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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

MOBY BUKHARI

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart to pay tribute to a very special community leader and friend. We lost Moby Bukhari late last year.

Moby served as manager of Erin Court Co-op, but to everyone who knew him, he was so much more than this title suggested. Moby viewed his daily work and sphere of influence as part of a deeper calling, and he embodied the very best of what it means to be a public servant.

He was a trusted mentor to an entire generation of young people at Erin Court, for whom he built a gym, installed basketball nets and created a breakfast program. Generous with his time, he also offered a great deal of one-on-one support. Moby was a relentless champion of inclusion and unequivocal in his quest to give every person he could reach the chance for a brighter future.

To his wife Mishti and daughter Zelia, we pledge to honour Moby's life and legacy by continuing to work together to ensure his dream of a better tomorrow for everyone lives on.

[*Translation*]

GNL QUÉBEC PROJECT

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean are gearing up for public consultations about the énergie Saguenay project.

“Je crois en ma région” is an organization created to send the message that the Saguenay is open for business and welcomes development.

Recently, over 37,000 people joined a Facebook group initiated by Yvon Laprise in support of the project called “Pour GNL Québec à Saguenay”. Richard Courchesne of the Saguenay's top radio station is encouraging listeners to express their support for the GNL Québec project and to join massive public demonstrations.

As we have heard repeatedly in recent weeks, we produce the world's greenest aluminum. We believe we can also produce the world's greenest LNG.

In Canada, we carry out projects properly, ethically and responsibly.

If this project gets the green light from environmental officials, we must seize the opportunity.

I encourage those in the region to keep expressing their support for major projects that will secure its future.

NELLY DUBOURG

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as parliamentarians, we have many privileges. Today, I would like to use one of those prerogatives to share some exciting news with the House.

Exactly one month ago, on January 26, my daughter-in-law, Anne-Marie, and her partner, Edwin-Simon, welcomed a beautiful little girl named Nelly into the world. After gazing into Nelly's eyes, I can say without a shadow of a doubt that the next generation is alive and well.

I am elated to be a grandfather for the first time. The year 2020 marks the birth of a new generation of Dubourgs.

I would like my colleagues to join me in congratulating Anne-Marie and Edwin and wishing a very warm welcome to my granddaughter, Nelly Dubourg.

2022 QUEBEC GAMES

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the countdown has begun. In less than 888 days, the City of Rimouski will be hosting the finals of the 2022 Quebec Games.

Statements by Members

From July 29 to August 6, 2022, over 3,000 athletes from across Quebec will converge on our riding. They will be competing for the highest honour that a Quebec athlete can receive in any sport.

I salute the tireless efforts of the organizing committee, the volunteers and the campaigners who rallied the community to bid on these games.

This event not only serves as a springboard for all of Quebec's top athletes, it is also a source of unending pride for all of these young participants.

Over the nine days of competition, thousands of young people, parents and visitors will experience the organizing committee's professionalism and dedication and enjoy the enthusiastic welcome for which our region is renowned.

I personally invite all members of the House to join me there to experience these unforgettable moments and celebrate youth excellence in sports.

* * *

● (1410)
[English]

BRANDON BASSI

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the member for Delta to pay tribute to Brandon Bassi.

Brandon was an aspiring young athlete who was taken from this world far too soon. At the age of 19, he had just started his undergraduate arts degree at Simon Fraser University, was a member of the university's men's soccer team and a prospect for the Vancouver Whitecaps. Unfortunately, a tragic car crash on May 18, 2019, extinguished these dreams.

Brandon was an outstanding athlete, a generous and compassionate person, and a positive role model for many young students in Delta. Our thoughts are with Brandon's family, his mom Pam, his dad Kulwinder, his brother Derrick and his sister Dalbir.

