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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 19, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[English]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House resumed from October 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-83, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here to speak to this bill. Over the last couple of days, I have heard a number of speakers in the House who have had varying and interesting opinions with respect to this bill. I think it is safe to say that a lot of work and extensive consultation went into getting to where we are with Bill C-83 at this time.

I want to start by congratulating the people who work in our correctional centres across this country. Many of them I have had the opportunity to meet at many different institutions, and some of them I know personally, so I know that their work in our institutions is often not valued in the way it should be. I really believe that the work they do is exceptional and in the best interests of ensuring safety for all who are in our institutions, including themselves.

A correctional institution is a unique environment. I believe that all Canadians realize that. They also realize that it needs to be controlled and managed effectively. Doing so in the best interests of the people who work there, the inmates and, ultimately, public safety is going to be truly important and a key to success.

When inmates are at risk of causing harm to themselves or others, it really puts our correctional institutions to the test in handling those risks and challenges and mitigating any harm that could come. Correctional staff are tasked every day with making sure that everyone is safe. They need to factor in physical and mental health concerns and consider inmates' correctional plans. High-risk inmates can pose serious management challenges, and in all cases, safety is paramount.

Today we have a new opportunity to move forward with a bold new approach to these challenges. Bill C-83 would eliminate the use of segregation in the Canadian federal corrections system. In its place, the bill would create what are called structured intervention units, or SIUs. SIUs would provide an appropriate living environment for inmates who could not be maintained in the mainstream inmate population for security or other reasons. An inmate could be transferred to an SIU only if the commissioner or delegated authority was satisfied that there was no other reasonable alternative and that the inmate's stay there would end as soon as it possibly could.

The SIUs would provide inmates with the opportunity for meaningful human contact through programs. They would allow for interventions and services tailored to respond to their specific needs and risks. We have already heard from many of my colleagues about some of the specific needs that are currently not being met and that are causing unsafe and harmful practices.

Structured interventions would address the underlying behaviour that led to an inmate's placement in an SIU. Correctional programming would continue. I think it is important that people understand that.

During their time in an SIU, inmates would have an opportunity to spend a maximum of four hours a day outside their cells. That is double the number of hours in the current segregation system.

As the bill stipulates, an inmate's stay would be subject to ongoing monitoring, including monitoring of their health while in a structured unit. A registered health care professional would visit the inmate in an SIU at least once every day.

These are welcome changes that would make correctional institutions safer and enhance the safety of Canadian communities.

• (1005)

I should have said at the outset that I will be splitting my time with the member for London North Centre.

Government Orders

As I said, a registered health care professional would visit the inmate at least once every day. This is necessary because of the health care needs of certain incarcerated individuals. However, it is important to say that this bill would include additional measures that would strengthen our corrections system. It would establish a patient advocacy service to ensure that inmates understand their rights and get the medical care they need. This would not only address the concerns raised at the inquest into the death of Ashley Smith, who was in segregation at the time, but would address calls from the Office of the Correctional Investigator.

Providing health care in a correctional institution is a challenging job. It requires a unique skill set that can make a real difference in improving living conditions within a correctional institution and in contributing to better safety. The bill would affirm the obligation of the service to support these health care professionals in maintaining their autonomy and clinical independence.

The service would also have an obligation to ensure that systemic and background factors unique to indigenous offenders were considered in all correctional decision-making. For the first time, that obligation would be enshrined in law as a guiding principle. That could mean, for example, that if an indigenous offender was placed in an SIU, individual or small group interventions would be tailored to their particular needs. Under this model, resources such as elders, aboriginal liaison personnel and specifically trained parole officers would provide culturally appropriate and responsive interventions for indigenous offenders. This would support calls to action 30 and 36 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and it would advance key mandate commitments to address gaps in services for indigenous people and those with mental illness throughout the criminal justice system.

This focus on indigenous inmates would complement steps the government has taken to enhance indigenous communities and to invest in the rehabilitation and safe reintegration of indigenous people who have come into contact with the criminal justice system. In budget 2017, we allocated \$65.2 million over four years to address the overrepresentation of indigenous people in the criminal justice and correctional system. Of that money, \$10 million has been allocated to indigenous community corrections initiatives. Under this program, public safety support projects help previously incarcerated indigenous people reintegrate safely and productively into their communities.

As I close, I feel that it is helpful to look at this proposed legislation in a much larger context. Overall, Canada is a very safe country, but we must not take that for granted. Strengthening our correctional system is an ongoing process and one that requires our constant attention. Bill C-83 would take us further down that path.

Our government wants to help ensure that we not only hold guilty parties to account for illegal behaviour but that we also create a custodial environment that fosters rehabilitation. The goal is fewer repeat offenders, fewer victims and safer communities.

While there is much more work to do, Bill C-83 would bring us closer to where we need to be. I encourage all members to join me in supporting Bill C-83 and in supporting those Canadians who are asking for this reform and modernization of the correctional centre program.

• (1010)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if the government has actually costed out these changes. When I look at the departmental plan for Correctional Service Canada, I do not believe government members have read their own plan that the Public Safety Minister signed off on. It shows over five years an 8.8% cut in funding, including inflation, for correctional services. Further, the departmental plan produced by the government, and signed off by the public safety minister, calls for a reduction in the number of correctional services officers.

I am curious to know if the government has done its homework on what the cost is going to be. How does it justify that and balance it with the fact that it is calling for significant cuts to correctional services at the same time?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, investments we have made as a government over the last two years in correctional services are making a change within our system. We are a government that has really been focusing hard on rehabilitation. We have been focusing hard on providing alternate correctional services for those who require them, whether that be mental health services or other services, while incarcerated.

The goal of the Government of Canada is to ensure that we reduce the number of victims and also reduce the number of repeat offenders in the Canadian judicial system. By offering the programs we are proposing and making the amendments in the bill today, we will be keeping all Canadians safer.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indigenous women make up 2% of Canada's population but 38% of women in prison. Eighteen of the 94 calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were about justice reform. There has been virtually no progress on most of them, according to witnesses at the status of women committee.

The legal counsel for the Native Women's Association, who appeared before the status of women committee, described solitary confinement as "a particularly cruel practice for women with histories of trauma and abuse, another area in which indigenous women are overrepresented.... [They are] particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of isolation."

Bill C-83 does not seem to have a lot of friends who think that the government's actions are the right thing to do. Kim Pate says it would virtually eliminate "already inadequate limitations on its use." Ivan Zinger, the correctional investigator, says "[t]here's no procedural safeguard" in Bill C-83. The Elizabeth Fry Society says that this legislation would not meet its needs.

Could the member let me know which indigenous women say this is going to make their lives better, because it sure does not sound like it to us?

• (1015)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate it when members in the House continue to raise the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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Bill C-83 would address two of the specific calls to action, number 30 and number 36, in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This is being done right across government. We have responded to nearly three-quarters of the recommendations in that report. Some action has been taken on all those recommendation that could be actioned by government, but many of them are outside the government's purview, as members may know.

Bill C-83 would have a meaningful impact on indigenous people who have been incarcerated, especially those who suffer from mental illness and other health and addiction challenges. The bill is designed to reach out and provide them with the programs and services they need so that they do not continue to be repeat offenders.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of concerns.

The member mentioned in her speech that extensive consultations were done, but my understanding is that the government did not consult with the union of correctional officers, who certainly will be impacted.

In addition to that, I am concerned about the Liberal direction of making life easier for criminals, beginning with Bill C-51 and then Bill C-75, where penalties for very serious crimes, such as forcible confinement of a minor and terrorism, were dropped. The government has brought ISIS terrorists back and now is trying to make life easier for criminals.

Why are the Liberals doing that as a priority?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to note that the goal of this bill and the other actions that the Government of Canada has taken is to ensure that we can reduce crime in Canada and reduce repeat crime in this country. We can continue to place people for minor offences in the correctional centres without proper programs or treatment and we have seen what happens from that process. They become repeat offenders.

I remember visiting, about a year or so ago, a correctional centre in my own riding, where I talked to a number of individuals who were there for perhaps theft. It might have started out that way, but through breaches of probation and a lack of services for addiction and mental health care, they became repeat offenders who were incarcerated for longer periods of time.

It is our goal as Canadians to get people out of the system, to get them rehabilitated and to help them with mental health and addictions issues that often lead to petty crime.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today in support of Bill C-83. Among other measures, the bill proposes to eliminate segregation from federal correctional institutions, and would do it in a way that protects the security of correctional institutions.

The reality of any correctional environment is that certain inmates at certain times will need to be separated from the rest of the inmate population. Some inmates pose safety risks. Bill C-83 introduces a new approach to manage those risks. This new approach would ensure the safety and security of staff, the general offender population and the inmate who needs to be managed separately

from the mainstream population. However, it would also help ensure the safety of our communities, because inmates would be able to continue the rehabilitative programming that is so crucial to their eventual successful reintegration into society as law-abiding citizens. This is a transformational change for a correctional system, and one that comes in the midst of a debate over segregation, an ongoing one we have had as a society in Canada.

Correctional Service Canada is responsible for managing the lives of more than 14,000 inmates in its custody. Correctional staff do a tough job in a difficult environment. We have to ensure they can do so safely, and that they have the tools to effectively rehabilitate offenders. Canada is incredibly fortunate to have an independent watchdog and ombudsman, the Office of the Correctional Investigator, to oversee and report on the operations of our system. From time to time, the Auditor General of Canada also investigates and identifies issues of concern within the system. In recent years, the issue of inmate segregation has come under its microscope. The Office of the Correctional Investigator and the Auditor General have raised concerns about the effects of segregation, particularly on inmates with mental health needs.

Under Bill C-83, segregation would be eliminated altogether from the federal correctional system. In its place, the government is proposing to create structured intervention units, or SIUs, to manage inmates whose behaviour poses a safety risk that cannot be managed within the mainstream inmate population. The key, as I noted earlier, is that although they would be separated from the mainstream inmate population, inmates in an SIU would maintain their access to rehabilitative programming and interventions. Upon placement in an SIU, their correctional plan would be updated. This would be done to ensure they receive the most effective programs at the appropriate time while they are in the unit. Also, it is meant to prepare them for reintegration into the mainstream inmate population. They would also spend at least four hours a day outside of their cell and have at least two hours a day of meaningful human contact interaction. Under the current segregation system inmates only get two hours out of the cell and interaction with people is extremely limited.

In addition to all of this, inmates in an SIU would be visited by a registered health care professional at least once a day. That health care professional could recommend changes to the conditions of confinement, or transfer back to the general population. As well, for the first time ever, the health care professional's autonomy and clinical independence within a correctional facility would be enshrined in law.

The correctional service would also have the obligation to provide patient advocacy services to inmates at designated institutions to help them better understand and exercise their rights, and ensure they get the medical care they need. As hon. members may recall, that was one of the recommendations of the inquest into the tragic death of Ashley Smith.

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These proposed reforms build on recent investments in mental health care. Budget 2017, for example, invested \$57.8 million over five years, and \$13.6 million per year thereafter, to expand mental health care capacity for all inmates in federal correctional facilities. Budget 2018 invested another \$20.3 million over five years, and \$5.5 million per year thereafter, to support the mental health needs of federal inmates, particularly women offenders.

However, segregation and mental health are not the only challenges facing our correctional system. Another major and very much related concern is the overrepresentation of indigenous inmates in federal custody. Indigenous individuals currently make up roughly 4% of Canada's population, but they account for more than a quarter of federal inmates. That is unacceptable.

• (1020)

To help address this discrepancy and help those who have been incarcerated to heal, rehabilitate and reintegrate into society, budget 2017 invested \$65.2 million over five years and \$10.9 million per year thereafter. Bill C-83 would enshrine, again not in regulation but in law, that systemic and background factors unique to indigenous inmates would be considered in all correctional decision-making. This, indeed, flows from the Supreme Court's Gladue decision in 1999, nearly 20 years ago.

The number of inmates in segregation has been trending downward for several years. There were, for example, 780 inmates in segregation as recently as April of 2014. However, by March of 2018, that number had dropped to 340, a decrease of more than 50%. This legislation would put an end to this practice once and for all. It would replace it with a far better and more effective approach.

SIUs would protect staff and inmates from offenders who exhibit particularly disruptive and dangerous behaviour and ensure that inmates separated from the general population can continue with their treatment and rehabilitative programs. Programs like these prepare inmates for reintegration as law-abiding members of a community, the Canadian community, at the end of their sentences. In other words, they are essential to public safety because almost all inmates will eventually be released from custody.

Bill C-83 would help make our correctional system stronger, more humane and more effective. It would mean better correctional outcomes for the most challenging and difficult-to-manage inmates. We have to focus on outcomes. With enhanced rehabilitation and reintegration support, I believe this would lead to a safer environment for those who work or are incarcerated inside of our institutions and fewer victims of repeat offenders outside. That is why I strongly support this important piece of legislation. It is also why I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

• (1025)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I asked the parliamentary secretary about how she reconciles the fact that there are going to be all of these added costs for the changes to Bill C-83, but at the same time their departmental plan shows, with inflation adjusted, an 8.8% cut to funding for correctional services, as well as a cut in staffing, her comment was that it is because it is the money the government invested in the first two years. The library of Canada produced a report for me that actually shows that in the first two of the Liberal government, it has

actually cut funding to CSC from the Harper era and then going forward for the next five years, is going to cut a further 8.8%.

Perhaps my colleague could answer, where the parliamentary secretary refused to or did not know the information for, what the added costs are with Bill C-83, how the government is going to achieve these things when it is cutting a further 8.8% from current funding on top of the funding it cut from the Conservative era to Correctional Service Canada.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, specific details relating to budgetary costs of Bill C-83 and the changes that it will bring about I believe will be announced soon, as my colleague knows.

I take great interest, however, in his focus on the Conservative era in office, the most recent reign of conservatism in Canada at the federal level. I have a lot of respect for my colleagues across the way, but I cannot help but notice them, time and again, draping themselves in the flag not only of Canada but of law and order, when actually, if we review the record of the Harper government, we see cuts to the RCMP, we see cuts to the CBSA, key legal agencies enforcing law and order in Canada.

We have listened to the folks in corrections. I would ask the hon. member to go back and take a look at what some key folks in corrections have said about this particular bill and the changes it would bring about. It focuses on rehabilitation, reintegration and strengthening the system and making it more effective. That is what Bill C-83 would do.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are claims by the Liberal government that we are going to have a lot more provisions to deal with indigenous offenders. Of course, we know that a huge percentage of offenders are indigenous, particularly the women.

I wish to again raise the case of Edward Christopher Snowshoe from the Northwest Territories, who was confined to a cell the size apparently of a Volkswagen Beetle. He was in solitary for 162 days. At one point, he asked for additional medical assistance and revealed he was suicidal. He, in fact, had attempted suicide several times. He was sent to an aboriginal healing centre, but he asked to leave because the healing centre had nothing to do with his indigenous beliefs. He was from the Northwest Territories. We need to recognize that there are over 300 first nations.

