not just part 2 that needs to be thoroughly studied. We need a comprehensive study of all aspects of this bill. We need to examine the bill in its entirety.

Third, as I mentioned at the outset, Canada is not the first country to move in this direction. Australia took its first steps in 2015, beginning with protecting children only. Nine years later, in 2024, Australia is addressing the issue more broadly. In 2024, Canada needs to address all aspects. Harmful content is by no means limited to content directed at children.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP finds that the government delayed introduction of this bill for far too long. We want it to be referred to committee for a comprehensive study.

There are some parts that we fully support. There are others that deal with the Criminal Code, for example, that will truly require a comprehensive study in committee. We have to make sure we take the time that is needed.

That being said, the bill is missing certain aspects, which is a bit surprising. I am talking about transparency with respect to algorithms. As the minister knows, hate and other such things are often amplified by algorithms that promote the kind of content that adversely affects people. This is not being addressed in the bill.

I would like the minister to tell us why this important aspect of algorithms and transparency is not being addressed so that we can

determine precisely why some hateful content or harmful content is promoted on certain platforms.

**Hon. Arif Virani:** Mr. Speaker, I want to note that the time it took to promulgate this bill and bring it here before the House for debate was directly related to the consultations we held around the world. That is why it took four years to prepare this bill.

Also, with respect to the transparency of social media and platforms, I would like to note three specific points.

First, the bill specifically seeks to enable the digital safety commissioner to authorize academic researchers to access data anonymously to verify what is happening on platforms with their own algorithms. Second, the digital safety commissioner will be responsible for ensuring that the platforms actually follow the digital safety plan. Third, every user can run their own algorithm to inform platforms that some content is harmful and to prevent content from a specific author from appearing on their feed.

We are therefore broadening many aspects related to algorithm transparency. If other measures should be taken, I am quite willing to consider amendments that are presented in good faith in committee on how to improve transparency on this front.

● (1030)

[English]

**Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to visit a school in my riding in response to letters that some nine-year-olds and 10-year-olds had written to me. In their classroom, I asked the kids whether they knew about cyber-bullying, and all of them raised their hands because all of them had experienced it or knew to some degree what cyber-bullying is like.

While I was talking about the topic of cyber-bullying, there was a young boy the age of my daughter, nine years old. He raised his hand and shared with me that on his birthday, he had received new VR glasses to use with his video game. He shared that while he was in his online space and was minding his own business, someone approached him online and did things to him repeatedly that were not nice. Needless to say, when I asked him what he did after this happened to him, the young man said he did not do anything and that he decided not to play video games ever again.

The reason I am sharing his testimony is that I would like to ask the hon. minister what the bill would do to help protect kids just like the one I spoke to at the elementary school.

**Hon. Arif Virani:** Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that my heart breaks just listening to that. It is at the heart of the bill. The bill would entrench a duty to protect children, a duty to remove content that would target children. In terms of what the child who was mentioned experienced, one can rest assured that it is not an anomaly in Mississauga. Kids around Canada and around the world are facing this type of situation all the time.

*Government Orders*

We would never tolerate someone's lurking around a schoolyard or contacting our kids by telephone at midnight. That is what is occurring all the time. The fact that the bill takes a hard look at child sex predators and at those who would spread revenge porn, and that it would entrench a duty to protect children, is in fact the exact step we need to take. That is what Canadian parents are demanding. I hope every parliamentarian of the chamber will get behind the important bill before us.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we must protect Canadians in the digital age, but Bill C-63 is not the way to do it. It would force Canadians to make unnecessary trade-offs between the guarantee of their security and their charter rights. Today I will explain why Bill C-63 is deeply flawed and why it would not protect Canadians' rights sufficiently. More importantly, I will present a comprehensive alternative plan that is more respectful of Canadians' charter rights and would provide immediate protections for Canadians facing online harms.

The core problem with Bill C-63 is how the government has changed and chosen to frame the myriad harms that occur in the digital space as homogenous and as capable of being solved with one approach or piece of legislation. In reality, harms that occur online are an incredibly heterogeneous set of problems requiring a multitude of tailored solutions. It may sound like the former might be more difficult to achieve than the latter, but this is not the case. It is relatively easy to inventory the multitudes of problems that occur online and cause Canadians harm. From there, it should be easy to sort out how existing laws and regulatory processes that exist for the physical world could be extended to the digital world.

There are few, if any, examples of harms that are being caused in digital spaces that do not already have existing relatable laws or regulatory structures that could be extended or modified to cover them. Conversely, what the government has done for nearly a decade is try to create new, catch-all regulatory, bureaucratic and extrajudicial processes that would adapt to the needs of actors in the digital space instead of requiring them to adapt to our existing laws. All of these attempts have failed to become law, which is likely going to be the fate of Bill C-63.

This is a backward way of looking at things. It has caused nearly a decade of inaction on much-needed modernization of existing systems and has translated into law enforcement's not having the tools it needs to prevent crime, which in turn causes harm to Canadians. It has also led to a balkanization of laws and regulations across Canadian jurisdictions, a loss of investment due to the uncertainty, and a lack of coordination with the international community. Again, ultimately, it all harms Canadians.

Bill C-63 takes the same approach by listing only a few of the harms that happen in online spaces and creates a new, onerous and opaque extrajudicial bureaucracy, while creating deep problems for Canadian charter rights. For example, Bill C-63 would create a new "offence motivated by a hatred" provision that could see a life sentence applied to minor infractions under any act of Parliament, a parasitic provision that would be unchecked in the scope of the legislation. This means that words alone could lead to life imprisonment.

While the government has attempted to argue that this is not the case, saying that a serious underlying act would have to occur for the provision to apply, that is simply not how the bill is written. I ask colleagues to look at it. The bill seeks to amend section 320 of the Criminal Code, and reads, "Everyone who commits an offence under this Act or any other Act of Parliament...is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for life."

At the justice committee earlier this year, the minister stated:

...the new hate crime offence captures any existing offence if it was hate-motivated. That can run the gamut from a hate-motivated theft all the way to a hate-motivated attempted murder. The sentencing range entrenched in Bill C-63 was designed to mirror the existing...options for all of these potential underlying offences, from the most minor to the most serious offences on the books....

The minister continued, saying, "this does not mean that minor offences will suddenly receive...harsh sentences. However, sentencing judges are required to follow legal principles, and "hate-motivated murder will result in a life sentence. A minor infraction will...not result in it."

In this statement, the minister admitted both that the new provision could be applied to any act of Parliament, as the bill states, and that the government would be relying upon the judiciary to ensure that maximum penalties were not levelled against a minor infraction. Parliament cannot afford the government to be this lazy, and by that I mean not spelling out exactly what it intends a life sentence to apply to in law, as opposed to handing a highly imperfect judiciary an overbroad law that could have extreme, negative consequences.

Similarly, a massive amount of concern from across the political spectrum has been raised regarding Bill C-63's introduction of a so-called hate crime peace bond, calling it a pre-crime provision for speech. This is highly problematic because it would explicitly extend the power to issue peace bonds to crimes of speech, which the bill does not adequately define, nor does it provide any assurance that it would meet a criminal standard for hate.



*Government Orders*

• (1035)

Equally as concerning is that Bill C-63 would create a new process for individuals and groups to complain to the Canadian Human Rights Commission that online speech directed at them is discriminatory. This process would be extrajudicial, not subject to the same evidentiary standards of a criminal court, and could take years to resolve. Findings would be based on a mere balance of probabilities rather than on the criminal standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

The subjectivity of defining hate speech would undoubtedly lead to punishments for protected speech. The mere threat of human rights complaints would chill large amounts of protected speech, and the system would undoubtedly be deluged with a landslide of vexatious complaints. There certainly are no provisions in the bill to prevent any of this from happening.

Nearly a decade ago, even the *Toronto Star*, hardly a bastion of Conservative thought, wrote a scathing opinion piece opposing these types of provisions. The same principle should apply today. When the highly problematic components of the bill are overlaid upon the fact that we are presently living under a government that unlawfully invoked the Emergencies Act and that routinely gaslights Canadians who legitimately question efficacy or the morality of its policies as spreading misinformation, as the Minister of Justice did in his response to my question, saying that I had mischaracterized the bill, it is not a far leap to surmise that the new provision has great potential for abuse. That could be true for any political stripe that is in government.

The government's charter compliance statement, which is long and vague and has only recently been issued, should raise concerns for parliamentarians in this regard, as it relies on this statement: "The effects of the Bill on freedom expression are outweighed by the benefits of protecting members of vulnerable groups". The government has already been found to have violated the Charter in the case of Bill C-69 for false presumptions on which one benefit outweighs others. I suspect this would be the same case for Bill C-63 should it become law, which I hope it does not.

I believe in the capacity of Canadians to express themselves within the bounds of protected speech and to maintain the rule of law within our vibrant pluralism. Regardless of political stripe, we must value freedom of speech and due process, because they are what prevents violent conflict. Speech already has clearly defined limitations under Canadian law. The provisions in Bill C-63 that I have just described are anathema to these principles. To be clear, Canadians should not be expected to have their right to protected speech chilled or limited in order to be safe online, which is what Bill C-63 would ask of them.

Bill C-63 would also create a new three-headed, yet-to-exist bureaucracy. It would leave much of the actual rules the bill describes to be created and enforced under undefined regulations by said bureaucracy at some much later date in the future. We cannot wait to take action in many circumstances. As one expert described it to me, it is like vaguely creating an outline and expecting bureaucrats, not elected legislators, to colour in the picture behind closed doors without any accountability to the Canadian public.

The government should have learned from the costs associated with failing when it attempted the same approach with Bill C-11 and Bill C-18, but alas, here we are. The new bureaucratic process would be slow, onerous and uncertain. If the government proceeds with it, it means Canadians would be left without protection, and innovators and investors would be left without the regulatory certainty needed to grow their businesses.

It would also be costly. I have asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer to conduct an analysis of the costs associated with the creation of the bureaucracy, and he has agreed to undertake the task. No parliamentarian should even consider supporting the bill without understanding the resources the government intends to allocate to the creation of the new digital safety commission, digital safety ombudsman and digital safety office, particularly since the findings in this week's damning NSICOP report starkly outlined the opportunity cost of the government failing to allocate much needed resources to the RCMP.

Said differently, if the government cannot fund and maintain the critical operations of the RCMP, which already has the mandate to enforce laws related to public safety, then Parliament should have grave, serious doubts about the efficacy of its setting up three new bureaucracies to address issues that could likely be managed by existing regulatory bodies like the CRTC or in the enforcement of the Criminal Code. Also, Canadians should have major qualms about creating new bureaucracies which would give power to well-funded and extremely powerful big tech companies to lobby and manipulate regulations to their benefit behind the scenes and outside the purview of Parliament.

• (1040)

This approach would not necessarily protect Canadians and may create artificial barriers to entry for new innovative industry players. The far better approach would be to adapt and extend long-existing laws and regulatory systems, properly resource their enforcement arms, and require big tech companies and other actors in the digital space to comply with these laws, not the other way around. This approach would provide Canadians with real protections, not what amounts to a new, ineffectual complaints department with a high negative opportunity cost to Canadians.

*Government Orders*

In no scenario should Parliament allow the government to entrench in legislation a power for social media companies to be arbiters of speech, which Bill C-63 risks doing. If the government wishes to further impose restrictions on Canadians' rights to speech, that should be a debate for Parliament to consider, not for regulators and tech giants to decide behind closed doors and with limited accountability to the public.

In short, this bill is completely flawed and should be abandoned, particularly given the minister's announcement this morning that he is unwilling to proceed with any sort of change to it in scope.

However, there is a better way. There is an alternative, which would be a more effective and more quickly implementable plan to protect Canadians' safety in the digital age. It would modernize existing laws and processes to align with digital advancements. It would protect speech not already limited in the Criminal Code, and would foster an environment for innovation and investment in digital technologies. It would propose adequately resourcing agencies with existing responsibilities for enforcing the law, not creating extrajudicial bureaucracies that would amount to a complaints department.

To begin, the RCMP and many law enforcement agencies across the country are under-resourced after certain flavours of politicians have given much more than a wink and a nod to the "defund the police" movement for over a decade. This trend must immediately be reversed. Well-resourced and well-respected law enforcement is critical to a free and just society.

Second, the government must also reform its watered-down bail policies, which allow repeat offenders to commit crimes over and over again. Criminals in the digital space will never face justice, no matter what laws are passed, if the Liberal government's catch-and-release policies are not reversed. I think of a woman in my city of Calgary who was murdered in broad daylight in front of an elementary school because her spouse was subject to the catch-and-release Liberal bail policy, in spite of his online harassment of her for a very long time.

Third, the government must actually enforce—

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Drummond is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize to my colleague. I hate to interrupt her in the middle of a speech like this, but we can hear a telephone or device vibrating near a microphone and it must be very irritating for the interpreters.

Could you ask members to be mindful of that and to keep their devices away from the microphones, please?

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would ask the hon. member to move the cellphone away from the microphone so that it does not vibrate.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Speaker, third, the government must actually enforce laws that are already on the books but have not been recently enforced due to an extreme lack of political will and disingenuous politics and leadership, particularly as they

relate to hate speech. This is particularly in light of the rise of dangers currently faced by vulnerable Canadian religious communities such as, as the minister mentioned, Canada's Jewish community.

This could be done via actions such as ensuring the RCMP, including specialized integrated national security enforcement teams and national security enforcement sections, is providing resources and working directly with appropriate provincial and municipal police forces to share appropriate information intelligence to provide protection to these communities, as well as making sure the secure security infrastructure program funding is accessible in an expedited manner so community institutions and centres can enhance security measures at their gathering places.

Fourth, for areas where modernization of existing regulations and the Criminal Code need immediate updating to reflect the digital age, and where there could be cross-partisan consensus, the government should undertake these changes in a manner that would allow for swift and non-partisan passage through Parliament.

These items could include some of the provisions discussed in Bill C-63. These include the duty of making content that sexually victimizes a child or revictimizes a survivor, or of intimate content communicated without consent, inaccessible to persons in Canada in certain circumstances; imposing certain duties to keep all records related to sexual victimization to online providers; making provisions for persons in Canada to make a complaint to existing enforcement bodies, such as the CRTC or the police, not a new bureaucracy that would take years to potentially materialize and be costly and/or ineffective; ensuring that content on a social media service that sexually victimizes a child or revictimizes a survivor, or is intimate content communicated without consent, by authorization of a court making orders to the operators of those services, is inaccessible to persons in Canada; and enforcing the proposed amendment to an act respecting the mandatory reporting of internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service.

Other provisions the government has chosen not to include in Bill C-63, but that should have been and that Parliament should be considering in the context of harms that are being conducted online, must include updating Canada's existing laws on the non-consensual distribution of intimate images to ensure the distribution of intimate deepfakes is also criminalized, likely through a simple update to the Criminal Code. We could have done this by unanimous consent today had the government taken the initiative to do so. This is already a major problem in Canada with girls in high schools in Winnipeg seeing intimate images of themselves, sometimes, as reports are saying, being sexually violated without any ability for the law to intervene.

The government also needs to create a new criminal offence of online criminal harassment that would update the existing crime of criminal harassment to address the ease and anonymity of online criminal harassment. Specifically, this would apply to those who repeatedly send threatening and/or explicit messages or content to people across the Internet and social media when they know, or should know, it is not welcome. This could include aggravating factors for repeatedly sending such material anonymously and be accompanied by a so-called digital restraining order that would allow victims of online criminal harassment to apply to a judge, under strict circumstances, to identify the harassment and end the harassment.

This would protect privacy, remove the onus on social media platforms from guessing when they should be giving identity to the police and prevent the escalation of online harassment into physical violence. This would give police and victims clear and easy-to-understand tools to prevent online harassment and associated escalation. This would address a major issue of intimate partner violence and make it easier to stop coercive control.

As well, I will note to the minister that members of the governing Liberal Party agreed to the need for these exact measures at a recent meeting of PROC related to online harassment of elected officials this past week.

Fifth, the government should consider a more effective and better way to regulate online platforms, likely under the authority of the CRTC and the Minister of Industry, to better protect children online while protecting charter rights.

● (1050)

This path could include improved measures to do this. This could include, through legislation, not backroom regulation, but precisely through law, defining the duty of care required by online platforms. Some of these duties of care have already been mentioned in questions to the ministers today. This is what Parliament should be seized with, not allowing some unnamed future regulatory body to decide this for us while we have big tech companies and their lobbying arms defining that behind closed doors. That is our job, not theirs.

We could provide parents with safeguards, controls and transparency to prevent harm to their kids when they are online, which could be part of the duty of care. We could also require that online platforms put the interests of children first with appropriate safeguards, again, in a legislative duty of care.

### *Government Orders*

There could also be measures to prevent and mitigate self-harm, mental health disorders, addictive behaviours, bullying and harassment, sexual violence and exploitation, and the promotion of marketing and products that are unlawful for minors. All of these things are instances of duty of care.

We could improve measures to implement privacy-preserving and trustworthy age verification methods, which many platforms always have the capacity to do, while prohibiting the use of a digital ID in any of these mechanisms.

This path could also include measure to ensure that the enforcement of these mechanisms, including a system of administrative penalties and consequences, is done through agencies that already exist. Additionally, we could ensure that there are perhaps other remedies, such as the ability to seek remedy for civil injury, when that duty of care is violated.

