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(HANSARD)

Friday, March 1, 2019

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 1, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1005)

[*English*]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved that Bill C-83, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another Act, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that we have reached together the third reading stage of Bill C-83, legislation that would significantly strengthen our federal corrections system in a variety of important ways. It would make institutions safer both for employees and for inmates. It would enhance support for the victims of crime. By improving the ability of the Correctional Service of Canada to successfully rehabilitate and safely reintegrate people who have broken the law, this legislation will better protect Canadians in communities across the country.

The bill's main feature is the replacement of the current practice of administrative segregation with structured intervention units, or what is commonly known as SIUs. This is a new system that would allow inmates to be separated from the rest of the institution when that needs to happen for safety reasons, while giving them more time out of their cells, more meaningful contact with other people and greater access to mental health care and other rehabilitative interventions.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the members who participated in the meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, as well as the many individuals who appeared as witnesses or submitted briefs. The bill was reviewed in meticulous detail, and the participants were, by and large, motivated by a sincere desire to strengthen our correctional system.

[*English*]

In response to witness testimony, committee members made a number of important amendments. Strangely, the opposition has been arguing that this is somehow a bad thing. We make no apologies for being receptive to feedback and willing to let

legislators legislate. It is a testament to the strength of our parliamentary process that at least one amendment was accepted at committee stage from every party that made a submission during the committee's study of Bill C-83. There were even situations where an amendment was proposed by a member of one party and then subamended by a member of another party and then supported by both of them together. This stands in stark contrast to the way that things worked during the Harper days in Parliament. The Conservative government generally operated as though its bills were immaculately conceived and good-faith amendments were dismissed as heretical.

An hon. member: It is true.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: The opposition has correctly noted that is not our government's approach, and I am very proud of the fact that we have worked together on amendments.

Most of the amendments made at the committee responded directly to various questions that were raised by witnesses about whether the SIUs would work as intended. For example, there were concerns that the opportunity for time out of the cell might be offered in the middle of the night, which would obviously be unreasonable. Therefore, the bill now prohibits that.

There were concerns that inmates' interactions with other people would only occur through the doors or through the meal slots. The bill now makes clear that this is to be a truly exceptional practice.

Some witnesses thought that the provision relieving the Correctional Service, in exceptional circumstances, of the obligation to provide time out of the cell could be too broadly construed. Therefore, the bill now includes a specific list of the kinds of extraordinary circumstances that provision is meant to respond to, like natural disasters.

While the bill already allowed medical professionals to recommend that an inmate be removed from the SIU, some witnesses wanted greater assurance that such a recommendation would in fact be taken seriously. Therefore, the bill now requires that if the warden disagrees with the recommendation, the matter would be immediately elevated to a senior panel external to that particular institution.

These and other amendments preserve the fundamental objectives of Bill C-83, while providing more clarity and confidence that the new system would function as planned and accomplish the transformation that is intended.

There is one other thing that happened at committee that I would like to highlight.

Government Orders

Along with their amended version of the bill, committee members sent this House a specific recommendation, that as we go about replacing segregation, particular attention should be given to the circumstances at women's institutions. Under the existing system, women tend to be housed in segregation less frequently and for shorter periods of time than men, and there is almost always a serious mental health issue involved. Also, while segregation cells and regular cells are quite similar at men's institutions, the same is not the case for women.

I am, therefore, pleased to report that in line with the committee's recommendation, the Correctional Service is taking a gender-informed approach to the implementation of SIUs. The service has confirmed that it will be engaging stakeholders, such as the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, as it develops plans to implement the new law in a way that is appropriate for women's corrections.

Having completed a brief overview of the work that was done at the committee, I would now like to turn to the report stage debate that has occurred in this House in recent days. One notable outcome of the report stage process was the addition of an external oversight mechanism, thanks to an amendment proposed by the member for Oakville North—Burlington. As I mention that particular member, let me also congratulate her on becoming the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

SIU placements now, thanks to that amendment, would be subject to binding review by independent external decision-makers. This process would kick in if, for whatever reason, an inmate in an SIU does not get his or her minimum hours out of a cell or minimum hours of meaningful human contact for five straight days or for 15 days out of 30. At that point, the independent decision-maker would determine if the Correctional Service has taken all reasonable steps to provide those hours out of the cell and may make corrective recommendations. If after a week, the decision-maker is not satisfied, he or she can order the inmate removed from the SIU.

The independent decision-maker would also get involved if the Correctional Service is keeping an inmate in an SIU despite the recommendation of a health care professional. A review would be conducted of each SIU placement after 90 days and every 60 days thereafter. That is in addition to internal reviews that would be done by warden and the commissioner. Importantly, the determinations of the independent external decision-makers would be appealable to the Federal Court by both the inmate and the Correctional Service of Canada in accordance with section 18 of the Federal Courts Act.

Independent oversight is something that has been advocated by a number of stakeholders, including The John Howard Society, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the BC Civil Liberties Association and Aboriginal Legal Services, as well as the correctional investigator. I was, therefore, a bit surprised during the third reading proceedings to see the NDP join with the Conservatives to oppose adding independent oversight to the bill.

At committee, the NDP member for Beloeil—Chambly said that he indeed wanted independent oversight in the legislation, and the NDP member for Salaberry—Suroît made several calls for independent oversight in this place on Tuesday of this week during the debate. However, on Tuesday night, for some reason, the NDP

voted against independent oversight and in favour of keeping all the reviews of SIU placements internal to the Correctional Service. That was an absolutely baffling turn of events, and I would be very interested to hear NDP members explain it during the course of the debate today.

There were a couple of other points made during the report stage debate that are worth touching upon. First, Conservative members accused us of not putting any resources toward the implementation of Bill C-83. I suppose none of them have had the opportunity to read the fall economic statement, which allocated in fact \$448 million over six years to “support amendments to transform federal corrections, including the introduction of a new correctional interventions model to eliminate segregation.”

• (1010)

I suppose that the Conservative members of the public safety committee did not actually read the written response that was provided to them by my department in November outlining the breakdown of that funding.

As was set out in that document, we are putting nearly \$300 million over six years, with \$71.7 million ongoing, towards staffing and other resources required to run the SIUs. The other approximately \$150 million over six years, with \$74.3 million ongoing, will be devoted to enhancing mental health care both within SIUs and throughout the correctional system.

All of that is on top of the nearly \$80 million for mental health care in corrections that was provided in the last two federal budgets.

In my meetings with the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers and the Union of Safety and Justice Employees, a key point of emphasis has been the importance of having the staffing levels and other resources needed to safely implement this legislation. The new investments that I have just outlined will in fact ensure that is the case.

That brings me to the matter of staff safety, which has also come up repeatedly during this debate, as indeed it should. The success of our corrections system relies on the skills and dedication of correctional officers, parole officers, program officers, medical professionals, elders, aboriginal liaison officers, chaplains, support staff and a great many other employees and volunteers.

Ensuring that they have a safe work environment is a prerequisite for everything that the Correctional Service of Canada is mandated to do. That is why Bill C-83 allows inmates who pose a security risk to be separated from the general inmate population. The enhancements to mental health care and rehabilitative interventions are also important for staff safety, because staff will be safer when inmates make correctional progress and when their mental health issues are under control.

Government Orders

It is worth remembering that in 2014, the head of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers at that time said, “We have to actively work to rid the Conservatives from power.” He said that because he felt that the Harper government’s policies and budget cuts were endangering correctional officers.

Those cuts were deep. During their last term in office, under their deficit reduction action plan, the Conservatives cut \$846 million from the Correctional Service of Canada. Those cuts had a considerable impact on institutional and public safety. For example, they resulted in a freeze of transfers to the organizations that run halfway houses, which play a key role in the safe reintegration of former inmates. That freeze is finally ending this year.

Conservative cuts resulted in the near elimination of the CoSA program, an initiative that has been shown to dramatically reduce the recidivism rates of sex offenders. We restored funding for that effective program in 2017.

The Conservative cuts caused the closure of prison farms, which serve important rehabilitative and vocational purposes. The work to reopen the farms is now under way.

When I met recently with parole officers, they explained how cuts to so-called administrative functions can affect public safety. For instance, when the people fired are those who handle billing and travel arrangements, that work has to get done by parole officers, who then have less time to spend with the inmates whose rehabilitative progress they are supposed to be supervising.

There is naturally more work to be done to compensate for the decade of Conservative cuts and policies that treated rehabilitation as the opposite of public safety. In fact, one cannot have one without the other.

I am pleased with the work we have been able to do so far. Bill C-83 is a vital step as part of that.

•(1015)

I will close with this. Court rulings finding the existing segregation regime unconstitutional are due to take effect in coming months. The courts have recognized explicitly that simply ending segregation without having a new system in place to replace it would put correctional workers, employees and inmates at greater risk.

The replacement we are proposing in this legislation is clearly a major improvement, with double the time out of the cell, a focus on mental health care and rehabilitation, independent external oversight and the investments to make it all work. Just to make sure, I will be appointing an advisory committee to monitor the implementation of the new SIU system. This committee will comprise experts with a diversity of relevant experience in areas such as corrections, rehabilitation and mental health care. Its role will be to advise the commissioner on an ongoing basis and to alert me directly if anything is not proceeding as it should.

Bill C-83 is legislation I hope we can all support. I thank the hon. members who engaged in a thoughtful study of the bill and proposed constructive amendments. I want to thank the witnesses who provided the informed and useful feedback that led directly to some of those specific amendments.

I want to thank in advance the correctional employees who will be charged with implementing this new system, and who work hard every day in very, very challenging circumstances, to effect successful rehabilitation, safe reintegration and the protection of Canadians and our communities.

•(1020)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister mentioned that people on this side of the House had not read the supplementary estimates, but I have to ask him if he has read his own departmental plan from Correctional Service Canada that he himself signed. If he had read it, he would have seen a couple of remarkable items.

In the departmental plan, which sets out the government’s priorities for the coming years, there is not a single priority listed for the safety of correctional services officers, but he talks about resources. In the departmental plan from 2015, when the Harper government was in power, to 2021, there is a 13% cut in resources to correctional services when a minimal inflation rate is counted in.

Further, there is a cut of 150 full-time equivalents. I have to ask, where is the minister getting his information from? Why is he so wrong? Is it Brison’s fault? Is it Harper’s fault, or is it perhaps the former attorney general’s fault for this error?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I invite the hon. gentleman to read the deficit reduction action plan that was imposed by his party when the Conservatives were in government. I believe that the year 2010, followed by the budget of 2011, followed by the budget of 2012 and all those budgets imposed severe cuts and restrictions on vital services such as the correctional system. I mentioned in my remarks that over \$800 million was cut because of those measures implemented by the previous government. As well, I would point out that between the RCMP and CBSA, the Conservatives cut another close to \$1 billion from security services in this country.

If the Conservatives want to have a debate on fiscal responsibility and the investments that are necessary to make sure that our correctional service, the police service, the border service and the intelligence and security services of this country are adequately financed, I would be delighted to have that debate, because their record is one of talking a great game and delivering zero.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I often like to say, I love to see the Conservatives and Liberals argue about who provided less for the public services we need. In this case, we know that the key problem with the management of offenders is the lack of resources for treatment programs and rehabilitation programs.

The minister asked why the NDP is opposing this bill. I want to cite two people who are probably the country’s best authorities on this issue. One is Senator Kim Pate, who said, “With respect to segregation, Bill C-83 is not only merely a rebranding of the same damaging practice as “Structured Intervention Units”.

Government Orders

Ivan Zinger, the correctional investor, said, “Bill C-83 is widening the net of those restrictive environments. There's no procedural safeguard.”

These two people, undoubtedly the people who know the most about this in the entire country, have said that this is just a rebranding. We are going to end up back in front of the courts with the same problem of violation of people's rights, and we are going to end up with more victims of this system of segregation, because the bill expands the net of those who will be drawn into it.

• (1025)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. gentleman is caught in a bit of a time warp. The legislation has been amended. In fact, a number of the safeguards witnesses before the committee asked for have now been made part of the legislation, particularly the whole process of independent review to make sure that there is external scrutiny of the decisions made within the correctional system.

Plus, as I mentioned, I have made sure that there are the financial resources necessary to deliver mental health care and other treatment programs and services. Over \$400 million was allocated in the fiscal update last fall.

Finally, I announced today that we are appointing an independent monitoring and advisory committee, which will keep a very close eye on the implementation of the structured intervention units. It will make sure that the implementation is being accomplished in the right way and that the objectives we have set for this legislation are being achieved. If there is any deviation from that path, the monitoring group will inform the minister, and I will make sure that the House is aware of it.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. minister for his work on this file. Both in this House and outside of this House, the minister speaks quite positively of the work of the committee and the role it plays.

I am wondering if he can expand on the work the committee did on this bill to make improvements and amendments and what his perceptions are of that work.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the committee heard from an extensive list of witnesses representing a range of experiences, backgrounds and expertise, people who could offer good, practical input into the operation of our correctional system. They had some very clear recommendations to make. The committee listened to them and then acted on the recommendations.

As I mentioned in my remarks, the proposed amendments came from all parts of the table, not just one side or the other. All the political parties involved made recommendations to respond to the witnesses. There were amendments from all sides that were ultimately accepted by the committee. It was truly a collaborative effort to make sure that the legislation would achieve the objectives we set for it, which was to abolish the old practice of administrative segregation and replace it with a whole new approach whereby we would retain the ability to separate inmates for physical and safety reasons while at the same time having the capacity to continue with programming, mental health services, human contact and so forth that would ultimately lead toward rehabilitation.

The committee listened to that evidence very carefully and then crafted amendments that would deliver on the objectives of the legislation, particularly the element of external oversight and review, which is a critical element in assuring the public and all stakeholders interested in the correctional system that, in fact, the administration of the system was being conducted properly. The independent review process externally was the committee's greatest contribution.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that we are debating something related to our criminal justice system in Bill C-83. The Minister of Public Safety is the inheritor of the old solicitor general role. In fact, the minister was part of the government that changed that. The last official solicitor general for Canada was Anne McLellan, his former colleague. Therefore, the public safety minister is, by extension, the solicitor general, the second-highest ranking legal official in the government of Canada.

We are in the middle of a crisis with respect to the demotion of the former attorney general, the top legal official in Canada, after she refused the orders of the Prime Minister's Office and pressure by major officials.