What kinds of provision is the government going to take to put in additional resources so that there are provisions for support to all of the indigenous people who are imprisoned?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member quite rightly raises the issue of indigenous incarceration. I had the honour of serving on the public safety and national security committee last year, which studied that very issue. I am sure she is aware of this, but I would ask the hon. member to again review the sections in the proposed bill, Bill C-83, that focus on bringing to life what was called for in the landmark decision of the Supreme Court, the Gladue decision of 1999, almost 20 years ago.

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This is an incredible step forward, a very positive step forward for all those Canadians concerned about indigenous incarceration, about which we have to do more. This is not the end of the line; this is a beginning. It is a new opening. In that light, the bill offers an entirely new and different approach, a more effective approach, to the issue of segregation. I think we will see more positive results as a result of the bill going through.

● (1030)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I would like to inform the House that we have had five hours of debate on this motion in the first round. Consequently, the maximum time allocated for all subsequent interventions shall be 10 minutes for speeches and five minutes for questions and comments.

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Yellowhead.

[English]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to Bill C-83 because I am concerned that the changes it would make may put in jeopardy the safety of our institutional staff and that of the inmates who are under our care and control.

I was confused when the government introduced the bill.

In February of this year, the government appealed a ruling by the B.C. Supreme Court that struck down Canada's law on indefinite solitary confinement, arguing that it needed clarity on the decision. Therefore, why is the government introducing legislation before receiving that clarity? Why are the Liberals fighting the court decision to strike down solitary confinement, while at the same time introducing legislation to do just that? Are they just changing the words and calling it a structural intervention unit?

I have a federal prison in my riding of Yellowhead, the Grande Cache Institution. It is a medium-security institution with approximately 300 employees and 240 offenders. I have a lot of respect for my constituents who work there. Working for Correctional Service Canada often means working with violent offenders. Proposed section 36 of the new act will deal with the obligations of service and the rights of prisoners in structural intervention areas. It states:

...The Service shall provide an inmate in a structured intervention unit

- (a) an opportunity to spend a minimum of four hours a day outside the inmate's cell; and
- (b) an opportunity to interact, for a minimum of two hours a day, with others, through activities including, but not limited to,
 - (i) programs, interventions and services...
 - (ii) leisure time.

Proposed section 37 of the new act states that proposed section 36 does not apply if the inmate refuses or the inmate "does not comply with...instructions to ensure their safety or that of any other person or the security of the penitentiary."

As part of their job, employees are responsible for providing a safe, secure and positive environment for offenders, which is an essential element in helping offenders reintegrate into society. However, is the government fostering a safe and secure environment for our prison guards to work within these institutions?

Solitary confinement is a common safety measure many western countries take to protect guards from dangerous and volatile prisoners. I wonder if any of our front-line workers have been consulted on taking this tool away from them. Are we properly training our guards who deal with the most dangerous of offenders, offenders with possible mental conditions and psychological problems? Are these guards being given the necessary tools and knowledge to recognize, work with, protect and, for their own safety, help reintegrate these prisoners?

I am concerned that the bill does not mention new training programs to assist prison guards in these changes or in the current programs. It is paramount that the guards dealing with the most dangerous of our offenders have the knowledge and expertise to deal with them. This is for everyone's protection and safety.

I have heard concerns from prison staff members that more training should be given to them when they are dealing with high-risk offenders, such as murderers, compared to someone serving six months for theft. We need to ensure they feel prepared and comfortable, instead of taking away the tools they use to manage inmates.

Instead of solitary confinement, the government would create structural intervention units, SIUs. Let us be fair: This is just white-washing with some finely tuned words.

Under the new SIU model, inmates who misbehave and cannot be safely managed in the mainstream population will get personal programs tailored to their own needs. Are we forgetting the protection and safety of other inmates and prison staff in order to meet the new guidelines as outlined under the SIU? The segregation of certain prisoners in some cases has been done to protect those persons from internal conflicts with other inmates because of their character or mental disposition. In other cases, it is done for legal reasons that could cause interference with an investigation that could lead to criminal charges or a charge relating to serious disciplinary offences within the institution.

Under the new act, prisoners segregated for their own safety may spend up to four hours outside their cells each day. This is where I am concerned. This will require more resources and will create longer periods for the chance of an incident to occur. The replacement of solitary confinement strips the ability of guards to use segregation for disciplinary purposes. This change will make prisons more dangerous for the guards as they deal with the worst and most volatile prisoners.

● (1035)

Because the guards are dealing with the most violent criminals and those who do not care to follow the prison rules, when an incident does occur, it is going to be a lot more serious and require more force. Why are we putting our front line workers at risk?

I am also concerned that these prisoners who are segregated for their own safety may demand equal opportunities under the new act. This may open up an opportunity for their safety to be jeopardized and also put the safety of our guards in question.

Government Orders

This is just another example of the Liberals going soft on criminals and showing indifference to everyone else. Once again, the Liberals are prioritizing the rights of Canada's most violent and dangerous criminals.

Let me remind everyone of Bill C-75, which proposes sweeping changes to the Criminal Code and reduces the penalties of crimes to fines. Through Bill C-75, the Liberals are reducing penalties for terrorism, gang members, prison breaches, human trafficking, and the list goes on and on. It is not a surprise to me that the Liberal government is now prioritizing the rights of convicted and violent criminals inside our prison system.

Another aspect of the bill that I find deeply concerning is the new provision that would allow the commissioner to sub-designate parts of institutions to be a different level of security. It reads:

The Commissioner may assign the security classification of “minimum security”, “medium security”, “maximum security” or “multi-level security”, or any other prescribed security classification, to each penitentiary or to any area in a penitentiary.

Theoretically, could the commissioner authorize that a room, say in a healing lodge, to be designated as maximum or medium security by adding an extra lock on the door? There needs to be clarification on whether this is to be used as a temporary measure or if this is a declaration that can be made indefinitely of an area. If so, what is the security protocol that would be put in place to change an “area” to a higher designation than the rest of the facility? Under what circumstances would it be used?

This provision will lead to more cases where higher security prisoners are allowed into lower security spaces, all based on technicalities. Why are we allowing prisoners who should be in maximum or medium-security facilities into lower designated facilities?

I agree with one part of the bill, and that is body scanners. Already in use in the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario, body scanners should be used to scan prisoners in federal institutions. The more effective we can be in our searches, the better. That means fewer drugs, weapons and other contraband entering our prison systems.

I wonder why the government decided to stop there, though. Why only scan prisoners? In 2014, the CBC broadcast an article on the statistics of contraband entering prisons. The data obtained by CBC showed that corrections seized almost 9,000 unauthorized and contraband items, up almost 2,000 from a few years earlier. That was an increase of 20%. The article noted:

CSC spokesman Jonathan Schofield said the spike is due to enhanced security measures brought in to stem the flow of drugs and other contraband into institutions, including increased searches, random urine tests, and tools such as metal detectors, X-rays, drug-detecting ion scanners and dogs.

Howard Sapers, the former correctional investigator of Canada, said that likely sources of contraband included other people coming in to the prison and sometimes even trusted personnel.

Maybe we should be using body scanners to scan everyone, not just the prisoners, entering our institutions. This will help ensure that everyone inside the institution, prisoners, staff and visitors, all have a safe and secure environment in which to live and work. There are different types of body scanners, some detect drugs, others detect

metal. We use them in our airports, and there is no reason we cannot use the most sophisticated equipment in our jail system.

I am not in favour of the recently announced needle exchange program and a good scanning system would eliminate the need for such a program.

We must remember that any legislation brought in that changes how we manage our prisons must take into consideration the safety of our government employees and the safety of other inmates within our institutions. This to me is paramount over catering to the needs of convicted criminals. We must remember they are there because they have committed crimes and are being punished for those crimes. Yes, they have rights to a certain extent, but our institutions are not summer camps or recreational retreats.

• (1040)

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, I sat on the status of women committee. We did a study on indigenous women in corrections. It is particularly challenging to hear the stories of intergenerational trauma and of incarcerated women who are struggling with generations of problems from growing up in difficult situations.

My colleague said that the only part of the bill he agreed with was the body scanners. I am having a bit of a challenge with that. A big part of the bill is the mental health supports that will be provided to inmates to ensure they are treated in a way that they can be rehabilitated and not be put back in the corrections system.

Would my hon. colleague like comment on why he does not agree with mental health supports?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, I never said I disagreed with providing mental health supports. I said that we need to spend more time and more resources training our personnel at the jails. I clearly stated this a number of times in my comments. Jail guards are concerned that they are not receiving the proper training to deal with people with different mental situations, different stress situations and different violent tendencies. We need to ensure that our guards have the best training so that they understand the situations they are being put into so they can keep themselves and the prisoners safe.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure I heard my hon. colleague say he agreed with one part of the bill. I know he said that corrections officers must have training. That is what the bill is doing; it is providing mental health supports. He says the one part of the bill he agrees with is the part dealing with scanning, but he is not saying he agrees that we need to provide for better health. That is what we need to do. That is what the bill is doing and that is what the member is overlooking when he made his comments.

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Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, I do not see anything in the bill about extra training or education for either the prisoners or the guards. My concern at the present time is the safety of the guards and prisoners in our institutions. The member can talk about programs for them, and those are good. We need to interact with and get prisoners back into civilization as law-abiding citizens, but it is the safety of our guards that I am concerned about and their proper training. There is no mention of that in Bill C-83.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to many prison guards, especially in the London area where we have the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre and where rampant issues are occurring. Many drugs are coming into the area.

The bill talks about scanning the inmates, but does the member think that goes far enough? We have to recognize that drugs are getting into the correctional facilities and find out how they do. Does the member believe that we should expand scanning so it goes beyond the inmates and perhaps to all visitors, and maybe even going one step further than that?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct that we need to go further. We need to scan all people coming into and out of our jail institutions to protect the guards and the inmates. We know that contraband is increasingly entering our prisons. We know it is being brought in by people and we have indications that it is being brought in by some guards. It is not going to hurt to scan all individuals coming into our institutions, as many high security institutions already do.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to support Bill C-83.

This bill represents a fundamental change in the way we approach corrections in Canada. It would end the practice of administrative segregation in all federal correctional facilities. What is more, it would implement a new correctional intervention model that would ensure that offenders are held to account while creating an environment conducive to their rehabilitation in the interests of everyone's safety.

This is the right thing to do and the safe thing to do. It would keep correctional staff and volunteers safe. It would keep inmates safe, and ultimately it would keep communities safe.

An effective corrections system with appropriate, safe and targeted interventions to deal with difficult, challenging or dangerous situations within a secure environment is in everyone's best interests. That is why Bill C-83 would eliminate segregation and establish structured intervention units or SIUs. These units would provide the necessary resources and expertise to address the safety risks of inmates in these challenging situations. They will be used to manage inmates who cannot be managed safely in the general population.

However, unlike segregation, inmates in these units will receive structured interventions and programming tailored to their specific needs to address behaviours that led to their SIU placement. They will have a minimum of four hours outside of their cell every day, double the number of hours in the current segregation system. They

will have a minimum of two hours of meaningful human interaction every day, including through intervention programs and services. Currently in the segregation system, inmates can spend entire days with virtually no meaningful human interaction.

Inmates in these units will also have daily visits from health care professionals, and because of the strong focus on intervention, inmates in an SIU would be able to continue working on rehabilitation and achieving their correctional plan objectives.

All of this will help facilitate their safe return into the mainstream inmate population as soon as possible. The result will be better correctional outcomes, fewer violent incidents and enhanced safety for inmates, staff, volunteers, institutions and, ultimately, the general public.

This bill is a significant step forward for the Canadian correctional system and builds on the good work already under way.

The government has provided almost \$80 million over five years through budget 2017 and budget 2018 to better address the mental health needs of inmates. That includes \$20.4 million in the last budget specifically for incarcerated women.

There was also about \$120 million in budget 2017 to support restorative justice approaches through the indigenous justice program and to help indigenous offenders safely reintegrate and find jobs after serving their sentences.

The goal is to make Canadian communities safer through effective rehabilitation in a secure correctional environment. This is the right policy direction, and it is in line with recent calls for the kind of transformation this bill lays out.

Two constitutional challenges in Ontario and British Columbia found the legislation governing administrative segregation contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There are also pending class actions and human rights complaints related to both the use of segregation and what constitutes appropriate mental health care.

In this regard, the bill would also strengthen health care governance. The bill would provide that Correctional Service Canada has the obligation to support health care professionals' autonomy and clinical independence.

• (1050)

It also creates a legal framework for a patient advocacy service to ensure that inmates get the medical care they need.

Government Orders

The bill also enshrines in law CSC's obligation to take into account systemic and background factors unique to indigenous offenders are considered when making offender management decisions.

The Minister of Justice and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness were given a mandate to address gaps in services to indigenous peoples and those with mental illness throughout the criminal justice system. The government is delivering on that promise.

The bill also includes additional measures to round out all of those elements. It also provides for less invasive alternatives to intrusive body searches. It places greater emphasis on the role of victims in the criminal justice system by allowing them greater access to audio recordings of parole hearings. This is a major improvement over the old system.

Thanks to Bill C-83, going forward, victims will have access to an audio recording of the offender's parole hearing, regardless of whether they attend the hearing.

As I said, this bill is all about safety. It focuses on improving interventions in order to better meet the needs of vulnerable inmates. We need to enhance the safety of our inmates, our correctional staff, our institutions and our communities.

This bill will transform Canada's correctional system in order to achieve those objectives.

Today I am proud to support this bill, and I encourage all members to join me in voting in favour of this historic piece of legislation.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his speech.

The member for London North Centre said that this bill would affect just 340 people. However, the bill affects many others, including Terri-Lynne McClintic and the terrorists who are returning to Canada.

Why are the Liberals prioritizing help for criminals?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear my colleague use the word "terrorist".

The Conservatives talked a good game about this and were very hard on terrorists, but they did not manage to put a single terrorist behind bars in 10 years.

We have sent many terrorists to prison, so I am pleased that my colleague talked about that. In 2011, 700 inmates were placed in administrative segregation. My NDP colleague said that there were just 300. The new approach is to make sure that they have access to mental health care. That is the difference.

My colleague from Sarnia—Lambton named some prisoners, but she seems to have forgotten the case of Ms. Smith when she asked her question.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his articulate speech.

I just want to focus on one aspect. The Ontario and British Columbia courts ruled that the current law is unconstitutional on the grounds of two elements.

First, there was no independent body to review the justification for and the extension of administrative segregation. Second, the law did not set a limit for the undue or abusive extension of the administrative segregation.