This is a non-comprehensive list of online harms, but the point is, we could come to consensus in this place on simple modernization issues that would update the laws now. I hope that the government will accept this plan.

A send out a shout-out to Sean Phelan and David Murray, two strong and mighty workers. We did not have an army of bureaucrats, but we came up with this. I hope that Parliament considers this alternative plan, instead of Bill C-63, because the safety of Canadians is at risk.

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I genuinely thank the member opposite for her contributions to today's debate because it is really important.

I will point out four things and then ask her a question.

The first is that, with respect to my position on amendments, what I said, and I want to make sure it is crystal clear to Canadians watching, is that I am open to amendments that would strengthen the bill that are made in good faith.

*Government Orders*

The second point is with respect to free-standing hate crime, which is a provision that exists in 47 out of 50 states in the United States. The nature of the penalty that would be applied in a given context of a hate crime would depend on the underlying offence. Uttering a threat that was motivated by hate would constitute less of a penalty than committing a murder that was motivated by hate. For the member's benefit, paragraph 718.1 of the Criminal Code, which I do trust judges to interpret, specifically says that the penalty "must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender."

With respect to the peace bond, what I would say to the member's point, quite simply, is that I do believe it is necessary to take a tool that is well known to criminal law and apply it to the context of a synagogue, which has already been targeted with vandalism and may be targeted again, where there would be proof needed to be put before a judge and where the safeguard would exist for the attorney general of jurisdiction to give consent before such a peace bond was pursued.

The member talked about the fact that Criminal Code tools should be used in the context of ensuring that we can tackle this pernicious information. What I would say to her is that law enforcement has asked us for the same tool that Amanda Todd's mother has asked us for. The victimization of people, even after death, continues when the—

• (1055)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Speaker, I have outlined in detail why the bill is irremediable. It is not fixable, and members do not have to take my word for it. The Atlantic magazine, hardly a bastion of conservative thought, has a huge expose this morning on why the bill is so flawed. I suspect it is why the government has only allowed it to come up for debate now. I do not expect to see it in the fall.

Given that the bill is so flawed, it is incumbent upon the Minister of Justice to take the suggestions of the opposition seriously. I have outlined several, and they are very easy to pick out of my speech, suggestions on how the minister could proceed. He could proceed, likely on an expedited process, under those situations.

It sounds like my colleagues from the Bloc and the NDP have similar concerns. The bill cannot proceed in its current state. Frankly, Canadians should not be expected to trade their rights for safety online, and they should not have to expect a government, which has dragged its heels for nearly a decade, to continue with the facade that it actually cares about this issue or has a plan to address it. We have given it one, and the Liberals should take it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at the end of this parliamentary term, I am pleased to see that more and more school groups are coming to watch the business of the House. I think this is a strategy used by teachers to show that they are not as boring as they seem and that students should pay attention in class. Quite often, what happens here is a lot more interesting than sitting in class.

That said, I listened closely to my colleague's speech. I noted several interesting points, particularly the fact that she made proposals. We do not often hear proposals about regulating online content from the Conservatives. I heard proposals and I also detected some desire for consensus. There may well be certain points on which we could agree.

Does my colleague agree with the Bloc Québécois, which is proposing that we split the bill, that we should fast-track the study of part 1, given that we generally agree on its principles at least, and that we should take the time to study part 2 in the House and in committee? Part 2 contains aspects that require much more in-depth discussion, in our opinion.

[*English*]

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate thing is that the government is close to the end of its mandate and does not have a lot of public support across the country. The reality is that even if the government members said that they were going to split the bill, which they just said that they were not going to do, the bill would not likely become law. Certainly, the regulatory process is not going to happen prior to the next election, even if the bill is rammed through.

The problem that is facing Canadians is that the solutions that are required have problems that need to be addressed today. I would suggest that what is actually needed is a separate, completely different piece of legislation, which outlines the suggestions I have in there. It is unfortunate that the government, with its army of bureaucrats, was not able to do it and that it is the opposition that has to do it. I am certainly willing to work with my opposition colleagues on another piece of legislation that could address these issues and find areas of commonality so that we can protect Canadians from online harms.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's hard work in terms of tackling issues like harassment and the distribution of non-consensual images; she is very sincere in this regard.

The member has flagged the issue of resources; the bill is unclear as to what the government would actually provide in terms of resources. I do note this has been an ongoing problem over the last 20 years with cutbacks to law enforcement.

The member notes as well the impact of big tech. I wanted her to comment on a substantial missing piece in the legislation around algorithm transparency, which is currently before the U.S. Congress, and needs to be addressed absolutely. Big tech companies often promote non-consensual images through their algorithms and hate through their algorithms without any sort of oversight or responsibility. How does the member feel about that missing piece?

*Statements by Members*

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Speaker, with regard to resources, I asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer to conduct an analysis of the resources that the government was anticipating for the creation of its bureaucracy, because I believe that those resources would likely be much better allocated to other places. My colleague can wait for that report and perhaps re-emphasize to the Parliamentary Budget Officer the need to speed that along.

The second thing is with regard to algorithmic transparency. This is why we need to have a legislated duty of care. If we proceeded on the principle of a legislated duty of care of social media operators, then we could discuss what needs to be in there. Certainly, algorithmic transparency and bias that are used in AI systems that could be potentially injurious in a variety of ways are something—

• (1100)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is time to go to Statements by Members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a government that truly does care. I think of pharmacare, the school food program, dental care, child care and the disability program that we put into place, and we are focused on building a stronger economy. I think of the investments that we are receiving. Did anyone know that when we talk about direct investments per capita, Canada is number one in the G7, and when I compare us to the rest of the world, we are number three?

This is because people know and understand that the Canadian economy is doing well. At the same time, we are providing supports to Canadians. Earlier this week, the action that the Government of Canada is taking was reaffirmed as being positive, as the Bank of Canada dropped our interest rate. Canada is the first of the G7 countries to see a drop in interest rates. That is good for all of Canada.

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### LAKELAND

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, two years after Putin's illegal attack on Ukraine, many Lakeland towns, groups and people have opened their hearts to displaced Ukrainians who now call Canada their home. These are families like the Krawecs from Athabasca, who started by filling out immigration forms and then found furnishings for multiple homes.

There are volunteer settlement committees, like Vegreville and Area Stands with Ukraine, and community efforts, like the Vyshyvanka Day fundraiser in Bonnyville to provide winter clothing or the Koinonia retreat outside Thorhild, the family camp, to connect displaced people for emotional support.

That is only a small glimpse, but all Lakeland's efforts share one common goal: to welcome and assist Ukrainian families. One of them, parents Tetiana and Kostiantyn and big brother Daniil, were

blessed with a beautiful baby boy in May. Ernest is the first baby born to Ukrainian newcomers in the community and now also a baby Canadian citizen.

Conservatives will keep fighting to send weapons and Canadian LNG to help Ukrainians kick Putin's gas. That is real action to bring home peace, security and sovereignty for Ukrainians and Canadians.

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### STEFANO ECONOMOPOULOS

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the extraordinary life of Stefano “Steve” Economopoulos who recently passed away, unfortunately, in his 100th year. He was the husband to Angeliki for 74 years; father of Gus, Tom, Vivian and Angelo; grandfather to seven; and a great-grandfather as well.

He came to Canada in 1951, but he grew up in the Kalavryta area in Greece. He fought in the Second World War. A proud veteran, he then became a police officer and served the Greek police before coming here.

When he came here, he came here humble. He came willing to work hard to make a contribution to his country. He began as a dishwasher, and eventually became a very successful entrepreneur, owning several restaurants and doing very well throughout. In fact, even in his later years, he worked at Richies Family Restaurant, helping his sons. Everybody knows Richies back home.

He was kind and humble; he showed compassion to everyone he knew. He always had good advice for me. We will miss him. All of us will miss him very much. I wish all the very best to the family. We are thinking of them.

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[Translation]

### ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, eight months ago, the Hamas terrorist attack killed 1,200 Israelis and took 200 people hostage.

Since then, Palestinians in Gaza have been subjected to massive bombardments. The images and the resulting toll are apocalyptic. More than 36,000 people have been killed, and that is not even counting the thousands of bodies buried under the rubble. There have been missile attacks on refugee tents, hospitals and schools, where people shelter when fleeing to safety. This is a humanitarian disaster, but aid is being blocked. Netanyahu's war objectives are tantamount to ethnic cleansing. Some ministers say so openly.

*Statements by Members*

What are the Liberals doing to stop this genocide? They are reluctantly calling for a ceasefire. Without consequences, however, their call will not be taken seriously. The Liberals need to support the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Respect for the law is not a pick-and-choose proposition. They need to sanction the Netanyahu cabinet. They need to provide stable funding to UNRWA. They have to impose an arms embargo. Finally, the Palestinian state must be recognized to offer everyone the prospect of a future.

\* \* \*

● (1105)

[English]

**AGINCOURT COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSOCIATION**

**Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations to the Agincourt Community Services Association on its 50th anniversary. ACSA is dedicated to serving and uplifting those in need through an impressive array of critical programs, including youth empowerment initiatives, job training sessions, tax clinics, and emergency food and housing services. ACSA has strengthened our community by welcoming newcomers and providing assistance to seniors, as well as providing breakfasts and showers to those who are homeless and in need.

I want to thank Executive Director Lee Soda, her team of dedicated staff and volunteers, and the board of directors for their unwavering commitment to the people of Scarborough—Aginourt and Greater Scarborough. Here is to 50 years of serving the community and many more.

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**DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a bombshell intelligence report recently revealed that members in this House have knowingly and wittingly aided hostile foreign actors. This is not the first time the Prime Minister has been made aware of foreign interference. In fact, he has known about it since 2020, and yet he has done absolutely nothing about it. If it were not for Conservatives relentlessly calling for inquiries, the Prime Minister would have continued to hide the fact that foreign interference has run rampant under his watch.

Let us make one thing clear. It is our duty as parliamentarians to protect our democracy and our elections. Anything even remotely suggesting that a member of Parliament is wittingly aiding a hostile foreign government should be addressed immediately. That is why Conservatives are demanding the Prime Minister release the names of the parliamentarians referenced in the report.

Enough with the cover-ups. Canadians deserve to know who these people are, what they have shared and who they actually work for.

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**ATTACK ON AMRITSAR TEMPLE**

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, June 2024 is a sombre time of remembrance for the Sikh community. Forty years ago, the skies of Amritsar turned red as the Indian gov-

ernment attacked the Golden Temple complex, Akal Takhat, plus 40 additional gurdwaras across the country, killing thousands of Sikhs. Forty years ago, the Sikh Reference Library, home to our histories dating back to the inception of our faith, was reduced to ashes. The following years saw forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings of thousands of young Sikhs.

Forty years later, we continue to fight for justice. This month also marks 40 years of Sikh resilience within the community rooted in Chardi Kala, or high spirits, as the Sikh love for justice continues to overpower the genocide they have endured.

As we pray for those lost and for those defiant in the face of oppression, let us never forget 1984.

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**CLIFF BRIMMELL**

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I share the passing of coach Cliff Brimmell. Anyone who had the good fortune of knowing Cliff knows what a wonderful man and passionate coach he was.

An active member of the Ottawa Rowing Club for almost 50 years, Cliff shaped the lives of countless young rowers, instilling in them not only the skills and discipline required for rowing but also the values of teamwork, perseverance and sportsmanship. Cliff loved his athletes wholeheartedly and his enthusiasm for rowing spread to everyone who met him. His passion for the sport has left a lasting impact on the Ottawa rowing community, with his contributions deeply ingrained in the fabric of the Ottawa Rowing Club. It is clear that his presence on the river will be deeply missed and his spirit will continue to propel future generations forward on and off the water.

May he rest in peace.

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**CARBON TAX**

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us review the facts. On March 30, 2023, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a report on the carbon tax, stating, “Taking into consideration both fiscal and economic impacts, we estimate that most households will see a net loss.” On April 17, the PBO published a note on the website clarifying his economic analysis. On June 3, finance committee Liberal MPs called on the PBO to correct his report as it was inaccurate. When the PBO was asked how he could be confident in the conclusions, he answered, “The government has economic analysis on the impact of the carbon tax. It confirms the report that we have published.... That’s why I’m comfortable with what we have already published”.

The carbon tax cover-up is more proof the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost. When will it release the report and end the cover-up?

\* \* \*

• (1110)

#### MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, June is Men's Mental Health Awareness Month. It is often said that we do not talk about or acknowledge men's health and wellness often enough. I tend to agree. I also agree that change depends on us and it needs to start with men.

First of all, there is a stigma surrounding men's mental health. Many men feel as though they cannot reach out for help when they need it due to some societal expectations of masculinity. This must change. Mental health care is health care and men ought to feel more comfortable talking about our health, our mental health, our struggles and our challenges. We all have them. "Guys, let us speak up."

I recently joined Dr. Leigh Vanderloo, the scientific director at ParticipACTION and host Buzz Bishop on his "Don't Change Much" podcast with the Canadian Men's Health Foundation to chat about how important movement is for our minds and bodies and just to talk about men's health. Let us do that through this month and ongoing.

Since I might not get a chance to say it next week, I wish a happy Father's Day to all the dads and granddads out there.

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#### GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, rents have doubled, mortgages have doubled, and one in four Canadians is skipping meals. Up to 50 military families at one of Canada's largest military bases are relying on food banks just to get by. Meanwhile, the Liberals are supplying their friends at McKinsey with contracts and cash at taxpayers' expense. The Department of National Defence, last year, gave out \$72 million in contracts, including to McKinsey. The Auditor General has confirmed that most of those contracts broke the rules, were non-competitive and did not demonstrate value for money. The Government of Canada even changed the rules so that McKinsey could get contracts.

After nine years of the Liberal government, consultants are getting rich while Canadian taxpayers and military families are suffering. Canadians have had enough. The government must be held accountable for wasting taxpayers' dollars and for all of its ethical failures.

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#### HOUSING

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the cost of rent has never been more expensive. This cost of living crisis was confirmed by Rentals.ca, which reported that asking prices for rent rose 9.3% annually, meaning that the average asking price for a residential property across the country has now reached more than \$2,200 in May.

#### Statements by Members

This is more expensive than it has ever been in Canada. Simply, the cost increases of rent are not keeping up with anyone's paycheque. These costs continue to surge, because the NDP-Liberal government is failing to get enough homes built. We have seen tens of billions of dollars being sent out the door from Ottawa, but housing starts across the country are down 9% year over year, and homes continue to get less and less affordable.

We know that Canadians cannot afford this anymore. Only common-sense Conservatives will build the homes that Canadians can afford.

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#### COMMUNITY LIVING YORK SOUTH

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 70th anniversary of Community Living York South. This is a not-for-profit organization that provides support services to children, youth, adults and seniors who have an intellectual disability living in York Region. Actively working since 1954, Community Living York South empowers the people who need assistance to participate in the local community. Its significant contribution makes a genuine difference to the lives of the people using its services. I would like to thank the great staff and volunteers for their continuous hard work in authentic inclusion.

As they celebrate their 70th milestone, it is important to recognize organizations that uphold Canadian values and strive for a society where everyone belongs. I congratulate them on their decades of serving the community. Their efforts are an inspiration to Markham and to all of Canada.

\* \* \*

• (1115)

#### EDMONTON OILERS

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the Edmonton Oilers will play in game one of the Stanley Cup finals. With just four more wins, the Oilers will bring the cup back to Canada.

I grew up in Edmonton in the 1980s, and when my dad took me to a game, it was magic: Messier, Fuhr, Coffey, Anderson, Lowe and, of course, Wayne Gretzky. These guys were a beauty to watch.

Now, we have a new dynasty beginning. We have Hyman, who has scored more goals in the playoffs than the entire Toronto Maple Leafs. We have Bouchard, Nurse, Skinner, "Nuge" and, of course, Draisaitl and our captain, number 97, Connor McDavid.

### Oral Questions

This team has what it takes to go all the way. We have the best fans and the loudest building. I know the cup is coming home. Edmonton is cheering for these boys. Alberta is cheering for them. Canada is cheering for them.

It is time to play *La Bamba*, baby. Let us go, Oilers.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### PRIDE MONTH

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on May 17 we marked International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. For the occasion, I received a very special report with a reminder that every day in the world, acts of hate are committed against the 2SLGBTQQA+ communities.

We are never free from brutal regressions. We are now in June, which is Pride Month. Beyond the festive side of things, let us not forget that we need to continue to fight for inclusion and tolerance.

Let us take the opportunity to promote the right to freely love who we want. No one should be oppressed for their sexual orientation. Let us respond with the rainbow flag, but let us not forget to honour those who advance this cause against discrimination.

We need to keep up the fight for equal rights and for a more inclusive future for everyone. Let us seize this opportunity to look at how far we have come and at what remains to be done. I wish everyone a good Pride Month.

\* \* \*

[English]

### ETHICS

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a new day means a new scandal for the NDP-Liberal government. Shockingly, it does not involve the Prime Minister this time.

Reports show that the Liberal employment minister's company, Global Health Imports, is involved in numerous criminal offences, including fraud, arson and wire fraud. Alberta courts have forced GHI to pay out millions and millions of dollars after losing multiple lawsuits.

However, wait, it gets better. Now leaked text messages implicate the employment minister in a possible violation of federal ethics laws. Let us go through the facts. GHI is a small, fraud-riddled company. The minister owns 50% of it. He was listed as the director of the company for a year after becoming a minister. Texts from the other partner show that the unknown "Randy", we will call him "other Randy", was involved in a text message shakedown of a customer for \$500,000, which was paid but mysteriously disappeared.