The solicitor general needs to ensure that there is confidence in our system of justice in Canada. As the second-highest ranking legal official in the government of Canada, a barrister solicitor himself, I would like the member to tell us why Canadians should have faith in Bill C-83 in the corrections part of the criminal justice system, when we have just been witness to the spectacle of the top ranking legal official in the Canadian government suggesting that the Prime Minister interfered with the course of justice. Should the minister not withdraw this bill and all other bills that are now sullied by the government's lack of respect for the rule of law in Canada?

• (1030)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. When we heard from the former attorney general in her testimony before the justice committee earlier this week, there were two points she made abundantly clear. She was asked these questions several times by different members of the justice committee, and her answer in each case was the same.

She made these two very important points. First of all, the Prime Minister gave her no direction with respect to the disposition of the matter before her. The decision was entirely hers to make. Second, there were no laws broken. Nothing unlawful was done in the process. She made that point, unequivocally, over and over again.

An hon. member: She was fired, Ralph.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members that when addressing someone, it is through the Chair and not by their first name as they shout across the floor. I wanted to point that out in case some members were not quite aware of the rules.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Durham brought up a very valuable point. It will frame how my 10 minutes will move forward on the topic of Bill C-83.

I am glad to see that our hon. colleague across the way, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, is not at Rideau Hall right now, being shuffled away. It is nice he is here with us, as the Prime Minister tries to shuffle himself out of a crisis of confidence.

That is where we are. A great emergency debate took place last night, with valuable comments from all sides.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-83, and I reiterate that the government has used time allocation to once again force closure to limit debate. Why is that? As we have seen time and again, if the government does not like what it is hearing or does not like the message, it is going to force closure on debate. The Liberals do not want to hear anymore.

It was on day 10 of the 2015 election that the member for Papineau told Canadians that he was going to do things differently, let debate reign and not resort to parliamentary tricks such as closure and time allocation. He said that under his government, Canadians would see the most open and transparent government in the history of our country and sunny ways.

What have we seen over the last three years? We have not necessarily seen a lot of sunshine, but have heard a lot of questions. Canadians have a lot of questions, and rightfully so. Today, we are in the middle of a crisis of confidence.

We should always arm our front-line officers, those who we trust to protect us and who serve our country and our community. We should be giving them the tools so they can fulfill their missions, come home safe and sound and remain healthy.

Bill C-83 is another attempt at being soft on crime, making things easier for those who commit the worst crimes in our society. The Liberals want Canadians to believe that these criminals are okay and that somehow solitary confinement or segregation is cruel and unusual punishment. One day these criminals get out of prison and will walk among us.

Let us consider Paul Bernardo, Robert Pickton, Clifford Olson, Eric McArthur, Travis Winsor and Canada's youngest serial killer, Cody Legebokoff. These are the types of offenders who are in solitary confinement and they are there not only for the protection of officers and other inmates, but for their own protection as well.

The minister talked about consultation, saying that the Liberals had consulted with the union of correctional officers and with Canadians from coast to coast to coast. The testimony we heard is considerably different from what they have said.

They purport there is support for the bill. There is support for elements in the bill, such as body scanners. However, the union of correctional officers has some serious concerns with it. In fact, the president remarked that there would be a bloodbath behind bars with the implementation of Bill C-83. He said that prisons did not have the resources now for the two hours inmates in solitary confinement were allowed to be out each day, let alone for four hours per day.

●(1035)

It has been said that solitary confinement is used as an administrative tool for both the safety of the officers as well as other inmates. However, 23% of offenders who are in solitary confinement are serving life sentences; 23% of offenders are serving a sentence between two years and three years less a day; and 681 offenders are serving a sentence with a "dangerous offender" designation. Dangerous offenders very likely never get out of these institutions, because they have committed some of the worst crimes.

The Liberals want people to believe the opposition is sowing the seeds of fear, but the government is soft on crime. We have seen it with Bill C-75. Convictions for serious crimes could now be punishable with just a fine. Bill C-83's intent is to bring the prison population down from 12,000.

Prominent witnesses have had serious issues with Bill C-83. They have said it is flawed. As our hon. colleague for Durham remarked, how can Canadians have confidence in any legislation moving forward?

I will go back to the testimony we heard earlier this week from the former attorney general. It was three hours and 40 minutes of powerful testimony. The Liberals are going to spin it each and every way they can. They are going to say nothing untoward happened. The former attorney general has serious concerns. She spoke truth to power in what happened. She was shuffled. She was demoted, fired. Over the course of the following weeks, the Liberals have done everything to tarnish her character, cast doubt in her testimony. This is what they do, and it is shocking.

I challenge Canadians to take a moment to listen to that testimony, three hours and 40 minutes of it. It will give them a glimpse into our country's highest office and the extent to which it is willing to go to subvert justice. It will shock them. It will strike fear into Canadians. Make no bones about it, the world is listening.

Today is not just about Bill C-83. Today is about the crisis of confidence we have in the Prime Minister, his office and indeed his entire front bench. Those in the gallery and those who are watching should pay attention and listen. If they do one thing today, I urge them to find that testimony and listen to it. Hear in her own words how the pressure was sustained. Despite saying no multiple times, there was sustained pressure for her to subvert justice. After all, the Prime Minister was going to get his way one way or the other. That is shameful.

Government Orders

•(1040)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand what the Conservative Party's position is based on the comments of the minister responsible for the legislation. I refer specifically to some of the criticism of those members during second reading. Members of the Conservative Party made false allegations. It is not the first time they have given misinformation and they are very consistent about giving it.

The Conservatives are giving the impression to correctional officers and others that no money is flowing as a result of the legislation we are debating today. This is not the case. The minister has been very clear about to that.

Now that the Conservative members have been enlightened, now that they know money has been allocated, will they at least admit to the truth and admit they are wrong in their assertion that no money has been allocated? The opposition party has no qualms in saying something that is just not true. We see that again with respect to this legislation.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I guess the question today is whether the Prime Minister admits he was wrong.

Our hon. colleague is a good soldier. I am saddened that he is not down at Rideau Hall. I wish him better luck next time.

We have read the departmental plan for this department. One of our colleagues made note of it and questioned the minister on it. It shows about a 13% cut from the time we were government, 2015-16, to today. Correctional Service Canada managers have been tasked to look for efficiencies. In other words, to find ways to cut.

Bill C-83 has not been costed. We have made attempts to get the minister to tell us about the model the government is using and whether it has been costed. All we get is deflection. The Liberals are doing again what they usually do, which is to blame those before them.

The Liberals cannot accept the truth, they do not know the truth, we have not yet heard the truth and they cannot handle the truth.

•(1045)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate if the member would correct the slight he made to my colleague.

The Hon. Kim Pate, senator and former long-standing head of the Elizabeth Fry Society and who received the Order of Canada for her work against segregation in prisons, said two days ago that Bill C-83 could have been made meaningful. Instead of just changing the name, the government could have made significant changes by including provisions that would allow for the transfer of those who had mental problems to mental health facilities. I wonder if the member could speak to that.

Would the legislation really resolve the problem we face where so many have been put in segregation and suffer severe mental problems? There are other solutions? I have worked with many people in the criminal law field. I have been to those facilities of incarceration. The Hon. Kim Pate is a person whose advice should be considered.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, the issue today is that if the Liberals do not like the narrative or the message coming from others, they will do everything to tarnish their character. We have seen it with the former attorney general, one who still sits among their very own ranks. That is shameful.

We should be doing everything in our power to ensure that those who face tough times have the tools they need so they can remain healthy. However, we should always ensure that those who we task to protect, to serve our country or our communities have the tools they need to remain healthy, safe and secure at work so they can go home safely and remain healthy at home.

Bill C-83 would do none of that. It is flawed legislation. The Liberals should remove it immediately.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here today to speak to Bill C-83, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another Act.

While there are a few colleagues across the way that think this is good bill, a number of people and organizations that testified at committee disagree.

One organization said that structured intervention units, or SIUs, are not needed, that the bill fails to focus on the programs and that there are concerns with section 81. That was the Elizabeth Fry Society.

The John Howard Society disagrees, saying that it needs more information on what exactly the difference is between solitary confinement and structured intervention units, believing that there is really no difference other than in the wording.

The British Columbia Civil Liberties Association disagrees. It will not support this bill, citing a lack of external oversight, a lack of programming needed to assist prisoners to reform and lack of sufficient resources and staff to meet social and educational needs.

The Native Women's Association of Canada also disagrees. It is one organization in a long list that were not consulted. It expressed reservations that the bill does not address traditions, protocol or cultural practices and does not clarify what is meant by "indigenous communities".

The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers also disagrees, expressing very real concerns over the feasibility of SIUs and over prisoners and officers being more vulnerable under this bill.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association also disagrees, citing that Bill C-83 has no meaningful reform and should be repealed and expressing apprehension that there was little to no consultation as well.

Aboriginal Legal Services also disagrees with Bill C-83, citing a lack of consultation and speaking about the expanse between rhetoric and reality.

Government Orders

A Canadian correctional investigator who testified also disagreed with this bill, expressing that eliminating solitary confinement was one thing but that replacing it with a regime that imposes restrictions on retained rights and liberties with little regard for due process and administrative principles was inconsistent with the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, as well as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

However, when there is little regard for the rule of law, disregarding the charter is a trivial thing. I just hope that no one is hurt or killed because of this legislation before November, when Conservatives can repeal this piece of legislation.

I am not sure if my colleagues have detected a pattern or not. Clearly, the government sees no problem with ignoring the concerns of those most affected by this bad bill, but this lack of interest in listening to Canadians does not end with Bill C-83.

In the Correctional Services departmental report, 2018-19, on page 26, if the members opposite care to follow along, there is actually a cut in spending to Correctional Services of Canada of about 6.6%. That is comparing 2015 to 2019. It went down 6.6%.

Also in that departmental report is a list of departmental priorities. Believe it or not, there is not one mention of officer safety in that report. How is that even possible? Again, there is a pattern that is consistently repeating itself here.

With respect to the government's carbon tax, much promoted on their side, no less than four provinces are taking the Liberal government to court, and more are waiting.

The Prime Minister's carbon tax does nothing for the environment, but it will increase the cost of gas, home heating and everyday essentials. Worse still, it is going to get more expensive. For Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, in 2019 the Prime Minister's carbon tax starts at \$20 a tonne, going up to \$50 in three years. However, internal government documents confirm that the Liberals are already planning for a carbon tax of \$300 per tonne. That is 15 times larger than what it will be on April 1 when it kicks in.

The Prime Minister has cut a special carbon tax side deal with Canada's largest emitters, which means they will continue to pollute for free while families and small business owners get hit with the full force of that tax.

● (1050)

For wealthy individuals, an extra \$100 a month on a grocery bill or electricity bill might not seem like a big deal, but it matters a lot to a family trying to make its household budget last to the end of the month. Canadians do not want it, but like the stakeholders who testified on Bill C-83, they are being ignored by the government.

The bill is very much about protecting the rights of criminals, particularly those who continue to behave badly in prison. The Supreme Court of Canada recently made a ruling that the law that makes criminals pay surcharges to help victims is unconstitutional, and the Liberals have jumped on this. Instead of looking at ways to protect victims' rights, they have introduced legislation to remove this necessary instrument for ensuring criminals are held accountable. Victims' rights must always be at the heart of our criminal

justice system. That is why our previous Conservative government took unprecedented steps to ensure that the rights of victims were protected.

The Liberals' approach to Bill C-83 is similar to what we are seeing in a lot of other pieces of legislation, and I will outline a few more ways the government continues its pattern of failing to listen to Canadians.

The Prime Minister failed to move an ounce of dirt or build one inch of new pipeline. They had to nationalize it, and they still have continued to fail on this file. After killing the northern gateway, he vetoed the energy east pipeline and obstructed Trans Mountain. This lack of pipeline capacity has turned an already difficult economy in western Canada into a full-blown national economic crisis that is threatening tens of thousands of jobs, on top of the 100,000 jobs already lost in the energy sector since 2015.

The Prime Minister also failed to fix the mess he created at our border with the United States. Since his #WelcomeToCanada tweet last year, 40,000 people have crossed illegally into Canada, at a cost of up to \$34,000 each. By 2020, this crisis will have cost Canadian taxpayers \$1.6 billion.

As well, the Prime Minister failed to balance the budget, despite promising to do so in the 2015 election campaign. This year is supposed to be the year of the Prime Minister's final deficit before returning to surplus in 2019. Instead, this year's deficit is three times larger than projected and the budget will not be balanced until 2045. He is spending Canada's cupboards bare in good economic times and leaving us open to disaster when the downturn next hits.

The Prime Minister has also failed our veterans. After promising in the 2015 election that veterans would never have to go to court to obtain benefits from his government, he has spent nearly \$40 million fighting veterans groups in court over benefits claims. When asked why at a town hall meeting in 2018 in Edmonton, he said that veterans were asking more than we are able to give.

The Prime Minister failed to equip our armed forces. He is spending \$2.5 billion less than what he promised in his defence policy. The Royal Canadian Navy is in need of new warships, and to meet Canada's international obligations, the Royal Canadian Air Force requires a new fleet of fighter jets, not used CF-18s from Australia.

Canada's peacekeeping is at an all-time low, and the Prime Minister failed to represent Canada with dignity on the world stage, as he failed to maintain relationships with key allies. His trip to India was a PR disaster for Canada and seriously damaged relations with the world's largest democracy. Relations with the United States and other traditional long-standing allies are also strained.

Statements by Members

The Prime Minister failed to uphold the standards of transparency, accountability and ethical behaviour he promised. In 2018, he became the first prime minister in Canadian history found guilty of breaking ethics laws after accepting a vacation from the Aga Khan, while his ministers continued to abuse their power for political gain in 2018. Now, with his handling of the SNC-Lavalin affair and his attempts to manipulate a favourable decision for his friends at SNC-Lavalin, he has lost the moral authority to govern. He must resign.

It seems unless someone employs workers in and around the Prime Minister's riding, there is not much the government will do to listen to their concerns.

I have laid out why this side of the House will not support Bill C-83. I welcome questions from my colleagues.

●(1055)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): As we are getting close to the end of allotted time, we will break for question period, and then the hon. member will have five minutes' worth of questions coming to him when we return.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's long list of failures keeps growing and Canadians are paying for it. After vowing just three tiny deficits and his first balanced budget this year, the Prime Minister has delivered twice the debt and his fourth-straight budget deficit, another costly Liberal failure.

Now the Prime Minister is peddling an expensive carbon tax that will add 11¢ to a litre of fuel, hundreds to home heating and hundreds for grocery bills. That is just the beginning. Special interest groups are complaining that the carbon tax is too low and they are urging the Prime Minister to raise it. If given another chance, the Prime Minister will.