Unfortunately, unlike former Bill C-56, the current bill does not meet these two criteria.

How can my colleague believe that the courts will deem this Liberal bill to be constitutional?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I will repeat that when an inmate is placed in this special unit, the warden will examine the case and decide whether the inmate must remain there. Subsequent reviews will be done by the warden after 30 days and by the commissioner of the Correctional Service every 30 days thereafter.

I believe that we have put in place a system that will comply with the rulings of the Ontario and the British Columbia courts.

I am sure that our bill will comply with the rulings.

● (1055)

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member, I have an institution in my riding where nearly half a million dollars of drugs were seized by corrections officials in 2017.

When I think about that situation, I also think about the suggestion that, well, maybe we should be advancing needle exchange programs, spoons, and so on. I think that gives the wrong impression to people about what life and conditions should be in prison.

As Conservatives, we look at advancing and expanding the screening process, and maybe making sure that no one comes in. That would perhaps be a better way to create some safety for those who are in the prisons, primarily those who do not use drugs.

Thinking about the situation, if everyone else is going to have a needle, maybe each person should have one as well just to protect themselves. That is how obscene this approach to corrections is.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member mentioned the amount of dollars seized in terms of drug seizures. It is why, as part of that response, we will be putting body scanners in prisons to ensure those drugs do not get into our prison system. I agree with the member, there should be a lot more technology. My question to the member is, will he support Bill C-83?

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the top of his speech, my colleague said that Bill C-83 would end the practice of administrative segregation. That is technically true, but only because the name is changing. Instead of administrative segregation, it will be called structured intervention units. However, what does this change actually mean? It means two hours less a day and a little more support for people with mental health issues.

Statements by Members

Does my colleague not think it is misleading to tell the House and the media that the administrative segregation process is being eliminated completely?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, administrative segregation could force an inmate to go a whole day without human contact. The new bill will ensure that inmates get human contact, especially with mental health professionals. That is the difference.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM CONTEST

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, the City of Rosemère participated in the national and international editions of the Communities in Bloom competition and won a gold medal. The awards ceremony was held on September 29 in Strathcona, Alberta.

This competition is organized by a Canadian non-profit organization committed to fostering civic pride and environmental responsibility. The evaluation focuses on the community's green spaces, businesses, institutions, citizens and community groups and is based on various criteria such as tidiness, heritage conservation and environmental action.

In the international challenge category, Rosemère was competing against other cities across Canada and in Hungary, Belgium and the United Kingdom. The judges described Rosemère as a green oasis within the regional expanse of greater Montreal.

I could not be prouder to have such a beautiful city in my riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. Congratulations to the City of Rosemère, its elected officials and its residents.

* * *

[*English*]

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I spent part of last week sailing on the HMCS *Vancouver* as part of the leaders at sea program. I would like to thank Commodore Topshee, commander of the Canadian Fleet Pacific, and Commander Kouwenberg, captain of the vessel, and all personnel on board.

This amazing experience gave me the opportunity to experience life aboard one of Canada's major warships, living among and interacting with its crew to gain a deeper understanding of their mission in the service of Canada. I gained a perspective of what life is like at sea, and I better understand the training that each sailor receives for their specific role on the vessel.

I want to thank all our sailors past and present who spend months at a time away from their family and friends in the service of Canada.

Aye aye, ever on guard.

● (1100)

NIAGARA CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Niagara Children's Centre is recognized throughout the Niagara region as a provider of services to children with physical, developmental and communicative disabilities. It is a family-centred organization aimed at helping every child reach their potential.

On October 14, my son and I attended the centre's fourth annual Superhero Walk. We were joined by hundreds of residents from across Niagara, many of whom have been helped or know someone who has been helped by the organization and its incredible team of staff and volunteers.

The run is a family-friendly event that allows participants to dress up as their favourite superhero and raise money for a great cause. This year, the organization sought to raise \$55,000 and exceeded its goal by raising more than \$70,000.

A special thanks to members of the IAFF Local 485 for their participation and showing kids some real heroes, including my son, who was a bit star-struck and refused to get out of the fire truck. I also thank the more than 300 volunteers who made this event accessible and successful.

The money raised will benefit more than 3,300 children with special needs, the smallest yet mightiest of superheroes.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement was a terrible shock to our community. Our dairy farmers are going to lose huge amounts of revenue. Dairy farmers in Greater Drummond feel that the Liberal government has turned its back on them.

Here is what some of them had to say about it. "I feel we were sold to the Americans.... The Prime Minister stole my vote", said Dave Tourigny of Saint-Germain-de-Grantham.

Jean-François Janelle of Saint-Cyrille-de-Wendover said, "I feel abandoned.... The Prime Minister was everywhere on TV talking about how he was going to protect supply management".

Linda Lallier of South Durham told us, "You know, supply management is really about people, about families for the most part, who are passionate about their work, and it is about the next generation".

Opening up nearly 4% of the Canadian milk market is a threat to the survival of our dairy farms. The NDP supports supply management in its entirety. Why don't the Liberals?

Statements by Members

[English]

PERSONS DAY

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each year, on October 18, we recognize Persons Day, a day that commemorates how women became “persons” under the law and recognizes strong female leadership.

This past March, I had the privilege of joining colleagues from all sides of this House in New York, at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, where we heard from incredible female leaders about boosting their rural economies.

I am proud to say that in my riding of South Shore—St. Margarets, we have rural communities represented by strong female leadership, like the Town of Lunenburg, the Town of Shelburne, the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, and the Municipality of Shelburne, which all have a female MP, MLAs, mayors and wardens.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize all of the amazing women on the South Shore who are leaders in our communities, who are boosting our rural economies, and thank all the strong women who came before us. We would not be here today without their leadership.

* * *

NICARAGUA

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since April Daniel Ortega and his Sandinista regime have unleashed a wave of political violence and repression against the Nicaraguan people. According to a UN report, the Sandinistas have engaged in extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture and sexual violence. This week, a report from Amnesty International reported that pro-Ortega paramilitary groups have used weapons of war against peaceful protesters.

In light of the ongoing serious human rights violations, it is no longer good enough for Canada to merely call out Ortega. The time has come for the imposition of targeted sanctions pursuant to the Magnitsky act against Ortega and his Sandinista thugs.

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MISSISSAUGA CENTRE

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know about you, but my 14th year was as unmemorable as the rest of my teenage years. However, I could not say the same about Zaynah Bhanji, a grade 8 student at Woodlands Secondary School in Mississauga. She is a sought-after artificial intelligence and virtual reality developer. She also is the only girl on her school's robotics team.

In May, Zaynah was one of “six under 16” extraordinary young people invited to speak at the international business conference C2 Montréal. Zaynah is also a member of The Knowledge Society that selects exceptional young leaders in the artificial intelligence field. She was chosen for a CIBC internship at the MaRS Discovery District. Corporations like Google and Microsoft have extended support as well. She was recently celebrated at this year's MAX Gala for her outstanding achievements.

Members should watch for her. Zaynah's impressive intelligence, boundless energy and incredible drive will change the world.

* * *

● (1105)

[Translation]

PARLIAMENT HILL

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Saturday, October 20, I will have the honour of welcoming nearly 500 residents of my riding, Hull—Aylmer, to the place we are all honoured to work at, Parliament Hill.

As everyone knows, the Centre Block will soon close for a decade of renovations. What better than to offer the people of Hull—Aylmer the unforgettable opportunity to visit the iconic Peace Tower, the two legislative chambers, and our magnificent Library of Parliament?

[English]

During the day, we will also celebrate the outstanding contributions of 19 residents of Hull-Aylmer with the Canada 150 awards. I salute their contributions to Hull-Aylmer in fields of community, arts and culture, sports and emerging leadership.

I am proud that so many residents of Hull-Aylmer will visit this grand old building before it undergoes its much-needed rejuvenation so that countless future generations of Canadians can enjoy what we have in Hull-Aylmer's backyard.

* * *

[Translation]

53RD QUEBEC GAMES

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the City of Thetford Mines and the Appalaches RCM had the honour and, above all, the pleasure of hosting Quebec's top young athletes this summer at the 53rd Quebec Games. The entire region went above and beyond to welcome 3,700 athletes from across Quebec, athletes who gave their very best.

Many took home medals, others left with a sense of pride, knowing they outdid themselves, but they all left with wonderful memories of an incredible experience. The athletes may be back home, but the Quebec Games left an indelible mark on the hearts of the people of Mégantic—L'Érable. Some 2,580 volunteers came together, creating new friendships and a new dynamic along the way, showing us that great things can be accomplished when we work together.

Under the leadership of the president, Guylaine Dubuc, and the executive director, Guy Bérard, 40 people gained valuable work experience.

On behalf of my colleagues, I want to once again congratulate the Quebec Games organizers, the volunteers, the dozens of financial partners, and of course, the City of Thetford Mines. I particularly want to thank SportsQuébec, whose support every step of the way helped make the 53rd Quebec Games such an amazing success.

*Statements by Members**[English]***CAPILANO UNIVERSITY**

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year Capilano University is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Might I say that CapU has come a long way since its humble beginnings with just a few portables to now educating over 11,000 students per year. It has nurtured countless leaders in everything from early childhood education to global stewardship. It has also introduced tremendous programs, from indigenous independent filmmaking to small business.

Its new logo honours the Coast Salish territory and is the product of extensive consultations with local first nations. Its design was done by local Tsleil-Waututh artist Jordan Gallie and Squamish artist Marissa Nahanee.

I am a proud Capilano alumni. As an 18-year-old city councillor, I studied public administration at Capilano. Now, almost 19 years later, what I learned in those classes is still incredibly valuable to my career. I am so thankful for the outstanding education that I and so many others have received over the past 50 years.

I congratulate Capilano University.

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● (1110)

AUTISM

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Autism Awareness Month to recognize the Riley family, who are members of my community, for their advocacy of autism awareness. Austin, a three-time racing champion, is the first professional Canadian race car driver with autism.

It is through sharing his story that Austin has been empowering those with autism to follow their dreams, while encouraging others to learn more about it. In addition to sharing his story, Austin and his family have been touring the country, sharing the autism reality experience, a reality simulator that provides a first-hand experience of what the world is like living with autism.

Having personally taken part in this simulation, I can say it was an unforgettable and eye-opening experience. I would like to thank Austin, Jason and Shane Riley for this opportunity and their continuous advocacy and efforts to make Canada and our communities a more inclusive place for us all.

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*[Translation]***PHELAN-MCDERMID SYNDROME**

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently I was very moved by the story of one of my constituents in Louis-Saint-Laurent. Stéphanie Leclerc is the mother of Sarah, a nine-year old girl with Phelan-McDermid syndrome.

Phelan-McDermid syndrome is a rare genetic condition characterized by intellectual disability, delayed or absent speech, symptoms of autism spectrum disorder, low muscle tone, motor delays and epilepsy.

It is important to raise awareness and educate people about this disorder.

I wish to inform the House that October 22 has been designated international Phelan-McDermid syndrome awareness day.

I hope this awareness-raising initiative will lead to advances that will help improve life for Sarah and all those with this disorder and their loved ones.

* * *

*[English]***NATIONAL INFECTION CONTROL WEEK**

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House and all Canadians that this week is National Infection Control Week, an annual event that highlights the important work being done by infection prevention professionals. This year's theme is "No Borders", as everyone across health care disciplines, in provinces, territories and countries, plays a role in keeping Canadians safe from infectious diseases.

In addition to health care professionals, there are many people who perform infection prevention control activities, from people who perform cleaning and sanitation services, to those we put on the front lines during global responses to emerging diseases or outbreaks.

I encourage all Canadians and members of the House to use this year's infection control week as an opportunity to raise awareness of infection prevention and control in Canada, and recognize the valuable contribution of the many people who help reduce our risks of infectious diseases every day.

Everyone in this place can do their part by washing their hands several times a day.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday, I held one of my "coffee with your MP" meetings at Freshies Coffee and Crepes in Fernie. I met with the owner, Guylaine, who told me how difficult it was to keep staff because of the lack of affordable housing.

On Wednesday, I convened a meeting at Community Connections in Cranbrook with organizations concerned about homeless outreach and prevention. Tears were shed in that room, with heartbreaking stories about homeless families and individuals due to the lack of social housing, the lack of support for people with mental illness, and rental occupancy rates near zero.

Oral Questions

Later on, I attended a forum on youth at risk and homelessness in Nelson. We heard how youth fleeing troubling situations at home, or aging out of foster care end up in dangerous situations on the street.

This is Small Business Week in Canada and, coincidentally, Wednesday was the International Day For The Eradication of Poverty. What do they have in common and what do we need in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia? We need affordable housing now, not in two years, not in 10 years. We need it now. The federal government can and must do better.

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SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is Small Business Week, and yet the Liberals have proven time and time again that they have no interest in helping small businesses succeed. Their failure to champion Canadian small business has real life consequences that matter and impact people's day-to-day lives.

Farmers in my riding employ many workers and managers, and these small business owners are struggling. With an early snow and excess moisture, many farmers still have crops in the field that are wasting away. They need propane and fuel to dry their crops. Instead of helping farmers, the Liberals are making life difficult and more expensive by forcing a carbon tax and attempting to change taxation rules for small businesses. This means significant administrative strain on regular farm operations, and some farmers will need to make a difficult choice about whether their way of life is still affordable and sustainable.

Farmers feed Canada and the world and their government should be doing everything possible to assist them, not hurt them. The consequence of the Prime Minister's failures are real and it is the small businesses in Canada that will pay the price.

* * *

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses represent 98% of all Canadian businesses and employ more than eight million Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

[English]

With Small Business Week coming to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate some of the hard-working small businesses right here in the city of Ottawa, specifically in my riding, by drawing special attention to Echo Audiology, which just celebrated its one-year anniversary in Orleans; Stray Dog Brewing Company, which was recently named one of five best new breweries in Canada; Aura Design & Integration, which just opened its doors this fall; Gloucester Pottery School, which employs and represents our vibrant arts community by employing dozens of students and training them in the arts; and OakWood, which was recently awarded with Renovator of the Year.

[Translation]

Again, I want to acknowledge and thank the entrepreneurs in our community for the important role that they play. I am proud to

celebrate Small Business Week with you and all members of the House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1115)

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the justice minister said that the case against Vice-Admiral Norman was being handled by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada and was totally independent of the government. However, there is only one problem with that: the Prime Minister talked about charges being laid in this case back in April 2017, almost a full year before any charges were laid.