If the story is true, the minister broke the law. He could put all the speculation to rest today by simply revealing the identity of the "other Randy". Will the minister tell Canadians the truth? Who is the other Randy, and why is he still on the front bench?

### ISLAMOPHOBIA

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Madiha, Salman, Yumna and Talat. Three years ago yesterday, the Afzaal family, a peaceful Muslim Canadian family, out for an evening walk, were brutally murdered, with their nine-year-old son as the only survivor. This was an act of terrorism, plain and simple.

They deserved to grow up and to grow old with their family, go to Jum'ah or school, celebrate the holidays and feel safe in their own community. Yumna Afzaal would have graduated from school today, alongside her friends. Instead, because of Islamophobia and hate, she was taken from us.

Since this horrific day, we must reflect on whether we are doing enough to combat anti-Muslim hate in our society. We have to commit to doing more every single day.

Today, we mourn with many in London, Ontario and beyond who lost a friend, a father, a mother, a sister. We remember this beautiful family.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, "Boo hoo, get over it" was the NDP-Liberal government's response to serious questions about members of this House co-operating with hostile foreign powers. The Prime Minister was briefed on the threat of foreign interference for years, since at least 2020, and he did nothing. It is time for him to name names listed in the foreign interference report. Who are they?

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and reveal whether any of his cabinet ministers are on that list?

● (1120)

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative members know what actually happened at committee that day, but when it comes to foreign interference, this is something we take incredibly seriously. It is something we have taken seriously since we formed government, something that unfortunately Mr. Harper's government did not do. We have put in place measures like the NSICOP committee. We are currently debating Bill C-70 at committee, which will bring forward more provisions to help strengthen our democratic institutions.



*Oral Questions*

I hope Conservatives will stop playing political games and instead focus on resilience in our democratic institutions.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the surest way to have resilience is to also have transparency. That was not a credible answer. Our sovereignty is at stake. Our first duty is to Canada. There is only one acceptable answer, and it is not to tell Canadians, “Boo hoo, get over it.” That is unserious, unhinged, in fact. It further proves that that corrupt government is unfit to lead this country.

Can someone, anyone over there, stand up and tell Canadians today the names of the MPs working against Canada? We are waiting.

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that member knows full well that we do not share secret and highly confidential intelligence on the floor of the House of Commons.

I would simply point out the series of measures, beginning with the creation of NSICOP, and the series of other measures that have been put in place by this government over the past years to combat foreign interference, a problem that countries around the world are dealing with. This is a problem that is being confronted extremely seriously by this government and not in a partisan way.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are sick of secret meetings and secret outcomes. This is foreign interference at an unprecedented level. Canadians deserve answers and clarity. The corrupt NDP-Liberal government's lack of political courage in the face of hostile foreign actors is a disgrace.

Yesterday, we honoured our D-Day heroes, soldiers who stormed beaches under fire and died for our freedoms. The least we can do to honour them and their memories is to stand up for Canada.

Come clean, release the names, and at least tell us if they are sitting in cabinet.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have always taken the issues of foreign interference seriously. This is precisely why we have implemented a number of measures in dealing with this.

What we have also done is ensure that leaders of the opposition, including the leader of the official opposition, are provided the clearance to review all of the documents unredacted, so that he too has clarity on the national security elements of this information. We are not going to politicize this. We are going to ensure that information that is of national security importance is dealt with in a secure manner.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** The foreign influence affair is very serious. The report released by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians is clear. Members of the House of Commons were elected to this place with the support and assistance of a foreign power that is hostile to Canadian interests. People need to know who these individuals are, so it is important to identify them. Until they are identified, a cloud

of suspicion will hang over the House. Ultimately it is the Prime Minister who has the power to tell us.

When will he do that?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that member knows full well that the government is bound to secrecy and is keeping our key national security secrets. We will continue to do just that. This member has not taken seriously the measures put in place by our government, including the creation of the committee of parliamentarians, which produced the report outlining the situation. Countries around the world are facing this kind of interference. Canada is a leader in fighting this interference. The opposition members need to take this more seriously.

\* \* \*

● (1125)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, taking this seriously would mean telling us whether any ministers were elected because of foreign interference, yes or no.

Meanwhile, there is also the matter of crime. Over the past nine years under this government, the crime rate has gone up in Canada, particularly in urban centres. In Laval, the crime rate is over 10%. In Montreal, 112,000 offences were committed.

Unfortunately, crime is not going away. The other problem is that criminals can serve their sentence at home, rather than in prison, thanks to Bill C-5 that was passed. Members will recall, sadly, that the Bloc Québécois supported Bill C-5.

When will the government take real action to ensure that criminals serve their sentence behind bars rather than at home?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member also knows that this government has been cracking down on crime across the country by making substantial reforms.

When it comes to crime, we obviously support our police forces, the provinces and the municipalities, which overall are fully committed to fighting crime, including auto theft.

We will not take any lessons from the Conservative Party when it comes to fighting crime. The Conservatives have no policy on crime, but we do.

*Oral Questions***DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are being warned that members are working for foreign powers; meanwhile, yesterday in committee a Liberal MP responded to parliamentarians by saying “get over it”. This is in addition to the Deputy Prime Minister who, on Wednesday, refused to answer questions about foreign interference because she preferred to talk about interest rates.

Our democracy is under attack and the Liberals are acting like children. We all have a responsibility to ensure that these MPs, who are not working in the interests of their constituents, are thrown out.

Are the Liberals finally going to take foreign interference seriously?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will repeat for the Bloc Québécois and for the member opposite that we have undertaken a series of measures to combat foreign interference. Many countries, including France, the United Kingdom and the United States, are facing situations of foreign interference, which are very well documented.

Canada has introduced a series of very substantial measures in this area, including the creation of a committee of parliamentarians that has studied the issue and is reporting on it. The government will shoulder its responsibilities.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as parliamentarians, we simply cannot be content with the measures outlined by the Liberals. The fact that some members are under foreign influence is proof that these measures are not enough. We also cannot be content with simply offloading the problem onto the RCMP. Our hands are tied because scheming in favour of foreign powers does not always involve criminal acts. In any case, it can only be catastrophic for democracy.

Will the Liberals get their act together, do their own investigations and get rid of the disloyal members?

[English]

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Bloc members on the committee have been working hard and diligently with us, in good faith, on foreign interference. It is disappointing when Conservative mis-characterization of meetings takes place.

What is most important is that we are working hard to ensure that our democratic institutions are resilient and that we are combatting foreign interference. This is not a partisan issue, and it is why we have introduced a number of measures to strengthen our democratic institutions. This includes Bill C-70, which we are working on in committee.

[Translation]

**HOUSING**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the average monthly price for rental housing in Canada hit a record high of \$2,202 in May. This is unprecedented. In Montreal, a two-bedroom apartment costs \$2,300 a month. It is crazy.

For decades, Liberal and Conservative governments have allowed wealthy developers to use the housing market as a casino, rather than protect the people. Prices are skyrocketing and families are being squeezed.

What will it take for this government to prioritize social and affordable housing rather than developers' profits?

**Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. As he is well aware, we made historic investments in the last federal budget. We even announced a new program, the co-op program. It is the best investment in co-operatives in 30 years, precisely to create non-market housing.

We will continue to work with all partners to build more housing, particularly in Montreal.

• (1130)

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, people in Vancouver Kingsway are really struggling to find a home they can afford. A two-bedroom apartment costs over \$3,600 a month, which is the highest cost in the country. The average renter is now spending 60% of their income on rent, or double the recommended amount. This is the result of decades of underfunding by Liberal and Conservative governments. The Liberals are failing to meet this moment, and the Conservatives offer slogans instead of solutions.

When will the Liberals start building the affordable, non-market homes people need and deserve?

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are doing exactly that. We share an interest with that party in building more non-market homes. That has to happen, and this is why budget 2024 supplemented existing programs that will make it happen.

He raises the issue of rent, and he should. We do have an expensive situation when it comes to rent in Canada, and that is why the government is responding by putting in place innovative measures that will lead to more building. It is lifting the GST on the construction of purpose-built rentals and putting in place measures to allow for low-interest loans by the private sector; these are measures the Conservatives do not support. They are not serious.

### CARBON PRICING

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or corruption. Liberals do not want Canadians to know what they already know: Canadians are worse off with the carbon tax. A secret government report proves that the carbon tax costs Canadians more than they get back, but the government has forced its budget watchdog to sign a gag order so that he cannot share that information with Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister quit using unbelievable talking points and release the secret report that proves Canadians are right?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that member of Parliament knows full well that, many years ago, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that eight out of 10 Canadians were better off under the carbon pricing policies of the government. Today, the Parliamentary Budget Officer says eight out of 10 Canadians are better off under the carbon pricing policy of the government. That member, however, ran in the last election, walking around Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek and promising to put a price on pollution.

**An hon. member:** She did.

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon:** She sure did, Mr. Speaker, but now she opposes the doubling of the growth in the rural rebate—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek has the floor.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely did not do that, and he can talk to my constituents.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has already proven that the Liberal carbon tax, just like the Prime Minister, is not worth the cost. The PBO has been clear: The vast majority of Canadians are worse off under a carbon tax than without it, and the Liberal secret government report proves it. The analysis has been done, but the government is blocking its release with a gag order.

When will the Prime Minister come clean with Canadians, stop hiding the real cost of the carbon tax and release his secret report?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have learned something rather astounding this morning. The member just denied that she ran on the Conservative Party of Canada's platform in the last election. However, there she sits as a member of the Conservative caucus. Canadians can now ask any member over here what parts of the Conservative platform they will be subtracting themselves from in the upcoming election. Which parts will they be disassociating themselves from? The Conservative platform applies to all the members' bulletins.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost. When asked about reaching their climate goals, the Liberal member for Whitby admitted that they knew their policies would be difficult and painful for Canadians. Now we know that their carbon tax climate policy confirms this, as documented in a secret report that has been covered up by putting a gag order on their budget watchdog.

### Oral Questions

When will the government quit using its unbelievable talking points and release this secret report that proves Canadians are right?

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, campaign platforms are not a buffet. All the members on the Conservatives' side ran on a commitment to price carbon with Erin O'Toole. That they have abandoned those commitments just demonstrates very clearly that they have no integrity and no desire to fight climate change or lower our emissions.

Let us look at what the PBO actually said, which is that “carbon pricing is [the most] effective way of reducing [greenhouse gas] emissions.” The PBO has—

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

• (1135)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I cannot hear the hon. parliamentary secretary.

I will allow the hon. parliamentary secretary to finish up.

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Mr. Speaker, if I could finish, the PBO concluded that carbon pricing is the most cost-effective way to fight climate change.

Canadians will receive their Canada carbon rebate on July 15, which supports affordability.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I guess the member ran on a platform of record cover-ups and corruption, but Canadians are sick and tired of the NDP-Liberal government. It silences anyone who does not go along with its narrative.

The government is covering up for Liberal insiders who are benefiting from exploiting the green slush fund. It is covering up the shameful inappropriate awarding of contracts to McKinsey, as well as the names of MPs who are involved in foreign interference. Now it is silencing the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Again, when will the government release the secret report that proves Canadians are right?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that the PBO said a long time ago that eight out of 10 Canadians were better off; today he says that eight out of 10 Canadians are better off.

### Oral Questions

Now that we have à la carte election platforms, does the member approve of his leader's affirmations with respect to contraception and a woman's right to choose? While he is at it, could he explain to the House what was discussed at the lunch he attended with the extreme right German legislator?

**Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians trust the independent and impartial Parliamentary Budget Officer. This is likely because the PBO shows its homework instead of relying on the old “just trust me” routine. Because of the PBO, we know that there exists government data showing what the true cost of the carbon tax is, but the Liberal-NDP government does not want to show the homework that is contained in that secret report. In fact, the Liberals have gone so far as to gag the PBO from telling Canadians about it. Why do they not just release the report?

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is not what the PBO did, and that is not what the PBO said.

What the PBO said, back on April 17, is that he overestimated the economic cost of climate change. This means that all the axe-the-tax rallies are based on faulty math. This is just another reason for Conservatives to deny climate change. Denying the effectiveness and proven impact of carbon pricing is another form of climate change denial.

The Canada carbon rebate will be in mailboxes and bank accounts on July 15. We support affordability and fighting climate change on this side.

**Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to see that secret report from the PBO on the true cost of the carbon tax. Canadians no longer trust the government, they no longer trust this MP, and they no longer trust the Prime Minister. Canadians want the data. They want the facts, and they will determine the truth. Canadians do not believe that they are better off because of the carbon tax. They are struggling daily to survive.

Why does the government not trust Canadians to make a fair assessment and release the secret report on the true cost of the carbon tax?

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us review what the PBO actually said.

On *Power and Politics*, Mr. Giroux said that carbon pricing is “seen by [most] economists as...the most cost-effective way of reaching...levels of carbon emissions [reduction].” Recently, on March 27, at the OGGO committee, Yves Giroux also said that “there is a wide consensus among economists—and I am an economist—that carbon pricing is an effective way of reducing carbon emissions.”

Mr. Giroux has claimed over and over again, and has reiterated, that carbon pricing—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Terrebonne.

[Translation]

### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this week the Auditor General tabled three reports. Her observations never change. Once again, we see untendered contracts, conflicts of interest, laxity, and negligence. The situation has reached a point where the Auditor General made only one recommendation in her initial report: that her recommendations be followed. That says a lot about her exasperation as the person responsible for ensuring the sound management of our public finances.

Do the Liberals realize that every Auditor General's report has proven them incapable of running the government?

• (1140)

[English]

**Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work done by the Auditor General. We thank her for her recommendations.

We are all concerned about ensuring that there be transparency, accountability and integrity in all the work we do. There have been recommendations made by the Auditor General, the ombudsman and a number of others that reinforce concerns the government shares, which is why this review was initiated. Therefore, we will take every step necessary to provide proper training to ensure that we have taken the steps to provide integrity on this as we go forward.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, whistle-blowers, repeated warnings, criticism from a senior official: all of these red flags about the management of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, were being waved for a long time.

There were conflicts of interest. Projects ineligible for funding received funding. Once again, taxpayer money has been recklessly squandered. The department received the minutes and conflict of interest declarations, and so it knew what was going on. The minister knew all that and did nothing. Would the minister have shut down SDTC if the Auditor General had not tabled such a scathing report?

[English]

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that SDTC, for over 20 years, has done great work to support the clean-tech sector. Obviously, there were allegations of mismanagement. When those surfaced, the minister acted immediately to issue several independent reviews, both on HR practices and on governance practices. We know, and have always been unequivocal, about the fact that we need to demand the highest governance practices from independent organizations that are dealing with public funds. We are moving forward with a new governance model and framework that will restore proper oversight.

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#### ETHICS

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Employment has a 50% stake in a shady company that has been ordered by Alberta courts to pay \$7.8 million for ripping off clients. Someone named Randy at the company is implicated in a half a million dollar fraud. Now, the minister claims that he is not that Randy. Okay, but the company has five employees, and no one can find that Randy. Therefore, if the minister is not that Randy, who is?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we all know, Canada has among the most stringent conflict of interest and ethics dispositions and measures in the world. Ministers are expected to comply with all of those, and the minister answered that specific question yesterday.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister claimed he is not that Randy, on the basis that he turned over his phone records. The minister did no such thing. Rather, he very conveniently turned over the records of a single device. Therefore, can the minister confirm that the records of the device that he turned over are from the minister's business burner phone?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we were all here yesterday when the minister gave a comprehensive response to the very question the member raises, so I can only refer him to that statement.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a little suss. Come on. They have a numbered company, a 50% stake, and then a mysterious "other Randy" is stepping up to take the blame. Did the minister bother asking the employment minister what the other Randy's last name was before he held the bag for him today?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know that members strain to come up with original ways of asking the same question, and I note that it is the case in this instance. The minister responded comprehensively to this very issue yesterday. I would remind the member of that, and I would refer her to that statement.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here is a news flash for the government. We would not

#### Oral Questions

have to ask the same question over and over again if the government answered the question. Would that not that be nice? It would be so nice.

Therefore, I will try once again. This is clearly suss. I cannot actually believe that the Minister of Employment had the audacity to say that it was the other Randy. If there is another Randy, what is his last name?

• (1145)

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member had a chance to consult the *Urban Dictionary* this morning, but I would again refer her to the minister's very comprehensive response yesterday.

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#### CANADIAN HERITAGE

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the arts inspire us, enrich our lives and add so much to our community. We need to support them, but the Liberal government has been underfunding Edmonton's arts scene for years, and local artists and our community are struggling. Cities with loads of Liberal MPs are getting as much as four times what Edmonton gets per capita. The partisan politics are hurting Edmonton's creative scene. When will the government stop punishing Alberta and start funding our arts?

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite. The arts are extremely important for all of us individually, for our communities and for our country. There is so much Canadian arts and culture to celebrate, which varies from region to region. That is why Liberals will continue to support arts groups and artists all across the country, regardless of which part of the country they live in, including Alberta.

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#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Canadians who have experienced devastating climate consequences were here in Ottawa. They are people who have lost their homes to wildfires, who have lived through severe flooding and whose communities are threatened by rising sea levels.