Maybe the Prime Minister, who has never had to worry about money, does not care about another \$100 a month for groceries or home heating, but struggling Canadians do care and they should not be paying for Liberal failures.

In October, Canadians will have the choice to choose a Conservative government that will get them ahead.

* * *

[Translation]

LISE WATERS

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lise Waters, an outstanding volunteer in the sports community, passed away on Tuesday morning.

The Outaouais region lost an amazing woman who was very active in her community. Ms. Waters had been volunteering for six decades, including serving as president of recreational development organization *Loisir sport Outaouais* from 1988 to 2017. She took

part in the adventure of the Quebec Games in Gatineau from 1981 to 2010. She also campaigned for the sports centre to be built. Those are just a few of the many, many things she did for the community.

She was truly a monument for the Outaouais region and an inspiration to all. She will be deeply missed by her family and by the whole community. Volunteering was a real passion for Ms. Waters. She was and will always be held up as a paragon of goodness, involvement and dedication.

* * *

●(1100)

[English]

START ME UP NIAGARA

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, February 23, in communities across the country, Canadians came together, raised funds and walked on the coldest night of the year. In St. Catharines, hundreds of neighbours, friends and community members filled our downtown streets with hope, warmth and compassion, and did so while raising \$107,000 for Start Me Up Niagara.

In 1999, Susan and Tony Venditti started Start Me Up Niagara to help those most vulnerable in our community. It is open 365 days a year and coordinates our "Out of the Cold" winter shelter program with help from several churches across the city of St. Catharines.

Start Me Up Niagara offers a variety of opportunities that improve health, increase the level of community integration and support housing and employment opportunities, including the Work Action Centre that opened in 2017.

Start Me Up Niagara is an essential organization in St. Catharines, and one that ensures all residents in our community have a place to go, a place to be somebody and a place to do something.

* * *

[Translation]

LA RUBRIQUE THEATRE

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year, we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of a well-known cultural organization in my riding, Théâtre La Rubrique.

This theatre, which was founded in Jonquière in 1979, has an impressive history: it has put on 1,360 shows for the public involving 450 artists. By showcasing many actors from the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean area, La Rubrique has contributed to the region's artistic development over the past few decades. What is more, its mission to promote and present local productions has helped introduce thousands of young people and adults to the theatre.

Because of its expertise, which has been long recognized by the cultural community, La Rubrique has even been able to take on Saguenay's internationally acclaimed Festival international des arts de la marionnette.

Statements by Members

I would like to close by recognizing the dedication of the members of the board of directors and employees who are working hard to ensure that La Rubrique is able to continue its activities for at least another 40 wonderful years.

* * *

ERNEST TUCKER

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Black History Month draws to a close, I want to honour the memory of Ernest Tucker, the first black reporter hired at the CBC. After a brilliant career as a journalist, professor and author, he passed away in January in Châteauguay. However, his career was not without its challenges.

[English]

Initially unable to get hired full time, he took jobs in Bermuda and the Toronto Telegram before joining CBC Radio in Toronto. It was then, alone in the newsroom at lunchtime on November 22, 1963, that he broke the tragic story of John F. Kennedy's assassination. For this, he was first reprimanded and then promoted, as the CBC was praised for his quick reporting.

Eventually, he moved to Châteauguay and taught at John Abbott College in Montreal. There, he mentored black students while publishing *Lost Boundaries*, a novel about police harassment of black Montrealers.

His courage and inspiring advocacy are appreciated by all of us.

* * *

PRINCE GEORGE SPRUCE KINGS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tonight our Prince George Spruce Kings start the BCHL playoffs against the Coquitlam Express at the Rolling Mix castle.

To the players, I say, I am a King. I am only one, but I am one of many.

There are four core values of being a King: commitment, strength, dedication and courage. To get to today, these four values have to be embedded in one's fibre and this is what we play for: this moment right here. Great moments come from great opportunities and this opportunity is theirs to leave a legacy.

Tonight, they start their chapter in Spruce Kings' history. They have earned this opportunity. They should not let anyone take this from them. Skate faster, play harder, be relentless. Play for one another and trust one another. Do not fear failure, but never ever accept it.

This is their moment. I ask them if they are ready. Go, Kings, go!

* * *

FILIPINO STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *kamusta*.

Over 100 Filipino Canadian youth gathered in Ottawa this past weekend for their first national leadership conference. Hosted by the Filipino Students Association of the University of Ottawa, they launched this phenomenal event to affirm their beliefs that our

democratic principles are vital to our common future, and to underscore their vision that political participation is not limited to running for political office but extends to knowing how people's concerns are heard and how positive change happens.

Their panel discussions and workshops heard from the community's trailblazers in politics and civil service and from academic scholars and leaders in the media and business. They heard from their keynote speaker, the hon. Dr. Rey Pagtakhan, who is from Winnipeg and served in the House with great distinction, on the theme of "Politics: A truly noble calling". Canada's multiculturalism policy is proud to support this type of civic engagement, which fosters citizenship values, nurtures the nobility of politics and enriches our collective heritage.

Salamat.

* * *

●(1105)

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in February we recognize and celebrate the rich history of black Canadians, and in my riding of King—Vaughan, we have much to celebrate.

I want to express my gratitude to VACA and TACCA, for supporting and strengthening our communities and showcasing our black leaders. This past weekend, we had our Black History Month celebration at Vaughan City Hall and again I am inspired by the artists and speeches. The women showcased at the event were exceptional.

This leads me to another important day, March 8, International Women's Day, to recognize the important contributions women have made and are making to our country and around the world. Let me combine the two by highlighting an artist featured at our Black History Month celebration, Nadine Williams, who is here today. She is a poet, author and educator. At the event, she read one of her powerful poems, *Rooted*, which ends with "We belong. We are strong. We are rooted. We are free to grow. We are home."

This is a vision all Canadians can share.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am well known for going door to door in my riding, and, honestly, I meet very few constituents who are satisfied with this Liberal government. Fewer still feel they are in a better financial position than they were before the Liberals were elected in 2015.

There is no arguing with that kind of general consensus. Here are just some of the public policies that have made people feel that way.

Statements by Members

People have experienced three years of taxes going up, three years of our Canadian Armed Forces being underfunded, three years of deficit and mismanagement of public funds, three years of what might politely be called ethical breaches, three years of an infrastructure program that fails to deliver the goods, three years of multiple failed natural resources and border security policies, and three years of countless other broken promises.

Canadians and the people of Beauport—Limoilou simply cannot afford another four years of Liberal government.

As of October 2019, they will be able to count on the Conservative team and our great leader to change the way this country is run and renew people's hope for the future.

* * *

[English]

NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNITS

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my gratitude for the neonatal intensive care unit nurses and doctors at Royal Columbian Hospital. My wife Ravi and I welcomed our daughter Nova into the world on December 4, 2018. At birth, she was diagnosed with meconium aspiration syndrome, which meant she had to spend three weeks in the NICU. Having our newborn daughter spend her first weeks struggling to survive was heartbreaking, but it made me realize just how intensive intensive care really is. It is 24 hours a day, minute by minute.

Thanks to their tireless care and positivity, Nova was able to come home just in time for Christmas. She is now happy, healthy and ready to take on the world.

We are endlessly grateful for the angels at Royal Columbian Hospital, Dr. Moodley, Dr. Kesavan, Dr. Cieslak, Dr. Stavel, Dr. Glass, and the dozens of nurses and staff who played a part in Nova's recovery, especially Danielle, Hannah and Vicky.

If colleagues know people who work at their local NICU, give them a hug. They are the best people in the world.

* * *

CANADA WINTER GAMES

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every two years, young athletes from coast to coast to coast come together in the spirit of sport to compete in the Canada Winter Games. This year, the games are being hosted in Red Deer, Alberta, and 3,600 athletes and coaches are competing in 20 different sports.

I am pleased to be heading to Red Deer tonight to attend the games and the closing ceremonies tomorrow on behalf of the Government of Canada.

When our young athletes attend the Canada Games, it is about more than just competing, it is an opportunity for youth to see our country, make friendships that will last a lifetime and hopefully win a medal or two.

With the games concluding tomorrow, I hope all members will join me in saying congratulations to all of our athletes.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's carbon tax begins to take effect this year in Saskatchewan, meaning that those who are already struggling to get ahead will soon have to pay another tax. Farmers, truckers, loggers, energy producers, miners and other small businesses are upset that the Prime Minister has brought on another tax that Canada's international competitors do not have. While he claims that farmers will be exempt, farm representatives told me this week they cannot afford a carbon tax on crop inputs.

Internal government documents confirm the Prime Minister would have to raise the carbon tax to \$300 a tonne in order to meet Canada's commitments. At that rate, the average family would pay \$1,000 more to heat their homes and the price of gasoline would jump by 60¢ a litre. Canadians cannot afford this. It will make groceries, gasoline, home heating and everything else we have to buy more expensive.

Saskatchewan residents reject this tax grab and will act on this rejection at the ballot box. Their voices will be united and strong against this carbon tax.

* * *

● (1110)

WORLD COMPLIMENT DAY

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Compliment Day, a day to create more positivity in the world.

I would like to compliment you, Mr. Speaker, on the important work you do to keep decorum in the house.

I compliment the Parliamentary Protective Service for its hard work to keep everyone on Parliament Hill safe.

I compliment the pages, who keep their cool in a demanding environment and ensure that parliamentarians have what we need for our work in the House.

I compliment all MPs in the House for the hard work they do to represent the interests of all Canadians.

I compliment my staff, who have an incredible desire to serve our constituents and who bring such enormous empathy to the individuals who come to us, often as a last resort, when they are frustrated, desperate and in need. My staff go the extra mile each and every single day and I so admire them for it.

Most of all, I compliment my wife Irene. I admire the great patience she has to put up with me in this very challenging and time-consuming job.

WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the World Heritage Committee, after an investigation requested by the Mikisew Cree, found the government failing to address significant threats to Wood Buffalo National Park, a world heritage site. In response, the government allocated a pathetic \$27.5 million over five years, a sum its own officials deemed inadequate. Put in perspective, the government paid 200% more just to pave a road in the park.

For decades, federal governments have failed to provide leadership in preventing or addressing mounting damage caused by dams and oil sands projects to the Peace-Athabasca Delta, the life source of this treasured heritage site. The iconic woodland caribou, bison and whooping cranes are at risk.

The government announced, and wait for this, a fund so communities can bring people together to protect species at risk.

How many more court cases will it take to get the government to comply with the law? Do the Liberals really want this world heritage site de-listed under its watch? So much for honouring the treaties. So much for a commitment to preserving natural heritage.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government reduced taxes, balanced the budget and increased trade, saving the average Canadian family thousands of dollars per year. In comparison, under the Liberal Prime Minister, 92% of Canadian families are facing higher taxes. The average income tax increase for middle-income families is \$840, and that is only the beginning.

The Liberals squandered the surplus we left them, and the Prime Minister's promises to run small deficits and balance the budget by this year were broken almost as soon as he made them. In fact, last year's deficit is more than triple what the Prime Minister said it would be.

Now the Liberals appear set to table their fourth straight deficit budget. Meanwhile, Alberta continues to lose jobs, and those who are working cannot afford to keep paying for the Liberals' mistakes.

Canada's Conservatives are fighting for better.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March 8 is International Women's Day. For Canada, it is an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of women and girls and to reaffirm our commitment to advancing gender equality. This year's theme, #InnovateForChange, celebrates the achievements of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and math as well as business and the skilled trades.

It is also a call to action to remove the barriers preventing women from thriving in these fields, from unequal pay and fewer promotions to harassment and discrimination. By removing barriers, we pave the way for more women and girls to find their passion, achieve their goals, and follow their dreams.

Oral Questions

I look forward to welcoming the Minister of Science and Sport to Scarborough Centre next week to share her experience breaking through barriers at our International Women's Day event. This year, let us celebrate the women and girls who #InnovateForChange, role models across Canada inspiring the next generation of innovators, change-makers and visionaries.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1115)

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning's cabinet shuffle will not make the Prime Minister's problems go away. What the former attorney general said at the justice committee was shocking, showing political interference at the highest level of government, including by the Prime Minister himself.

While next week Gerald Butts and Michael Wernick will testify, they cannot take the fall for his actions. The Prime Minister needs to be held responsible. Rather than running scared, will the Prime Minister show even a fraction of the courage of his former attorney general and testify under oath at the justice committee?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister who also agreed that it is important for Canadians to be able to hear from witnesses. Members of the justice committee have worked together to have witnesses appear.

It was not that long ago that the Conservatives said that the justice committee would not meet. They are meeting. It was the Conservatives who said that the former attorney general would not have a chance to appear. She appeared, and she was able to share what she needed to share. Within her comments that she shared, she once again confirmed that, every time, the Prime Minister did tell the former attorney general that it was her decision to take.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. The former attorney general was not allowed to fully share her story, and what she did share, the Prime Minister says he does not believe, because this so-called feminist Prime Minister does not like it when women tell the truth about him.

The Prime Minister is trying to discredit her. From not accepting her testimony at face value, to blaming her, to calling her difficult to work with, he is running a despicable smear campaign against the former attorney general and is still not allowing her to tell her full story, nor is he coming forward to tell the truth.

Oral Questions

Will he stop attacking her and admit that she spoke the truth and own up to what he has done?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a clear difference between the government under the leadership of this Prime Minister, because we support the work of committees. We have confidence in the work of committees. We have confidence in the independence of the judicial system. We have confidence in officers of Parliament.

The contrast is the Conservatives, the party of Stephen Harper, with a new leader now but still the party of Stephen Harper, which likes to divide, which likes to mischaracterize. Rather than listening to witness testimony and actually bringing credibility to this place and to Canadian institutions, they are misleading and misrepresenting. The former attorney general is more than capable of representing herself, and that is why she could share what she needed to share and the Prime Minister shared that she had the avenue and the privilege—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how about this? Yesterday, five former attorneys general wrote to the RCMP asking it to investigate the Prime Minister for obstruction of justice under section 139(2) of the Criminal Code. In their words, “ordinary Canadians, who do not benefit from political connections, have been charged under these sections with much less evidence.”

Try as he might, the Prime Minister cannot just sweep this under the carpet and hope that it goes away. He needs to be honest with Canadians. Will he start by testifying under oath at the justice committee the House leader says she respects so much?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the RCMP, the opposition House leader should know that the force is entirely independent. It makes its own decisions and judgments about how, when and where to commence investigations. It never consults with the Minister of Public Safety; neither should it.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general told us that she received a call from the Prime Minister on January 7 to inform her that she would be shuffled to a new department. She was sure it was because of the SNC-Lavalin situation.