How did the Prime Minister know a year ahead of time that charges would be laid against Mark Norman? Who told the Prime Minister?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have noted in the House many times this week and otherwise, this is a matter that is presently before the courts. A proper judicial proceeding is under way. It is in the hands of the Public Prosecution Service on the Crown side. It is in the hands of very a competent defence counsel on the defence side, and it is inappropriate for members of Parliament to comment on that process or any aspect of that process while the judicial system is still at work.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are asking about the cover-up that is going on right now in the Prime Minister's Office. The Prime Minister had no problem announcing to the world on multiple occasions that charges would be laid against Vice-Admiral Norman, even before an investigation was complete. Earlier this week, government officials had no problem talking to reporters on background about the Treasury Board president's dealings with Irving, but as for answering serious questions that might embarrass the Prime Minister, there is silence and lame excuses.

Who are they protecting? What are they hiding?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about lame excuses. Well, the excuses would actually be multiple rulings by the Speaker of the House of Commons and the rules compiled for the benefit of the House of Commons by the very table officers in front of us. Those rules make it very clear that during the course of a criminal proceeding, it is inappropriate to either ask or answer questions in the House of Commons.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in November 2015, both the minister of defence and the President of the Treasury Board were at the International Security Forum in Halifax.

Oral Questions

Can one of those ministers tell the House if a meeting took place with Irving in Halifax between November 20 and November 22 with one or both of those ministers, and what was discussed?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the appropriate place to pursue the details of a criminal proceeding is in a court of law. That is what the rules of the House of Commons say. I would point out, as the table officers have written in The House of Commons Compendium of Procedure, that “Members are expected to refrain from discussing matters actively before the courts or under judicial consideration in order to guard those involved in a court action or judicial inquiry from any undue influence.” I would remind the hon. member that she is neither the prosecutor nor the defender.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I assure the minister that we are here on behalf of Canadians and we will continue to ask questions on behalf of Canadians.

In November 2015, the Minister of National Defence and the President of the Treasury Board attended a meeting at the Halifax International Security Forum. Representatives from Irving were at this forum.

Can one of these two ministers tell the House and all Canadians whether they met with representatives from Irving and, if so, what they talked about?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people who are charged with the administration of this particular case are, on the one side, the prosecution, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. On the other side, they are competent defence counsel who have been retained by the defendant in the case. None of the members opposite have that role, and the rules of the House of Commons say that one should leave the work of the prosecution to the prosecutor and the work of the defence to the defence counsel, not to the floor of the House of Commons.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can see that we just asked whether two ministers met with representatives from Irving, and the minister himself made the connection to the Norman case.

Is there a relevant link between the two, yes or no? How come the minister is making a direct link to the Norman case?

Will the government finally release the evidence it has on this case, yes or no?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the question just asked, the hon. member has exposed his own subterfuge.

I would refer him to none other than Peter Van Loan, who said, “It is deemed improper for a Member, in posing a question, or a Minister in responding to a question, to comment on any matter that

is *sub judice*.” So said Peter Van Loan, and on this occasion he was right.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, do you know why science is right? Because it works. Planes fly, vaccines protect against illness, and if I drop my pencil, it will fall on the ground because of gravity. We all agree on that.

However, when it comes time to listen to the 6,000 IPCC scientists who are saying that fundamental changes are absolutely needed, the Prime Minister turns a deaf ear. I will say it once again, the IPCC report is alarming.

Why are the Liberals still subsidizing oil companies and buying a pipeline with our money instead of actually fighting climate change?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan for fighting climate change and growing the economy. We are putting a price on pollution because it has a cost. The cost to Canadians right now is extreme temperatures, hurricanes and very hot days, which actually cause deaths.

We also have a plan to grow our economy. We have clean technology companies, including in Quebec, that play an important role around the world. In fact, 13% of the world's clean technology companies are Canadian.

[*English*]

We punch above our weight.

[*Translation*]

We will continue to grow the economy and to fight climate change—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we agree that we need to put a price on pollution, but at the moment, the Liberal plan is not working. They are not doing enough.

IPCC scientists desperately want governments around the world to know that they need to take meaningful action to fight climate change. Here in Ottawa, though, the Liberals bought Trans Mountain with taxpayers' money, and the Conservatives want to bring energy east back to life, like a zombie.

This Liberal-Conservative pipeline coalition is quite the cabal. It feels like we are in a bad B movie. The only thing missing is a “sharknado”.

Do the Liberals realize that they are spineless and that they are putting our children's future at risk?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know we need to tackle climate change for our children and grandchildren. We also have an opportunity to create good jobs.

Oral Questions

I am very proud to say that, since we have been in government, greenhouse gas emissions have dropped and jobs are on the rise. That is what we need to do for our children and grandchildren, and we will continue to do so.

* * *

[English]

MULTICULTURALISM

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's mandate letter states, "It is important to acknowledge mistakes when we make them." By now, surely the minister knows that it is wrong to say that there is no systemic discrimination in Canada. Systemic racism took its root in this country the moment white settlers came and began the colonization process. To claim that there is no systemic racism in Canada is a slap in the face of indigenous peoples.

Will the minister do the honourable thing, admit that he was wrong and apologize?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that diversity is our strength. While we have much to celebrate, there are still real challenges for many people in the country.

Let me be very clear. Throughout history, and even today, there are people in communities who experience systemic racism, oppression and discrimination, preventing them from fully participating in our society. These experiences are still felt today by many Canadians, and we can and we must do better.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, then why did the minister say that there was no systemic racism in Canada?

The new national anti-racism strategy comes directly from the report "Taking action against systemic racism and religious discrimination including Islamophobia". At committee, Senator Murray Sinclair stated, "systemic racism is the racism that's left over after you get rid of the racists. Once you get rid of the racists within the justice system...you will still have racism perpetrated by the justice system."

Senator Sinclair is absolutely correct. Has the minister even read the report?

• (1125)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat once again. Throughout history, and even today, there are people in communities who experience systemic racism, oppression and discrimination that prevent them from fully participating in our society. This is exactly why we are conducting meetings across the country. I had the chance last week. We are going to have many more meetings in every province across the country to discuss this. We are acting on this.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 4, 2015, the Liberal cabinet was sworn in. Within days, members of that cabinet were trying to halt the Davie Shipbuilding contract. The

President of the Treasury Board told the House that as minister he was only copied on a letter from Irving.

Will the President of the Treasury Board confirm to the House whether he spoke to Irving during the election before he became minister?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the opposition members are attempting to pursue dimensions of an outstanding legal proceeding. As the rules of the House make very clear, not only are ministers prevented from commenting on those proceedings, that prohibition also applies to the opposition. Distinguished former members of the House, like former minister Van Loan, has made it very clear that this line of questioning is inappropriate.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CBC has reported that the member for Halifax West had several meetings with ministers with respect to the Irving shipyard. Will the President of the Treasury Board confirm which members of the Atlantic Liberal caucus spoke to him about the Davie Shipbuilding contract?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the hon. gentleman is trying to prosecute a legal proceeding on the floor of the House of Commons. The rules of the House, including the work of the distinguished table in front of us, has made it very clear that this line of questioning is inappropriate.

With respect to the activities of lobbyists, of course we have a public registry in which all of that activity is recorded.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Vice-Admiral Norman never benefited personally. His focus has always been the well-being of his colleagues and the Royal Canadian Navy. He has had an exemplary career and deserves to retire in dignity with the recognition he has earned. He must have a fair trial. The Prime Minister must therefore release the evidence required for his defence.

Who or what group could have an interest?

What is the Liberal government hiding?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the rules of the House are very clear. Let me again quote the table officers who have said, "Members are expected to refrain from discussing matters before the courts, or under judicial consideration, in order to protect those involved in a court action or judicial inquiry against any undue influence through the discussion of the case."

By pursuing the line of questioning, the opposition is potentially jeopardizing a legitimate legal procedure. We have in fact a very mature judicial system in the country and that system is more than capable of handling this matter.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to know. The Liberal government is ruining the career of an officer who has been recognized for his distinguished service, and it will not say why. So much for an open and transparent government.

Will the Prime Minister stop dragging an honourable officer through the mud and give him the evidence required for his defence?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada is in charge of the Crown side of this matter. The defence is obviously in the hands of very distinguished defence counsel. We have an amazingly strong judicial system in the country, which is in fact the envy of the world. Canadians can trust that system properly administered to deliver justice and to make sure that justice is also seen to be done.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has become aptly skilled at being able to hide behind a corkscrew on this issue. The hon. gentleman also knows that convention around this place dictates that the government does not dictate to Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition what questions it asks in spite of the fact that it is uncomfortable.

The fact is that the Prime Minister is undermining the due process to which Vice-Admiral Norman and his defence team are entitled. What is the government trying to cover up?

• (1130)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the words I have quoted for the opposition members are in fact the words of the Hon. Peter Van Loan, who is one of their own. He says, "It is deemed improper for a Member, in posing a question, or a Minister in responding to a question, to comment on any matter that is *sub judice*." Those are the words of Mr. Peter Van Loan. The opposition members would be well advised to take the advice of one of their own.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Vice-Admiral Norman is in the battle of his life and the person who is fighting him is the Prime Minister. I am not standing here asking for court records or a report from a courtroom. The Prime Minister has been asked to provide evidence in the case involving Vice-Admiral Norman, yet he is refusing. There is precedence. Former prime minister Paul Martin turned over evidence, when requested, during the Gomery Inquiry.

It is time for the Prime Minister to stop hiding the truth. Who is he protecting and what is he hiding?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman's question indicates clearly, unequivocally and beyond all doubt that what he is referring to is a matter that is in fact *sub judice*. The rules that are pronounced by the table and the rules as articulated in the House by Mr. Van Loan are very clear. Whether the opposition wishes to persist in the line of questioning or not, that line of questioning is inappropriate and ministers are prevented from responding to those questions for fear of prejudicing the matter before the courts.

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim to be champions of the environment, but everyone knows that it is all just smoke and mirrors. They will not even be able to meet the weak greenhouse gas targets set by Stephen Harper. They are buying Trans Mountain with our money and they will not even rule out a return of energy east when the Conservatives ask.

Will the Liberals commit to listening to Quebeckers and to never bring back the terrible energy east pipeline?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about Canada's economy and the importance of pipelines.

The answer on energy east is a simple one. At the time, TransCanada made a business decision over whether to continue with the project.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk to the NDP about our platform on renewable energy and our investments in green energy. We have invested more than \$27 billion, while the NDP's 2015 platform called for less than \$3 billion. How do those figures compare? We believe that we can improve the environment and grow the economy at the same time.

* * *

[English]

ASBESTOS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just one day after announcing regulations that they described as a complete and comprehensive ban on asbestos, the government is announcing a stream of exemptions and funding for a project it should have banned.

Quebec health authorities have asked the federal government not to exempt mining waste, expressing deep concern about the lack of proper occupational health and safety standards. Instead, the government listened to the asbestos lobby.

Why is the government ignoring health and science experts and continuing to put Canadian workers at risk through exposure to asbestos?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was thrilled yesterday to announce that we have a comprehensive ban on asbestos. That is the sale, manufacture, import, export and use of asbestos.

I stood with Hassan Yussuff. He is the head of the Canadian Labour Congress. Does the member know what he said? He said that this was very good for Canadian workers. Hassan Yussuff is actually someone who was exposed to asbestos. He understands how damaging it can be for health, how it kills people.

Oral Questions

In very exceptional circumstances, there are exceptions. Those exceptions are time-limited. There is a reporting requirement, and there is no impact on human health.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned that the five major Inuit organizations pulled out of the government's working group on food security.

It was clear from the start that the Liberals had no intention of listening. The consultations were “just tokenism and optics...so they can justify the changes that they want to make”.

The government's failure has real consequences. Tokenism does not feed children. When will the Liberals get back to the table and take this issue seriously?

• (1135)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that our government is committed to ensuring that northerners have access to affordable food throughout the north. We want to work meaningfully with all parties, including Inuit, first nations, Métis and northerners, on food security.

Inuit organizations have an important and unique perspective to offer on nutrition north Canada. That is why we have engaged with them. We value their expertise. We value their knowledge in this process. Their engagement has really been vital for us in developing our new initiative and providing thoughtful solutions in how we move forward with food security for northerners.

We are going to continue to work with Inuit right across the north, as we will with all indigenous groups and all northerners to ensure that the revisions to nutrition north are what people are asking for.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, this was a key election promise by the government. We know that food costs in the north are absolutely staggering. After going through the process and withdrawing from the consultations, an Inuit leader told CBC that she had lost all hope. Listen to this. She was told by a government employee that if they do not want to be at the table, it is just going to move forward anyway.

This is a government that said that no relationship is more important than that with indigenous peoples in Canada. Is this how it treats this most important relationship? When is the government going to stop being so disrespectful and move forward in terms of this important initiative?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has been a priority for us, and we want to make sure that we are going to get it right. This is why we have been engaging with northerners, Inuit, Métis and first nations on how we move forward with this project. The minister himself visited all three territories. In the last few weeks, he met with premiers and leaders of government and organizations about this extremely important initiative and the changes we are about to implement.

We understand how important nutrition is to people in the north, and we know how important it is that the Government of Canada get it right so that it helps northerners—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, the CRTC announced that a 50-megabyte download speed Internet is a basic service all Canadians should have access to. The government claimed it would make that a reality. However, now the details are out, and we can see that the Liberals have failed again. They have slashed their target in half.

Why does the minister think Canadians do not deserve the Internet service that he gets in his own office?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have understood the importance of broadband across Canada. That is the reason we have invested, through connect to innovate, over \$500 million across Canada. The program has a variety of different projects in every region of the country to increase the access Canadians have to good-quality high-speed Internet access.

We are going to continue moving forward in that direction. We will take no lessons from the previous government on Internet connectivity.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the Liberals talk big and then fail to deliver.

On giving Communist-China-controlled Huawei access to our mobile network, the public safety minister has said that we will check their equipment, do not worry, but the reality is that equipment will often break down and need to be quickly replaced and may not be perfectly inspected and documented.

When will the Liberals see that this big talk about checking every piece of technology is not practical and, like our allies in Australia and the United States, simply ban Huawei from accessing our 5G network?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have stated a number of times in this House, our government, yes, is open to foreign investment in Canada, because it benefits Canadians, but we will never, ever compromise our national security.

Oral Questions

As a government, unlike the previous government, we are investing in 5G. We are investing in it seriously, because we appreciate that it is what Canadian consumers want and need to participate in the future economy, and we will rely on the opinions of our public security experts. We will rely on our experts when we look at who gets to participate in those 5G networks.

* * *

● (1140)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in March, the Minister of Health promised Alain Gervais that the government would do something about sweetened alcoholic beverages, which of course caused the death of Athena Gervais. The answer provided by the minister on Monday is quite different. She is still holding consultations. It is shocking. The committee's 15 recommendations were quite clear. The government has to take action immediately to protect our children.

When will the government finally put its money where its mouth is and protect our children?