These Canadians called on the Liberals to meaningfully cap emissions from the oil and gas sector. The problem is that the Liberals are still bending their knee to oil lobbyists. Yesterday, the oil and gas CEOs went so far as to say that if the cap is so low, it is unnecessary. First, they water it down, and now they want to scrap it.

Will the Liberals stop listening to lobbyists and strengthen the emissions cap?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank some lobbyists. I would like to thank Citizens' Climate Lobby Canada. I would like to thank the David Suzuki Foundation. I would like to thank the member for her question. I would like to thank all the climate activists and all the folks across Canada who are concerned about the extreme emissions of the oil sands sector.

Liberals are not just listening; we are taking action. We are actually the first oil-producing country in the world to put a cap on greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector. Yes. Yesterday, at the environment committee, we had those CEOs there, and we held them to account. We asked them what their plans were to lower emissions. I am sad to say that their answers were insufficient. We will continue to be there for climate advocates.

\* \* \*

**HOUSING**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to build more homes and build them faster, Liberals know that municipalities need funding to accelerate the construction of critical housing infrastructure. Through our new Canada housing infrastructure fund, we are going to help municipalities do just that.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities share the Liberals' plan to support the municipal infrastructure necessary for homes to be built across this country?

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member has served the House since 2004. He is always interested in issues of not only water but also water infrastructure.

Liberals have put in place measures to support more home building, but we cannot do that without thinking about housing-enabling infrastructure. Waste water, stormwater and solid waste infrastructure are all things that add up, and they make a difference. They make communities possible.

That is why this government has put forward \$6 billion for provinces and municipalities. There is conditionality attached. If provinces and municipalities want to access to the funds, they have to freeze development charges, and they have to make sure that more middle homes get built.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Employment claims that he set the record straight and that he is not the other Randy who is conducting business at a fraud-ridden company. However, he has failed to answer the most basic question. If he is not the Randy in question, who is Randy?

The answer to this question will reveal the truth and will put to rest any questions about the guilt or innocence of the minister. He

could easily pick up the phone and find out the identity of this other Randy.

Why will the minister not finally end the charade and tell us who Randy is?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to, once again, reiterate for my hon. colleague that the minister comprehensively responded to this question yesterday, and to all of the elements under his purview. I would refer the member across the way to that response.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all the denials and rhetoric in the world will not change the very basic fact that we need the answer to the question: Who is Randy? It is a simple question. Who is the Randy referred to in the text messages from the Minister of Employment's former business partner, Stephen Anderson?

The minister has admitted, at committee, that he talks to his former business partners. Why will he not pick up the phone and find out who Randy is? If there truly is another Randy, I will rise in the House and apologize.

Until then, I will keep asking: Who is Randy?

• (1150)

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is question period. The member can ask whatever question he wishes. The answer, of course, is the same one that I just gave him. The minister very comprehensively responded to this yesterday. The minister submits to the conflict of interest and ethics code, which is among the most stringent in the world. I think we presume all members of the House to be honourable.

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**HOUSING**

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it is more expensive to rent in Canada than ever. The top two most expensive places to rent are in my home province of British Columbia: Vancouver is number one, and Burnaby is number two.

In Vancouver, it now costs over \$2,600 to rent a one bedroom or a staggering \$3,600 for a two bedroom. Canadians' quality of life continues to drop. Food bank usage is at record highs, and tent encampments are growing. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

When will the Prime Minister build homes, not bureaucracy?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member mentions housing, mentions affordability and mentions getting people off the streets. We share those interests. Unfortunately, her voting record shows something entirely different. She should go to 651 Cambridge Avenue, in her riding of Kelowna, to see a project funded by the government, which she voted against, unfortunately. She talks about encampments. The Conservatives do not want to deal with encampments. They have nothing in their housing plan, so-called, to deal with homelessness.

The member talks about building more. The Conservatives want to apply a tax on home builders. They do not want to apply any measure to the housing crisis. It is not a serious party. It is all slogans.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, housing starts are down, and under the NDP-Liberal government, the housing crisis continues to get worse. On the Liberals meeting their housing plan numbers, construction experts at committee have been saying that there is “not a chance” and that they are not attainable. Also, according to a new Rentals.ca monthly rent report, asking prices for rent rose by 9.3% compared to this time last year. After nine years, rents have doubled.

The Prime Minister has spent billions, but rent prices keep increasing, and building keeps decreasing. How can the Prime Minister spend so much and achieve so little?

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member ought to know, again, that in order to deal with the housing crisis in this country, we do need to see another 3.87 million homes built in this country. That is the number of homes that need to be built to address the housing crisis.

It is incumbent on the federal government, provincial governments and municipal governments to put in place measures to address that crisis. If the member is serious, then she and her party will support the government in the measures that we are responsible for, waiving GST on purpose-built rentals, putting in place missing middle housing measures and working with municipalities to make that happen. The Conservatives are opposed to it every single time.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development we welcomed the CEOs of the five major oil companies.

They were despicable. They do not care about increased emissions in the oil sector. They all defended their record profits of \$38 billion since 2020, money made from pollution. Despite their bulging pockets, they are seeking even more public money. These companies do not deserve a penny of the \$83 billion in tax giveaways that the federal government is offering them over 10 years.

Will the government cut the funding and reinvest in climate change adaptation?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work of my colleague at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development and in the House of Commons.

We are the only G20 country to have eliminated subsidies for oil and gas companies, two years ahead of schedule no less. This week, we announced \$530 million in funding with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in order to work with our communities across the country on fighting climate change.

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**CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while Ottawa is giving oil companies \$83 billion, those who are bearing the brunt of climate change are still waiting for compensation.

There is nothing for farmers whose crops were destroyed last year by natural disasters. Baie-Saint-Paul is still waiting to be compensated for last year's floods, despite my colleague from Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix's superhuman efforts. While the Weather Network is predicting another high-risk summer for natural disasters, the federal government has still not provided any compensation for last year's natural disasters.

Why is the government quick and generous with oil companies, but slow and cheap with ordinary Canadians?

● (1155)

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Once again, I enjoy working with her.

The new funding that I just mentioned supports more than 1,400 projects to help municipalities adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Over the past two years, we have implemented a clean fuel standard, something that the Conservatives promised to do in their last election campaign. However, they changed their minds to make their leader happy.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**HOUSING**

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, most young Canadians believe they will never be able to afford a home. Under the Prime Minister, housing prices have doubled. Mortgage payments have doubled. The needed down payment has doubled. This week, Rentals.ca reported that the average rent in Canada has reached over \$2,200. This is the most expensive rent we have ever seen.

Despite this, the NDP-Liberal government is failing to build the homes that Canadians need. If the Prime Minister cannot build the affordable homes that Canadians need, will he get out of the way so that Conservatives can?

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will not let that happen.

The Conservatives have no vision on housing. They want to tax home builders. When it comes to working with municipalities to see more zoning changes, so we can see fourplexes, duplexes, triplexes, mid-rise apartments, all of these things built in communities, they do not want to support that either. Like the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, he voted against those measures.

Just yesterday, for the first time in 30 years, we saw an investment in co-op housing that will lead to more homes. However, what do the Conservatives think about co-op housing? They believe it is Soviet-style housing. They do not believe in that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just two days ago, the Deputy Prime Minister, in her legendary modesty, was bragging about housing. She is totally out of touch with the reality of Canadians. The housing numbers are staggering. The average rental cost has risen by almost 10% to \$2,202 per month. Two-bedroom apartments have increased by 12%. It costs \$2,233 to rent a two-bedroom apartment in Canada. This government excels at announcements, bureaucracy and spending, but certainly not when it comes to helping Canadians.

When will this government really take action to help Canadians after doing nothing for nine years?

**Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my dear colleague that when his leader was the minister responsible for housing, he built six housing units. I repeat, six housing units. The housing plan we have in place will create more than 3.8 million homes in Canada in the next few years.

On this side of the House, we are helping people pay their rent, building housing, making sure people are not left homeless, and getting those who are homeless off the streets by providing access to housing and shelters. We will continue to work for all Canadians.

[English]

**CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA**

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Corrections Canada has a mandate to retrain Canada's 10,000 inmates so they can find employment upon release. In the past three years, Corrections has issued 112,000 meaningless in-house vocational certificates and a grand total of 64 Red Seal certifications. Corrections has also made zero effort to engage in provincial apprenticeship programs, which could produce life-changing certified job skills, reduce recidivism and be beneficial to everyone in the community. Why this neglect?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly share our colleague's focus on the importance of vocational training and skills upgrading for those who are serving in federal correctional facilities.

I had a chance, with my colleague, the parliamentary secretary and member for Kingston and the Islands, to visit the Joyceville Institution, in our colleague's riding, to meet people from CORCAN who are working and seeing inmates taking programs that will improve their skills training and hopefully set them up for success when they are released from those institutions. We will continue to do everything that is necessary to preserve public safety, and this is an important element of that work as well.

\* \* \*

**AIR TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, across the country, communities need new infrastructure to grow, build more homes and enable economic growth. This is especially true in the north. Investing in our communities also means investing in our airports. Northerners want reliable, safe and affordable service when it comes to air connectivity.

Could the Minister of Transport please tell us what the government is doing to ensure that the communities in the north are more connected and more livable?

● (1200)

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Yukon is not only excellent, he is also right. Investing in our communities means investing in our airports. Northern, remote and indigenous communities must have access to the air services they need and expect. This is why we invested \$186 million to upgrade the infrastructure at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport.



We have a plan to build a Canada that the next generation will be proud of. The Conservatives, well, they pretend to care about making life better for the next generation of Canadians, but they just pretend. On our side, we are doing it.

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#### INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's explosive report on the NDP-Liberal green slush fund shows that personal friends of the Prime Minister voted themselves millions in taxpayer cash. With 96 cases of declared conflicts by board members, they still voted to award themselves that taxpayer cash. In another 90, they failed to disclose the conflict of interest and still then gave themselves the cash anyway.

Now, will this NDP-Liberal government release all the slush fund documents and call in the RCMP?

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, SDTC is an organization that has served the clean-tech sector for over 20 years. When we knew about the allegations of mismanagement, our government acted immediately. There are a number of steps over the last many months that our government has taken to get to the bottom of the issues in terms of the governance and HR practices of the organization.

I think it is important to keep in mind that this is an arm's-length organization. It operated independently of government oversight. We are now folding it into the National Research Council and installing a more robust governance framework.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that member's response does not make any sense. That organization, in 2017, got a clean bill of health from the Auditor General. Then when the government took it over, it dumped the chair within three days, a record amount of time. That new board member gave \$217,000 to a company she had a direct relationship with.

The question remains: Will the government then release all of the documents connected to this slush fund and call in the RCMP?

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate for us all, as a government and members of Parliament, to demand the highest governance standards when dealing with public funds. That is what our government has done from day one. As soon as we learned about allegations of mismanagement in this independent organization, we ordered independent reviews done, fact-finding missions.

We collaborated with the Auditor General in her review, and now we are moving forward with the recommendations that the Auditor General has made, which include folding the organization in to have better transparency, accountability and oversight.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there is \$123 million worth of inappropriately awarded contracts, \$76 million given to Liberal insiders; resignations, abuse and a leadership team that

#### Oral Questions

seemed far more interested in protecting Liberal cabinet ministers than Canadian taxpayer dollars. This is the legacy of the failed green slush fund.

When will the Liberal government give up the cover-up and call in the Mounties?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, of course, that question has just been answered repeatedly by my colleague.

However, I cannot let this opportunity or this week go by without punctuating some of the great economic news that we have seen. There has been a loud reduction in interest rates. Canada is leading the world in interest rate reductions. Today, we can see that we have now recovered 141% of the jobs that were lost in the first months of the pandemic, compared to just 128% in the United States. Importantly, there are over 1.3 million more Canadians employed than at any time before the pandemic.

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#### CANADIAN HERITAGE

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, tech giants have dominated the online space for years. For far too long, they have gotten away without contributing their fair share to the audiovisual sector and Canadian creators, while generating millions in revenues from their work. Our government passed historic legislation last year to level the playing field between platforms and creators.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage provide this House with an update on the implementation of the Online Streaming Act?

• (1205)

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, this week, the CRTC released its decision on initial contributions by global streamers as part of the implementation of the Online Streaming Act. This means digital platforms will contribute nearly \$200 million per year to our audio and audiovisual sectors, including content creators.

Unlike the Conservatives, who defend tech giants and obstruct all attempts supporting Canadian industries, we are standing up for Canadian artists and good-paying jobs. The Online Streaming Act is about fairness for our creators, levelling the playing field, more Canadian jobs and content made for us, by us.

*Routine Proceedings***EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the B.C. communities of Merritt, Princeton and Abbotsford were devastated by floods in 2021. Five people were killed, thousands were forced from their homes, farmland was flooded; and roads, bridges and other structures were destroyed. At the time, the Prime Minister said that he had the backs of these Canadians. Now these same communities have been denied funding to mitigate future disasters.

Will the minister live up to his promises and provide these communities with the funds they need to rebuild and prevent more devastating floods?

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the 2021 floods and landslides had a devastating impact on communities across the Lower Mainland, disrupting lives and livelihoods. Through the disaster financial assistance arrangements, we have now provided over \$1.4 billion to the province to help them recover from those floods. The program allows the province to put \$210 million to reduce the vulnerability of mitigation projects like dikes and pumps. We will continue to work closely with the province in all capabilities that they need and in terms of making sure that they can fully recover.

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**DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians will never get over nor accept the betrayal of their country's democracy by traitors who sell themselves out for personal and political gain. Instead of shielding subversives on the payroll of foreign operators, will the government release the cabinet documents to the Hogue inquiry and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians so that such individuals can be investigated, or is it the case that the Liberal Party does not want to incriminate itself?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just because our colleague makes something up does not make it true. He knows very well that our government has worked collaboratively with the Hogue commission. In fact, officials from the Privy Council Office are in regular and ongoing contact with the lawyers from the Hogue commission to ensure that they have all of the appropriate and relevant documents to do the important work that all recognized parties in the House supported. We obviously look forward to working in a continued way with the national security committee of parliamentarians. My colleague should be careful before he makes up things in the House of Commons.

**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 responses to three petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999**

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-393, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (electronic products recycling program).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the legislation, with thanks to the great member for Victoria for seconding it. The legislation would ensure that all electronic products containing toxic substances sold in Canada would be disposed of and recycled in a responsible manner.

Electronic waste often contains hazardous materials. When improperly disposed of, these substances can leach into soil and water, posing serious risks to ecosystems and human health. Recycling programs allow for the recovery of valuable materials from e-waste. Components like metals, plastics and rare earth elements can be extracted and reused, reducing the need for new raw materials. Finally, recycling also consumes less energy than manufacturing new electronic products from scratch. By recycling, we conserve energy and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with production.

I hope that all members will join me in supporting this important initiative for our planet.

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

\* \* \*

● (1210)

**PETITIONS****AIR SERVICE TO INDIA**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to table a petition signed by many constituents in regard to air travel between Canada and India. The Indo-Canadian community continues to grow, to the benefit of all of Canada, as does the desire of Indo-Canadian individuals to travel to India. Petitioners are looking for the government, airline industries or airport authorities to look at the possibility of ways we can enhance travel between the two nations.

**An hon. member:** Table the petition.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** I would ask the member across the way to be a little bit patient.

## NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by the people of Pickering—Uxbridge, of Whitby and of the Liberal Minister of Health's riding of Ajax. They call on the House of Commons to immediately pass Bill C-368 and repeal the new regulatory constraints on natural health products passed last year that millions of Canadians rely upon that has since affected medical freedom of choice and affordability.

“Boo hoo, get over it” just does not cut it.

## ACCESS TO PUBLIC WASHROOMS

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

The first follows the Gutsy Walk that just happened across this country to bring attention to irritable bowel syndrome and those suffering from Crohn's and colitis.

The people who signed the petition point out that safe access to washrooms is a basic physical need and necessary for participation in civic life, the workplace, educational settings and other public spaces. They also point out that exclusionary washroom policies cause significant barriers for trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people. They note that avoiding washroom use can result in serious health consequences including urinary tract infections and kidney problems.

Therefore they call on the government to, among other things, amend the Canada Labour Code to require gender-inclusive washrooms in all federally regulated workplaces and to ensure that there is access to public washrooms for everyone in this country.

## HEALTH

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, with the second petition, petitioners note that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to put an unsustainable level of strain on Canada's public health system. They say that provincial health care systems must be brought into compliance with the five criteria of the Canada Health Act. They would like to see facilitation of the development of new post-infection therapeutics, and, more importantly, enforcement of air quality standards for all public buildings and the provision of funding for the resources needed to maintain those standards. Also, they would like to see the institution of universal mandatory paid sick leave of at least two weeks.

There is a suite of measures, but I think the petition reminds us all that, having come out of the pandemic, there are lessons still to be learned and policies still to be implemented for the health of Canadians.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## Government Orders

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. government House leader is rising on a point of order.

\* \* \*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the next sitting be 12 midnight, pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28, 2024.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28, the minister's request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

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MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE REVIEW COMMISSION  
ACT (DAVID AND JOYCE MILGAARD'S LAW)

BILL C-40—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to report stage and third reading of Bill C-40, an act to amend the Criminal Code, to make consequential amendments to other acts and to repeal a regulation (miscarriage of justice reviews).