What is more, the clerk told the deputy minister that one of the first discussions with the new minister would be about SNC-Lavalin. Later, the new Minister of Justice said that he did indeed discuss the file with representatives of the Prime Minister's Office.

Can he at least name these mysterious people from the Prime Minister's Office?

[English]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, upon his appointment, the minister was briefed on numerous files that relate to his portfolio. This is standard practice for all new ministers or ministers who change their portfolios.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that one of the first discussions the new Minister of Justice had at the Prime Minister's Office focused on a special agreement for SNC-Lavalin to avoid a criminal trial.

Who did he talk to? Was it Gerald Butts, Katie Telford, Mathieu Bouchard or someone else?

Why will he not answer the question?

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us contemplate the reverse scenario. The reverse scenario would be if ministers, upon taking new appointments or changing portfolios, were not briefed. That would impede ministers in the execution of their functions and impede them in serving the public interest.

As I indicated, the minister received briefings on files that relate to his portfolio, as is the standard practice.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week we heard explosive testimony from the former attorney general. We heard that the Prime Minister led a concerted pressure campaign to protect corporate and Liberal interests with inappropriate political interference. These allegations are so serious that yesterday, five former attorneys general wrote to the RCMP commissioner requesting a criminal investigation.

The Liberals continue to pretend that a justice committee investigation, with a limited mandate and controlled by a Liberal majority, can get to the bottom of this, but they are the only ones who think so. When are they going to do the right thing and launch a full public inquiry so Canadians can get the whole story?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would make the point that the RCMP in this country is completely independent. It makes its own decisions in a professional way about where and when to investigate anything. As a matter of fact, the former attorney general for the Conservative Party, Mr. MacKay, this morning indicated that it is fine for citizens or the public to write to the commissioner of the RCMP to ask about an investigation or suggest one, but they dare not direct that. That is beyond the jurisdiction. The RCMP will make its own decisions.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the red herrings continue. No one has said that it is not the prerogative of the RCMP whether or not to decide to launch that investigation, but someone who has been in politics that long should know that it is very significant to have five former attorneys general suggest that a criminal investigation might be warranted. So can we please stop with the red herrings?

Oral Questions

The fact of the matter is that we have heard that there was a concerted political pressure campaign in the PMO. We want to get to the bottom of that. We believe that a full public inquiry is the way to get to the bottom of that. When are they going to launch one?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the justice committee has members on both sides who are actually working together to have witnesses appear. Witnesses are appearing and answering those questions.

What is fascinating is that the member, who talks about the length of a member's service in this place, has also been here. It is fascinating that they choose when they like to hear certain things, and they choose when they do not.

Other attorneys general have also commented on what has been taking place, and they have been saying that it is pretty impressive that the Prime Minister worked with the former attorney general to waive client-solicitor privilege and waive cabinet confidence so that the former attorney general could appear at committee and share her story.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, give me a break. The Prime Minister and his office did not pressure the former attorney general in order to protect jobs. She was very clear in her testimony that they pressured her for their re-election.

If they wanted to protect jobs, they would have done the same for workers at Sears, Aveos, Rona and the Davie shipyard. In the meantime, steel and aluminum workers in Jonquière might lose their jobs because the government failed to do the work required to eliminate the unfair tariffs.

When will the government admit that it is not working for workers but rather for those who fill its coffers?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We on this side of the House will always stand up for workers across the country. Of course we can stand up for workers, pensioners and suppliers while obeying all rules of law.

The real issue, for Canadians watching us today, is that the Conservatives have not asked a single question about standing up for workers across the country. That is what we should be focusing on today.

Why are the Conservatives not standing up to defend workers across the country when now is the time to do so?

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are not the ones who asked the question.

The former attorney general was clear. The Prime Minister wanted to help the executives who support his party. We in the NDP stand up for workers.

The workers affected by the Phoenix fiasco are another example. It has been three years, as of this week, and they still are not being paid correctly. People across the country have been shocked by the former attorney general's testimony regarding repeated and inappropriate pressure from the Prime Minister and his office. People want the truth.

Will the Liberal government do the right thing and agree to an independent inquiry so we can finally get to the truth?

• (1125)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this very important matter was raised in the House by members this morning.

I would like to point out that the objective of the amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada is to eliminate the negative consequences for the employees, customers or retirees of a given company.

The purpose of these amendments to the Criminal Code and all measures we introduce is to protect workers and to convict and make liable the executives of any company.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. I want to remind hon. members that when the question is asked, we want to hear the answer, and we want to hear the question as well.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week at the finance committee, I asked why the finance minister met with SNC-Lavalin after the prosecutor had decided not to waive the trial into SNC's charges. The chair of the finance committee slammed his gavel down, said the questions were completely out of order and suspended the meeting altogether.

We now know, from the former attorney general, that the finance minister inappropriately pressured her in that matter. Why will the finance minister not testify as to his conduct in this matter before the finance committee?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is intentionally mixing different things up, and he can do what he pleases. That is the approach of the Conservatives.

We on this side respect the work of committees. We know the director of the Public Prosecution Service confirmed that prosecutors in every case “exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration.”

We on this side will look at the facts. We are looking at what is being shared at committee. We know that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is also looking at this matter. We have confidence in our committees and the independent—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Carleton.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance committee chair claimed that these deferred prosecution agreements had nothing to do with finance and therefore could not be discussed in the finance committee. The only problem is that they were in the budget and they were approved by the finance committee, yet the Liberal chair is blocking questions to the finance minister about what the former attorney general said was inappropriate interference by that same minister.

Will the Minister of Finance come out of hiding, appear before the finance committee and answer as to why he was interfering with the former attorney general's work?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after having this experience, that member, who is a member of the finance committee, came into this House and addressed you, Mr. Speaker. You ruled on this matter, and you said that it is a matter members of the committee need to address and take care of.

Rather than work with his colleagues and try to find a way forward, he does what Conservatives do. They do the politics of division. They tattle when it is convenient for them, rather than trying to find solutions.

We on this side work with Canadians, and we will find solutions. Canadians will have a clear choice to make. They can choose a government that is going to invest and is demonstrating its results and programs are working, or Conservatives with no—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, we heard the powerful testimony of the former attorney general and former justice minister.

She stated that various officials had urged her to take into account partisan political considerations. That was clearly inappropriate.

The Liberal's conduct is completely unacceptable.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and resign?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been clear since the beginning that he and his staff always acted appropriately and professionally.

The members who sit on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights are doing their job. On this side of the House, we believe that they can do this job.

Canadians will have a choice to make between our plan to invest in our communities, grow our economy and support middle-class jobs or the party of Stephen Harper that wants to divide Canadians and has no plan for the economy or jobs.

We know that the Conservatives are saying one thing in French and another in English. They should get together and talk about a plan. We know that they do not have one.

•(1130)

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe what we are hearing in the House right now.

The former attorney general was very clear on Wednesday. She said that she had faced repeated pressure from individuals at the Prime Minister's Office, individuals at the Privy Council, the Minister of Finance and his entourage, and the Prime Minister himself. She faced constant pressure for four months from 11 individuals. That is unacceptable.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for to resign?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general stated that the Prime Minister told her it was her decision to make. The former attorney general said it was appropriate to discuss job impacts. In the end, the former attorney general chose not to proceed. The law was followed every step of the way.

The job of any prime minister is to stand up for Canadians and Canadian workers, and that is exactly what we on this side of the House are going to do. It is clear that the Conservatives do not have a plan and will not stand up for workers the way we will.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the Prime Minister fired the former attorney general when she refused to break the rules or bend the law for him. The first thing he planned to discuss with his new Attorney General was SNC-Lavalin.

No one knows what has happened since, and the former attorney general cannot say anything else because of the Prime Minister's legal gag order. He is using privilege and committees to shield his own wrongdoings. She said, "...some of the questions would be answered if that information was made available."

Therefore, will the Prime Minister remove his restrictions—yes or no?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said in this chamber, it was extremely important not just for parliamentarians but for all Canadians to hear different perspectives on this matter, specifically the perspective of the former attorney general.

That is why the government and the Prime Minister took the extremely historic step of waiving cabinet confidence and solicitor-client privilege, a privilege that all lawyers in this chamber know to be sacrosanct.

What we understand is that the committee is doing its work to ensure that those perspectives are heard. We have confidence in the perspective of that committee, as well as in the ability of the ethics investigator to conduct a non-partisan investigation.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are actually using all of their tools to hide the truth.

Oral Questions

The former attorney general has gone to great lengths not to jeopardize active prosecutions and to uphold their independence. However, the Prime Minister and senior Liberals, including the finance minister and his office, ganged up to threaten and pressure her to interfere.

The only thing the Prime Minister is really worried about is his job and his power. If he has nothing to hide, then he has nothing to fear.

Therefore, will he let her tell us all of the facts—yes or no?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the waiver of privilege in this context was wide and historic. It was wide insofar as it relieved the former attorney general from her cabinet confidence responsibilities as well as her solicitor-client responsibilities.

What was not waived—and this is important for the other side and for all Canadians to understand—is the aspect of privilege that relates to two ongoing matters that are before the courts. When matters are before the courts, they are not to be influenced by members of Parliament, members of government or cabinet, because they are under judicial consideration. That is an important precept in the very rule of law that all members of the House seek to uphold and ensure.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Waskahegen Corporation is a non-profit organization that provides affordable rental housing to urban indigenous Canadians. However, it has emerged that their tenants include some non-indigenous Canadians, even though many first nations members have been waiting for years to secure an apartment. Furthermore, discrimination already makes it harder for people from first nations to find housing.

Will the minister ensure that the federal funding earmarked for off-reserve indigenous housing actually reaches its intended target?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the specific case to which the member refers is one that raises some important questions. I would be happy to discuss the issue with her afterwards to understand exactly how federal funding and the tenant list is constructed in that situation to ensure that dollars assigned to urban indigenous housing programs serve people from that particular community.

In general, though, the housing programs that have been put in place—and this is an important distinction from the previous government—such as the co-investment fund, as an example, and also the homelessness partnering strategy, now called Reaching Home, have all been broadened to include indigenous communities. They are no longer told not to apply. We include them in the mainstream—

● (1135)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have presented bills on indigenous languages and indigenous child welfare but have not committed any base funding. Children and languages are too important for their promises to be empty.

Language keepers and child welfare advocates both say these bills do not meet the needs of indigenous people. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people will not accept promises that come without funding.

Why are the Liberals making empty promises to indigenous people?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, language is at the core of who we are, but indigenous languages across the country are endangered and are disappearing. This is a direct consequence of governments' past actions that were meant to destroy indigenous languages. It is time to take action.

That is why our government introduced Bill C-91, with support from all parties. We hope that this bill will become law before the end of June.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his much-vaunted public mandate letters to all of his ministers, the Prime Minister told each minister to be honest, open and sincere and to serve only the public interest. The testimony from the attorney general shows the Prime Minister and his team have not been open, they have not been completely honest and they have tried to pervert the course of justice to favour private corporate interests.

Since the Prime Minister fell short of the conduct he demanded of his ministers, will he resign his role as the head of government?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that experienced member knows that we should respect committees. The Conservatives had their playbook to disrupt and destroy committees. We on this side increased resources to committees so that they could do their important work.

Canadians are watching, and they noticed that the Prime Minister was able to waive solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence so that the former attorney general could speak. Committee members asked tough questions.

Oral Questions

What Canadians also know is that this week we saw the statistics that 300,000 children have been lifted out of poverty because of the Canada child benefit. They know that the Conservatives voted against it. They know that we have a plan, and that plan is working, and they know the Conservatives have no plan.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec caucus met in Gatineau on January 28. We can only assume that the matter of SNC-Lavalin was raised during the various meetings between federal and provincial ministers.

Did a member of the PMO or the Liberal cabinet assure the Government of Quebec that SNC-Lavalin would be given its remediation agreement and be able to avoid a criminal trial, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a process in place.

We have committees, including the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, which has members from both sides of the House. Those members work together. They are calling witnesses, and witnesses are appearing and answering questions. Members on both sides are asking their questions.

It is obvious that the Conservatives have never had any respect for committees and that, today, nothing has changed. We, on this side of the House, respect committees and are going to let them do their job.

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general gave shocking testimony on Wednesday about political interference by the Prime Minister. Her testimony was backed with specific names, dates, notes and text messages.

In her testimony she said the PM jumped in, stressing there is an election in Quebec and that “I am an MP in Quebec, the member for Papineau”.

The Prime Minister has lost the moral authority to govern and must resign. When will he?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we hear misrepresentation.

The justice committee met in public, and Canadians were able to watch that testimony. Several witnesses appeared. Canadians should be watching. The justice committee is going to continue sitting next week, and more witnesses will be appearing and answering those questions.

That member seems to have observed the committee appearance but does not seem to remember that the former attorney general stated that the Prime Minister told her it was her decision to make. She does not seem to remember that the former attorney general stated that it was appropriate to discuss job impacts. She does not seem to remember that the attorney general said that she had made up her mind and that she chose not to proceed.

• (1140)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for three hours and 40 minutes the former attorney general gave shocking testimony, revealing a sustained, coordinated and inappropriate attempt by our Prime Minister to subvert justice—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am just waiting for the chatter to stop across the floor so that we can hear the question. I want to make sure they are done so we can proceed with the question.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, we now know that the Clerk of the Privy Council told the former attorney general that the Prime Minister was going to get his way one way or the other. She told us that principal secretary Gerry Butts said “there is no solution here that does not involve some interference.”

The Prime Minister has lost the moral authority to govern our great country. He must resign. When will he?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have confidence in our institutions. I have confidence in the work that committees do. We have confidence in the independence of the judicial system. We have confidence in officers of Parliament.

The justice committee is looking at this matter. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is looking at this matter. We have confidence they will do that work.

However, it is important to note that the Conservatives are picking and choosing what they represent, because they tend to misrepresent. The former attorney general stated that the Prime Minister told her it was her decision to make. She stated that it was appropriate to discuss job impacts. She stated that she had made up her mind. At the end, it was the former attorney general who made her decision not to proceed—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Edmonton's mayor, Don Iveson, is asking for \$1.2 billion over five years for 5,000 new affordable housing units to begin to fill the need.