[English]

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting the health and safety of Canadians is a top priority for our government, and we continue to work to identify actions that can be taken to address the harms associated with problematic alcohol use. Following the tragic death of Athena Gervais, we immediately took action to begin work to restrict the amount of alcohol in highly sweetened alcohol beverages.

We thank the health committee for its work. We have tabled a response to its recommendations and will be introducing regulations in the near future to ensure that tragedies such as this never occur again.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Anita lives in a small town in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. She was recently ordered to attend a meeting at the regional immigration office in Vancouver, a 1,700-kilometre round trip. Taking a week off work for travel was impossible for her, so she asked if she could go to a closer IRCC office in Calgary. She was told no, meetings must take place in the province of residence.

This is a big country with big provinces, and sometimes it makes sense to use a regional office that is closer. Canadians understand that. Why does the department of immigration not?

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands full well that our economic success as a country is dependent on welcoming newcomers into our communities and providing them avenues to contribute to their local economies. We know equally well that the diversity of newcomers adds to the richness of Canada. We are reinvesting in economic immigration streams and in welcoming refugees.

I remind the member opposite that under this government, we saw a historic effort to resettle 56,000 Syrian refugees in this country. We are equally reinvesting in our department and our officials so that they can provide the type of immigration services that newcomers to our country expect and that Canadians expect as well.

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ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis, many constituents have shared with me through emails, phone calls, visits to my office, and discussions in the community their concerns about the need to address the serious and unfortunate problem of animal cruelty, including with respect to gaps in the Criminal Code as regards bestiality and animal fighting.

Could the Minister of Justice please update this House on what our government is doing to address animal cruelty?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis for his advocacy, in fact all parliamentarians' advocacy, on this important issue.

Yesterday I was proud to introduce Bill C-84, which delivers on our government's commitment to protect children and animals from abuse. We are toughening the laws against bestiality and animal fighting, conduct that is completely unacceptable. I look forward to the support of all members in this House.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Indian Resource Council represents hundreds of first nations and advocates for first nations oil and gas producers. Its president and CEO, Stephen Buffalo, says, "Bill C-69 will harm Indigenous economic development, create barriers to decision-making, and make Canada unattractive for resource investment. This legislation must be stopped". Premiers, economists and the private sector all say the same.

When will the Prime Minister kill his no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand up and talk about how we are going to rebuild the trust of Canadians and how we approve major projects.

I worked very hard with indigenous people. In fact, we had a working group that included representatives from indigenous organizations throughout the whole process. It is interesting, because the party opposite actually jammed through legislation that killed the trust of Canadians in how we did environmental assessments. We know we can do better. We know that we can protect the environment. We can grow the economy, and this is part of our strategy to do exactly that.

Oral Questions

●(1145)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister should actually listen to what first nations are saying instead of countering with the exact opposite. The majority of first nations do support responsible resource development for the benefit of all Canadians, and it is key to poverty reduction and Canada's high standard of living.

The reality is that investment is fleeing Canada under these Liberals. Here is what Stephen Buffalo also said:

Indigenous communities are on the verge of a major economic breakthrough, one that finally allows Indigenous people to share in Canada's economic prosperity...Bill C-69 will stop this progress in its tracks.

When will the Liberals kill their no-more-pipelines Bill C-69?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always heartening to hear that those in the party opposite care about indigenous peoples and indigenous rights after they did nothing for a decade.

We are pleased that we have been working with indigenous peoples. I will explain to the party opposite how we are working with indigenous peoples.

There will be early engagement with indigenous peoples. We will actually be sitting down with indigenous peoples and not dumping big documents about projects on their desks. We are going to have a consultation plan so that we can listen to them and figure out how we move forward together.

I agree, there are huge economic opportunities for indigenous peoples. We need to make sure they benefit. They did not under the previous—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Sturgeon River—Parkland.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is these Liberals are failing indigenous communities. The Liberals no-more-pipelines bill, also known as Bill C-69, is a threat to the prosperity of all Canadians.

A Texas company was recently awarded because it was able to get a pipeline permitted and built in only eight months. However, under these Liberals, we are not even sure if we are ever going to get a pipeline built ever.

When will the government get serious about pipeline jobs and scrap this terrible legislation?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was 10 years of inaction by the Harper government, with 99% of our oil actually distributed to the U.S., and in 2015, the same thing occurred. Their approach failed and they are doubling down on that failed approach, disregarding the courts, with no plan to protect the environment and coastal communities, and with no plan for meaningful two-way dialogue with indigenous communities. We will take no lessons from the previous government.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the government is not listening to the indigenous community and so we will see if it will listen to the business community.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the Port of Vancouver. At the Port of Vancouver there are hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of construction in new facilities happening today. The officials at the Port of Vancouver said to me that if Bill C-69 had been in place two years ago, not one dollar of what is being spent today would be invested in the Port of Vancouver.

Will the minister stand up today and say to the business community who are investing in the Port of Vancouver that she will kill this bill?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will stand up today and explain why we need Bill C-69, and why we need to rebuild trust and environmental assessments. Guess what? If we do not have trust in how we approve major projects, no projects go ahead.

We have an obligation to Canadians to figure out how we are going to protect the environment and grow the economy. I have spent, with my colleagues in meetings, over two years listening to the business community. We have shorter timelines under Bill C-69. We are providing more certainty of the process. We are working with indigenous peoples. We are also working with provinces.

We need to get this right. That way we will have investment dollars flowing.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers gave a strike notice to Canada Post this week. After falling behind because of the Harper-mandated agreement, postal workers have been negotiating for almost a year to improve working conditions and improve services for Canadians. Canadian workers deserve better.

Will the Liberal government continue the Harper ways that undermined workers' fundamental rights or will it ensure that the Canada Post management negotiate in good faith for sustainable community-based jobs that best serve Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said all along that this is a government that firmly believes in the value of collective bargaining. In fact, we believe that an agreement that is arrived at by both parties through collective bargaining is a strong agreement and one that can bring a company and its workers forward into the next term. Therefore, we stand by both parties, federal mediation is working with both parties, and we look forward to the resolution of their collective agreement.

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●(1150)

[Translation]

PARLIAMENTARY PROTECTIVE SERVICE

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the changes made to the Parliamentary Protective Service are not working.

Oral Questions

Employees of the House of Commons Parliamentary Protective Service have been working without a contract since 2016. Nothing has happened in two years. PPS management is required to initiate negotiations within the next 20 days. What is more, it seems that the employer has threatened employees who are exercising their charter rights.

Will the government amend the Parliament of Canada Act to protect the rights and independence of the Parliamentary Protective Service?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legislation in many ways may need to be amended, but I would note that the matter referred to by the hon. member is under the jurisdiction of the House and not under the jurisdiction of the government.

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[Translation]

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in June, it was 1,263. In July, it was 1,634. In August, it was 1,747, and in September, it was 1,601. That is how many illegal immigrants came to Canada in the past four months alone, and most of them entered the country through Quebec.

When Canadians want to know why the government is not doing anything, they are insulted and told they are un-Canadian.

Today, after four months, we have a question. Today, I want to know whether the Liberals have a plan to address this problem.

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member opposite that the government does in fact have a plan. We have been working very diligently with our international partners to address the issues that lead to that migration. The RCMP, the CBSA, the IRCC and the IRB have all been working diligently to create greater efficiencies for all individuals, regardless of how they come into this country.

I want to assure the member opposite and all Canadians that the security of this country is maintained through the diligent work of our public officials.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the plan of no plan. It is clear that the Prime Minister has no plan to ensure the integrity of our borders. The number of illegal crossings is on the rise. We have already had more this year than the same time last year.

Canada's Conservatives have proposed a plan. So far, the Liberals have totally failed to resolve this problem. When Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, what are the total projected costs for processing, transporting, housing and social welfare programs for these people?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to advise the member opposite that we have seen tremendous success in reducing the number of people who have been presenting themselves

at our border. Since April of this year, we have seen significant reductions. In fact, the number of people who crossed this summer irregularly was 70% less than what we experienced just last year. Therefore, we are making real progress.

On the issue of how these individuals are treated, we can assure Canadians as well that, by Canadian law, we have to allow them to process, and provide support to the provinces and municipalities to ensure they are properly treated. That work is ongoing between ourselves and the Province of Quebec, the Province of Ontario, and the cities of Montreal and Toronto. This is a well-managed—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Dominique Daigle is one of thousands of Canadians affected by the Liberal Phoenix fiasco. She has not been paid in 15 months. I sent a letter to the public works minister in July of this year on behalf of Dominique and guess what? No answer.

The minister said at the operations committee in November of 2017 that hardship cases would be dealt with in just “a couple of weeks”.

She has lost her home and has moved back in with her dad.

Will the public works minister take responsibility, end the empty talking points and pay Dominique the wages she has earned?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are determined to stabilize and ensure that our hard-working public servants are paid on time and are paid accurately, and that would include the employee to whom my hon. colleague refers. We will look into this specific case.

I would point out to my hon. colleague that perhaps he should survey the front bench of his parliamentary group here to find an apology to the public servants of Canada, which we are still waiting for, for leaving us with this fiasco of a pay system after eight years of planning.

* * *

● (1155)

MULTICULTURALISM

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to see that our government is continuing its commitment to diversity by supporting organizations through increased multicultural funding in budget 2018.

As part of the funding, the government announced that it would engage communities on the development of a new anti-racism approach that would bring communities and interfaith leaders together to find new ways to combat discrimination.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism update the House on how the development of a new anti-racism strategy is developing?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her important question, which allows me to repeat something that I have said many times, something extremely important for me.

Throughout history and even today there are people in communities who experience systemic racism, oppression and discrimination, preventing them from fully participating in our society. These experiences are still felt by many Canadians. We can and we must do better. That is why we are conducting those important sessions.

[Translation]

Any form of racism and discrimination is completely unacceptable, and we need to fight that every day. That is why we are holding these consultations. We will always fight against racism and discrimination.

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DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are desperate. They literally misled supply-managed producers. They only pretended to defend them.

Today, they continue to improvise at the expense of farmers. They signed an agreement with the United States that is going to flood our market with American milk and prevent us from exporting ours throughout the world.

There will be fewer quotas, no exports and no compensation.

Is that what the Liberals call a good agreement? Why did they once again fail to defend our farmers?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we defended our supply management system against the Americans' aggressive attempts at dismantling it.

Market access is similar to what the Conservatives had negotiated in the TPP. We are the party that implemented supply management, and we are the government that defended it. That is precisely what we did. We understand that there will be impacts on our farmers, and we made a commitment to provide them with fair and full compensation to help them succeed.

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POVERTY

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Wednesday, October 17, was the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Thanks to initiatives such as the Canada child benefit, the national housing strategy and the Canada workers benefit, our government will have lifted 650,000 people out of poverty since 2015.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development tell the House how our government continues to help Canadians who are working hard to escape poverty and join the middle class?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and

Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia for his words of support for Canadians living in poverty.

Since taking office in 2015, our government has invested more than \$20 billion in programs to help the most vulnerable in Canada. As a result of Canada's first national poverty reduction strategy we are on track to post the lowest level of poverty in the history of Canada. Our government is committed to being a leader, now and in the future, and a full partner in the fight against poverty.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years ago in the city of Brooks, Tanya Campbell-Losier was killed by her boyfriend in a domestic dispute. She was just 19 years old. On September 27, her killer was released on day parole after serving just four months. This is yet another example of our justice system acting like a revolving door under this government's catch-and-release policy.

In the words of Tanya's mother, "She got no justice". Do the Liberals agree with Tanya's mother that a four-month sentence for killing someone is not justice?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will undertake to look into the circumstances of this particular case. I believe it may fall under provincial jurisdiction, but I will examine that.

The rules with respect to day parole that apply at the present time were in fact implemented through a legal framework under a private member's bill that was proposed by a member of the Conservative Party.

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● (1200)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, bees are essential to biodiversity, but neonicotinoid pesticides are pushing them to the brink of extinction. Pesticides are not good for the environment or for human health.

Europe plans to ban neonicotinoids by the end of the year, but the Canadian government is hiding behind consultations, which will not yield concrete results until 2025. This week, Équiterre called on the government to follow Europe's lead.

Will the government act immediately to help farmers eliminate neonicotinoids by the end of this year?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Health Canada is working with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and scientists from around the world to ensure that there are no long-term impacts from neonics on bees. In addition, Health Canada is currently conducting a scientific review that includes risks to wild bees, such as bumble bees. New scientific information will be taken into consideration prior to making any final decisions. Health Canada will continue to monitor the situation and take action as necessary.

* * *

*[Translation]***PENSIONS**

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since I introduced Bill C-372 to protect workers' pension funds. It has been a year since Sears closed its doors. It has been three years that Cliffs retirees living on the north shore in Quebec have been fighting to recover their stolen pensions and insurance benefits.

Retirees should be the top priority when a company goes out of business. We have been talking about this for decades, but the Liberals are not doing one single thing about it. In fact, they are still only thinking about doing consultations. It is high time we protected our workers and retirees from being robbed blind by multinational corporations.

Will the Liberals protect workers and retirees by supporting my bill?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

We understand the difficulties that employees and retirees experience when a business goes through restructuring or a bankruptcy. That is why, in our last budget, we made a commitment to adopt a balanced governmental approach in order to strengthen retirement security. We are currently consulting stakeholders across Canada to find a fair solution for our country's retirees.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF CANADA**

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, on behalf of the President of the Treasury Board, in both official languages, the Public Accounts of Canada, 2018.

[Translation]

The Auditor General of Canada has provided an unqualified audit opinion on the Canadian government's financial statements. The Government of Canada is committed to sound financial management and to monitoring the use of public funds to enhance accountability and transparency.

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons entitled, "Commentary on the 2017–2018 Financial Audits".

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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*[Translation]***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the annual report of the implementation committee on the Sahtu Dene and Métis comprehensive land claim agreement for the period from April 1, 2010, to March 31, 2015.

[English]

At the same time, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, annual report, April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013.

* * *

● (1205)

*[Translation]***PETITIONS****DOMESTIC WORKERS**

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the work women employed as domestic workers do is not recognized and so their rights are being violated and they are being denied decent working conditions. October 7 was World Day for Decent Work, which seeks to draw attention to the fact that all workers should have access to a decent life. That is the gist of the petition.

On October 4, I submitted 1,312 electronic signatures. Today, I am immensely proud to present a paper petition signed by nearly 5,000 people.

*[English]***JUSTICE**

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition about Bill C-75.

Bill C-75 proposes to lighten the sentences for some very serious crimes, such as belonging to a terrorist organization, forcible confinement of a minor, forcible marriage of a child, and a number of other very serious crimes. The petitioners are calling on the Prime Minister to defend the safety and security of all Canadians by withdrawing Bill C-75.

CANADA POST

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from Canadians who support postal banking.