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stages of the bill.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1215)

[Translation]

## ONLINE HARMS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, An Act to enact the Online Harms Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act and An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Shefford, who does essential work as the Bloc Québécois critic on issues having to do with seniors.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member needs the unanimous consent of the House to share her time.

*Government Orders*

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to share my time.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I have been authorized to share my time with the hon. member for Shefford, who does essential work for the Bloc Québécois on issues having to do with seniors. I would like to take this opportunity to remind the government that Bill C-319, which was introduced by my colleague, was unanimously adopted in committee with good reason. The Bloc Québécois is proposing to increase the amount of the full pension by 10% starting at age 65 and change the way to guarantee income supplement is calculated to benefit seniors.

There is a lot of talk about that in my riding. This bill is coming back to the House and the government should make a commitment at some point. We are asking the government to give royal assent to Bill C-319. In other words, if the bill is blocked again, seniors will understand that the Liberals are once again abandoning them. I am passionate about the cause of seniors, and so I wanted to use my speech on Bill C-63 to make a heartfelt plea on behalf of seniors in Quebec and to commend my colleague from Shefford for her work.

Today we are debating Bill C-63, which amends a number of laws to tackle two major digital scourges, specifically child pornography, including online child pornography, and hate speech. This legislation was eagerly awaited. We were surprised that it took the government so long to introduce it.

We have been waiting a long time for this bill, especially part 1. The Bloc Québécois has been waiting a long time for such a bill to protect our children and people who are abused and bullied and whose reputations are jeopardized because of all the issues related to pornography. We agree with part 1 of the bill. We even made an offer to the minister. We agree with it so completely, and I believe there is a consensus about that across the House, that I think we should split the bill and pass the first part before the House rises. That way, we could implement everything needed to protect our children, teens and young adults who are currently going through difficult experiences that can change their lives and have a significant negative impact on them.

We agree that parts 2, 3 and 4 need to be discussed and debated, because the whole hate speech component of the bill is important. We agree with the minister on that. It is very important. What is currently happening on the Internet and online is unacceptable. We need to take action, but reaching an agreement on how to deal with this issue is not that easy. We need time and we need to debate it amongst ourselves.

The Bloc Québécois has a list of witnesses who could enlighten us on how we can improve the situation. We would like to hear from experts who could help us pass the best bill possible in order to protect the public, citizens and groups when it comes to the whole issue of hate speech. We also wonder why the minister, in part 2 of his bill, which deals with hate speech, omitted to include the two clauses of the bill introduced by the member for Beloeil—Chambly. I am talking about Bill C-367, which proposed removing

the protection afforded under the Criminal Code to people who engage in hate speech on a religious basis.

We are wondering why the minister did not take the opportunity to add these clauses to his bill. These are questions that we have because to us, offering this protection is out of the question. It is out of the question to let someone use religion as an excuse to make gestures, accusations or even very threatening comments on the Internet under these sections of the Criminal Code. We are asking the minister to listen. The debates in the House and in committee are very polarized right now.

• (1220)

It would be extremely sad and very disappointing if we passed this bill so quickly that there was no time to debate it in order to improve it and make it the best bill it can be.

I can say that the Bloc Québécois is voting in favour of the bill at second reading. As I said, it is a complex bill. We made a proposal to the Prime Minister. We wrote to him and the leader. We also talked to the Minister of Justice to tell him to split the bill as soon as possible. That way, we could quickly protect the survivors who testified at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in the other Parliament. These people said that their life is unbearable, and they talked about the consequences they are suffering from being victims of sites such as Pornhub. They were used without their consent. Intimate images of them were posted without their consent. We are saying that we need to protect the people currently going through this by quickly adopting part 1. The committee could then study part 2 and hear witnesses.

I know that the member for Drummond and the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia raised this idea during committee of the whole on May 23. They tried to convince the minister, but he is still refusing to split the bill. We think that is a very bad idea. We want to repeat our offer. We do not really understand why he is so reluctant to do so. There is nothing partisan about what the Bloc Québécois is proposing. Our focus is on protecting victims on various platforms.

In closing, I know that the leaders are having discussions to finalize when the House will rise for the summer. Maybe fast-tracking a bill like this one could be part of the negotiations. However, I repeat that we are appealing to the Minister of Justice's sense of responsibility. I know he cares a lot about victims and their cause. We are sincerely asking him to postpone the passage of parts 2, 3 and 4, so that we can have more time to debate them in committee. Most importantly, we want to pass part 1 before the House rises for the summer so that we can protect people who are going through a really hard time right now because their private lives have been exposed online and they cannot get web platforms to taken down their image, their photo or photos of their private parts.

We are appealing to the minister's sense of responsibility.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech.

*Government Orders*

This is a very important issue in our region. We have already seen cases of abuse. It is very concerning.

According to what we are hearing today, some people oppose the bill because they say that freedom of expression needs to be protected at all costs. I think my colleague understands that there should be limits. Protecting our young people is one of those limits.

I would like to hear more about that from her.

● (1225)

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is from the neighbouring constituency.

She is right. I totally agree that we need to take action to eliminate or reduce all types of hate speech on platforms and on the Internet. It feels like the wild west. She is totally right.

Where do we draw the line? After all, there are sections of the Criminal Code that protect people and offer them some protection. How do we strike a balance between protecting freedom of expression and taking action to eliminate or reduce hate speech on the various platforms or on the Internet? That is the question.

That is why we are inviting her government to acknowledge that this requires a lot of work and discussion. We should split off Part 1 and pass it, then debate the other parts to make it a better law.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as usual, I listened to my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît's speech with great interest. There is one aspect of the bill that I see as a major flaw, specifically the fact that children are often profoundly harmed by hateful content promoted by secret algorithms, yet there is nothing in this bill about algorithm transparency.

Does my colleague agree that the big digital platforms, the web giants, should be responsible for disclosing the algorithms they use? These algorithms amplify hate speech, which is often extremely harmful to children.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, the issue raised by my colleague is just one example of something that could be studied and debated in committee. For instance, experts could share their expertise on algorithm management. As legislators, our goal is to improve the bill. What my colleague is proposing is one of the things that will probably be discussed in committee. Depending on the nature of the deliberations, we might be able to amend the bill.

Quebec began exploring how we could reduce radicalization and hate speech on the Internet in 2015. This was even the subject of a bill studied in the Quebec National Assembly. However, it was not easy. We realized that what we were doing would not necessarily help the situation and could even do more damage.

I urge my colleagues to study parts 2, 3 and 4 of the bill in committee and to pass part 1 now.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since I have very little time, I would just like to say something and perhaps ask my colleague a question. Not very long ago, the leader of the Bloc Québécois and member for Beloeil—Chambly introduced a bill to prevent people from using the religious exemption to engage in hate speech. I

would like to know whether this bill addresses that very important matter.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I hope we are going to discuss this and be able to amend the bill, because we do not understand why this aspect was not included.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the schoolchildren from École Edgar-Hébert, who are here with us today to observe our work in the House and see what a good job the Speaker is doing.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is not easy to speak in front of the member for Salaberry—Suro it, who does outstanding work and who just gave a wonderful speech. I will see what I can add to it. I may get a little more technical than she did. She spoke from the heart, as usual, and I commend her for that. I also want to thank her for her shout-out to Bill C-319. People are still talking to me about Bill C-319, because seniors between the ages of 65 and 74 feel forgotten. We will continue this debate over the summer. In anticipation of this bill's eventual return before the House, we will continue to try to raise public awareness of the important issue of increasing old age security by 10% for all seniors.

I have gotten a bit off today's topic. I am the critic for seniors, but I am also the critic for status of women, and it is more in that capacity that I am rising today to speak to Bill C-63. This is an issue that I hear a lot about. Many groups reach out to me about hate speech. They are saying that women are disproportionately affected. That was the theme that my colleague from Drummond and I chose on March 8 of last year. We are calling for better control over hate speech out of respect for women who are the victims of serious violence online. It is important that we have a bill on this subject. It took a while, but I will come back to that.

Today we are discussing the famous Bill C-63, the online harms act, "whose purpose is to, among other things, promote the online safety of persons in Canada, reduce harms caused to persons in Canada as a result of harmful content online and ensure that the operators of social media services in respect of which that Act applies are transparent and accountable with respect to their duties under that Act". This bill was introduced by the Minister of Justice. I will provide a bit of context. I will then talk a bit more about the bill. I will close with a few of the Bloc Qu b cois's proposals.

### *Government Orders*

To begin, I would like to say that Bill C-63 should have been introduced much sooner. The Liberals promised to legislate against online hate. As members know, in June 2021, during the second session of the 43rd Parliament, the Liberals tabled Bill C-36, which was a first draft that laid out their intentions. This bill faced criticism, so they chose to let it die on the Order Paper. In July 2021, the government launched consultations on a new regulatory framework for online safety. It then set up an expert advisory group to help it draft a new bill. We saw that things were dragging on, so in 2022 we again asked about bringing back the bill. We wanted the government to keep its promises. This bill comes at a time when tensions are high and discourse is strained, particularly because of the war between Israel and Hamas. Some activists fear that hate speech will be used to silence critics. The Minister of Justice defended himself by saying that the highest level of proof would have to be produced before a conviction could be handed down.

Second, I would like to go back over a few aspects of the bill. Under this bill, operators who refuse to comply with the law, or who refuse to comply with the commission's decision, could face fines of up to 8% of their overall gross revenues, or \$25 million, the highest fine, depending on the nature of the offence. Bill C-63 increases the maximum penalties for hate crimes. It even includes a definition of hate as the "emotion that involves detestation or vilification and that is stronger than disdain or dislike". The bill addresses that. This legislation includes tough new provisions stipulating that a person who commits a hate-motivated crime, under any federal law, can be sentenced to life in prison. Even more surprising, people can file a complaint before a provincial court judge if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that someone is going to commit one of these offences.

Bill C-63 amends the Canadian Human Rights Act to allow the Canadian Human Rights Commission to receive complaints regarding the communication of hate speech. Individuals found guilty could be subject to an order. Private conversations are excluded from the communication of hate speech. There are all kinds of things like that to examine more closely. As my colleague explained, this bill contains several parts, each with its own elements. Certain aspects will need a closer look in committee.

Bill C-63 also updates the definition of "Internet service". The law requires Internet service providers to "notify the law enforcement body designated by the regulations...as soon as feasible and in accordance with the regulations" if they have "reasonable grounds to believe that their Internet service is being or has been used to commit a child pornography offence".

• (1230)

Bill C-63 tackles two major scourges of the digital world, which I have already discussed. The first is non-consensual pornographic material or child pornography, and the second is hate speech.

The provisions to combat child pornography and the distribution of non-consensual pornographic material are generally positive. The Bloc Québécois supports them. That is why the Bloc Québécois supports part 1 of the bill.

On the other hand, some provisions of Bill C-63 to fight against hate are problematic. The Bloc Québécois fears, as my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît explained, that the provisions of Bill C-63

might unnecessarily restrict freedom of expression. We want to remind the House that Quebec already debated the subject in 2015. Bill 59, which sought to counter radicalization, was intended to sanction hate speech. Ultimately, Quebec legislators concluded that giving powers to the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, as Bill C-63 would have us do with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, would do more harm than good. The Bloc Québécois is going with the consensus in Quebec on this. It believes that the Criminal Code provisions are more than sufficient to fight against hate speech. Yes, the Bloc Québécois is representing the consensus in Quebec and reiterating it here in the House.

Third, the Bloc Québécois is proposing that Bill C-63 be divided so that we can debate part 1 separately, as I explained. This is a critical issue. Internet pornography has a disproportionate effect on children, minors and women, and we need to protect them. This part targets sexual content. Online platforms are also targeted in the other parts.

We believe that the digital safety commission must be established as quickly as possible to provide support and recourse for those who are trying to have content about them removed from platforms. We have to help them. By dividing Bill C-63, we would be able to debate and reach a consensus on part 1 more quickly.

Parts 2, 3 and 4 also contain provisions about hate speech. That is a bit more complex. Part 1 of the bill is well structured. It forces social media operators, including platforms that distribute pornographic material, such as Pornhub, to take measures to increase the security of digital environments. In order to do so, the bill requires social media operators to act responsibly. All of that is very positive.

Part 1 also talks about allowing users to report harmful content to operators based on seven categories defined by the law, so that it can be removed. We want Bill C-63 to be tougher on harmful content, meaning content that sexually victimizes a child or revictimizes a survivor and intimate content communicated without consent. As we have already seen, this has serious consequences for victims with related PTSD. We need to take action.

However, part 2 of the bill is more problematic, because it amends the Criminal Code to increase the maximum sentences for hate crimes. The Bloc Québécois finds it hard to see how increasing maximum sentences for this type of crime will have any effect and how it is justified. Introducing a provision that allows life imprisonment for any hate-motivated federal offence is puzzling.

Furthermore, part 2 provides that a complaint can be made against someone when there is a fear they may commit a hate crime, and orders can be made against that person. However, as explained earlier, there are already sections of the Criminal Code that deal with these situations. This part is therefore problematic.

Part 3 allows an individual to file a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission for speech that foments hate, including online speech. As mentioned, the Bloc Québécois has concerns that these provisions may be used to silence ideological opponents.

Part 4 states that Internet service providers must notify the appropriate authority if they suspect that their services are being used for child pornography purposes. In short, this part should also be studied.

In conclusion, the numbers are alarming. According to Statistics Canada, violent hate crimes have increased each year since 2015. Between 2015 and 2021, the total number of victims of violent hate crimes increased by 158%. The Internet is contributing to the surge in hate. However, if we want to take serious action, I think it is important to split Bill C-63. The Bloc Québécois has been calling for this for a long time. Part 1 is important, but parts 2, 3 and 4 need to be studied separately in committee.

I would like to acknowledge all the work accomplished on this issue by my colleagues. Specifically, I am referring to the member for Drummond, the member for Rivière-du-Nord and the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia. We really must take action.

- (1235)

This is an important issue that the Bloc Québécois has been working on for a very long time.

- (1240)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister, in introducing the legislation, made it very clear that amendments are something he is open to, as long as they give more strength to the legislation.

In recognition of the fine work that standing committees can do in giving strength to legislation, would it be fair to say that the Bloc's position would be that it is in favour of this legislation, as it currently is, at least at this stage, going to committee? In other words, will the member be voting in favour of the legislation going to committee?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the Bloc Québécois would have preferred to split the bill in two.

### *Government Orders*

Right now, it is far too problematic to get a proper perspective. We certainly want to study this bill in committee, including parts two, three and four. The leader of the Bloc Québécois, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, introduced a bill to deal with hate speech. There are two clauses that we would have liked to include in this bill, for example. We would have liked to work on the bill.

The Bloc Québécois made a perfectly reasonable proposal, specifically to split the bill in two in order to work on part 1, which has a much greater consensus. Urgent action is needed on part 1, which deals with sexual crimes involving children online. We have been calling for this for quite some time. We must act.

Some elements of the Criminal Code already apply to parts 2, 3 and 4 of the bill. The Bloc Québécois has also made other proposals. We would like to rework these parts in committee.

Above all, we reiterate the need to split the bill in two, because these are two completely separate issues.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on the part of the bill that addresses hate. In the past few weeks, we have seen horrific attacks on synagogues and Jewish schools, and I have met with community members and leaders from the Jewish community who are scared. They are scared about the rise in anti-Semitism, and a number of them have brought up how online platforms are fuelling this kind of hate. We must address the issues of civil liberties and free speech that are problematic in this bill.

New Democrats want to hold social media giants accountable for their algorithms. Can the member talk a bit about how we also need to strengthen accountability and transparency measures to hold social media platforms accountable?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain: When we talk about algorithms, it is not so simple.

In my presentation, I explained the issue of hate speech. When it comes to parts 2, 3 and 4 of the bill, we have questions that we want to work on.

It was in fact to deal with anti-Semitism and hate speech against the Jewish community that the Bloc Québécois introduced the member for Beloeil—Chambly's bill.

Then there is the whole issue of freedom of expression, which is critical but certainly not simple. There is a fine line between wanting to take action and knowing how to deal with algorithms without attacking freedom of expression. That is why I think that we need to hear from experts in committee. We need to hear suggestions from experts on these very serious issues. That is such a fine line that we truly need help to walk that line and strike a delicate balance between the two. It is critically important.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to commend my colleague for her speech and for her work on this issue. I know that she really puts her heart into it. This is something that really concerns her. Like me, she was really looking forward to finally seeing some legislation put forward on this issue.

In her speech, my colleague mentioned an aspect of this bill that is of personal concern to me. I am talking about the increase in maximum sentences for crimes set out in the bill. However, Canada's corrections system is more focused on rehabilitation than on punishment.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on how effective it will be to increase these maximum sentences.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, that is why we want to divide the bill in two. This is yet another example, in addition to the matter of algorithms that my colleague from Victoria raised. My esteemed colleague from Drummond, with whom I worked on this file, is right. Increasing minimum sentences is an issue of major concern. In fact, that is why we want to examine it in committee. Is that the best solution, or should we focus instead on restorative justice?

• (1245)

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, as we mentioned earlier, the NDP believes that certain aspects of Bill C-63 are important and will help address a situation that calls for measures to counter online harm. However, other elements of this bill are not as clear and raise important questions.

We feel it is really necessary to pass the bill, send it to committee and give that committee the opportunity to do a thorough review. Parts of this bill are well done, but other parts need clarification and still others raise concerns. We therefore have some reservations.