Our city's non-profit housing provider working group says over 48,000 households are in need. More than 22,000 of those spend more than half of their gross income on housing, putting them at risk of paying for their home or their essentials. Many of these projects are shovel ready, with land secured and buildings designed. All that is missing is for the government to release the federal dollars now. Will it?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, the dollars have been released now. In fact, the co-investment fund has been set up to finance projects specifically put forward by municipalities. We are engaged with municipalities from coast to coast to coast to make sure their housing needs are met.

Oral Questions

To date, close to 15,000 new units have been built. To date, close to 150,000 units have been repaired. To date, close to 800,000 Canadian households receive subsidies under the new national housing strategy. The strategy is active. It is taking applications as we speak. It is funding cities and municipal programs right across the country.

I was in Burnaby announcing projects. I have been in Woodstock announcing projects. I have been in Barrie announcing projects. I have been in virtually every province and the minister has been working twice as hard.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, 93 Aéroports de Montréal or ADM workers learned, in answer to their counter-offer, that they were simply being laid off. The Liberals claim to protect good jobs, but if the minister was aware of this matter, he just stood idly by.

Last year, ADM's top eight executives shared a \$1-million bonus at the expense of workers. Meanwhile, the safety of the travelling public is being contracted out on the cheap.

What did the Minister of Transport do to protect these jobs?

[English]

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand how important our airports are to our economy and we take safety at our airports incredibly seriously. Canadians can rest assured that we have one of the safest air transport systems in the world.

The member knows that the governance of airports is independent and they operate quite well, including at the airports he mentioned.

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret I am a big fan of the Canada summer jobs program. In my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, this program has provided many young people in my community with their first real job.

While the previous government put CSJ on the chopping block and youth unemployment skyrocketed, my team worked hard with our local employers to more than double the number of CSJ jobs in my riding, something that had a meaningful impact in my community.

Could the minister update us on the number of jobs this government has created nationally for young Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is such a pleasure to work for the MP for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge on the Canada summer jobs program. His hard and tireless work on the program has made it a better program for young people across the country.

We committed to double this program, in direct opposition, as the member noted, to the Conservatives' neglect of the program, which meant young people did not have the kinds of opportunities they have today.

I am happy to announce that Canada summer jobs 2018 created over 70,000 high-quality jobs for students across the country. Not only did the Conservatives starve this program, they did not care about the quality of the program. On this side, we know our economy depends on young people having the skills and opportunity to thrive.

* * *

●(1145)

JUSTICE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week we heard jaw-dropping testimony from the former attorney general about the political interference of the Prime Minister in a criminal trial. Her testimony was credible, detailed and sincere. She said that the former principal secretary to the Prime Minister told her, “there is no solution here that does not involve some interference.”

It is clear that the Prime Minister no longer has the moral authority to govern our great country. When will the Prime Minister do what is necessary and resign?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, there is a committee process. The justice committee is looking into this matter.

We on this side have confidence in the work of committees and the members who sit on them. We know the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is looking into this matter. We on this side have respect and confidence in our officers of Parliament.

We know there are two ongoing court cases. We on this side have confidence in the independence of the judicial system. We think it should do its important work. The Conservatives will continue their politics of division.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general gave disturbing testimony about the political interference of the Prime Minister and others in an ongoing criminal trial.

Unlike the Prime Minister, her testimony was backed up by credible evidence. She said, “I spoke to [the finance minister] on this matter...I told him that engagements from his office to mine on SNC had to stop, that they were inappropriate. They did not stop.”

The Prime Minister has lost the moral authority to govern our great country. He must resign. When will he?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member acknowledges that he knows there are two court cases on this matter currently. We on this side respect the independence of the judicial system and we think it should do its important work.

We on this side also respect the work of committees. The justice committee is actually working together. Members on both sides sit on the committee. They are asking witnesses to come. Witnesses are coming and responding. We know that next week, when most of us return to our constituencies, the justice committee will continue sitting and more witnesses will be appearing.

Oral Questions

It is important to also note that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is looking into this matter. We on this side have confidence in the work of officers of Parliament. We will respect them. They should—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, the former attorney general testified that she was inappropriately pressured by the Prime Minister over the criminal case involving SNC-Lavalin. Sonia Lebel, the Attorney General of Quebec, agrees that this is extremely troubling.

Gerald Butts, the Prime Minister's closest adviser and friend said there was no solution that did not involve interference. By implicating himself in the obstruction of justice, the Prime Minister has lost the moral authority to govern.

When will he resign?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general said that the Prime Minister told her that the decision was hers. The former attorney general said that it was appropriate to talk about the impact on jobs. The former attorney general confirmed that she took the decision and that she decided not to move forward. I think that the hon. members opposite should respect her decision.

The law was followed every step of the way. The job of any prime minister is to stand up for Canadians, including workers. That is exactly what we will do on this side of the House. We can see that the Conservatives have no plan and that they will not stand up for workers.

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general gave shocking testimony about the political interference of the Prime Minister and his top cronies in an ongoing criminal trial.

In a moment of blatant audacity, the Prime Minister's chief of staff let the former attorney general and her staff know just what the Prime Minister thought of the rule of law, decreeing that the PMO did not “want to debate legalities anymore”.

The Prime Minister has lost the moral authority to govern our great country. He must resign. When will he?

• (1150)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Canada we have a rule of law. On this side, we obviously respect it a lot more than on the other side.

The justice committee is doing its work. Members from both sides sit on the committee. They are working together to have witnesses appear. Witnesses are appearing and they are responding to questions. Next week, when most of us return to our constituencies, members of the justice committee will continue to sit. They are having more witnesses appear so that more questions can be asked

and witnesses can actually provide more answers so Canadians can make decisions for themselves.

We respect the work of committees. Additionally, we have officers of Parliament. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is also—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

* * *

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week marked three years since the Phoenix pay system fiasco was rolled out. It is reported that it will take three to five years to clear the backlog and potentially 10 years until the system is fixed.

In the meantime, Parks Canada employees continue to have problems with the system, as many work full-time in the warmer months and are on call in the winter. Their pay transactions vary and they continue to encounter serious errors with pay and benefits.

These timelines are unacceptable. Will the Liberals commit in the 2019 budget to invest what is needed now to properly pay our workers?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know how much the member opposite cares about Parks Canada employees. I do as well. I work every single week on Phoenix issues with Parks Canada. We have made investments. I am also working very hard for the minister responsible for Phoenix. We need to ensure our employees are properly paid.

I value the great work that our Parks Canada folks are doing. We are working with them to fix this.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the defence committee just returned from visiting the Canadian troops that are supporting the U.S. mission in Mali. While there, we heard universal praise for the contribution that Canada was making by providing high-quality medevac services.

However, we also heard concern about Canada's August 1 hard date for leaving, when our Romanian replacements will not arrive until October 15.

Will the government commit now to extending the Canadian mission in Mali so we will not leave a gap in critical medical evacuation services and put teachers, health workers and humanitarian aid workers at risk when the UN mission is forced to cut back its operations?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague, along with the other committee members, went to Mali for this visit.

On their return, they seemed quite impressed by what is being done on the ground. Our government is determined to promote peace and stability in the world. Where the Conservatives backed off, we are taking action, especially when it comes to UN peacekeeping operations.

Our air task force is fully active and is conducting medical evacuations and tactical airlift operations for UN forces. We were pleased to learn that Romania will be taking over this important role in Mali.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' relentless pressure on the former attorney general in the SNC-Lavalin affair is not only an embarrassment but potentially criminal. In one of those interactions, the former attorney general said that the Prime Minister jumped in, stressing there was an election in Quebec, and said, "I am an MP in Quebec, the member for Papineau."

Later, the former attorney general told the finance minister that engagements from his office to hers on the SNC-Lavalin affair had to stop. They did not stop.

The Prime Minister has lost the moral authority to govern Canada. He must resign. When will he resign?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the justice committee is looking into this matter, as is the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

As the former attorney general stated, the Prime Minister told her it was her decision to make. She also stated that it was appropriate to discuss job impacts. She stated that she had made up her mind and that she made a decision not to proceed. We know the law was followed at every step of the way.

I find it fascinating that the member comes from the region I also represent. In our region, we have had lay-offs and we have had people lose their jobs. Rather than respecting the work of committees and the officer of Parliament, the member is focused on partisan politics rather than jobs in our communities. He knows Canadians are hurting. Those are the people whom I will be fighting for and those are the people whom this government will fight for.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, testimony that the former attorney general gave about the political interference of the Prime Minister in an ongoing criminal trial was nothing short of shocking. She said, "On January 7 I received a call from the [PM] and was informed I was being shuffled.... I will say that I stated I believed [it] was because of the SNC matter." Her testimony was backed up by credible evidence.

Clearly, the Prime Minister has lost his moral authority to govern our great country. He must resign. When will he do so?

● (1155)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will just remind the House, in case it has not been noted, that we have a committee process. The justice committee is looking into this matter. Members of Parliament from both sides sit on the justice committee. They have asked for witnesses to appear. Witnesses are appearing. Next week, when most of us return to our constituencies, members of the justice committee will continue to sit as they are having more witnesses appear so they can continue looking into this matter.

We also know the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is looking into this matter. We have confidence in the work that office will do.

We also know there are two ongoing court cases. We on this side have respect for the independence of the judicial system. We think that the matter is being looked at—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general gave extraordinary testimony about the political interference by the Prime Minister in an ongoing criminal trial. Her testimony was backed up by credible evidence: names, texts and documentation. She said, "I experienced a consistent and sustained effort by many people within the government to seek to politically interfere in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion".

The Prime Minister has lost the moral authority to govern and must resign. When will he?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, because the government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, increased resources to committees and is permitting them to do their important work. They actually are working really well. We know that they are independent from this place and are masters of their own domain.

What has been happening is that members of Parliament from both sides who sit on committees are working together to move forward on matters so that we can serve the people who sent us here. The justice committee has been working well together and calling on witnesses. In the next weeks, when we return from our constituencies, the members of the justice committee will continue sitting and hearing from more witnesses so that they can continue looking at this matter.

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SPORTS

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the father of two daughters and two sons, I strongly encourage all of my kids to get involved in sports. A common theme that is often discussed right around the country among parents is equality in sport.

Oral Questions

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Science and Sport please tell the House what important steps she is taking to improve gender equity and safety in sport?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Science and Sport and to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to creating an environment where women and girls can engage in sport at all ages and levels, and feel safe while doing so. That is why last week we announced a new secretariat to develop, implement and monitor a gender equity strategy. This builds on our investment of \$30 million to achieve gender equality in sport by 2035 so that all women at all ages can engage and compete from the playground to the podium.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear to me that the Liberals cannot handle the truth. The former attorney general gave shocking testimony about the political interference of the Prime Minister and his top officials in an ongoing criminal trial. I believe the former attorney general when she testified that the Prime Minister urged her to intervene, “stressing that there is an election in Quebec and that ‘I am an MP in Quebec, the member for Papineau.’”

The Prime Minister has failed to uphold the rule of law and he has lost the moral authority to govern. When will he resign?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, looking at the facts, the former attorney general was at the justice committee and she stated that the Prime Minister told her it was her decision to make. The former attorney general stated that it was appropriate to discuss job impacts. The former attorney general stated on numerous occasions that she had made up her mind and she made the decision not to proceed.

We know the law was followed every step of the way, and we know that the job of any Prime Minister is to stand up for Canadians, Canadian workers and the rule of law. That is what this Prime Minister does.

What is clear is that the Conservatives focus on partisan politics, rather than focusing on Canadians. We will not take their advice. We are going to continue making sure that we have a plan that is working for Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, democracy is near and dear to the hearts of every member of Parliament and all our constituents. We know that having an engaged, informed population that is less susceptible to being manipulated online is key to protecting our democracy. The government is known for having the digital and technical expertise to respond to threats and protect its networks.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell us how Canada's electoral processes will be—

● (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard for working to protect our elections and our democracy.

Protecting Canadians and our democracy and ensuring that the next election is free and fair is a priority for our government. To that end, the Communications Security Establishment is working with the Minister of Democratic Institutions and her team to implement measures that will strengthen people's resistance to disinformation. We will fight interference in our elections and work to mitigate its impact. Canadians can count on Canada's strong electoral process.

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[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has damaged Canada's credibility on the international stage. Yesterday, The New York Times writer Bret Stephens tweeted, “Who knew? [The Canadian PM] may be more corrupt than Donald Trump”.

He is talking about the abuse of power within our judicial system. One minute, the Prime Minister is lecturing China on the independence of our judicial system, and the next minute he is bullying the former attorney general for SNC-Lavalin.

There is only one way Canada's international reputation can be restored. The Prime Minister must go. When will he resign? If he will not resign, when will his caucus do its job and remove him?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we examine again the evidence that was received from the former attorney general who stated that the Prime Minister told her that it was her decision to take, who said that the PMO staff told her that they did not want to cross any lines, who stated that it was appropriate to discuss job impacts, who stated that nothing was unlawful and that she was never directed.

Most importantly, what she said is that, “I do not want members of this committee or Canadians to think that the integrity of our institutions has somehow evaporated. The integrity of our justice system, the integrity of the director of public prosecutions and prosecutors is intact.”

LABOUR

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, this week, Statistics Canada reported that Saskatchewan was the only province where payroll earnings fell in 2018. That drop was driven by lower construction earnings. The government was elected promising to restore a fair wages policy for federally funded construction projects.

Will the government enact a fair wages policy for construction workers before the House rises this spring?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it stands, we are holding consultations right now on a fair wages policy for Canada. I have been working closely with labour leaders, others who are interested in a fair wages policy and those whom it would affect.

I look forward to the results of the consultations and charting a path forward for Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, August 22 of this year marks the 100th anniversary of the Quebec Bridge. I invite you to come and visit this beautiful city and have a look at the bridge. As you will see, the paint job looks like it is 100 years old.

Stephen Harper had promised to fix this in one year. The current Prime Minister promised to fix it in six months, yet the bridge continues to rust, and it looks like it will be another 100 years before Ottawa finally does anything.

Since the government does not have the courage to force CN to do it, why will it not paint the bridge itself?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and for her interest in the Quebec Bridge.

For the past six months, I have been engaged in intense discussions with the various partners involved to come up with a permanent solution for the Quebec Bridge. My message to the people of the greater Quebec City area is that we will always be there for Quebecers. Of course we will continue to invest in Quebec City. The people of that city who are listening to us today understand that in order to get this done, we need all partners at the negotiating table.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we want more than just discussions, we want a coat of paint.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister was proud to announce that Canada is going to the moon. He may be going to the moon, but he cannot get the bridge painted. In the meantime, an engineering marvel is deteriorating. Liberal and Conservative governments are quicker to talk and discuss than to pick up a paintbrush.