In his memory, the Bassi family has created the Brandon Bassi Foundation, through which \$1,000 will be awarded annually to a student in North Delta who demonstrates leadership inside and outside the classroom. Although Brandon is no longer with us, this fine young man's legacy will live on through this scholarship, which will help other students realize their dreams.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was a great honour for me to attend a reception last night celebrating Black History Month and the achievements of Canada's black community, hosted by the leader of the official opposition at his home. As far as we know, this is the first time that a Black History Month reception has been hosted at Stornoway by any leader of any party. Various members of Parliament and leaders from the black community gathered, along with our leader and his family, to build relationships and discuss important issues.

I want to particularly recognize Emmanuel and Mariama Bayo and the member for Tobique—Mactaquac for their leadership on this event, as well as the work done by staff, especially Jesus Bondo and Anton Sestritys.

Black Canadians are an integral part of our Conservative family, including current and former staff, former candidates and nomination candidates like Abdul Abdi, Denise Siele and Toyin Crandell, elected provincial Conservatives such as Minister Kaycee Madu in Alberta and soon-to-be elected provincial Conservatives like Patrick Mayangi in Ottawa—Vanier.

We have more work to do to build and strengthen the relationship between the black community and the Conservative Party. Last night was another big step forward.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as February comes to an end, we conclude Black History Month.

I want to recognize Wilma Francis as a community leader and a strong voice in my riding. Every Monday she brings together Caribbean Canadian seniors from across Mississauga with the Cari-Can Group, helping to keep seniors active.

I also recently sat down with the very influential Bishop Lennox Walker from Praise Cathedral Worship Centre, which has the largest congregation in the GTA, and learned the history of lawyer Robert Sutherland.

I am proud of our government for putting Viola Desmond on the \$10 bill, making her the first woman in Canadian history to be featured on Canadian currency. Desmond's story of fighting against systemic discrimination and racism is a reminder to all Canadians of our collective responsibility to fight inequality.

I want to encourage all Canadians to start conversations and learn the history of these remarkable Canadians who helped shape this peaceful country we are in today.

* * *

[Translation]

MAXIE PLANTE

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to recognize the outstanding performance of athlete Maxie Plante.

Since the beginning of the year, this Magog-born woman has brought home no less than three podium finishes in three women's ice cross competitions, including a gold medal at the Red Bull Ice Cross World Championship in Yokohama, Japan, on February 15. This 27-year-old athlete has certainly made a name for herself over the past few months and is currently ranked eighth in the world.

On the ice cross circuit for the past six years, her focus and hard work have set her on a rewarding path. What is more, she is also an airline pilot in Canada's Far North. I am very proud to have such a talented athlete in my riding. She first laced up her skates at the age of five in the Magog arena. Thank you, Maxie, for putting the region of Brome—Missisquoi on the map with your spectacular performances.

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[English]

SCOTTIES TOURNAMENT OF HEARTS

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to congratulate Rivers, Manitoba, a vibrant community in my riding.

Earlier this month Rivers proudly hosted Manitoba's Scotties Tournament of Hearts. The 68th edition of this tournament resulted in team Einarson winning the provincial championship. As of Sunday, the team went on to win the national championship in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

Although we all knew team Manitoba would once again prove that they are truly Canada's best curlers, the real champion was the community of Rivers. Today, I rise to commend the efforts of the organizing committee, sponsors and volunteers who dedicated their time and energy to ensuring a successful event that proudly showcased their love for the game and their community.

I congratulate the community of Rivers and team Manitoba on a well-deserved victory. All of Canada is celebrating with them.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

ANTI-ARMENIAN POGROMS

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago, pogroms were committed against the Armenians in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. For seven days in January 1990, hundreds of Armenians were beaten, expelled from the city or killed.

These crimes against the Armenians escalated and resulted in an almost complete ethnic cleansing of Armenians from the country. Close to 500,000 Armenians were deported and sought refuge in various countries around the world, including Canada.