This bill has been needed for years. The Liberal government promised it within 100 days of the last election, but it took almost three years, as members know. Finally, it has been introduced and is being examined. As parliamentarians, we need to do the work necessary to get answers to the questions people are asking, improve the parts of the bill that need improving and pass those parts that are sorely needed.

If parts of the bill cannot be passed or seem not to be in the public interest after a thorough examination in committee, it is our responsibility to withdraw them. However, there is no question that we need this legislation.

The harm being done to children is definitely rising. The idea that people can approach children, without restriction, to encourage them to self-harm or commit suicide should be something that our society will not tolerate. The fact that we have these web giants or platforms that promote child pornography is unacceptable. It should not be happening in our society. We have to acknowledge the importance of implementing laws to prevent this from happening. Hate speech is another issue. We are seeing a disturbing rise in violence in society, which is often fomented online.

For all of these reasons, we are going to pass this bill at second reading. We are going to send it to committee. This part of the pro-

cess is very important to us. All answers must be obtained and all necessary improvements to the bill must be made in committee.

I do not think that anyone in the Parliament of Canada would like to vote against the principle of having such legislation in place. In practice, the important role of parliamentarians is to do everything in their power to produce a bill that achieves consensus, with questions answered and the necessary improvements put in place.

[English]

There is no doubt about the need for the bill. The NDP has been calling for the bill for years. The government promised it after 100 days. Canadians had to wait over 800 days before we saw the bill actually being presented.

In the meantime, the reality is that we have seen more and more cases of children being induced to harm themselves. This is profoundly disturbing to us, as parents, parliamentarians and Canadians, to see how predators have been going after children in our society. When we are talking about child pornography or inducing children to harm themselves, it is something that should be a profound concern to all of us.

Issues around the sharing of intimate content online without permission, in a way that it attacks victims, is also something that we have been calling for action on. It is important for parliamentarians to take action.

We have seen a steady and disturbing rise in hate crimes. We have seen it in all aspects of racism and misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. All of these toxic sources of hate are rising.

I would note two things. First, the rise in anti-Semitism is mirrored by the rise in Islamophobia. Something we have seen from the far right is that they are attacking all groups.

Second, as the ADL has pointed out, in 2022 and 2023, all the violent acts of mass murder that were ideologically motivated came from the far right in North America. These are profoundly disturbing acts. We have a responsibility to take action.

The fact that the government has delayed the bill for so long is something we are very critical of. The fact that it is before us now means that, as parliamentarians, we have the responsibility to take both the sections of the bill where there is consensus and parts of the bill where there are questions and concerns being raised that are legitimate, and we must ensure that the committee has all the resources necessary, once it is referred to the committee in principle.



*Government Orders*

That second reading vote is a vote in principle, supporting the idea of legislation in this area. However, it is at the committee stage that we will see all the witnesses who need to come forward to dissect the bill and make sure that it is the best possible legislation. From there, we determine which parts of the bill can be improved, which parts are adequate and which parts, if they raise legitimate concerns and simply do not do the job, need to be taken out.

Over the course of the next few minutes, let us go through where there is consensus and where there are legitimate questions being raised. I want to flag that the issue of resources, which has been raised by every speaker so far today, is something that the NDP takes very seriously as well.

In the Conservative government that preceded the current Liberal government, we saw the slashing of crime prevention funding. This basically meant the elimination of resources that play a valuable role in preventing crimes. In the current Liberal government, we have not seen the resources that need to go into countering online harms.

● (1250)

There are legitimate questions being raised about whether resources are going to be adequate for the bill to do the job that it needs to do. Those questions absolutely need to be answered in committee. If the resources are not adequate, the best bill in the world is not going to do the job to stop online harms. Therefore, the issue of resources is key for the NDP as we move forward.

With previous pieces of legislation, we have seen that the intent was good but that the resources were inadequate. The NDP, as the adults in the House, the worker bees of Parliament, as many people have attested, would then push the Liberal government hard to actually ensure adequate resources to meet the needs of the legislation.

Legislation should never be symbolic. It should accomplish a goal. If we are concerned about online harms, and so many Canadians are, then we need to ensure that the resources are adequate to do the job.

● (1255)

Part 1 of the bill responds to the long-delayed need to combat online harms, and a number of speakers have indicated a consensus on this approach. It is important to note the definitions, which we certainly support, in the intent of part 1 of the bill, which is also integrated into other parts of the bill. The definitions include raising concerns about “content that foments hatred”, “content that incites violence”, “content that incites violent extremism or terrorism”, “content that induces a child to harm themselves”, “content that sexually victimizes a child or revictimizes a survivor”, “content used to bully a child” and “intimate content communicated without consent”.

All of these are, I think it is fair to say, definitions that are detailed in how they address each of those categories. This is, I think, a goal all parliamentarians would share. No one wants to see the continued increase in sexual victimization of children and content that induces a child to harm themselves.

I have raised before in the House the sad and tragic story of Molly Russell. I met with her father and have spoken with the family. The tragic result of her having content forced upon her that led to her ending her own life is a tragedy that we have seen repeated many times, where the wild west of online platforms is promoting, often through secret algorithms, material that is profoundly damaging to children. This is something that is simply unacceptable in any society, yet that content proliferates online. It is often reinforced by secret algorithms.

I would suggest that, while the definitions in the bill are strong concerning the content we do not want to see, whether it is violent extremism or the victimization of children, the reality is that it is not tackling a key element of why this harmful online content expands so rapidly, and with such disturbing strength, and that is the secretive algorithms online platforms use. There is no obligation for these companies to come clean about their algorithms, yet these algorithms inflict profound damage on Canadians, victimize children and, often, encourage violence.

One of the pieces I believe needs to be addressed through the committee process of the bill is why these online platforms have no obligation at all to reveal the algorithms that produce, in such disturbing strength, this profoundly toxic content. The fact is that a child, Molly Russell, was, through the algorithms, constantly fed material that encouraged her to ultimately end her own life, and these companies, these massive corporations, are often making unbelievable profits.

I will flag one more time that Canada continues to indirectly subsidize both Meta and Google, to the tune of a billion dollars a year, with indirect subsidies when there is no responsibility from these online platforms at all, which is something I find extremely disturbing. These are massive amounts of money, and they meet with massive profits. We have, as well, these significant subsidies, which we need to absolutely get a handle on. We see the fact that these algorithms are present, and not being dealt with in the legislation, as a major problem.

● (1300)

Second, when we look at other aspects of the bill and the detail that I have just run through in terms of the actual content itself, the definitions in part 1 are not mirrored by the same level of detail in part 2 of the bill, which is the aspects of the Criminal Code that are present. The Criminal Code provisions have raised concerns because of their lack of definition. The concerns around part 2, on the Criminal Code, are something that firmly needs to be dealt with at the committee stage. Answers need to be obtained, and amendments need to be brought to that section. I understand that as part of the committee process there will be rigorous questions asked on part 2. It is a concern that a number of people and a number of organizations have raised. The committee step in this legislation is going to be crucial to improving and potentially deleting parts of the bill, subject to the rigorous questioning that would occur at the committee stage.

*Government Orders*

The third part of the bill addresses issues around the Canadian Human Rights Commission. We were opposed to the former Harper government's gutting of the ability of the Human Rights Commission to uphold the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Constitution that governs our country, Canadians have a right to be free from discrimination. The reality of the Harper government's cuts to that portion of the Canadian Human Rights Commission is something that we found disturbing at the time. The reality is that part 3, the question of resources and whether the Canadian Human Rights Commission has the ability to actually respond to the responsibilities that would come from part 3 of the bill, is something that we want to rigorously question witnesses on. Whether we are talking about government witnesses or the Canadian Human Rights Commission, it is absolutely important that we get those answers before we think of the next steps for part 3.

Finally, there is part 4, an act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service. That section of the bill as well is something that, I think it is fair to say, should receive some level of consensus from parliamentarians.

In short, at second reading, as members well know, the intent of the debate and discussion is whether or not we are in agreement with the principle of the bill. New Democrats are in agreement with the principle of the bill. We have broad concerns about certain parts of the bill. The intent around part 1, though, the idea that we would be tackling and forcing a greater level of responsibility on the web giants that have profited for so long with such a degree of irresponsibility to tackle issues of content that incites violence or violent extremism, content that induces a child to harm themselves or that sexually victimizes a child, content used to bully a child, and intimate content communicated without consent, all of those elements of the bill, we support in principle.

We look forward to a very rigorous examination at committee with the witnesses we need to bring forward. There is no doubt that there is a need for this bill and we need to proceed as quickly as possible, but only by hearing from the appropriate witnesses and making sure that we have gotten all the answers and made all the improvements necessary to this bill.

• (1305)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was very good to hear the word “quickly” in the hon. member's comments. When something gets posted, it gets propagated at the speed of light. We heard earlier today in the debate that there were questions about using existing mechanisms to deal with this, but existing mechanisms are notoriously slow.

What factors would need to be considered in this bill to, in essence, use the precautionary principle? If it looks awful, there should be a way of dealing with it very quickly and not just leaving it up there while some process works its way through.

Can the hon. member comment on that?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, certainly, but what I am saying is with regard to the rigorous examination of this at the committee stage. When I say “quickly”, I am not talking about, in any way,

short-circuiting the important work of committee. That needs to happen.

One of the major concerns I have seen, as the member points out, is that we have identified content that harms a child but the problem is that, because algorithms are not touched by this, and algorithm transparency is not touched by the bill, it could well mean closing the barn door after the horse has already left, and that the despicable content that harms a child has been promoted widely by algorithms. It is then ultimately taken out of circulation.

However, with the algorithms, it is amplified so quickly and to such a huge extent that this is, I would suggest, a major shortfall in the bill. The U.S. Congress is considering legislation around algorithm transparency. I have a bill in front of the House on algorithm transparency. The reality is we cannot act quickly to save a child if the algorithms have already promoted that harmful content everywhere. That is a major concern and a major shortfall, I believe, in this legislation.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the Human Rights Tribunal. Would calling for the elimination of the State of Israel online land someone before the Human Rights Tribunal or would calling for “from the river to the sea”, which refers to the dismantling of Israel or the removal or extermination of its Jewish population, either of those, online, end up landing somebody before the Human Rights Tribunal?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I think this is why we need to have the rigorous committee process. I know Conservatives will try to throw out lines and ask, “Does this matter? Does this matter?”

With regard to the important aspect of definition, if we just look through part 1 of the bill, it is very clear. As for the definitions that apply, the member knows, as I am sure she read the bill, what definitions apply. In terms of what happens around the Criminal Code, we have concerns about the definitions and we need to be very clear about that.

Conservatives will take that issue of clarity and try to exploit it. I think it is important, as adults in the room, as legislators, as parliamentarians, that we go through that rigorous committee process and that we ensure that questions are answered. I do not believe that the kind of speculation that Conservatives do is helpful at all. Let us get the work done around the bill. It is definitely needed to combat online harms. Let us make sure the definitions are clear and concise.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby also cares about regulating what happens on the web. We had the opportunity to work together at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage on various topics that have to do with this issue.

*Government Orders*

We have been waiting for Bill C-63 for a long time. I think that there is consensus on part 1. As the Bloc Québécois has been saying all day, it is proposing that we split the bill in order to quickly pass part 1, which is one part we all agree on.

The trouble is with part 2 and the subsequent parts. There are a lot of things that deserve to be discussed. There is one in particular that raises a major red flag, as far as I am concerned. It is the idea that a person could file a complaint because they fear that at some point, someone might utter hate speech or commit a crime as described in the clauses of the bill. A complaint could be filed simply on the presumption that a person might commit this type of crime.

To me, that seems to promote a sort of climate of accusation that could lead to paranoia. It makes me think of the movie *Minority Report*. I am sure my colleague has heard of it. I would like his impressions of this type of thing that we find in Bill C-63.

• (1310)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, that is why we would like the bill to go to committee for a thorough study, because it is important in the context of this bill.

That said, we know that hate crimes are on the rise. We are seeing more and more anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and so on. That is why it is important to have clear definitions in the bill.

At this stage of the bill's consideration, we are being asked to vote on the principle of the bill. The bill seeks to reduce online harm, and we agree with that principle. However, there are still many questions and details to be studied. We will have the opportunity to amend the bill in committee to remove certain parts or add others. There is still a lot of work to be done. The NDP wants to refer the bill to committee so that we can begin that work.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby for his speech and his involvement in this serious issue.

Unfortunately, we have more proof that the Liberals are dragging their feet and waiting to take action. Online hate is a real problem. Many children and teenagers are experiencing social media in harmful, aggressive and damaging ways. These young people are often the victims of cyberbullying and cyber-attacks, which create very tense situations. The Liberals have not done anything about that.

My colleague is right in saying the Liberals missed something in this bill. The Minister of Justice does not see it. The algorithms are creating echo chambers where people with far-right perspectives, who are racist, homophobic, transphobic and sexist, feed off each other. For example, the phenomenon of fake news is on the rise. The Liberals do not dare touch the issue of secret algorithms.

Why does my colleague think that the Liberals do not dare take that fundamental step in the fight against online hate?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, that is a really great question from my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I know that he has done a lot of work to protect children. As a father, it is important for my colleague to ensure that children are

not inundated with toxic content that encourages them to self-harm or to commit suicide. It is appalling to see what is out there.

My colleague is right to talk about the Liberals' abject failure. Everyone heard the Prime Minister say in 2021 that he was going to introduce a bill within 100 days to counter all the attacks, the hate crimes and the attacks on children that we are seeing. It took another two years.

Furthermore, the Liberals did not touch on the real profit maker for the web giants: the algorithms. Algorithms rake in incredible profits for these companies. They did not seem to want to look at this key element, and we can speculate as to why. However, we want to get answers to this question, and that is something we are going to do in committee.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise and speak to Bill C-63.

We often talk about the communities and neighbourhoods in which we live. We do this not only as parliamentarians but also as politicians in general, whether at the municipal, provincial, or federal level. We talk about how we want people to feel safe. People need to feel safe in their homes, in their communities and in the places where they live. That has always been a priority for the current government and, I would like to think, for all parliamentarians of all political stripes. However, sometimes we need to look at finding a better definition of what we mean when we talk about keeping people safe in our communities.

The Internet is a wonderful thing, and it plays a critical and important role in society today. In fact, I would argue that, nowadays, it is an essential service that is virtually required in all communities. We see provincial and national governments investing greatly to ensure that there is more access to the Internet. We have become more and more dependent on it in so many different ways. It is, for all intents and purposes, a part of the community.

I could go back to the days when I was a child, and my parents would tell me to go outside and play. Yes, I would include my children as having been encouraged to go outside and play. Then things such as Nintendo came out, and people started gravitating toward the TV and playing computer games. I have grandchildren now, and I get the opportunity to see my two grandsons quite a bit. I can tell members that, when I do, I am totally amazed at what they are participating in on the Internet and with respect to technology. There are incredible programs associated with it, from gaming to YouTube, that I would suggest are a part of the community. Therefore, when we say that we want to protect our children in our communities when they are outside, we also need to protect them when they are inside.

*Government Orders*

It is easy for mega platforms to say it is not their responsibility but that of the parent or guardian. From my perspective, that is a cop-out. We have a responsibility here, and we need to recognize that responsibility. That is what Bill C-63 is all about.

Some people will talk about freedom of speech and so forth. I am all for freedom of speech. In fact, I just got an email from a constituent who is quite upset about how the profanity and flags being displayed by a particular vehicle that is driving around is promoting all sorts of nastiness in the community. I indicated to them that freedom of speech entitles that individual to do that.

I care deeply about the fact that we, as a political party, brought in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees freedom of speech and expression. At the end of the day, I will always advocate for freedom of speech, but there are limitations. I believe that, if we look at Bill C-63, we can get a better sense of the types of limitations the government is talking about. Not only that, but I believe they are a reflection of a lot of the work that has been put together in order to bring the legislation before us today.

● (1315)

I understand some of the comments that have been brought forward, depending on which political parties addressed the bill so far. However, the minister himself has reinforced that this is not something that was done on a napkin; it is something that has taken a great deal of time, effort and resources to make sure that we got it right. The minister was very clear about the consultations that were done, the research that took a look at what has been done in other countries, and what is being said here in our communities. There are a great number of people who have been engaged in the legislation. I suspect that once it gets to committee we will continue to hear a wide spectrum of opinions and thoughts on it.

I do not believe that as legislators we should be put off to such a degree that we do not take action. I am inclined to agree with the minister in saying that this is a holistic approach at dealing with an important issue. We should not be looking at ways to divide the legislation. Rather, we should be looking at ways it can be improved. The minister himself, earlier today, said that if members have ideas or amendments they believe will give more strength to the legislation, then let us hear them. Bring them forward.

Often there is a great deal of debate on something at second reading and not as much at third reading. I suggest that the legislation before us might be the type of legislation that it would be beneficial to pass relatively quickly out of second reading, after some members have had the opportunity to provide some thoughts, in favour of having more reading or debate time at third reading but more specifically to allow for time at the committee stage. That would allow, for example, members the opportunity to have discussions with constituents over the summer, knowing full well that the bill is at committee. I think there is a great deal of merit to that.

There was something that spoke volumes, in terms of keeping the community safe, and the impact today that the Internet has on our children in particular. Platforms have a responsibility, and we have to ensure that they are living up to that responsibility.