Government Orders

As the House knows, nearly two million Canadians desperately need an alternative to payday lenders, whose crippling lending rates affect the poor, marginalized, rural and indigenous communities the most. We have 3,800 Canada Post outlets that already exist in rural Canada, where there are few or no banks at all. Canada Post has the infrastructure to make a rapid transition to include postal banking.

The petitioners are calling on Parliament to enact my Motion No. 166 to create a committee to study and then propose a plan to have postal banking under the Canada Post Corporation in Canada.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in support of protection for the Thames River system.

The petitioners want to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Conservative government stripped away environmental regulations covered in the navigable waters act, leaving rivers vulnerable and at risk, including the Thames. As well, the Liberal government has failed to keep its promise to reinstate environmental protections.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support my bill, Bill C-355, which commits government to prioritizing the protection of the Thames by amending the Navigation Protection Act.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure I table yet another petition with regard to pharmacare. Hundreds of residents of Winnipeg North have brought forward many different petitions on this same subject.

The petitioners call for the national government, with the support from the Prime Minister, to develop, in co-operation with stakeholders, a national pharmacare system so prescribed medicines will be more affordable for all Canadians.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with a garbage truck of plastic entering our waterways every minute, it is an honour for me to table this petition on behalf of my hometown residents of Tofino.

The petitioners call on the government to work with the provinces, local governments and indigenous communities to develop a strategy to combat plastic pollution from entering our waterways. They are looking for regulations to reduce plastic debris discharged from stormwater outfalls, to stop the industrial use of microplastics and to regulate consumer and industrial use of single-use plastics. They are looking for permanent and dedicated annual funding for the cleanup of derelict and ghost fishing gear; community-led projects to clean up plastics and debris on our shores, banks, beaches and other aquatic peripheries; and education outreach campaigns.

The petitioners call for the government to support my motion, Motion No. 151, to ban plastics and to come up with a strategy to eliminate plastic pollution from entering our waterways.

PENSIONS

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to present a petition on behalf of the residents primarily from my community of Nelson, British Columbia. The petition concerns Bill C-27.

People have put away money from deferred wages into their pension plans for years and they are very much concerned about the possibility that these defined benefit plans will be changed to target benefit plans.

The petitioners therefore ask that the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-27, which is an act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act of 1985.

● (1210)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, because bulk anchorages are having environmental and property impacts and risking the sport fishing industry on the Salish Sea, the petitioners from Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and Gabriola Island, where I live, urge the transport minister to not approve five new bulk anchorages proposed in a quite pristine area of the island. They cite impacts on forage fish and the food chain issues that come with that.

This reinforces testimony from Gabriolans against freighter anchorages at the transport committee this week. They pointed out that although bulk exports coming into port in Port Metro Vancouver had gone up 40%, the time that freighters were sitting at anchor had gone up 400% over the same period. We have a supply problem and they have specific solutions to fix it.

* * *

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.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-83, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Government Orders

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak today in support of the bill in front of the House. It is an important step in the reformation and the improvement of our criminal justice system, in particular, our corrections facilities.

The proposed legislation will eliminate the practice of administrative segregation where inmates are confined to their cells for all but two hours a day, with little or no contact with other people and, most important, with little or no contact with rehabilitative programming, which is fundamental to the restoration of their presence in our society.

Under the new bill, people who need to be separated from the general inmate population for safety reasons will have at least double the amount of time out of their cells and they will have access to programs, interventions, mental health care and meaningful human contact with staff, volunteers, elders, chaplains, visitors and other compatible inmates.

This is good policy and it is also necessary in light of two court decisions declaring administrative segregation unconstitutional, which are scheduled to take effect in the next few months.

In addition, the bill would enshrine in law the clinical autonomy of health care providers in the corrections system. It would create patient advocates, called for through the Ashley Smith inquest, to ensure people in correctional institutions receive the medical care they need. It would also codify the principles stemming from the Supreme Court's Gladue decision, which requires systemic and background factors be considered in decision-making, particularly when it involves indigenous inmates.

This is fundamental to ensure that the majority of inmates who eventually return to society after they have served time are reintegrated in a healthy way, in a productive way, in a human way, in a compassionate way so recidivism is reduced if not eliminated. The absence of these interventions historically and the impact of the absence of them on indigenous peoples have been catastrophic. The rate of recidivism is one of the challenges we have to deal with as a result of the problems we face by not providing this care inside corrections facilities.

The bill would also give victims the right to an audio recording of their parole hearings, whether or not they attend in person, and it also allows for new search technology to be introduced to the system to once again keep inmates safe and, in this case, corrections officers safe as well.

Bill C-83 would make correctional institutions safer, and it will make all of us safer, because we are all better off and better protected when people who have served their sentences return to our communities prepared to lead safe, productive, law-abiding lives.

The response of the Conservatives to the legislation is incredibly disappointing. They have almost made a parody of themselves. They put out a press release on Tuesday that called solitary confinement "common and legitimate" despite what the Supreme Court said. For a party that prides itself on law and order, members sure have a tough time listening to the orders of the court system, especially the Supreme Court. It is a pattern.

In other words, the Conservatives go right past arguing that segregation does not meet the international definition of solitary confinement. They are now saying that solitary confinement in and of itself, which the United Nations calls torture if it lasts longer than 15 days, is a good thing. They are not interested in trying to minimize or restrict the use of segregation in Canadian prisons. In fact, they would be fine if it were routine and more widespread. The Conservatives apparently yearn for the good old days of medieval dungeons.

As someone whose parents are Australian, the relationship we have to the corrections system as a culture in the country where my family comes from is a little different. The lack of compassion for the conditions in the prison system traditionally led precisely to recidivism in Australia. The Australian prison system was one of the harshest on the continent at the time it was in operation during the period of transport and the punishment destroyed people's lives.

The corrections facility is not about destroying the lives of people; it is about protecting the public. It is about rehabilitating those who have offended and focusing on reintegration, because not every sentence is a life sentence. When convicted individuals return to our communities, we have a responsibility to try to make them safer, both to themselves and to society at large.

The Conservatives are back in the period of transport as far as one can tell. I do not know where the member who made those statements received his criminology degree, if he has one, but I would bet he is referring to a phenomenon that is being reported by people who are homeless. There is a belief somehow that people try to get into jail because it is so nice. It just is not true.

The reality is that the poverty people are subjected to, the lack of a housing strategy, the lack of supports for people, particularly indigenous people in urban settings, is one of the reasons people have no alternative to prison systems at times. However, no one wants to be in jail. People want an opportunity to have good health and to lead productive lives. The corrections system has to respond to this. We cannot, we must not and we should not make it worse for people, because the impact on the larger population will be present one day.

● (1215)

If the Conservatives, who now suddenly seem preoccupied by poverty and the lack of housing are really focused on these issues, I invite them to support the national housing strategy, the poverty reduction strategy. I invite them to support the initiatives and the advancements we have made in indigenous housing, health care and education. We create a safer country by ensuring we do not have crime to begin with. However, when people fall afoul of the law and end up in corrections facilities, we have a responsibility as a society and as a country to make things right and to ensure that when people are released from corrections facilities, they do not present an even greater danger to the public.

Government Orders

When we listen to the Conservatives focus on razor wire and bars and not on the rehabilitation of people who have made terrible mistakes in some cases, we are left speechless as to how they are making society safer through a rehabilitation program. It is not just about punishment; it is also about corrections. That is why the system is called a corrections facility.

One of the things we are investing in through this program is ensuring that the prisons and the correction facilities themselves are safer places for guards to work. When segregation is overused and is used as a tool of punishment, the prisons become more dangerous. It is not fair to corrections workers to jack up the system in such a way that their lives are put at risk as they go about doing their critically important work.

The Conservative public safety critic has caricatured these new units by saying that the inmates will be invited to cuddle together in the exercise yard. The way in which the Conservatives talk about the corrections system is beyond the experience of anyone I have ever talked to who has been through it. Nonetheless they perpetuate these myths and they do so at the expense of not only the correction facilities, but also the officers who work there and ultimately society at large.

The truth is that the proposed legislation will create units that are highly structured and secure and within these secure settings, inmates will interact with staff, volunteers, elders, chaplains and visitors. They will get the health care they need to become more productive citizens upon release. They will only interact with other inmates if compatible and that interaction can happen safely and is part of a restorative justice process. It is about making people safer and making our country safer.

The Conservative critic also said in his speech that the current system responded to the needs of prisoners. It does not. More important, it does not respond to society's needs.

We need safer communities and that means reintegration has to be a focus of correction to ensure that when people are released, they do not do more harm to communities.

Most people incarcerated in our federal prison system have some combination of mental illness, addiction, a history of physical or sexual abuse and an upbringing in poverty. None of these excuse the behaviour that put them in jail. If people break the law, they face the consequences. Sentences are real.

However, while they are in custody, we can either leave them to languish in conditions that might aggravate their problems and make them more dangerous upon release or we can take measures within a secure correctional environment to reduce the risk they pose and increase the safety of our communities.

Bill C-83 is all about that. It is why it has my strong support. It is why we are focused on ensuring that the criminal justice system is not just tough on crime, but is also smart on crime. We are using the best practices from around the world to ensure we have the best results after incarceration.

Absolutely, people should be jailed for serious crimes. Nobody disagrees with that. Anybody who pretends there is a party in the House that disagrees is fooling folks. The reality is this. When

individuals are released from prison, when they are exited from corrections and they are reintegrate into society, we have a moral and a legal obligation to ensure they do not reoffend. That requires us addressing mental health issues, addiction issues and other underlying issues which might have been part of the factor as to what put them in prison to begin with.

This is a good bill. It deserves the support of all parties in the House.

● (1220)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I head the parliamentary secretary misstate the law. On more than one occasion, the parliamentary secretary made reference to a Supreme Court of Canada decision. In fact, there is no Supreme Court of Canada decision. There are two lower court decisions, one a Supreme Court of British Columbia decision and another an Ontario Superior Court of Justice decision, neither of which, by the way, ordered a blanket prohibition on segregation.

Could the hon. parliamentary secretary clarify the record.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, if I misidentified the Supreme Court in this case, I apologize and stand by the correct record as the member opposite pointed out.

However, the issue is this. Segregation has an extraordinarily damaging impact on prisoners who are subjected to it, especially when it is used as punishment and extends beyond 15 days. We have had case after case of people where the damage done to them has been contained while they remain in the corrections system, but when they are released into the larger population, the crimes they commit are even more horrendous than the ones that put them in jail to begin with.

We cannot allow a prison system or a justice system to make criminals more dangerous, and when it does, we have a responsibility to act. We also have to take into account the good evidence showing that if we do not address the underlying issues, extended segregation and segregation as punishment without support for the mental health or addictions issues that have put people into that situation, we will not get the results we need to make communities safe.

Being tough on crime for the sake of being political about it is one thing, but if we are going to be smart on crime, we need to end crime and the risk to populations and communities. The evidence is very clear that we have to do better with the use of segregation. It has damaged people and put communities and people at risk.

Government Orders

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a resident of a community that includes the Elgin—Middlesex Detention Centre, where, if anyone checks the news, they would find lots of information about what is happening there. I have talked to some of the people who work there, and I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary's thoughts on what they had to say. My friend Jason said, "No profession has hit the toilet [like] corrections in the last several years. Violence, contraband, assault on staff are skyrocketing. Why? Total lack of consequence for behaviour. Eliminating segregation has handcuffed us. Now, no question segregation exacerbates mental health, but we have no choice. Violent offenders continue assaulting, and easy victims continue being preyed upon. We continually have people making changes based on concepts, not reality."

Throughout these consultations, we heard that the government has not spoken with corrections officers. My daughter, who is also in corrections, says this bill is hugely flawed and that she feels unsafe when these things are going on. What does the parliamentary secretary have to say about that, and how is he going to answer to people like my friend Jason, who are concerned about their own safety and segregation being taken away?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, regardless of whether or not they are working in corrections or any federal institutions, workers have a right and an expectation to be treated fairly and to have their safety protected by a government that passes laws. Clearly, the status quo is not safe. Clearly, the current situation in the corrections system is one that is both dangerous to the workers there and harmful to the persons being incarcerated. Change is needed, which is what this bill presents.

This bill presents a path forward that would not allow confinement to be used in a way that has been abusive to some and has intensified the violence and risks to corrections workers. It presents a new regime that would provide a middle path forward. It would allow prisoners to be isolated if they present a risk to staff, other prisoners or themselves, but also allow services to be provided to those people so they can stop being a risk to other people. In particular, the absence of mental health services for indigenous populations in prison systems has been shown to be one of the most significant causes of violence in the prison system. That situation is the status quo at present. We cannot allow that to continue. It is inhumane. It is also really bad justice, creating even more risk, not just for the workers in the corrections system but also for society as a whole when these people get out as damaged goods. When they go into prison and come out worse than they went in, they go back into society and create a greater risk to others. We have to turn that around, and that is what this bill addresses.

• (1225)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be joining the debate on Bill C-83. I have been intently listening over the last few days to the debate and the argument being made by the Liberal government on the need for this. Several members on the government side have now said that administrative segregation, solitary confinement, is simply unconstitutional. In fact, the parliamentary secretary just said that again and was rightfully corrected by the member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

I will read into the record exactly what Justice Leask said in paragraph 534 of his B.C. Supreme Court decision. He said, "The plaintiffs do not argue that administrative segregation as a practice is unconstitutional", circa section 12, which is the prohibition in our charter against cruel and unusual punishment, only that it is unconstitutional under a certain set of conditions. The judge, in fact, said no, he did not accept the argument based on section 12 and that it was not unconstitutional to be used.

What Bill C-83 would do instead is rename administrative segregation, which is just words, as if the punishment is just being told that one is going into solitary confinement.

It would double the hours and makes additional changes that would make it more difficult for corrections officers to look after violent prisoners in their workplace. Let us be honest. Corrections is not the workplace of prisoners; it is the workplace of guards. Their needs should actually come first. Guards in the prison system have agreed to take on violent criminals on our behalf to ensure the safety of the public.

I am not saying that prisoners should be treated poorly. I heard the parliamentary secretary mention before that Conservatives believe in some kind of medieval dungeon system. That is absolutely ridiculous. Hyperbole is something I have come to expect, particularly from the member. Hyperbole does not belong in the House. That is not what we are talking about here. We are talking about a reasonable use of administrative segregation, the way these two courts have determined it should be used. That is not what Bill C-83 would do. It would actually modify it completely.

There is an additional issue we should look at, which is the financials. If we look at the Correctional Service Canada departmental plan 2018-19, signed off by the Minister of Public Safety, we see that over the next few years, there will actually be a drop in real financial resources of 8.8%. In real terms, Correctional Service Canada will have less money to deal with a bigger workload, because let us be frank, this will lead to a bigger workload for prison guards. We are asking them to take violent criminals out of solitary confinement, and I will keep calling it solidarity confinement or administrative segregation, for longer periods of time. We have heard other members on this side of the House mention what exactly is involved. Oftentimes, it is a group of guards who escort a particular criminal for their time out of segregation.