[English]

These events were preceded by the Sumgait pogrom in 1988 where Armenian civilians were targeted, being killed in their homes and in the streets.

[Translation]

The civil violence in Sumgait and the atrocities committed there shocked the entire world. This anniversary reminds us of what a privilege it is to live in a country where diversity and inclusion make us strong and where various ethnic and religious communities can participate equally in our country's political life.

Statements by Members

[English]

While commemorating the Armenian victims of these pogroms in Sumgait and Baku, we solemnly condemn all forms of racism, xenophobia and hatred.

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BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to rise to say happy 100th birthday to World War II veteran and Edmontonian, Mr. Leslie McLean. Like many of his era, he fought for Canada during the war. Enlisting in 1941, he served as a leading seaman on the HMCS *Calgary*, part of our proud corvette navy that fought in the Battle of the Atlantic.

During his service, the *Calgary* shared in the sinking of one U-boat and single-handedly sank a second one. The *Calgary* participated in the Normandy landings later, protecting the landing craft of his friend Fred Russell, whose 100th birthday we celebrated in the House last year. The two are still friends to this day.

Mr. McLean later transferred to the HMCS *Ontario* and served in the Pacific theatre. Discharged in 1946, he came home to Edmonton where he and his wife, Christina, who served in the Women's Army Corps, raised seven children, 14 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.

Mr. McLean, happy 100th birthday, and from a grateful nation I say thank you.

* * *

[Translation]

PINK SHIRT DAY

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, February 26 is Pink Shirt Day, which is why I am proudly wearing pink today. This important national day was launched in 2007, when a group of students decided to come to the defence of a boy who was being bullied for wearing pink.

Having worked in the education system myself, I am especially sensitive to this cause. Roughly one in four Canadian youths reported being bullied as often as twice a week. According to a UNICEF report, when it comes to bullying, Canada unfortunately ranks 21st out of 29 developed countries.

We still have a lot of work to do to improve the situation. That is why it is crucial that we continue to take action to raise awareness and prevent bullying. We must provide a safe environment for all our children, and in doing that we will be supporting the development of the decision-makers of tomorrow. After all, our beautiful young people are our future.

*Oral Questions**[English]***PINK SHIRT DAY**

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, bullying is never acceptable in our society, whether it is in our schools, workplaces, homes, online or even in Parliament.

Today is Pink Shirt Day, a day to raise awareness of the ongoing issue of bullying. Whether bullying takes the form of racism, including anti-black and anti-indigenous racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, gender-based violence, homophobia, transphobia or even bullying someone for wearing a pink shirt, we will stand together to fight it.

We are seeing a dramatic rise in bullying and hate that is allowed to flourish on the Internet. Social media platforms must take a responsibility for removing hateful and extremist content before it can do harm.

As New Democrats, we recognize the inherent dignity of all people and are about building a sense of community. Let us recommit to countering bullying and hate in our communities and in our country.

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*[Translation]***RAIL CRISIS**

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a business located in Berthierville, A. Richard Tools, is celebrating its 130th anniversary this year. The pride of our region, this business manufactures high-quality, ergonomic tools.

However, this company is currently experiencing serious difficulties because of the ongoing rail crisis. Since it imports many of its raw materials, a considerable amount of its stock is currently held up in Vancouver and Alberta. Its only options are to move its stock through Montreal with a 20-day delay or pay another carrier a lot more money.

This situation is putting the company in a very difficult situation because of the penalty clauses in its contracts. The government's inaction and lack of leadership are jeopardizing our businesses.

The Bloc Québécois has proposed some simple solutions. After 130 years in business, A. Richard Tools deserves to have a quick resolution to this crisis. We need action.

* * *

• (1420)

*[English]***PINK SHIRT DAY**

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, bullying impacts people across Canada every day at school, on the playground and at the office. Cyber-bullying and online hate have also enabled bullies to hurt Canadians even when they are in their own homes. We know the consequences of bullying are enormous. Every year, Canadians who are bullied face significant mental health challenges and may even become suicidal. It has to stop.