I will ask my question again: When will the government keep the promise it made to Quebecers and repaint the Quebec Bridge?

• (1205)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

Routine Proceedings

She is so enthusiastic that perhaps she could help me paint the bridge. Indeed, it is an important project. It is a heritage structure for the people of Quebec City.

I can assure my colleague and all MPs from the greater Quebec City area that we will continue to make progress on this important file. I have spoken with the mayor of Quebec City and I am speaking to our partners. The people of Quebec City who are watching at home understand that having the will to do something is not enough. All of the partners need to work together to find a permanent solution for the Quebec Bridge.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Simon Marcell (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about SNC-Lavalin for three weeks, and no one has brought up the 3,600 workers in Quebec. Their jobs are in jeopardy, and all of the parties here are playing politics at their expense. The Bloc Québécois' priorities are workers and our economy, not partisanship.

This is the last question before we adjourn for two weeks. Will the government sign a remediation agreement with SNC-Lavalin to save these jobs before we return?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my Bloc Québécois colleague asked us this question because, as the Canadians watching us know, we are the ones who stood up to give the workers, pensioners and suppliers who have nothing to do with this whole situation a voice here.

We will continue to stand up for SNC-Lavalin workers across the country, and we can absolutely do this in keeping with the rule of law and the appropriate ethics rules.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PARKS CANADA

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32 (2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the action plan to protect the Wood Buffalo National Park world heritage site.

* * *

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-93, an act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in relation to Bill S-240, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (trafficking in human organs).

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 28th report of the Standing Committee on Finance concerning Bill C-82, an act to implement a multilateral convention to implement tax treaty related measures to prevent base erosion and profit shifting. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

* * *

• (1210)

[*English*]

ADDRESSING THE CONTINUING VICTIMIZATION OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS' FAMILIES ACT

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-437, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Prisons and Reformatories Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to table my bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code respecting families of victims of homicide.

It is impossible not to be touched by the story of Lyle and Marie McCann, an elderly couple who went missing in 2010. We know they were murdered, and their killer is currently behind bars. However, the McCann family has never been told what happened to their remains.

This bill would give authorities the tools to end the injustice that is the re-victimization of victims' families. This legislation would give discretion to authorities to make the refusal to co-operate an aggravating factor and make the ongoing refusal to tell the location of the victims' remains a consideration for the Parole Board.

I know we are heading into an election and that this bill may not receive the full airing it deserves. However, as a member recently elected in a by-election, I want this legislation to enter the debate now. This bill, or as I like to call it, McCann's law, will give authorities the tools they need to bring justice to families of victims of homicide.

I will never stop fighting for this legislation and for the families of victims.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

MOTION FOR TRAVEL

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following travel motions:

That, in relation to its study of Priorities of Canadian Stakeholders Having an Interest in Bilateral and Trilateral Trade in North America, Between Canada, United States and Mexico and of the Impact of Tariffs on Canadian Businesses, Companies and Workers, seven members of the Standing Committee on International Trade be authorized to travel to Washington, D.C., United States of America, in the spring of 2019, and that the necessary staff accompany the committee;

That, in relation its study of Impacts of Methamphetamine Abuse in Canada, seven members of the Standing Committee on Health, be authorized to travel to Vancouver, British Columbia; Calgary, Alberta; Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Montréal, Quebec, in the spring of 2019, and that the necessary staff accompany the committee;

That, in relation to the Annual Conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees (CCPAC) and Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors (CCOLA), seven members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to travel to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, in the summer of 2019, and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I have the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sorry, there was a mix-up.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I would only say that you did call petitions and the member for Edmonton West was recognized. I think we should require unanimous consent to revert to motions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I have consulted with the Table officers. The hon. member had risen. The Chair did not see her rise and she was not listed. I will recognize her and then we will go to petitions.

The hon. member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

Routine Proceedings

•(1215)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Mr. Speaker, following the usual consultations among all parties, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That Bill S-240, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, trafficking in human organs, be deemed concurred in at report stage, deemed read a third time and passed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to present a petition signed by several hundred constituents from my riding and across the country.

The petitioners note that it is impossible for a person to give informed consent to assisted suicide or euthanasia if appropriate palliative care is unavailable to them. They therefore call upon Parliament to establish a national strategy for palliative care.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. Many people who signed the petition are from the Kelowna area. About 1,400 individuals have signed this petition calling upon the House of Commons to support Bill S-214 to ban the sale and/or manufacture of animal-tested cosmetics and their ingredients in Canada moving forward.

It is always an honour to rise in this great democracy to present a petition.

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, it is my pleasure to once again speak on behalf of the hundreds, or even thousands, of Trois-Rivières residents who wish to remind the government that they hope the budget that is tabled on March 19 offers some good news by ending their 25-year wait for passenger rail service to return to Trois-Rivières.

There are countless arguments for resuming passenger rail with VIA Rail's high-frequency rail project. Sadly, I do not have time to present them all this afternoon, but I will certainly want to raise the subject again, because hundreds of people are adding their names to this petition every day, hoping for a favourable response on March 19.

[*English*]

PHARMACARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table yet another petition on a national pharmacare program, something my constituents have been requesting for the last couple of years. They are hoping that the Prime Minister and the government and in fact all members of the House will recognize the value of having a national program whereby prescribed medicines would be provided in a universal fashion.

VIOLENCE AGAINST HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise on behalf of the 8,743 Canadians who signed my petition to address violence against health care workers.

The petition calls upon the Minister of Health to develop a pan-Canadian prevention strategy to address growing incidents of violence against health care workers to ensure that all health care settings across our country are safe.

For too long, violence was often considered part of the job. During my time in the emergency room, I was assaulted on two occasions, and thousands of nurses, doctors, paramedics and support staff continue to face much worse on a regular basis.

It is time for violence in the workplace to end and for real action to address this serious issue. I want to thank Linda Silas of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions and Darlene Jackson of the Manitoba Nurses Union for their tireless efforts on behalf of health care workers. It has been a privilege to work with both of them on this petition and on the health committee's upcoming study on this issue.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and present a petition signed by many Canadians in and around Surrey, British Columbia, stating that it is impossible for a person to give informed consent to assisted suicide or euthanasia if appropriate palliative care is unavailable to them. Therefore, these Canadians are requesting that Parliament establish a national strategy on palliative care.

* * *

•(1220)

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 would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***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 third time and passed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): As was stated earlier, the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock has five minutes of questions coming to him.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this legislation is one of those government initiatives that is long overdue. It is going to have a very positive impact for our corrections system and will make our communities safer in the long run.

A vast majority of the individuals in our prison system ultimately end up going back into communities, and one of the ways we can prevent crimes from taking place is by investing in the right resources and at the same time supporting our correctional officers. I am wondering if my colleague could point out any specific parts of the legislation that the opposition members would have liked to have seen changed at the committee stage, where I know we did accept opposition amendments to the legislation to improve it.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, I listed organization after organization that either raised concerns with this piece of legislation or felt that they were not consulted on this piece of legislation. I laid out the issues that I had with the use of SIUs and the fact that prison officers and the unions representing them have said on multiple occasions that the SIUs could not only put themselves in danger but also potentially other inmates as well. I think I listed that very well in my speech.

The hon. member talked about investments in law and order, security and justice, but the government's own departmental plan includes a cut of a third of a billion dollars in the RCMP budget. Not only that, the Correctional Service of Canada budget has received a 6.6% cut from 2015 when compared to 2019. Again, the Liberals' words are not backing up their actions.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, anyone who has looked at this question of solitary confinement, administrative segregation or its new title, structured integration units, knows that those with mental illness problems are the ones most likely to end up in this situation. I know the hon. member was not here in the last Parliament, but the Conservatives brought in an extremely large number of mandatory minimum sentences, which resulted in people who should otherwise be treated for mental illness ending up in a corrections situation.

Does he still support the use of mandatory minimums, which result in people with mental illness ending up in administrative segregation?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, the mandatory minimums were aimed at keeping the worst of the worst, the violent repeat offenders,

off our streets. I do not believe those who refuse to be rehabilitated in any way should be allowed to go free on our streets. Although there are a number of tools in the tool box that court officers, judges and law enforcement professionals have, the more tools the better.

What Bill C-83 fails to address is the fact that the union representing corrections officers has said on many occasions, especially through its testimony, that this is one tool being taken away that could jeopardize the safety of workers and the safety of other inmates.

● (1225)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns we have raised again and again is the government's lack of seriousness over the safety of our correctional services officers. In its mandate letter to the head of correctional services, a 1,400-word mandate letter, only 52 words discuss officer safety, including this gem, "to instill within CSC a culture of ongoing self-reflection." The government does not once mention safety of the workers in the departmental plan. It cuts resources, but wants to instill a culture of self-reflection.

Is this a government concerned with the safety of corrections services officers?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, it clearly is not, due to the fact the departmental report does not talk about officer safety and that the union representing corrections officers has commented on many occasions that Bill C-83 could potentially endanger the lives of its officers or other inmates. This is also the same government that is sending returning ISIS fighters to poetry classes, so we know where its priorities are.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish I were rising today to support Bill C-83. We have a problem in our corrections system with the use of what was originally called solitary confinement, which then became administrative segregation and is now being rebranded as structured integration units. We are trying to deal with a real problem in the corrections system, but instead, the bill is trying to rebrand the problem out of existence.

I do not think there is any way the courts will be fooled by the bill. The B.C. Supreme Court and the Ontario Superior Court have clearly found that the practice of solitary confinement is unconstitutional. The bill would actually make that practice more common than it is now, and it would have fewer protections for inmates than there are now. I will return to this question of rights later.

I want to talk about the bill from two other perspectives, which I think are equally important: the perspective of corrections workers and the perspective of victims.

Government Orders

In the last Parliament, I was privileged to serve as the NDP public safety critic. I was given that task based on my 20 years of teaching criminal justice at Camosun College, which is essentially a police and corrections worker training program.

The majority of the students who came into that program wanted to be police officers, as they still do. Once they are in the program, they find out that there are a lot of other jobs within the corrections, policing and criminal justice world. Many of them end up going into corrections.

I always talk to the students who are about to go into corrections about the challenges of that job. It is not as glamorous as policing. There are not many shows on TV glamourizing corrections officers. However, it is an equally challenging job.

One of the first challenges workers have to learn to deal with is being locked in during the day. For some, that is psychologically too difficult to handle. That goes along with the second challenge of that job: Corrections workers do not get any choice in who they deal with. In fact, they have to deal the most anti-social and most difficult people to deal with in our society.

Our corrections system often makes corrections workers' jobs harder. We have long wait-lists for treatment programs within our system. We also have long waits for rehabilitation programs. While people are serving their time, it is not just that they are not getting the rehabilitation they need for when they come out. It is not just that they are not getting the addiction treatment they need. They are not getting anything. They are just serving time.

Many will say that this is the kind of punishment people need. However, they tend to forget the fact that far more than 90% of the people in our corrections system will come back into society. If we are worried about the perspective of victims, we have to do a good job on rehabilitation and addiction treatment so that we do not create more victims when people come out of our corrections system.

In response to a question I posed earlier, the minister claimed that I was living in a time warp. He said the Liberals have solved all these problems and have earmarked new money for addiction and mental health treatment within prisons. He said that on the one hand, while on the other hand, he is making cuts in the corrections system.

We have a system, which is already strained from years of cuts by the Conservatives, being held in a steady state of inadequacy by the Liberal budget. It is great for the Liberals to say that they have earmarked these new programs, but if they do not have the staff and facilities to deliver those programs and the things they need to make those programs work, it does not do much good to say they are going to do it, when they cannot do it.

One of the other critical problems in our corrections system is the corrections system for women. It is even more challenging than the corrections system for men in that it is by nature, given the number of offenders, a much smaller system. There are fewer resources and fewer alternatives available for offenders within the women's system.

I think the women's corrections system also suffers from what many would call "essentialism". That is the idea that women are somehow different from men, and therefore, with their caring and nurturing nature, do not belong in prison. There is a prejudice against

women offenders that they must somehow be the worst people, even worse than male offenders, because we expect it from men but we do not expect it from women. That kind of essentialism has really stood in the way of providing the kinds of programs we need to help women offenders, who largely deal with mental health and addiction problems.

● (1230)

While women have served traditionally, or experientially I would say, less often in solitary confinement and shorter periods in solitary confinement, it is the same phenomenon for women as for men. It means that all kinds of mental illnesses, rather than being treated, end up being exacerbated, because while an inmate is in segregation he or she does not have access to those mental health programs. The same thing is true of addiction problems. If an inmate is in administrative segregation, he or she does not have access to those programs.

In the women's system of corrections those programs are already very limited, are hard to access, are hard to schedule and if women spend time in and out of administrative segregation, they do not get the treatment and rehabilitation that they deserve before they return to society.

Sometimes politicians make correctional workers' jobs harder and they do this by making offenders harder to manage. One of the things we hear constantly from the Conservatives is a call for consecutive sentences. They say the crimes are so horrible that if there is more than one victim we ought to have consecutive rather than concurrent sentences. We have to make sure that the worst of the worst do not get out. That is the Conservative line.

When we do that, however, we make sure we have people in the system who have no interest in being rehabilitated, they have no interest in being treated for their addictions, and they have no interest in civil behaviour, if I may put it that way, within the prison. If inmates are never going to get out, then they might as well be the baddest people they can be while they are in that situation. Calling for consecutive sentences just makes correctional workers' jobs that much harder and encourages all of the worst behaviours by offenders.

Related to that was the elimination of what we had in the system before, which was called the faint hope clause. This, for the worst offenders, allowed people to apply for early parole after serving 15 years.

The argument often becomes entitlement. Why would these people be entitled to ask for early parole? But it is the same kind of thing I was just talking about earlier. If people have a faint hope, which is why it is called faint hope, that they may eventually be released, then there is still an incentive to behave civilly while within the system. There is an incentive to get addiction treatment and there is an incentive to do rehabilitation work.

Government Orders

If we take away that faint hope, which we did in the last Parliament as an initiative of the Conservatives, an initiative that was supported by the Liberals, then we end up with people in prisons who are extremely difficult to manage and, therefore, very dangerous for correctional workers to deal with.

The people who are trying to use the faint hope clause are not the most attractive people in our society. The issue of eliminating the faint hope clause from the Criminal Code came up in the case of Clifford Olson in 1997. He was the serial killer of 11 young men and women. It is important to point out that when he applied for his early release, it took only 15 minutes to quash the process. Those people who are in fact the worst of the worst will never get out of prison.