Government Orders

An additional point I want to raise is that in the same departmental plan, over the next two or three years, we see a reduction in full-time equivalent employees of 150 individuals. On one hand, in Bill C-83, the government is saying that it wants to do more. It wants more mental health services. That is great. It wants more for our indigenous prison population. That is great. I am very thankful that it is actually looking after it in that lens. However, where are the financial resources? Where are the people resources to match the lofty language we are hearing in this place? Again, the Liberals say one thing and do another. That is the most I have come to expect from the government.

There is a Yiddish proverb that says, "God punishes but man takes revenge." The prison system should not be about revenge. It should be about reform. I fervently believe that.

Many members know this, but I studied in the United States for my master's degree. Part of it was local and state administration, where we learned about the prison system in the United States. Every single state is different, but I will give members, as a corollary, the debate that was happening in 2017 in the State of Massachusetts, which has been using solitary confinement. The debate was this: Is 10 years too long to keep someone in solitary confinement? I think all of us here would say, absolutely. That is absolutely wrong. It destroys people's lives. It destroys their mental health. There is ample evidence of that.

• (1230)

However, what we are talking about in Canada is 15 days. What the government is proposing to do is burden prison guards with having to care for sometimes violent criminals, doubling the amount of time they will spend outside, on top of the other exemptions they will provide for them, without providing sufficient financial and people resources in a plan the Minister of Public Safety himself has signed off on.

That causes me to wonder why, who is approving this legislation on the government side and who is approving the departmental plan. I would assume the Minister of Public Safety would have been well versed in the departmental plan that he signed off on and now this piece of legislation I know will lead to greater costs down the road, both in personnel and in financial resources. Personnel do not work for free.

I have a great concern more generally with the Government of Canada's behaviour. On the one hand, it talks a good game and puts out flowery language. We heard about the housing strategy. There is no money in it until late into future governments that will actually have to do something about the so-called housing strategy. There are news releases and pretty photo ops. In fact, the Auditor General of Canada, in the last report, accused the government of putting photo ops ahead of doing anything. That is pretty typical now for the Government of Canada.

We have the Auditor General slamming the government for its behaviour on photo ops, public relations, its public image management in a government report, so we know there is something wrong. It is pretty typical. The Liberals have done this constantly. During the election campaign, they said they had costed out the so-called tax on the rich, which would be paid off by the so-called middle-income bracket tax cut that all of us here enjoyed and that those earning less

than \$45,000 got zero. They got nothing. The working poor got nothing.

However, the Liberals talked a good game. Then the Department of Finance numbers came out and they were wrong again. They failed at it again. They lost money by the scheme of fleecing the rich, so called, in a vain attempt to try to win public support on the backs of others. It is the bait and switch that we have seen in the House of Commons on a consistent set of issues, and Bill C-83 just happens to be the latest one.

Many of my Conservative colleagues were not calling for a return to medieval dungeons or a return to house segregation. We have heard of the cases where people have died in administrative segregation because it was misused, there were no good rules surrounding when, how and to whom it should apply. What Liberals are proposing with this piece of legislation is completely taking it apart. We know, by looking at the departmental plan, that they have not done their homework. Again, that is pretty typical of the government.

They have not done their homework, they have not consulted with the guards and I am wondering why not. Why would one not ask the men and women in the workplace? This is where they go on a consistent basis. We talk so much in this House about how we work and the type of work environment we want here, but we are going to make it more difficult for prison guards to do their work in their work environment? Prisoners are supposed to be there temporarily to ensure the safety of the public and for rehabilitation. The guards will possibly spend their entire lives there because this is where they work and we are going to make it more difficult. There will be less personnel at Correctional Service Canada by 2020-21 and there will be a real cut of 8.8% in financial resources. I am not the one saying that. That is in the Minister of Public Safety's plan. That is what he has put forward.

I will not be supporting this bill because there is nothing to it. It is a bunch of words on paper that Liberals have put together. They have misapplied the two court rulings and provided no financial or people resources to make it happen. It is bad legislation, it is poorly thought out and it is poor administration on the government's side.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that I only have a minute or so to pose a question when I could probably use 10 or 20 minutes to counter the misinformation the member has put on the record. We have heard a couple of times from the Conservatives, for example, that body scans only apply to prisoners, which is not the case. They constantly say in their speeches that correctional officers were not consulted, which is just not the case.

Does the member not believe that when members stand to speak, facts do matter? When a member makes a statement that correctional officers were not consulted, when they were consulted, should the member be saying that? Should members say that body scans only apply to prisoners, and a number of Conservatives said that, when it is not the case, when visitors will be subjected on occasion to body scans? Do facts matter when opposition members stand to speak on legislation?

Government Orders

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals care so much about the environment the guards will be working in and care truthfully for their opinion, one would think that in the 22 priorities listed in Correctional Service Canada's plan they would actually mention the safety and work environment for prison guards.

I will let the member know, maybe he has not read the plan, which is quite possible as they get attached to the estimates and many members forget about them, but out of the 22 priorities, not one mentions the safety of the guards working in corrections services.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to this whole debate.

We have issues with criminal justice in this country where we have murderers and rapists going free because the justice minister has not appointed enough judges. We have 160 ISIS terrorists who have returned and are wandering free, but only had 10 charges laid.

When I see the myriad of things that the government could have brought, the bill before us would address 340 people who are currently in segregation. It just seems like it should not be such a big priority. Would the member agree?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I would absolutely agree with the member for Sarnia—Lambton. She is absolutely right. What we should be doing is looking after the public safety issue that we have raised multiple times now in the House with returning ISIS terrorists.

Let me frank here. ISIS, as a combat unit, as a combat effective force, has been defeated on the ground. Those people today who are choosing to return, who are asking to return, are not returning because they have a change of heart. They are not returning because they have seen the horrible atrocities being committed in eastern Syria and Iraq. They are returning because the people who kept them safe in their territories have been militarily defeated by western powers, by the Russian Federation, by Assad's forces and by Kurdish forces on the ground.

Many of these people we know very little about. We do not know what type of combat training they received. That is a true public safety concern and should be a top priority for the department instead of something that will look after 300 prisoners in administrative segregation.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's very well-researched and thoughtful remarks on this.

What I found most astounding is that earlier we had a parliamentary secretary misquote the law of Canada, suggesting a lower court decision was actually that of the Supreme Court of Canada. I am glad he corrected the record.

What I would like my colleague to comment on is the very fact that the government, on many things, is of two faces. It has a bill before the House that it did not even consult front-line correctional workers on, the justice department is actually appealing the decisions in the lower courts with respect to these issues, yet it has a bill before Parliament.

We have heard a lot of rhetoric today in the House with respecting the courts. My friend, Peter Van Loan, was quoted at length by the Minister of Public Safety in an almost embarrassing fashion.

Does my colleague think that there should be a bill in the House when there has not been comprehensive consultation with the people impacted, and while the government is appealing lower court decisions on the very issue of the bill? Should this not wait until the courts have determined the full rights and rules with respect to solitary confinement?

• (1240)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, as the member mentioned, this matter is before the courts and so I cannot give further commentary.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on second reading of Bill C-83, which would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

[*Translation*]

As the Minister of Public Safety told us, our government's top priority is protecting Canadians from natural disasters, threats to national security, and, of course, crime. We are doing a number of things to protect Canadian communities from criminal activity.

[*English*]

One of the most significant things we can do to enhance public safety is make our correctional system as effective as possible in dealing with people who have committed crimes so when their sentences are over they do not commit new ones. Bill C-83, the legislation before us today, will significantly strengthen the ability of our corrections system to achieve that objective and keep Canadians safe.

Following recent court decisions on administrative segregation, Bill C-83 proposes to eliminate segregation and establish structured intervention units, SIUs, which will allow offenders to be separated from mainstream inmate population as required while maintaining their access to rehabilitative programming, interventions and mental health care. If passed, the bill would allow Canada to take a major step forward to having a modern evidence-based correctional system that understands clearly the nexus between the mental health of offenders and the safety of communities.

As colleagues may not be familiar with the concept of administrative segregation, let me take a moment to provide the chamber with a foundational understanding of what it means.

The Correctional Service of Canada defines “administrative segregation” as “the separation of an inmate to prevent association with other inmates, when specific legal requirements are met, other than pursuant to a disciplinary decision.” Even now, while administrative segregation remains a tool that the Correctional Service of Canada has at its disposal, the objective is always to ensure that it is only used for the shortest period of time necessary when there is no reasonable or safe alternative. Clearly, isolating someone almost all day, every day is an extreme measure that must be used rarely and with caution.

Government Orders

In 1955, the United Nations congress on the prevention of crime and treatment of offenders was convened. There, delegates adopted the first iteration of the standard minimal rules for the treatment of prisoners. These represent the very first universally acknowledged minimal standards for the management of prison facilities and the treatment of prisoners. They inform the development of prison policies and practices the world over. They stood the test of time, serving as a standard-bearer for nearly half a century.

In 2011, it was decided that these ought to be updated, and by 2015 a new set of revised rules had been crafted. In December 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the revised rules, known as the “Nelson Mandela rules”, to honour the legacy of the late president of South Africa, who spent 27 years in prison in the course of his struggle for global human rights, equity, democracy and the promotion of a culture of peace. This is important to understand, because one of the primary updates that were made when the Mandela rules were released in 2015 was in the area of discipline and the use of solitary confinement. For the first time, solitary confinement is clearly defined and strict limitations are recommended for its use.

The Mandela rules define “solitary” as “the confinement of inmates for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact.” They prohibit prolonged solitary confinement of more than 15 consecutive days.

Many have argued that these kinds of conditions have the potential to be damaging to the mental health of inmates, with outcomes such as claustrophobia, anger, depression, hallucinations, insomnia, and obsessive ideation or fixation on dying. I am sure all members in this chamber will agree that these outcomes are not ones that we want to see for inmates, who I will remind members are, by and large, going to be released into Canadian society. It is in no one's interest, least of all the general public's, for offenders to enter a correctional institution and come out worse off than when they went in. Although the Mandela rules are not binding on Canada or any other UN member country, they are an important source of guidance and information.

We know that we can always strive to do better when it comes to our criminal justice system and the safety of our communities. That is the spirit behind this bill. Under this new legislation, SIUs would be established to provide the necessary resources and expertise to address the safety and security risks of inmates who cannot be managed safely within the mainstream inmate population. Inmates in an SIU would receive structured interventions and programming tailored to their specific situation, have an opportunity for a minimum of four hours a day outside of their cell, have an opportunity for at least two hours a day of meaningful human contact and receive continued programming to help them progress toward their correctional plan objectives.

At the end of the day, all members of this place must remember this. Almost all federal offenders will return to the community one day. Safe and humane custody and access to programs and services while incarcerated increase the chance that offenders will come back as law-abiding contributing members of society. This creates greater public safety for all Canadians.

It is for these reasons that I support Bill C-83 and encourage all members to do the same.

• (1245)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has brought up some very good points. There are some parts of Bill C-83 that we support, like the scanners that we would like to see a bit further.

Earlier, we asked two different members of the Liberal government about whether they had done the costs. We note in the Liberals' departmental plans that even before wage increases for our correctional officers it is showing, with inflation, about an 8.8% cut in spending. We asked the parliamentary secretary and she said to ignore that because they have spent so much in the last two years. I introduced a Library of Parliament report that shows they actually cut spending to Correctional Service in their first three years of government. We asked another Liberal member of Parliament, who said that the Conservatives cut money to border services. I would be happy to table this report that shows the Liberals have cut money to CBSA since they came to power.

Has the member across the way done the study on how much this is going to cost in services? Where are they going to find the money to provide the extra officers to escort the prisoners and to renovate the prisons, when they are showing in their own departmental plan that they are cutting resources to Correctional Services? This is not a partisan question. This is a safety issue for our corrections officers. How are we going to provide resources to them when we are showing at the same time that we are burdening them with extra work, but we are cutting their resources in the Liberals' plan?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. With respect, specifically, to Canada Border Services, there have been significant increases under this government, so I am not sure I can trust the hon. member's numbers. On the other side of things, what is the cost—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Library of Parliament.

Mr. Chris Bittle: I hear the member calling out from the other side. I am sure he is excited to ask another question.

That being said, what is the cost of doing nothing? The Conservative plan is for us to have more hardened criminals. Knowing that almost all of these people are going to be released, we want a safer population with a lower recidivism rate, and this is a bill that would achieve that. It would lead to lower costs for the taxpayers at the end of the line, and that is the important thing and it would better public safety.

Government Orders

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for St. Catharines alluded to two lower court decisions and, typical of the Liberals in trying to justify their legislation, they argue that the courts made them do it. In that vein, I was wondering if the member for St. Catharines could explain why the government is appealing those decisions.

• (1250)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, as the law has not changed, the government has an obligation to proceed with the justice system and proceed to appealing those decisions, as the law that exists on the books is not something that the government necessarily wants to see. We do want to see changes, and we appreciate and respect the court's decision, but as a matter of course and a matter of principle, the appeal has to go forward. We hope that Parliament moves quickly, and I hope the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton will support this bill and we can get it to the Senate as quickly as possible.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, juxtaposing the member for St. Catharines' remarks with question period is really what I want to talk about. Here, we have a case where this bill deals with subjects currently under appeal by the federal government, by the justice department, for lower court decisions in two provinces, namely the B.C. Supreme Court. The very subject matter of solitary confinement is under appeal. Therefore, is it appropriate in this House for us to be discussing something that is currently before the courts?

We heard repeatedly today from the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness what we should not be discussing in this House. He quoted my friend, Peter Van Loan, at length about it, yet several Liberal members are referring to court decisions that are leading to this bill and the substantive elements in this bill. Could the member square how the Liberals are more than happy to talk about ongoing court proceedings in this subject, but not when it comes to the due process rights of one of our top-ranking military officers?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the subject of due process, it is ironic that the Conservatives will stand up and ask questions about that because they have shown time and again their unwillingness to consider that for other individuals. That being said, this is a decision that has been made, it is a decision that is public and it is a decision that we can talk about frequently. Cases that are before the courts, cases that are under criminal investigation and cases that the Public Prosecution Service is dealing with are an entirely different ball game. It is shameful that the hon. member would attempt to confuse these things.

At the end of the day, this is a policy decision by the government. It is a bill that would increase public safety, and something we should all be moving forward on for the safety of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be rising in the House to speak to Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another act. Before I go any further, I want to express my unqualified admiration and appreciation for the incredible and very important work done by the employees of the Correctional Service of Canada and Drummond Institution, especially the mental health professionals.