Pink Shirt Day gives us an opportunity to make it known that we will not accept hurtful words or actions directed at anyone, especially children. Let us all work together to make sure that no one gets bullied for how they speak, what they wear, who they love, where they are from or for any reason. Today we remember to stand up against bullies, lead by example and treat all Canadians with dignity, compassion and respect. I say to the members, happy Pink Shirt Day.

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WILLIAM HALL SHIP DEDICATION

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Black History Month I would like to acknowledge an African Nova Scotian hero from my very own riding of Kings—Hants, Petty Officer William Hall.

Born in Horton Bluff, Hall worked in the shipyards of Hantsport, building wooden ships during the golden age of sail. He enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1852. From there, the young Nova Scotian travelled the world with the Royal Navy, seeing the shores of England, Ireland, China, India and beyond. For his bravery during the siege of Lucknow, Hall became the first black person, first Nova Scotian and third Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross, the British Empire's highest award for bravery.

Now, William Hall's legacy is being commemorated as the namesake of the Royal Canadian Navy's fourth Arctic and offshore patrol ship being built at the Halifax shipyard. This is the first Royal Canadian Navy ship to be named after a black Canadian.

I hope that all members of the House will join me in celebrating our Canadian hero.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister still does not seem to realize that Teck Frontier pulled its decision to invest billions of dollars into the Canadian economy because of a situation that he has created. He is directly responsible for the loss of 7,000 jobs.

This application went through an independent analysis. It was approved by the independent regulator, and all that was left was his political approval. Why did this application sit on his desk since July?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the company in question decided to withdraw its application. It recognized that there is still a tremendous polarization in the debate in this country between Canadians who were very happy that the company withdrew its investment and others who were deeply disappointed that the company withdrew its proposal.

The work we need to do is to demonstrate that the way we move forward is by creating jobs and by protecting the environment at the same time. That is something that the Conservative Party of Canada continues to refuse to accept. The only way forward with jobs is to protect the environment at the same time.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is trying to blame everybody else. First he blamed global commodity prices, but that cannot be true because there are investments pouring into Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United States. He tried to blame the Alberta government. His Liberal government gave equivalency to the Alberta emitters regime. Then he tried to blame Stephen Harper. I guess he forgets that he has been Prime Minister for almost five years now.

He cannot blame Scott Brison, so will he finally take responsibility for his failure on this file?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reconciling the environment and the economy requires responsible conversations and reflection by all Canadians. It is not good for our country to have this debate take place on the battleground between extremist views. What is good for Canada is to create common ground on which we recognize that the environment and the economy must go hand in hand.

This decision was Teck's decision. As the CEO said, strong climate plans and collaboration across sectors and governments are needed. This should be a wake-up call for the party opposite that we cannot have a jobs plan without having an environment plan.

• (1425)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he has the same environmental plan that he has for his jobs plan: no action on either one. He has a balanced approach. He is failing on the environment and he is failing to get jobs built, so I congratulate him on that one.

When it comes to having a real plan, I want to read a quote that says, "We don't have a net-zero plan. We have got to work on it, that's for sure." Do members know who said that? It was the Liberal Minister of Natural Resources.

Will the Prime Minister admit that it is his lack of action and lack of a plan that is causing the hardship all over western Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the member opposite invents statistics, let us talk about a few things. Let us talk about the fact that we created a million jobs in this country over the past five years and Statistics Canada just confirmed that a million Canadians were lifted out of poverty, for a historic record.

We recognize there is much more to do, but at the same time as we have been growing the economy and helping Canadians, we have been phasing out single-use plastics, we have been phasing out coal plants and we have been moving forward on a price on pollution right across the country because we know that Canadians expect us to do it all.

Oral Questions

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that simply cannot be true because people are pulling investments out of Canada because he does not have a plan for either the environment or the economy.