There were about 1,000 applications under the existing faint hope clause. Of those 1,000 applications, 1.3% received parole, and of those 1.3%, there were virtually no returns to prison, no recidivism.

The faint hope clause worked very well in preserving discipline inside the corrections system and in making the environment safer for correctional workers but unfortunately only the NDP and the Bloc opposed eliminating the faint hope clause.

A third way in which politicians make things worse, which I mentioned in an earlier question to my Conservative colleague, is the creation of mandatory minimums. Under the Harper government we had a whole raft of mandatory minimum sentences brought in with the idea that we have to make sure that each and every person who is found guilty is punished. I would argue that we have to make sure that each and every person who is found guilty is rehabilitated. That is what public safety is all about.

The Liberals promised in their election campaign they would repeal these mandatory minimums, yet when they eventually got around after two and a half years to bringing in Bill C-75, it did not repeal mandatory minimum sentences.

● (1235)

We are still stuck with lots of offenders, be they aboriginal people or quite often women, or quite often those with addiction and mental health problems, who do not belong in the corrections system. They belong in the mental health treatment system. They belong in the addictions treatment system. They need supports to get their lives in order. However, under mandatory minimums, the Conservatives took away the tools that the courts had to get those people into the programs that they needed to keep all the rest of us safe.

When we combine all of these things with the lack of resources in the corrections system, which the Conservatives made a hallmark of their government and which has been continued by the Liberals, then all we are doing here is making the work of corrections officers more difficult and dangerous, and we are making the effort to make sure people are rehabilitated successfully less likely.

I want to talk about two cases, one federal and one provincial, to put a human face on the specific problem of solitary confinement.

The first of those is the sad case of Ashley Smith. Ashley Smith, from the Maritimes, was jailed at the age of 15 for throwing crabapples at a postal worker. She was given a 90-day sentence, but while she was in custody for that 90-day sentence, repeated behavioural problems resulted in her sentence being extended and

extended until eventually she served four years, 17 transfers from one institution to another, because she was so difficult to manage, forced medication and long periods in solitary confinement.

What happened with Ashley Smith is a tragedy, because she died by suicide after repeated incidents of self-harm while she was in custody. It is unfortunately a sad example of the outcomes when we place people in, whatever we want to call it, solitary confinement, administrative segregation or structured integration units. It does not matter what the label is. It has enormously negative impacts on those in particular who have a mental illness.

The second case is a provincial case in Ontario, the case of Adam Capay, a mentally ill indigenous man who was kept in isolation for more than four years, without access to mental health services, and under conditions that the courts found amounted to inhumane treatment. The effects on Mr. Capay were permanent memory loss and an exacerbation of his pre-existing psychiatric disorders.

While he was in an institution, unfortunately, Mr. Capay did not get the treatment he needed, and he ended up stabbing another offender, resulting in the death of that offender. What this did, of course, was to create new victims, not only the person who lost his life while in custody but the family of that person.

The result here was a ruling by provincial court Judge John Fregeau that Mr. Capay was incapable of standing trial for that murder within the corrections system because of the way he had been treated and the excessive periods of time he had spent in solitary confinement. The prosecutors did not appeal this decision. It resulted in Mr. Capay's release, to the great distress of the family of the murder victim.

What is the real cause here? The real cause, the fundamental cause, and I am not even going to say it is solitary confinement, is the lack of resources to deal with mental health and addictions problems within our corrections system.

Let me come back to the bill very specifically. The Liberals say they are setting up a new system here to deal with the difficult offenders. They have given it that new title. Senator Kim Pate, who spent many years heading up the Elizabeth Fry Society and has received the Order of Canada for her work on women in corrections, said:

With respect to segregation, Bill C-83, is not only merely a re-branding of the same damaging practice as "Structured Intervention Units", the new bill...also virtually eliminates existing, already inadequate limitations on its use.

Strangely, what the Liberals have done in the bill, in attempting to get rid of administrative segregation, is that they have cast a broader net. They are setting up a system that will actually bring more people into the isolation and segregation system within the corrections system. The Liberals have actually removed some of the safeguards that existed on the length of time someone could end up spending in what should be called solitary confinement. There is actually no limit in the bill on how long someone could end up in solitary confinement.

Government Orders

•(1240)

Our correctional investigator, Ivan Zinger, an independent officer of Parliament, has criticized the bill, saying people will end up in much more restrictive routines under the new system than most of them would have under the old system. The bill would make things worse.

Josh Patterson, from the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, pointed out that the bill would allow the same practices that the courts had criticized as inhumane treatment in the new bill as existed under the old administrative segregation. Therefore, we have merely relabelled the existing practices in the bill.

The final piece I want to talk about is the question of oversight. In earlier debate, the minister said I was living in a time warp. Sometimes I wish that were true. However, he was talking about oversight and said that I had missed the amendments he made on oversight. What is really true is the minister missed the point of the witnesses on oversight. Stretching all the way back to the inquiry into events at the prison for women in Kingston, Louise Arbour recommended judicial oversight of the use of solitary confinement. That is truly independent. That is truly an outside review of what happens.

Also, as Josh Patterson pointed out, not only is there no judicial oversight, there is no recourse for those who are subjected to solitary confinement to have legal representation to challenge the conditions under which they are being held.

Therefore, what the government has done in its amendments is to create not independent review but an advisory committee to the minister. That is not independent oversight and that is one of the reasons the NDP continues to oppose the bill.

I want to come back to the B.C. court decision, which pointed to two key reasons why the existing regime was unconstitutional. Those are the lack of access to counsel for what amounts to additional punishment measures being applied when someone is placed into solitary confinement and the possibility of indefinite extra punishment by being in solitary confinement. The bill deals with neither of those two key unconstitutional provisions of solitary confinement.

Therefore, where are we likely to find ourselves down the road? We are going to find ourselves back in court, with the new bill being challenged on the same grounds as the old regime of solitary confinement.

As I said at the beginning, I would like to be standing here to support a bill that would create a system for managing those most difficult offenders, those with mental health and addiction problems, in a way that would respect their constitutional rights and in a way that would guarantee treatment of their addictions and rehabilitation so when they would come out, they could be contributing members of society. Unfortunately, Bill C-83 is not that bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat interesting at times when we get differing opinions from the opposition parties. For example, the member spoke a great deal about solitary confinement and the idea of segregation, saying that not too much really had changed in the

legislation. If we listen to some of the Conservative speeches, in particular during second reading, it is almost as if they are accusing us of getting rid of any sort of solitary confinement and the element of danger in doing so.

If we look at the substance of the legislation, there is a significant change, which puts it in compliance with the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling on the matter.

I would ask the member opposite for some clarification on this. I could be wrong on this, but I had thought the NDP was in support of the legislation originally. I know when it went to committee, opposition amendments to the legislation were proposed, including from the NDP, and some were accepted. It highlights what the Prime Minister has always done, put a high priority on the independence of the committees and see them doing some fine work. That was demonstrated very clearly on this bill. I thought that was a positive thing. Therefore, I do not quite understand what might have caused the NDP to have change its mind on the issue.

•(1245)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that the hon. member is wrong. We opposed this bill at all stages.

However, what I said at the beginning still remains. New Democrats would have liked to support a bill that recognized the realities in the corrections system. There needs to be something to deal with some of the people who are the most difficult to deal with in the system. We are not denying that. However, we have to have a regime set up that guarantees the safety of corrections workers and the safety of other offenders, and at the same time we have to make sure that those difficult offenders still get addictions treatment, still get rehabilitation and still have their rights respected within the criminal justice system.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly we all remember with sadness the case of Ashley Smith. We should learn from mistakes in tragic cases in our system.

We hear concerns from correctional workers that they have not been properly consulted in the process. We also hear concerns from organizations, from Senator Pate and others, that Bill C-83 does not have the intended purpose to deal with some of the issues the member raised in his speech.

However, I am raising the wider issue that with the government now in a crisis of confidence with respect to the rule of law, maybe the Liberals have lost their moral authority on criminal justice issues, including corrections.

There is widespread disagreement on both the left and the right on Bill C-83. The fact is that the government is now tarnished. I talked about how the public safety minister is the modern equivalent of the solicitor general, the second-highest-ranking legal official in the government of Canada. In the absence of moral authority, should the government not go back to the drawing board and speak to the organizations that can give Bill C-83 its intended purpose?

I would like the member's comments on the wider issue of how the government and the Prime Minister and his office, in particular, have called into question their ability to bring forward appropriate legislation on both the rule of law and the criminal justice system.

Government Orders

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises an important point. The independence and impartiality of our criminal justice system, and the firewall that should be there to protect politicians of any stripe from using that system to advance the interests of their friends, is important.

It is important in the corrections world for another reason, which is to make sure that people are treated fairly, not that the most unpopular people are treated worse than other people who we might think are more deserving.

We have a system that it is never popular to advocate for. We are not going to win any kudos in most places by going out and saying that we need to spend more money on offenders, but in fact, we need to spend more money on offenders. If we want to have public safety, if we want to have rehabilitation and if we want to have our communities secure, we have to have a correctional service that deals with mental health and addictions problems and provides rehabilitation. Ultimately, that is the way to get community safety.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no matter how it is called, we are talking about the confinement of an individual. We are talking about a man or a woman who is deprived of all human contact for 22 hours a day. The proposed changes will make that 20 hours a day. It is not a big difference.

As my colleague said, these people often have mental health problems. Even if they are offered certain services, they have mental health problems. In addition, there will no longer be a limit on the number of days they spend in solitary confinement.

I would like to ask my colleague what effect that could have on people who already have mental health issues.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the research on the phenomenon of solitary confinement is quite clear that solitary confinement exacerbates mental illness problems. It makes what we call psychiatric disorders much worse. It does that through the conditions under which people are held. Quite often, in situations like that of Mr. Capay, in Ontario, people are held in conditions where the lights are always on so they cannot sleep. Not only are they denied basic human contact, they are held in conditions that are actually labelled by the courts as being inhumane.

The other part of this is that while people are in this kind of segregation, they cannot access mental health supports. Those who need the help the most are most often those who are in segregation and therefore cannot get treatment.

I am not disputing that there needs to be some kind of regime for the most difficult offenders. Quite often when they are suffering from mental health and addiction issues, they are not behaving rationally. We have to have some kind of system, but it has to respect their right to get treatment, to get rehabilitation and to be treated as human beings.

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise at third reading of Bill C-83. This important piece of legislation proposes significant reforms to Canada's correctional system. These changes would make our federal correctional institutions safer places for staff and inmates alike, and that in turn would contribute to greater safety for people in our communities.

Under Bill C-83, administrative segregation would be eliminated and a new correctional intervention model would be established through the implementation of structured intervention units, SIUs, which would serve to address the safety and security risks of offenders who are at any given time too dangerous or disruptive to be managed in the mainstream inmate population. When those offenders need to be separated for safety reasons, they would be placed in an SIU. While they are there, they would continue to have access to the interventions and programming they need to make progress on their correctional plan and improve their likelihood of rehabilitation.

The goal is to help offenders reintegrate into the mainstream inmate population as quickly as possible. That has been the main goal of Bill C-83 from the very beginning and remains so today in the bill's current form. We have arrived at a very solid, concise and thorough piece of legislation that was very strong to begin with. That is a testament to a robust, democratic and healthy legislative process, including thoughtful discussion in this chamber and careful scrutiny and informative testimony at committee. That process led to a number of amendments that have strengthened this bill.

Many of those amendments focus on additional measures to ensure that the SIUs would operate as intended. For example, amendments were made to specify that daily time outside an SIU cell must be offered between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. and that opportunities to interact through human contact must not be mediated or interposed by physical barriers.

Other amendments are about enhancing oversight and transparency when it comes to SIU placement decisions. However, today I would like to focus on one amendment in particular, proposed by the member for Oakville North—Burlington, which would introduce a new independent external decision-making function.

Under Bill C-83, independent external decision-makers would review an inmate's placement in an SIU if it falls under any one of three specific circumstances.

The first circumstance is if an inmate has not received or taken advantage of the opportunity to spend a minimum of four hours a day outside of their cell or two hours of interaction with others or five consecutive days or 15 cumulative days over a 30-day period. The second is if an inmate has been confined to an SIU for 90 consecutive days. The third is if a health care committee of senior officials from the Correctional Service of Canada has made the determination to maintain an inmate in an SIU contrary to the recommendations of a registered health professional.

This process would ensure that decisions to maintain an inmate in an SIU would be subject to scrutiny and ongoing assessment at specific time periods through a mechanism that would operate at arm's length from the Correctional Service of Canada.

Government Orders

Reviews conducted by independent external decision-makers would create additional external monitoring of inmates who are placed in SIUs. This would include vulnerable inmates, such as those who are not participating in programming or interventions or receiving meaningful human contact. It would also support transparency around decisions to maintain vulnerable inmates in an SIU. In all cases, the external decision-maker would be authorized to order the inmate to be released from the SIU entirely.

In addition, when it has been recommended by a registered health care professional, the external decision-maker could order the modification of the inmate's conditions of confinement in the SIU. The proposed addition of the independent external decision-maker's response was one of the main points raised at the committee stage by various witnesses. More specifically, concerns were raised that inmates in an SIU could still be subjected to indeterminate and prolonged confinement. The introduction of an additional external review mechanism addresses these concerns and would help keep our correctional system safe, lawful and accountable.

Another issue that was raised by witnesses at committee, including those representing front-line staff in federal correctional institutions, involved whether additional resources would be made available to support the implementation of the bill.

● (1255)

To ensure that our federal correctional system has the resources it needs to successfully implement the changes proposed in Bill C-83, the government announced a total of \$448 million in funding for corrections in last year's fall economic statement. That includes approximately \$297 million over six years to implement the proposed SIUs, funding that, in the words of the Minister of Public Safety would ensure that Correctional Service Canada "has people with the right skill sets in the right places at the right times".

Canada's federal correctional system is already in a class of its own. Operating in a challenging environment, it does a remarkable job of fulfilling its objectives of holding guilty parties to account, while fostering their rehabilitation. An important part of that rehabilitation process is making sure that offenders, including those who must be separated, are able to take part in reintegration programming in order to make progress against the objectives set out in their correctional plan.

That programming is essential to a successful transition to the mainstream inmate population, and after that, to the community at the end of a sentence. The bill would improve the way that works. In doing so, it would help bring about safer institutions for staff and inmates, in the short term. In the long run, it would mean fewer repeat offenders, fewer victims and safer communities for all.