I have had the opportunity to meet with their union representatives on several occasions to learn more about what they are dealing with. What they go through every day is not easy. I take my hat off to them for doing such a terrific job. They deserve the highest praise.

I should note that these employees have been affected by the infamous Phoenix pay system problems. In 2017, 60% of the employees of Drummond Institution had issues with the Phoenix pay system. Sadly, the people at Drummond Institution have had a rough time, whether because of their poor working conditions or because of the Phoenix pay system fiasco.

Again, I thank the people at Drummond Institution who work hard to keep our communities safe while inmates serve their sentences. They also do all the work involved in rehabilitating the inmates so that they can contribute to our society and our community when they leave prison.

I now want to get into the context around Bill C-83 because that has an impact on today's debate. By the minister's own admission, the bill was only ever meant to address some of the concerns expressed by the courts in their rulings.

First, the Supreme Court of British Columbia explicitly said that there are not enough tools for ensuring that a lawyer is present during administrative segregation hearings. Inmates are put in administrative segregation without independent third-party oversight, which would allow for a second opinion before proceeding.

It also mentioned the inhumane conditions resulting from overuse of administrative segregation and the fact that a predetermined time limit on the use of administrative segregation had been ignored. That is extremely important. There has to be a limited number of days and even hours during which inmates can remain in administrative segregation.

That ties in with part of the ruling from the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, which states that more than 48 hours in administrative segregation may cause serious and irreversible mental health problems. Earlier we were talking about rehabilitation. That is another very important aspect. When people have served their sentence and reintegrate into society, we do not want their mental health to be aggravated by their stay in prison. We want them to be rehabilitated so that they can contribute to our community in a positive and constructive way.

• (1255)

That is the most troubling part.

The use of administrative segregation has been found to be abusive by the correctional investigator countless times and in countless reports that he has published over the past decade.

In addition, some vulnerable populations, such as women with mental health issues and indigenous peoples, are overrepresented in administrative segregation. More than 42% of inmates in administrative segregation are indigenous. This situation is obviously quite problematic.

Government Orders

What exactly does this bill do? We are concerned that it is nothing more than a repackaged administrative segregation system. The name is different, but inmates can still be kept in segregation for an indeterminate period of time, for up to 20 hours a day. The government claims that this is a big step forward, since the maximum will be 20 hours instead of 22, but that is essentially the same. This is obviously just window dressing.

This can cause permanent damage to inmates' mental health. These inmates will be returning to society. We do not want their mental health to be permanently damaged. On the contrary, we want them to be rehabilitated and to reintegrate into society.

I am a teacher by profession. Some of my colleagues teach in the adult education program at the Drummond Institution to help inmates do everything they can to improve their situation when they return to society. These are good things that are happening in our correctional institutions. It is important to mention them and to point out all the work that is being done, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech.

The current situation is very difficult. Very painful things have happened. There was the tragic death of Ashley Smith and the subsequent recommendations from the coroner. In June 2017, 399 federal inmates were in administrative segregation and 94 of them had been there for over 90 consecutive days. Over 90 consecutive days in administrative segregation can have an impact on a person's mental health. It is just not right.

Instead, we need to improve the situation in our correctional institutions. How is it that we still have overcrowded prisons? How is it that we still have a lack of mental health care professionals? How is it that there is a lack of programs for inmates so that they can get the training they need to find jobs when they get out of prison?

That is extremely important. We need a different approach to administrative segregation, with limits and external oversight so that there is a different point of view from that of prison workers.

In recent years, the two rulings that I mentioned earlier have shown how important it is to implement legislation that is much more structured than Bill C-83, which will do little to change the situation.

Many studies have shown that prolonged administrative segregation can trigger or aggravate certain psychiatric symptoms, such as hallucinations, panic attacks, paranoia, depression, impulsiveness, hypersensitivity to external stimuli, and more. It can increase the number of suicide attempts or make inmates suicidal.

•(1300)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been an interesting part of this debate to watch the opposition parties. Both the Conservatives and the New Democrats oppose this legislation, but for very different reasons.

I can somewhat understand the Conservative side. I disagree with it, but I somewhat understand it. On the other hand, the NDP makes absolutely no sense at all. There is something really wrong with this picture and why the NDP—

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am wondering if you could inform the House of the amount of time this debate has taken place.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Karen Vecchio): We will calculate that amount, and get back to the House.

We will continue with the parliamentary secretary .

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that was an interesting interjection, I must say.

What I was getting at is that if we look at the legislation, it is very progressive. I would have thought the New Democrats would have favoured the change from segregated units to having services and programming, such as health services. There are other aspects, such as the body scanners. There is the access to audio for victims who are not attending parole hearings. There is a lot of good stuff in this legislation.

Could my colleague across the way identify precisely what in this legislation makes the NDP oppose it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, earlier on I identified everything wrong with this bill. First, the government should not be tabling a bill that does not address the court rulings. This bill will be deemed unconstitutional too. That is the first problem.

The other problem with this bill is that the significant, express demands for external oversight and monitoring of inmate segregation placements were not accepted. That is an extremely serious problem. In recent years, some people have still ended up spending more than 90 days in segregation without external oversight. Just imagine the psychological and mental health consequences of spending more than 90 days in segregation.

•(1305)

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very cogent, thoughtful and clear speech about the things he would like to see changed in this bill.

One of the things that troubles me is that the government is promising that via this legislation, all of a sudden there are going to be additional resources for inmates that would resolve the kinds of problems that we have run into where in many cases someone who is completely mentally stable becomes unstable as a result of a long period of incarceration and solitary confinement.

In the case of Eddie Snowshoe, he was sent to a healing centre with the presumption that all 300-plus first nations in Canada practice exactly the same cultural practices. He wanted to leave because he said he could not relate to what was going on.

Government Orders

Could my colleague speak to the issue of there being no promised exponential increase in dollars to ensure that we have more healing centres? Maybe the government will bring back the prison farms. Perhaps it will give greater consideration to communications between prisons, so inmates do not start again at zero in solitary confinement.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. I want to start by expressing my deepest gratitude to everyone working at Drummond Institution, including the correctional officers and all other staff, especially the mental health professionals.

What is important, and not just for this bill, which fails to address the court ruling, is that we also need to do something about prison overcrowding and the shortage of health care professionals and other professionals.

My colleague also mentioned that we need these resources to reduce the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples in our prisons and in segregation. We also need to reduce the overrepresentation of people with mental illness. Most of the women who end up in segregation are women with mental illness. We need to provide services. Segregation is not a service that improves overrepresentation of women with mental illness or overrepresentation of indigenous peoples.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, the previous chair occupant, the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, received a point of order from the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George relating to the time that had elapsed in the debate on the bill currently before the House. In response to that point of order, it was seven hours and 52 minutes at that point.

We will now resume debate with the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-83.

One of the things that I find truly remarkable about this bill is that specific measures were taken for the rehabilitation process of inmates with mental health problems.

Before becoming an MP, I promised myself to go see things that I could not see as a regular citizen. The first such thing was to visit a military base and meet the men and women who are committed to serving the country.

The second was to visit a prison. I knew that the reality in penitentiaries was quite different from that of ordinary Canadians. In December 2016, I had the privilege of visiting a penitentiary and that experience had a real impact on me. I saw the conditions that criminals are living in. There certainly are people who deserve to be there, but they will leave prison one day. It is important to provide all the necessary services to give them the best chances to reintegrate into civil society.

I visited two men's prisons. The inmates not only have trouble obeying the law, but also have mental health issues. I am very proud that this bill will give them access to services that can help them

learn to deal with their mental illness. I think a holistic, comprehensive solution to all this is key to ensuring that people have a chance to deal with their problems. In many cases, mental illness is what led these people to break the law.

That is why I am very proud to participate in this debate and support this bill. The program will enable inmates to reintegrate thanks to better services that help them deal with their mental illness.

The second reason I am so proud to participate in developing this program is that it will give us an opportunity to take a close look at issues affecting indigenous populations. As we all know, 4% of Canada's population is indigenous. I went to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, to visit the penitentiary, where the majority of the population is indigenous. In general, penitentiary populations are between 26% and 28% indigenous.

● (1310)

That is six to seven times higher than their demographic weight, which I think indicates a number of things. First, we need to do better with respect to many issues affecting indigenous communities. Second, systemic discrimination exists in our criminal justice system. We need to do everything we can to tackle these issues. I was very proud to hear the speech given by the Minister of Justice last June, I think, when she was introducing Bill C-75. She said that we are going to try to address this, because it is extremely important.

As a black Canadian, I am well aware that people in the black community are also victims. There were a lot of black inmates in the prison I visited in 2016, even though it was in a very remote area of Saskatchewan. This also indicates that there is a problem with systemic discrimination in our justice system. We need to address and resolve these issues. I am proud to say that the provisions of this bill will give us the opportunity to ensure that all services are provided, which is very important and can improve the chances that these individuals will be able to successfully integrate into society. That is the goal.

We are not like some people who believe that humans can be treated like animals, that you can put them in a cage, lock the door and throw away the key. That is not acceptable. That is inhumane. That view is not worthy of a civilized society such as ours. We must ensure that we properly address these issues. When people break the law, there definitely will be consequences. Those people deserve to be in jail, but we must plan for and consider the day that they will get out of jail.

We cannot just punish them. We also have to teach them how to be members of our civilized society and how to be good citizens. In order to do that, we have an obligation to ensure that they receive all services they need to better adapt and better reintegrate into our society. I encourage all my colleagues who have not yet done so to follow my lead and visit a penitentiary or a prison.

Government Orders

That will change their minds. That will encourage members to focus on finding solutions that will help these people to get out of jail, learn their lesson and learn to obey the laws and customs of a civil society. If they do not, there will be consequences. However, we want to ensure that these people are ultimately well reintegrated into our society. That is why I am delighted to learn that we will have services to try to help these people address their mental health issues.

• (1315)

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all sides in politics can sometimes resort to easy catch phrases to summarize the views of their contemporaries. When I hear “locking up people in cages” and things like that, I do not think it describes some of the valid concerns about this bill mainly because part of our criminal process, as covered in section 718 of the Criminal Code under “Purpose and Principles of Sentencing”, means that protection of the public, separation of a dangerous offender from the public, has to be part of the discussion. Once we have incarcerated someone for a serious crime, particularly ones with violent tendencies, we also have to consider the safety and wellness of our correctional service officers, uniformed service people who go through tremendous stress in that job.

When it comes to a bill that has not properly consulted correctional service officers, they not putting people in cages, they are detaining people, protecting the public as part of our criminal justice system. As important as rehabilitation is, one of the principles of sentencing, equally as important is separation of the offender. That is a principle in the Criminal Code as well to protect the public from dangerous offenders.

Will the member commit, as part of this bill, to speak more with correctional service members to hear their concerns about a top-down approach when it comes to solitary confinement or procedures within the penal system?

• (1320)

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Ferguson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Durham for his questions and comments. I appreciate him asking his question in a reasonable tone of voice.

However, I do not want him to misrepresent my comments by saying that we are going to lock people up in their cells. Yes, there must be consequences, and we have to protect not only society, but also our correctional officers. We agree on that. Actions must have consequences. However, with the exception of those deemed impossible to rehabilitate, most inmates eventually get out of prison. That means we are responsible for ensuring that they are prepared to return to society and the mainstream population.

That is why I am so proud of our bill. It will give them access to services, specifically mental health services. Whether their mental health issues are lifelong or developed while they were incarcerated, we have to meet those needs because they will go back into society one day.

I am sure that, like me, my colleague from Durham and all of our other colleagues want these people to be prepared to reintegrate and become citizens once again.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, I will let the hon. member know that there are only about seven minutes remaining in the time for government orders this afternoon, but he will have the remaining time when the House next debates the question.

The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

While there are some measures in the bill that are positive, on the whole, I cannot support Bill C-83. I cannot support Bill C-83, because important aspects of the bill, significant aspects of the bill, put criminals ahead of public safety. They put criminals ahead of our correctional officers, employees in correctional institutions. These are folks who work in some of the most difficult and dangerous work environments in Canada. Indeed, one could say that Bill C-83 is part of a Liberal scheme to put criminals first.

Perhaps the biggest problem I have with Bill C-83 is the fact that it would eliminate, right across the board, in all circumstances, both administrative and disciplinary segregation.

Under section 31 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, segregation is a last resort. The institutional head may only order that an inmate be segregated when there are reasonable grounds under one of three criteria: first, the inmate poses a security risk to the institution or to an individual in that institution; second, again as a last resort, there is a need to protect the integrity of an investigation; and third, it is necessary to protect the inmate from harm. Not only that, under section 31 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, an inmate must be released from segregation at the earliest opportunity.

If we listened to the speeches from members on the Liberal side and the NDP side, we would think it was something that occurred on a routine basis. In fact, when it comes to segregation, the criteria are high, the standard is high, and very few inmates are subjected to it.

Indeed, if one looks at the statistics, in 2014-15, 638 inmates across Canada were subject to administrative segregation. That number fell to 430 in 2016-17, and as of July 31, 2017, fewer than 300 inmates were subject to administrative segregation. The number of inmates who were subjected to disciplinary segregation is even lower: five in 2010-11 among male inmates, down to three in 2014-15; among female inmates, the number was zero, other than one year, 2012-13, when one female inmate was subjected to disciplinary segregation.

While the standard is high, and while it is only used in the rarest circumstances, make no mistake about it, segregation is an important tool to deal with, in some cases, the most dangerous and violent offenders in our institutions. Members do not have to take my word for it. They can take the word of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, who said, in regard to Bill C-83, “the new Bill C-83 must not sacrifice disciplinary segregation as a tool to deter violent behaviour.” This is the union that represents the men and women who work in correctional institutions.

However, instead of listening to them, the government ignored them. The government totally disregarded them and said that it had no choice, because the courts made it do it.

●(1325)

Balderdash, that the courts made the government do it. There are two court decisions. The parliamentary secretary said the Supreme Court of Canada made the government do it. He had to stand up in his place and admit there was no Supreme Court of Canada decision. However, neither of the lower court decisions contemplates the elimination of segregation in all circumstances, nor does the 1996 Arbour commission, nor do the UN Mandela rules.

It seems the only people who want to eliminate it in all circumstances are the Liberals at the expense of the safety and security of correctional officers and at the expense of the safety and security of inmates. The government should be ashamed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton will have four minutes remaining in the time for his remarks when the House next resumes debate on the question that is before the House.

I see the hon. Government House Leader rising on a point of order.

* * *

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

BILL C-83—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (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 the second reading stage of Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another act.

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 stage.

Private Members' Business

●(1330)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

NATIONAL LOCAL FOOD DAY

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-281, An Act to establish a National Local Food Day, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

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

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 98, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 24, 2018, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 1:32 p.m.)

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