I want to speak about Carol Todd, the mother of Amanda Todd, to whom reference has been made already. Ultimately, I believe,

she is one of the primary reasons why the legislation is so critically important. Amanda Michelle Todd was born November 27, 1996, and passed away October 10, 2012. Colleagues can do the math. She was a 15-year-old Canadian student and a victim of cyber-bullying who hanged herself at her home in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. There is a great deal of information on the Internet about to Amanda. I thank her mother, Carol, for having the courage to share the story of her daughter, because it is quite tragic.

I think there is a lot of blame that can be passed around, whether it is to the government, the private sector or society, including individuals. Carol Todd made reference to the thought that her daughter Amanda might still actually be alive if, in fact, Bill C-63 had been law at the time. She said, "As a mom, and having gone through the story that I've gone through with Amanda, this needs to be bipartisan. All parties in the House of Commons need to look in their hearts and look at young Canadians. Our job is to protect them. And parents, we can't do it alone. The government has to step in and that's what we are calling for."

● (1320)

That is a personal appeal, and it is not that often I will bring up a personal appeal of this nature. I thought it was warranted because I believe it really amplifies and humanizes why this legislation is so important. Some members, as we have seen in the debate already, have indicated that they disagree with certain aspects of the legislation, and that is fine. I can appreciate that there will be diverse opinions on this legislation. However, let us not use that as a way to ultimately prevent the legislation from moving forward.

Years of consultation and work have been put into the legislation to get it to where it is today. I would suggest, given we all have had discussions related to these types of issues, during private members' bills or with constituents, we understand the importance of freedom of speech. We know why we have the Charter of Rights. We understand the basics of hate crime and we all, I believe, acknowledge that freedom of speech does have some limitations to it.

I would like to talk about some of the things we should think about, in terms of responsibilities, when we think about platforms. I want to focus on platforms in my last three minutes. Platforms have a responsibility to be responsible. It is not all about profit. There is a societal responsibility that platforms have, and if they are not prepared to take it upon themselves to be responsible, then the government does need to take more actions.

Platforms need to understand and appreciate that there are certain aspects of society, and here we are talking about children, that need to be protected. Platforms cannot pass the buck on to parents and guardians. Yes, parents and guardians have the primary responsibility, but the Internet never shuts down. Even parents and guardians have limitations. Platforms need to recognize that they also have a responsibility to protect children.

Sexually victimized children, and intimate content that is shared without consent, are the types of things platforms have to do due diligence on. When the issue is raised to platforms, there is a moral and, with the passage of this legislation, a legal obligation for them to take action. I am surprised it has taken this type of legislation to hit that point home. At the end of the day, whether a life is lost, people being bullied, or depression and mental issues are caused because of things of that nature, platforms have to take responsibility.

There are other aspects that we need to be very much aware of. Inciting violent extremism or terrorism needs to be flagged. Content that induces a child to harm themselves also needs to be flagged. As it has been pointed out, this legislation would have a real, positive, profound impact, and it would not have to take away one's freedom of speech. It does not apply to private conversations or communications.

● (1325)

I will leave it at that and continue at a later date.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1330)

[Translation]

### EXCISE TAX ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-323, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (mental health services), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

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

[English]

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives ask that the motion be adopted on division.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair wishes to draw the attention of the House to a particular situation concerning Bill C-323, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act regarding mental health services, standing in the name of the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

### Private Members' Business

[English]

The bill was previously the subject of a ruling on December 12, 2023. The Chair addressed the similarity between Bill C-323 and Bill C-59, an act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023, and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023.

Both bills would amend sections 1 and 7 of part II of schedule V of the Excise Tax Act in order to exempt psychotherapy from GST, along with “mental health counselling services” in the case of Bill C-323 and “counselling therapy services” in the case of Bill C-59.

As explained in a ruling regarding Bill C-250 of May 11, 2022, which can be found on page 5123 of the debates:

The House should not face a situation where the same question can be cited twice within the same session, unless the House's intention is to rescind or revoke the decision.

Government and private members' bills belong to different categories of items and are governed by different sets of rules and precedents. Standing Order 94(1) provides the Speaker with the authority to “make all arrangements necessary to ensure the orderly conduct of Private Members' Business”.

[Translation]

The House passed Bill C-59 at third reading and sent it to the Senate on May 28, 2024. To comply with the principle that the House should not face a situation where the same question can be cited twice within the same session, the Chair may not put the question on the motion for third reading of Bill C-323 unless, of course, the House takes other measures to substantially amend the bill before that stage is reached.

[English]

For now, the Chair will give the House the opportunity to do so and allow the member for Cumberland—Colchester to move the motion for third reading of Bill C-323.

[Translation]

If no changes are made to Bill C-323, the Chair will delay the vote on the bill at third reading until the process surrounding Bill C-59 has been completed by the Senate. If Bill C-59 is passed by the Senate and Bill C-323 is still in its current form when the time comes for the question to be put on the motion for third reading, the House will not be able to vote on it.

[English]

**Mr. Stephen Ellis** moved that Bill C-323, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (mental health services), be read the third time and passed.

*Private Members' Business*

He said: Mr. Speaker, whenever we have an opportunity to bring a private member's bill to this House, it is an important and exciting day. I know some of my colleagues on both sides, or at least over here, have had the opportunity to do that, and some of them even successfully, which is a great feeling, especially when private members' bills speak on behalf of the people who asked us to do this work on their behalf. It is a significant opportunity that can have a very personal meaning attached to it.

Bill C-323, as you, Mr. Speaker, have spoken about, has had a bit of a tumultuous course in this House, even having been adopted in the fall economic statement, in some form at least. Many would suggest that it should be taken as a great compliment that the NDP-Liberal government would see the wisdom of things that we do on this side of the House, which happens very rarely, I would suggest. We should be happy that it happened. Since it is Friday, we will just be happy that it happened, nonetheless.

The original form of Bill C-323 recognized that psychotherapy and mental health counselling services are not exempt from GST and/or HST, thereby making it significantly more expensive when Canadians have to pay out of pocket for those things. If we do the math associated with it, depending on where one lives, removing those services from GST or HST could mean that every seventh or eighth session would, in essence, be free, although we know nothing is free. Certainly on this side of the House, we get concerned with the use of the word "free".

That being said, one significant type of therapy that was omitted originally was registered massage therapy services. When we look at how people recover from their mental health stress, distress and illnesses, we do know that registered massage therapy services can be a significant part of that. Many people choose to use registered massage therapy services on a regular basis as maybe a health maintenance type of program. Of course, many people choose to use it with injury and other illness as part of their ongoing self-care regimen. When we look at the utility of registered massage therapy services, I would suggest that adding it to this private member's bill would make perfect sense with the way it dovetails with self-care that Canadians so desire.

I know that I have talked a bit about this before, but it is worth repeating. Mental health difficulties and, indeed, perhaps even the crisis that exists in Canada are ongoing. In a more cumulative sense, we know that after age 40, one in two Canadians will have had a mental health diagnosis during their lifetime. Those fortunate enough to have someone sitting beside them can look at that and understand how significant that really is, when we realize it is every other person in Canada at the current time.

I will try not to irritate the NDP-Liberal government too much, because I do want it to pass this bill, but I cannot not say that I am incredibly disappointed with its announcement of the \$4.5-billion Canada mental health transfer, which has never been allocated. I know that the folks on the other side of the House will say that they have allocated it in a different way, and this and that. I am not entirely convinced of that. I would like to see the numbers and understand where the \$4.5 billion is.

• (1335)

That being said, I am not trying to be irritating to the NDP-Liberal government, but it is a bit of a cruel trick to say to Canadians that this country values mental health treatment and support for people who suffer with mental illness. The NDP-Liberal government effectively said, "We will transfer \$4.5 billion to provinces to help strengthen mental health treatment and diagnosis", and then, of course, it did not happen. That is the proverbial rug being pulled out from under people, and it is a sad day when that happens. It was a big announcement, but it just did not happen; that is the way it went.

To further underscore the severity of mental illness in this country, we know from studies being done that the cost to the economy of our great nation is about \$51 billion every year in lost productivity, direct health care costs and mental health quality-of-life issues for people who suffer from mental illness. It is not insignificant; even though we talk in the House easily about billions of dollars, \$51 billion is a heck of a lot of money. How do we put a price on individual suffering and the angst and distress that it causes?

I think one of the things that has been done reasonably well in our great country is the ability now that people have to understand that, first, mental health issues are incredibly common, and also, second, that it is important that we have the courage and the ability to speak out about them. Certainly initiatives like the Bell Let's Talk Day have been important. I will also give a shout-out to Kids Help Phone because I think it has done incredible work.

There is also the advocacy work of my colleague, the member for Cariboo—Prince George, with respect to the 988 suicide prevention hotline. I am absolutely thrilled to tell members that he will speak to Bill C-323 later. His passion and his compassion for Canadians always come through in everything that he says. When he speaks, it really comes from the heart, which has a significant amount of meaning for me. I am happy to call him a friend and a colleague.

In that vein, we do know, sadly, that 11 Canadians die every day by suicide. It goes without saying, of course, that is 11 Canadians too many. When we think about it deeply as an individual, we begin to think how bad must things be in a person's life that they think their only option is to take their own life, that things are that incredibly difficult and that there is no future they can possibly see. However, certainly if they have the opportunity to realize there is a 988 number, and they think, "Hey, I can reach out to this number and have someone answer me", then we know the likelihood is hopeful that they may see a different picture when they are finished with some talk therapy, as we might say.

However, accessing talk therapy, accessing help from a therapist of whatever kind one may choose, has become exceedingly difficult in this country. We know that it has become more and more difficult because Canadians do not have access to primary care. Seven million Canadians do not have access to primary care in this country. Why is that important? It is important because the majority of the way we access care in this country is by having a primary care provider. If they are unable to meet someone's service needs themselves, they will reach out on their behalf and help find someone who can.

Even in the town of Truro, Nova Scotia, where I live and where I was a family physician for many years, when people finally make the decision to present themselves to me, for example, as a former family physician, and have made the decision that they need to get some help, they do not want to wait months or weeks to get that help.

• (1340)

I know that they have struggled with that decision, often over many weeks and months, and that when they finally make that decision, it is important that they get help in a timely fashion. Sadly, at the current time, the timely help that Canadians need is just not available to them, and we need to be more responsive, as a country, to Canadians who need mental health care. This is not just for financial reasons but, most important, for the mental health quality of life that Canadians want to experience, and for their inclusion in and enjoyment of society.

We also have to talk a bit about the opioid crisis when we were talking about mental health in this country. People with a mental health diagnosis are twice as likely to suffer with substance use disorder and misuse of substances as well. We all know in the House that this is a crisis in this great country. I am not going to stand here to say that we do not, perhaps, disagree on how it is being treated. However, it is important that Canadians understand that we all would agree, and certainly I do not think I will get much push-back from my colleagues, that there is a crisis with respect to opioid use in this country. We also know that incredibly, sadly and disappointingly, 22 Canadians are dying every day from opioid overdoses.

As I said, we may differ on how this should be tackled. That being said, we do know that resources need to be given to help with things such as prevention. How do we help ensure that future generations of Canadians do not suffer with substance use disorder the way that we are seeing in our country now? We still also believe in this country that there needs to be disruption of those who deal drugs and profit from the suffering of others. That has to be an important part of it and, of course, recovery has to be a part of it, as well as what quality, meaningful recovery looks like. We can argue about that, but we need to make progress with respect to recovery in this country, especially for those who want to choose to attend recovery programs, get their lives back in a meaningful fashion and mend those relationships that have become very difficult to mend.

People need vocational training. They need housing. They need support. We all know that, and it does not matter from which side of the House one is arguing that point. This is a huge problem. In spite of the fact that we know there are differences in how we want to approach it, we have seen compassionate testimony on the health

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committee. I know, by virtue of the fact that all of us agreed to extend the study on opioids in Canada, that we know that this is a significant problem for many Canadians.

Therefore, we turn our attention to unmet mental health needs. A third of Canadians have unmet mental health needs. That is a significant number of people, and we know that currently 20% of Canadians are suffering with mental health issues. When we do the math, based on 40 million Canadians, that is quite simply eight million Canadians. This is a significant problem in our country, and we need to devote some resources to fixing that problem.

Bill C-323 is not a cure-all. It is not a panacea. It does not mean that, if passed in the House, suddenly all of the mental health issues are going to be gone for Canadians. Boy, I wish I had that opportunity.

For people who are seeking help and are paying out of their pocket, Bill C-323 would help. The bill would mean that, as a country, we would not charge them GST and HST on psychotherapy, counselling therapy and registered massage therapy services. If the House sees fit to, hopefully, pass the amendment and ensure that this bill is significantly different, it would be sent to the finance committee, since it deals with taxes and not to the health committee. The health committee does not want us to deal with money there, but just other important health-related issues.

I will leave it at that. Hopefully, Canadians now have a good understanding of the compassion and concern that we on this side of the House, shared with our NDP and Liberal colleagues, have for Canadians who are suffering out there, and that we see fit to help alleviate that suffering in some way, shape or form, today, here in the House.

• (1345)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the years we have seen a substantial change in attitudes toward mental health in a positive way, where we have seen governments and people, in general, recognize that mental health is, in fact, health and should be a part of having a healthy body. A part of a healthy body is a healthy mind.

Could I get the member's take on that particular issue?

• (1350)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, often in the House, we have a lot of back and forth. Some days one wishes it were different. Today it will be different. I will tell the member opposite that I agree with him wholeheartedly, with respect to the fact that mental health and physical health go hand in hand. I think that, as I said during my comments, Canadians also understand that clearly, that the difficulties one may have if one is suffering with things like anxiety and depression certainly impact one's ability to have a healthy lifestyle as well, and vice versa. We know that the interconnection is quite significant.

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For instance, if one is diagnosed with diabetes, that often creates a significant amount of anxiety and distress for people as well, as do many other diagnoses, cancer or heart disease, etc. They are incredibly linked together, that biopsychosocial model, which is why we often also talk about the need for appropriate housing. Health care services go hand in hand. We know that there is that incredible link. We wish we could ensure that there was not, but my colleague is absolutely right. There is that incredible connection of mental health and physical health.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague on his bill. Whether it passes or not, it will be a victory because it will have been incorporated into Bill C-59.

I wanted to put forward an amendment in the House to ensure that Quebec's specificity and the expertise that Quebec has developed, particularly in the fields of psychoeducation and sexology, would be recognized in this bill. Unfortunately, that was not possible.

Does my colleague believe that these professions should also be exempt from taxes and that, when it comes time to interpret Bill C-59 or his bill, these professions should be included and considered as part of the wording of his bill?

[*English*]

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, once again, I would suggest to Canadians out there that our sexual health, of course, is an important part of who we are as people. There is no doubt about that. There are some nuances, I think, that we need to be mindful of, not from a health perspective but from a perspective of taxation. Are we then meandering a bit into the difficulties with professions that are not registered or self-regulated professions? I think that those are the things we need to be careful of.

I apologize to my colleague that I do not have that knowledge at the current time, for me to comment on it and say that they should be included. From a physical health, mental health and sexual health perspective, of course, that makes perfect sense. That is all part of being a human being. We are all thankful for that.

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his advocacy on this. I also want to give thanks to the member for London—Fanshawe, who put forward this bill first and has been a strong advocate for mental health professionals and those seeking mental health. I also want to share a quick story from a counsellor I spoke to. She talked about what this would mean and how she has been trying to make sure that mental health services are accessible to her patients and that she does not want to pass along these costs.

Can the member speak about how we need to work to ensure that mental health is accessible to all?

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we cannot underscore the need for mental health care and the rapidity with which Canadians need to access it. I just want to highlight, as I said originally, that when somebody makes a decision to say that their mental health is suffering, it has been, most often, a long and difficult decision for them to come to that realization. We as a society need to be

mindful of that decision and ensure that timely access to health care is available.

I do believe that this is exactly what Canadians have an expectation to have happen to them.

• (1355)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to approach this bill in a couple of ways.

First, to deal specifically with Bill C-323 and the issue of mental health, and to pick up on the point I put forward to the member in the form of a question. Over the years, we have seen a substantial change in attitude towards the issue of mental health.

Back in late 1980s, I can recall a wonderful doctor. He was my favourite doctor. Every so often I talk to him, and I still call him my favourite doctor. Dr. Gulzar Cheema was a health care critic back in the day, in the late 1980s. I would like to think that he was one of the pioneers in trying to raise the importance of mental health. He worked very closely with Sharon Carstairs, the leader of the Liberal Party at the time, where there was a great deal of emphasis on this.

One thing that he had advocated for was the need to recognize mental health to the degree that the province should actually establish a mental health department. That was to amplify just how important mental health is to our health care system. He went on to run as an MLA in British Columbia and was elected. That is where the first mental health department was actually established, from what I understand. I could be corrected on that, but I believe it was one of them, if not the first one at the provincial level.

Fast forward to today, and we have a government that has recognized the importance of mental health, from a department perspective. The member made reference to a substantial commitment of literally hundreds of millions, going into billions, of dollars that, as a government, we have not only talked about but also put into place. We are talking about somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$5 billion over a set period of time to encourage provinces to look at ways in which we could ultimately see better mental health care services.

In fact, the creation of the youth mental health fund can be found in the most recent federal budget. It is substantial fund of money, somewhere in the neighbourhood of approximately \$500 million. Again, it is there to support young people and organizations and to assist in dealing with the important issue of mental health.