Getting the bill to where it is today has been a truly collaborative effort. I have been impressed and heartened by the careful attention and constructive input given to the bill from all parties and all corners. I would like to thank hon. members for the roles they have played throughout that entire process so far. The result is improved legislation that, if passed, I am confident will lead to a better, safer and more effective correctional system.

For all these reasons, I will be voting in favour of Bill C-83 at third reading and I encourage all my hon. colleagues to join me in doing the same.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk to my colleague a bit about the process of the bill in consultation, because there seems to be a lack of consultation with the government. I am from Oshawa. We are having a horrible situation where the government has chosen to amalgamate the Port of Oshawa with the Port of Hamilton and gave us 30 days with no consultation on it.

For the bill, even the correctional investigator of Canada told the public safety committee that all the consultations seemed to have been done internally. To his knowledge, there have been no consultations with external stakeholders. I think this is why we may end up with something that perhaps is not fully thought out.

For my colleague from the Liberal Party, which has purported to put consultation up on a pedestal, this seems a little strange. If the Liberals did not consult with the union, they did not consult with victims and they did not consult with prisoner advocates, can the member opposite tell me who exactly they consulted with when drafting the bill?

● (1300)

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: Mr. Speaker, there were a number of stakeholders consulted on this, including Corrections Canada law enforcement officials. There was plenty of opportunity for input at the committee stage for increasing opportunities for consultation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague who has a great deal of expertise in the area of health care and understands probably more than most individuals just how important it is that, when we consider our correctional facilities, there needs to be a health care component to it.

If we want to allow for and encourage healthier integration after being in our prisons, we have to at least have a genuine attempt to address some of those health conditions that prisoners often end up in prison for, such as a mental health issue that might have resulted in a particular crime being committed.

By providing these types of services, in the long run, we are preventing potential crimes in the future. I wonder if my colleague can comment on how important it is that we have these health care services.

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: Mr. Speaker, I agree completely. People often talk about the revolving door of the prison system and there is a revolving door. However, there are those who think that the answer to that is longer and harsher punishments. In fact, the evidence is clear that longer sentences and harsh conditions during incarceration actually increase the likelihood that an inmate will reoffend.

Government Orders

Furthermore, during my visit to Stony Mountain penitentiary, north of Winnipeg, it became clear that there are large numbers of inadequately treated people with mental health issues, who are essentially being warehoused in our correctional system because they do not have the adequate treatment in the community and, therefore, offend. This is a valuable way to ensure that these people receive the care and rehabilitation they need. They will actually be less likely to reoffend and this will improve public safety.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the safety of correctional officers, the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers said that it opposed the needle exchange program and that it was consulted minimally. This will dramatically change the work environment of officers.

Does the member feel confident that enough resources are there so the safety concerns brought forward by the union will be addressed?

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: Mr. Speaker, needle exchange programs have been shown, in many environments, to improve safety and improve the health of the users. A needle exchange program does not introduce additional needles to the program. These people already have needles that have been smuggled in and they reuse them, which can transmit infectious diseases. These needles are exchanged for clean ones, which will make for a safer environment.

As well, part of the enhancements of the bill will include body scanners to make it much less likely that such needles would be smuggled into the prison in the first place. Therefore, the needle exchange program would improve the safety of inmates and the safety of staff.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see that this legislation is at third reading stage. I had the opportunity to express a number of thoughts on the legislation at second reading in particular, and I suspect that if we were to check, I likely would have implied, because I know the minister's approach to legislation quite well, that the government is always open to looking at ways to change legislation. My colleague and friend from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, who spoke just before me, referenced some amendments. That is a nice way to start my comments.

We have this wonderful process that allows us to go through second reading and into committee stage, and often amendments are brought forward at committee stage. What is interesting about this legislation is that it exemplifies how open this government really is to opposition amendments. My understanding is that amendments from the opposition provided additional strength to the legislation before us. That tells me, in good part, that committees can be constructive and effective in improving legislation, in dealing with reports and even in discussion. It is a question of having confidence in our standing committees and allowing them to do the fantastic work they can do. Today, Bill C-83 is a good example of legislation being enhanced, and as a direct result, all Canadians will benefit.

Bill C-83, to me, is a good example of how this government has approached the whole crime and safety issue, recognizing just how important it is that no matter where one lives in Canada, there is an expectation that government is going to do what it can to make our communities safer places to be.

This is legislation that would do that, and I do not say that lightly. The majority of people incarcerated in our jail facilities, we have to realize, will leave at some point in time. When they leave, we want to ensure as far as possible that they have the opportunities to succeed and never return to a prison setting. If we are successful in doing that, it means that in Winnipeg North and all over Canada there will be fewer crimes. With fewer crimes, there are fewer victims.

There should be no doubt that when people are guilty of something, yes, there needs to be a consequence for inappropriate behaviour. That is why we have jails, probation and an array of consequences for individuals who commit offences. We also need to recognize that one way we can improve safety in our communities is by ensuring, wherever we can, that there is a sense of responsibility by providing programming and services to minimize the number of repeat offenders. That is what I like about Bill C-83 more than anything else.

There are other aspects to the legislation that would also make a difference. One example is body scanners. I had the opportunity to tour provincial facilities and even some federal facilities in my days as an MLA. Some provincial facilities use scanning technology, from what I understand, and with this legislation, we would better enable body scans to take place in our federal institutions.

I think that is a good thing, because we often hear of drugs, among other things, being smuggled into facilities. This is one of the ways we will be able to reduce that kind of smuggling. It will be a safer environment.

● (1305)

We not only hear about this from individuals in the Ottawa bubble, if I can put it that way, but, more important, we hear it from our constituents and correctional officers. These types of things can really make a difference.

At times, the Conservatives can be somewhat misleading. I am trying to put it as kindly as I can. When they say we are not providing the funds necessary, it is important to recognize that the government is committing almost a half-billion dollars over the next six years to ensure correctional officers and inmates have the supports they need and our system will have a safer environment.

I find it a little odd that the Conservative Party and New Democratic Party do not necessarily support legislation that a sound majority of our constituents would want us to support. There is some really good stuff in here, like the one about audio recordings. I have used the example of someone who is a victim of a sexual assault and whose perpetrator will now go to a hearing. Under the current law, the victim is unable to receive the audio of that hearing. I am sure members of all sides can appreciate the emotions a victim of a sexual assault would feel when put in the same room as the perpetrator. Why would we not allow for that individual to have a copy of the audio recording at a later date? This legislation would allow that.

On the one hand, some very obvious things within the legislation would have a very positive impact. Then some wonderful little things would make a real difference for victims. Whether it is this legislation or the legislation on military justice, when we talked about the Victims Bill of Rights, there are really encouraging things in the legislation.

We are moving forward on a number of different fronts as we modernize. Whether it is the military justice or civil justice, at the end of the day, we want our communities to feel safe. We want to work toward minimizing the number of victims by preventing crimes from taking place whenever we can. We want to ensure there is a consequence to criminal activities. That is why we have different tools to ensure that takes place. I am encouraged by the attitude of the government, in particular, in trying to ensure we are moving forward on this front.

When it comes to the issue of segregation, it is interesting to hear the contrast between the Conservatives and the NDP. The NDP says there is no change in the segregation and the Conservatives say we are going too far on this issue. The reality is that this is a response to the Supreme Court's decision, and we are complying with that decision with the new system we will be putting in place.

• (1310)

Those structured intervention units are in fact a progressive way forward that will ensure that we meet the Supreme Court's requirements, while at the same time allowing more services to be made available. Again, we will hopefully minimize the repeat offenders. We do not want people who are leaving our institutions to be committing more crimes.

We want safer communities, and that is really what all of this is about, trying to get communities across Canada to be safer, more harmonious places to live. It is with great pleasure that I support Bill C-83.

• (1315)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 1:15, pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, February 26, 2019, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Private Members' Business

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, March 18, 2019, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 1:30 p.m., so that we can begin private members' hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is it the pleasure of the House to see the clock at 1:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

(Bill C-421. On the Order: Private Members' Business)

November 1, 2018—Mr. Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île)—Second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration of Bill C-421, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (adequate knowledge of French in Quebec).

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île is not present to move the order as announced in today's notice paper. Accordingly, the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

[*English*]

It being 1:18 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, March 18, 2019, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

Have a great couple of weeks in your ridings.

(The House adjourned at 1:18 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, March 1, 2019

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Corrections and Conditional Release Act

Mr. Goodale	26041
Bill C-83. Third reading	26041
Mr. McCauley	26043
Mr. Garrison	26043
Mr. Bittle	26044
Mr. O'Toole	26044
Mr. Doherty	26044
Mr. Lamoureux	26046
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	26046
Mr. Schmale	26046

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Lloyd	26048
-----------------	-------

Lise Waters

Mr. Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	26048
--	-------

Start Me Up Niagara

Mr. Bittle	26048
------------------	-------

La Rubrique Theatre

Ms. Trudel	26048
------------------	-------

Ernest Tucker

Mrs. Shanahan	26049
---------------------	-------

Prince George Spruce Kings

Mr. Doherty	26049
-------------------	-------

Filipino Student Leadership Conference

Mr. Ouellette	26049
---------------------	-------

Black History Month

Mrs. Schulte	26049
--------------------	-------

Government Programs

Mr. Clarke	26049
------------------	-------

Neonatal Intensive Care Units

Mr. Beech	26050
-----------------	-------

Canada Winter Games

Ms. Young	26050
-----------------	-------

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Hoback	26050
------------------	-------

World Compliment Day

Mr. Bossio	26050
------------------	-------

Wood Buffalo National Park

Ms. Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	26051
--	-------

The Economy

Mrs. Kusie	26051
------------------	-------

International Women's Day

Mrs. Zahid	26051
------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Justice

Ms. Bergen	26051
Ms. Chagger	26051
Ms. Bergen	26051
Ms. Chagger	26052
Ms. Bergen	26052
Mr. Goodale	26052
Mr. Paul-Hus	26052
Mr. Virani	26052
Mr. Paul-Hus	26052
Mr. Virani	26052
Mr. Blaikie	26052
Mr. Goodale	26052
Mr. Blaikie	26052
Ms. Chagger	26053

Employment

Ms. Trudel	26053
Mr. Champagne	26053

Justice

Ms. Trudel	26053
Mr. Virani	26053
Mr. Poilievre	26053
Ms. Chagger	26053
Mr. Poilievre	26054
Ms. Chagger	26054
Mr. Rayes	26054
Ms. Chagger	26054
Mr. Rayes	26054
Ms. Chagger	26054
Mrs. Stubbs	26054
Mr. Virani	26054
Mrs. Stubbs	26054
Mr. Virani	26055

Housing

Ms. Boutin-Sweet	26055
Mr. Vaughan	26055

Indigenous Affairs

Ms. Jolibois	26055
Mr. Anandasangaree	26055

Justice

Mr. O'Toole	26055
Ms. Chagger	26055
Mr. Gourde	26056
Ms. Chagger	26056
Mrs. Block	26056
Ms. Chagger	26056
Mr. Doherty	26056
Ms. Chagger	26056

Housing

Ms. Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona).....	26056
Mr. Vaughan.....	26056

Employment

Mr. Aubin.....	26057
Mr. Beech.....	26057
Mr. Ruimy.....	26057
Ms. Hajdu.....	26057

Justice

Mr. Albas.....	26057
Ms. Chagger.....	26057
Mr. Carrie.....	26057
Ms. Chagger.....	26057
Mr. Généreux.....	26058
Ms. Chagger.....	26058
Mr. Schmale.....	26058
Ms. Chagger.....	26058

Parks Canada

Mr. Stetski.....	26058
Ms. McKenna.....	26058

National Defence

Mr. Garrison.....	26058
Mr. Cormier.....	26059

Justice

Mr. Albrecht.....	26059
Ms. Chagger.....	26059
Mr. Arnold.....	26059
Ms. Chagger.....	26059
Mr. Nater.....	26059
Ms. Chagger.....	26059

Sports

Mr. McGuinty.....	26059
Ms. Young.....	26060

Justice

Mr. Lloyd.....	26060
Ms. Chagger.....	26060

Democratic Institutions

Mr. Baylis.....	26060
Mr. Cormier.....	26060

Justice

Mr. Hoback.....	26060
Mr. Virani.....	26060

Labour

Mr. Weir.....	26061
Ms. Hajdu.....	26061

Infrastructure

Ms. Pauzé.....	26061
Mr. Champagne.....	26061
Ms. Pauzé.....	26061
Mr. Champagne.....	26061

Employment

Mr. Marcil.....	26061
Mr. Champagne.....	26061

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**Parks Canada**

Ms. McKenna.....	26061
------------------	-------

Criminal Records Act

Mr. Goodale.....	26061
Bill C-93. Introduction and first reading.....	26061
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	26062

Committees of the House**Foreign Affairs and International Development**

Ms. Vandenbeld.....	26062
---------------------	-------

Finance

Mr. Ferguson.....	26062
-------------------	-------

Addressing the Continuing Victimization of Homicide Victims' Families Act

Mr. Lloyd.....	26062
Bill C-437. Introduction and first reading.....	26062
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	26062

Committees of the House**Motion for Travel**

Mr. Lamoureux.....	26062
Motion.....	26062
(Motion agreed to).....	26062

Petitions**Palliative Care**

Mr. McCauley.....	26063
-------------------	-------

Animal Welfare

Mr. Albas.....	26063
----------------	-------

Rail Transportation

Mr. Aubin.....	26063
----------------	-------

Pharmacare

Mr. Lamoureux.....	26063
--------------------	-------

Violence Against Health Care Workers

Mr. Eyolfson.....	26063
-------------------	-------

Palliative Care

Mr. Schmale.....	26063
------------------	-------

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux.....	26063
--------------------	-------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Corrections and Conditional Release Act**

Bill C-83. Third reading.....	26064
Mr. Lamoureux.....	26064
Mr. Schmale.....	26064
Mr. Garrison.....	26064
Mr. McCauley.....	26064
Mr. Garrison.....	26064
Mr. Lamoureux.....	26067
Mr. O'Toole.....	26067
Ms. Boutin-Sweet.....	26068
Mr. Eyolfson.....	26068
Mr. Carrie.....	26069
Mr. Lamoureux.....	26069
Mr. Carrie.....	26070

Mr. Lamoureux..... 26070

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota)..... 26071

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Citizenship Act

(Bill C-421. On the Order: Private Members' Business). 26071

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