The budgetary measure, a way in which we can contribute to mental health, is something we have been very aggressive on. I have often made reference to the \$200-billion investment in health care that we have announced for the next 10 years. When we break down the investment, a considerable percentage of that is going to go towards the issue of mental health, either directly or indirectly. I believe that speaks volumes in terms of the way the national government can ensure that we have some form of standards and can encourage all the different provinces and territories, in our own way, to see more delivery of mental health care services.



It is one thing that I think distinguishes us from the Bloc and the Conservative Party. They do not see the benefits of the national party playing a stronger role in health care, in terms of the Canada Health Act and the type of programming we can put in place. It would ensure that, no matter where Canadians live, whether it is in British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia or anywhere in between, or up north in the Yukon, there would be programs throughout our different communities. That is really important.

• (1400)

It is one of the differences between the political parties here today.

When we think of Bill C-323, we think of psychotherapy and mental health counselling, and the fine work these people perform day in and day out in addressing such an important issue. We need to provide direct support to them and one of the ways we can do that is by exempting them from having to pay GST and HST.

I am grateful that the member recognized that and brought it forward in the form of a private member's bill, even though, as the member made reference to, it was incorporated into the fall economic statement. I am not going to get into what came first, the chicken versus the egg, in regard to this issue. However, I can say both sides agree that it is the right thing to do.

To that end, I am grateful because we do know that one of two things will happen. Either Bill C-59 will pass, and the psychotherapy and mental health counselling exemption for the GST and HST will take place, or the member across the way and I will be knocking on doors, because Bill C-59 is a confidence vote. That means it will be passing.

In that sense, it is a good thing. It is only a question of time. We might differ a bit in terms of the timing because there are a number of initiatives within Bill C-59, and if we dig a bit deeper than just the number of the bill, it is the fall economic statement. That is a piece of legislation that we were hoping to pass long ago.

One of the problems with having a substantive legislative agenda, as we do as a government in trying to support Canadians, is that time is a scarce commodity on the floor of the House. As a result, we are not necessarily able to pass as much legislation as we would like in the limited amount of time we have. It does not take too much to throw things off, unfortunately. Hopefully, Bill C-59 will pass relatively shortly through the Senate. When that happens, the psychotherapy and mental health counselling exemption will take effect. I think members on all sides of the House would recognize that as a good thing. No one owns a good idea. Let us just appreciate it for what it is worth.

There was another area I wanted to make reference to, and I wanted to talk about it in the spirit of what has been proposed. The government, along with the opposition, have been also talking about the 988 suicide crisis line. It has been an initiative that both the official opposition and the government have been very supportive of. As a result, we now have that suicide crisis line in place. I think by having that 988 number today, it does make a very positive impact, both directly and indirectly. The primary purpose for having the line is for those who will be using it, and that is stating the

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obvious. There is also a great deal of benefit because it raises the importance of mental health issues.

That is where I will do the full circle in terms of my comments today on the legislation that we are talking about. Mental health is a part of good health. It is not just being in a hospital with a broken arm. Mental and physical health are equally important.

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to commend the member for Cumberland—Colchester on his bill. I had the chance to mention this earlier, but I think that mental health is an important issue. It is something we do not talk about enough. It is often taboo. The purpose of this bill is to give a little help to those who use mental health services by removing the goods and services tax from these services. This will help them out budget-wise. Some are in a good financial positions, but there are others whose finances are very tight.

What is more, there is an injustice here. I will share a few examples. There is a long list of professionals who offer services that are tax-free: optometrists, chiropractors, physiotherapists, podiatrists, osteopaths, audiologists, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, midwives, dieticians, acupuncturists and naturopaths. However, a psychoeducator or a sexologist has to charge tax. That is discrimination.

That is also problematic because we know that the pandemic and other things have put a major strain on people's mental health. In a way, society has grown or has at least become more aware of the fact that mental health is sometimes fragile. It is obvious that, when people are put in lockdown, they miss having social interaction, and that can impact their mental health, which can trigger issues.

The situation has not necessarily improved since the pandemic. There has been inflation and rising interest rates. That means that households are really struggling financially, which can also have an impact on everything else. Traditional services, such as those of a psychologist, are already tax-free, but the others are not.

However, there is a shortage of psychologists and professionals offering mental health services. We cannot rely solely on psychologists, who are overworked. There are other professionals who can meet these needs. There are social workers, psychoeducators and sexologists who can help. Why not enable these professionals to receive the same benefits as the others, given that they provide the same services?

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I would also like to point out that Bill C-323, which we are debating at the moment, is interesting, even if, at the end of the day, we may not get to vote on it. It does, however, deserve credit for having triggered a debate. In a way, the bill forced the government to realize that this is a problem. The government included it in its economic update, in Bill C-59, which is currently being studied by the Senate. Since it is being studied by the Senate, we can assume that there is a good chance that it will be passed. Since Bill C-59 is likely to pass, Bill C-323 will lapse.

In any case, I took the initiative yesterday to submit an amendment to the Clerk's office. Unfortunately, it will not be voted on. The purpose of my amendment was to add a clarification to Bill C-323. Let me explain. The amendment would have clarified that guidance counsellors, psychoeducators, criminologists, sexologists and couples and family therapists would indeed be included among the professions covered by this bill.

I submitted this amendment because the bill, which the government copied word for word, is vague. If we examine the exact words used in the bill, we see that psychotherapy and mental health counselling are the proposed additions. Since these are not professions per se, but services, we do not know how will this ultimately be interpreted by the people responsible for enforcing the legislation. In parliamentary committee, my colleague from Joliette asked certain officials some questions. He asked how Bill C-323 would work in practical terms. However, this was more in the context of the study of Bill C-59.

• (1410)

I say this because Bill C-323 has been pushed through somewhat quickly, since it was Bill C-59 that was studied in committee. The response was that those professions would be considered. In theory, they should therefore be among the professions that will be exempt, especially since they are already eligible for the tax credit in Quebec. Not only are they eligible for the tax credit in Quebec, but they are also regulated professions.

Psychoeducation, unlike psychology, is not aimed at making a diagnosis. Other people can practise it, including guidance counsellors, criminologists, occupational therapists, nurses, psychoeducators, sexologists and social workers. These are all people who can practise psychoeducation if they have received the necessary training, completed the internships and hold a licence from the Ordre des psychologues du Québec. This involves roughly 765 hours of university courses, 600 hours of practical training and a master's degree in mental health. Not just anyone can practise this. These are serious people who have completed the necessary studies. They are professionals who are fully qualified to do this work.

To us, there was still some uncertainty. The fact that a public servant tells us that they should be covered is not a strong guarantee. What is more, some psychoeducators contacted us to say that the Parliamentary Budget Officer's analysis of the changes to the excise tax used occupation code 621330, "Offices of mental health practitioners". It would seem that is not exactly the same code that psychoeducators use. Since it is not the same code, the psychoeducators wondered if that meant they would be excluded, since the Parliamentary Budget Officer's analysis did not specifically talk about their profession. Is there a mistake here? I would like to know.

We wanted to be sure that these people did not slip through the cracks. We wanted to be sure that everyone was covered, that everyone could benefit from not having to charge these taxes for services that are essential, that people need. I proposed the amendment, but unfortunately it was deemed out of order. I am not necessarily discouraged. I am disappointed, obviously, but I do hope that at the end of the day, the interpretation will go our way. If we could have at least ended the uncertainty, that would have already been something.

That is why I wanted to point it out in my speech today. I think it is important for every profession where people do serious, professional work to be recognized. I understand that psychoeducation and sexology are two professions that are not as common in English Canada as they are in Quebec. That is because Quebec is ahead of the curve. Quebec launched the first such programs and also ensured that the profession is regulated, which is not necessarily the case in the rest of Canada.

I recognize that it can sometimes create legal issues when a legal framework is set up at the federal level but will not be exactly the same in Quebec. Credits and subsidies will be recognized but will not be eligible in Quebec. In fact, if there is one reason why we would like Quebec to be independent, it is so that there are no more problems, no more being penalized by the federal government every time Quebec innovates. We know our stuff. There are many other areas where Quebec is at the forefront and ahead of the curve in Canada. Just think of child care. Quebec is at the forefront of all sorts of issues compared to Canada. Unfortunately, we are still being somewhat held back by the federal government.

All that being said, I want to once again commend the work of the member for Cumberland—Colchester and the work of all members of the House. Everyone seems to have realized how important it is to support mental health care.

*Private Members' Business*

In closing, I would like to add that the federal government's approach is predatory. We know that the federal government likes to give lectures and to tell Quebec how to manage its jurisdictions, but we also know that it is making cuts to health care funding. One of the consequences of those cuts is that Quebec sometimes does not have the money to hire the staff it needs to provide the services that people need. I hope that the federal government will hear that. I hope that, one day, the federal government will finally listen to the needs of Quebec and increase health transfers, at least before Quebec becomes independent. I especially hope that, when it comes time to implement Bill C-59 or Bill C-323, if it is passed, the federal government will have listened to the opinions of professionals in Quebec and will understand the reality in Quebec, which can be a bit different from the reality in the rest of Canada, so that these professionals will not be penalized compared to other professionals and so that they can provide quality services to Quebecers.

• (1415)

[*English*]

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I speak today in support of the bill in front of us. It is an important bill that would allow for mental health services to be more affordable in the sense they would be exempt from a point of sales tax.

I want to acknowledge the important work leading up to this point, not just by the member who put this bill forward, but also by my colleague, the MP for London—Fanshawe, who had a bill that touched on this issue some time ago and worked closely with many advocates and stakeholders across the country.

I also want to acknowledge the advocacy of my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, who has been a steadfast champion for mental health supports and has been clear that Canada needs to do much better when it comes to mental health and ensuring that Canadians have the mental health supports they need.

We know that physical health services, such as optometry, chiropractic and physiotherapy services are already exempted from federal sales tax. Eliminating federal sales tax from psychotherapy and mental health services would be a step forward toward parity when it comes to mental and physical health. We know that the tax exemption would reduce the cost of these services, directly increasing access to them.

However, we also know that the tax exemption would not help Canadians who cannot afford these services in the first place. More importantly, it would not increase the availability of these services, which is far below the existing need. We believe, in the NDP, that Canadians deserve timely access to a full range of mental health treatments and services regardless of their ability to pay. Mental health care is not included in Canada's universal health care system, and Canadians are prevented from accessing mental health services because of long waits and unaffordable bills.

We in the NDP have been pushing for parity between mental and physical health with free access to mental health treatments and have also tabled a similar bill to remove GST from psychotherapy, which is again the work of my colleague, the MP for London—Fanshawe. While this bill does not go far enough in removing barriers to mental health care, it is one step in the right direction. Eliminating

federal sales tax for mental health services would reduce their cost and increase access.

I have spoken about the importance of this bill and that it is one step, but clearly we in the NDP believe that there is a role for the federal government to go much further. We know that there is a mental health crisis in our country today. According to a report by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, almost 35% of respondents reported moderate to severe mental health concerns. Fewer than one in three people with current mental health concerns are accessing mental health services. We know that key barriers to accessing these services include financial constraints and long waiting lists. We have seen that counselling is the most unmet need of Canadians who are seeking help with mental health. We also know that the mental health concerns of Canadians have worsened throughout this pandemic.

Let us be clear that the reality of the mental health crisis right now, in many cases, did not just happen. We know that the current reality that so many Canadians face contributes to the mental health crisis. We can see contributing factors, like the increased cost of living.

We in the NDP, just a few days ago, put forward a motion calling on the federal government to take bold action to reduce the cost of groceries. We know that the inaffordability across our country is pushing more Canadians toward food banks, pushing more Canadians into food insecurity. This contributes to the mental health crisis.

We know that the lack of affordable housing contributes to the mental health crisis. Here, in northern Canada, where we have a lack of affordable housing, we know that many people are struggling. They are often floating from one home to another, trying to stay with relatives, to make things work, and in many cases, end up homeless because of the lack of affordable housing in communities across the country.

We also know how the lack of good jobs contributes to mental health. A number of years ago, I was the first member of Parliament to talk about the rise in precarious work, particularly in my generation. We know that many young people increasingly face precarious work, contract work or temporary work and not the kind of permanent, stable work that many in our parents' generation had. We know that means a lack of benefits, a lack of pension and a lack of stability, which also contribute to mental health.

*Private Members' Business*

● (1420)

However, perhaps nowhere is the way in which the federal government has neglected the challenges people face more evident than in how the mental health crisis is reflected in first nations, including the first nations I have the privilege of representing. In Manitoba, many first nations have declared states of emergencies, particularly around mental health, as well in reference to the opioid crisis, very much making it clear that there is a lack of mental health supports in first nations and in indigenous and northern communities across our region.

According to the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, compared with other children in Manitoba, first nations children in Manitoba had a higher prevalence of mental health illness and disorders. We know hospitalization rates for suicide attempts were twice as high for on-reserve than off-reserve first nations. When the comparison cohort was restricted to only other children in low-income areas, a higher prevalence of almost all disorders remained for first nations children.

This did not just happen. This is because of Canada's history of colonization. This is because of the persistence of intergenerational trauma, whether it be through residential schools, the child welfare system or the ongoing institutional racism that exists in our country. It is also because of poverty. Nowhere is the housing crisis more acute than on first nations here in our country. Here in our region, many first nations face third world living conditions when it comes to housing.

In fact, one first nation in our region, St. Theresa Point, has taken a leading role in a class action lawsuit against the federal government because of what the housing crisis is doing to the community. There is a waiting list of 700 families waiting for a home.

I point to the cuts made by the Paul Martin government in the nineties when it came to housing for first nations, and we know the government of Stephen Harper and the current Liberal government have done very little to invest in first nations housing.

We also know how the enforced isolation of first nations contributes to the mental health crisis. I think of first nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, who are less able to rely on the winter roads because of climate change, and who have made it clear that having access to all-weather roads will not just make life more affordable and allow people to get out and access the services that they need, but that it would also contribute to better mental health.

I will never forget former chief George Kemp from Berens River, who said that when the all-weather road was built into his first nation a few years ago, because of the work of the NDP government at the time here provincially and the work of his first nation, one of the most noticeable impacts of that road was the fact there has not been a suicide since that road went in. This is a first nation that dealt with suicides over the years.

I also know that the lack of recreation on first nations, such as Cross Lake and others, also contributes to the mental health crisis. I will never forget speaking with Amber, a young leader from Cross Lake, who, after friends of hers took their own lives and others tried to take their own lives, said that they need a safe place for them to go. She said that they need mental health supports, but they

also need a drop-in centre. Amber said that they need recreation opportunities for them to come together in a good way.

My message is that, while we do support this bill, it is clear the federal government has a lot of work to do to be able to deal with the mental health crisis on first nations, to be able to deal with the mental health crisis that so many Canadians face. The federal government has a clear role to play, and we in the NDP will continue to fight for the people we represent. It is clear that first nations, Canadians, deserve better when it comes to their mental health.

● (1425)

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to my hon. colleague from Cumberland—Colchester's bill, Bill C-323. In truth, I wish I had another hour to speak to this because I do not believe that we do it justice when we talk a bit about this every so often. However, I will agree with our hon. colleague from Winnipeg North that we have taken significant steps toward combatting mental health and mental illness in our country. Sadly, there are still far too many barriers for those struggling or suffering silently in the shadows.

It has been said before, and I will say it again. As I sat here today and listened to our hon. colleague talk, I reflected on just how many people we have lost to suicide in my family alone or in the House. The House has even been affected by suicide. In the last debate, I thought about young Carson Cleland, who was 12 years of age, in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George. It was 12 hours after the first point of contact with an online predator that he took his own life. I think about my best friend when I was 14. His death has fuelled me, at every step of the way, to do whatever we can so that families do not have the same experience.

That is why I championed and pushed for Canada to adopt 988, a simple three-digit suicide hotline that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Six months after being launched, over 200,000 Canadians have accessed it, either by call or by text. In April alone, 25,000 Canadians have either called or texted 988. It speaks to the fact that we are failing Canadians when it comes to mental health and mental illness. We need to do more. It is not enough just to talk about it. We need to do whatever we can to remove any barriers for those seeking help.

Eleven Canadians die by suicide each and every day. If that statistic is not staggering enough, a further 200 Canadians will attempt suicide each and every day. That is 73,000 Canadians. I get emotional when I talk about it because I believe that we can do more. Treatment for mental health and mental illness is not one-size-fits-all. There has been some great debate in the House today, whether with this reading or with previous readings of this bill, we need to do more, and a great first step, with respect to Canadians seeking treatment, would be to remove the GST and the HST. Passing Bill C-323 would be a great first step in helping reduce the cost of mental health services.

I could stand up here forever and talk about this, but sadly, my time is being cut short. With that, I would be remiss if I did not mention massage therapy, which poses a significant cost for the average Canadian. It has been proven to have incredibly beneficial impacts on Canadians' mental health.

*Private Members' Business*

Therefore, I move:

That Bill C-323, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (mental health services), be not now read a third time but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Finance for the purpose of reconsidering Clause 1 with the view to amend the clause so as to include massage therapy among the health services to be exempt from the Goods and Services Tax, and the Committee be invited to consider reporting the bill back to the House within 15 sitting days following the adoption of this order.

● (1430)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The amendment is in order.

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

It being 2:31 p.m., the House now stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:31 p.m.)

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