In terms of inventing things, that was a direct quote from his Minister of Natural Resources, so he might want to check with him on that.

[Translation]

For three weeks, we witnessed the Prime Minister's weak leadership in response to the rail blockades. They sprang up across the country, blocking streets, ports and railways. They are negatively impacting workers who want to get to work.

Does he realize that his own weakness is the reason this situation is "out of control"?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need a solution that is quick, peaceful, and, most importantly, lasting. As a country, we need to proceed with the reconciliation process but also create prosperity and jobs across the country.

The Conservative Party's aggressive, simplistic solutions will not help anyone in this country. They will not help indigenous peoples or workers who rely on rail transportation. We will continue down the right path together.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is continuing to elevate radical protestors with no connections to indigenous issues. That is shameful.

These are not people who are reflecting the will of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation. If they did, they would be standing in solidarity and fighting to get this project built. These are radical groups, like Extinction Rebellion, an organization that has been listed as a terrorist organization in the United Kingdom.

Is the Prime Minister not embarrassed that he has shown less leadership and less of a backbone than radical protestors who just want to shut down our economy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it really concerns me that I might have heard the Leader of the Opposition refer to Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs as radical protestors, just because he disagrees with them. That is exactly what he just said, and that is unacceptable.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I recommend the members opposite check the blues, check Hansard for what the Leader of the Opposition just said, because he made that equivalency. That is unacceptable. I may disagree with the leaders, the hereditary chiefs—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order, please. Earlier today I had the honour and the privilege of meeting with a lot of school teachers from across the country, from one end to the other. We were talking about discipline in the classroom. One of them said to me “Sometimes what works for me, when it really gets out of hand, I turn off the lights.” I do not have a switch up here, so I am hoping everyone will behave.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I salute all school teachers, current and former, for the hard work they do to improve the lives of all Canadians. Thank you for meeting with them.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we calmly broaden the range of possible solutions.

In the last Parliament, the government committed to moving forward with the process of adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The government does want to see certain files move quickly.

For the sake of the nation-to-nation relationship, which is not necessarily a house specialty, is the Prime Minister prepared to consider immediately adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working on a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

We were very disappointed when the Conservatives blocked the bill from passing in the last Parliament. We made significant progress on the Indigenous Languages Act, on child and family services, and on the Impact Assessment Act.

We remain committed to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and we will pass a jointly drafted bill. We see the previous bill as a bare minimum, not the absolute best we can do.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that even the Conservatives can understand the notion of reconciliation and the fact that it is necessary. It was one of the values touted by the Liberals during two election campaigns. Unfortunately, no one believes it now, and certainly not the first nations. Instead of just repeating a number of principles, could we move forward and immediately—that being the key word—adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? The House will have the co-operation of the Bloc Québécois.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I promised Canadians, we will be bringing forward a bill on the UN declaration. This time we hope that the Conservative Party will not block the passage of this bill or progress and reconciliation.

With respect to the hon. member's comments, I can point out that we have taken steps towards reconciliation with the lifting of long-term boil water advisories, with 88% having been lifted to date, the recognition of jurisdiction over child and family services, a new fiscal relationship with communities and many other things we are doing.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has shown a lack of leadership throughout this crisis. The hereditary chiefs asked for a meeting with the Prime Minister for a over month, but he declined. We asked the Prime Minister the same question and he said that it was not his responsibility. This whole situation could have been avoided if the Prime Minister had just met with the hereditary chiefs.

Will the Prime Minister commit today in this House to meet with the hereditary chiefs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very easy for the opposition parties, both the Conservatives and the New Democrats, to propose simplistic solutions.

We have been working on finding complex solutions to complex problems for weeks, or even years, now. We have been working with the hereditary chiefs for several years to address child protection issues, and British Columbia has been working with the hereditary chiefs on matters of rights and land. We will continue our work, and I want to point out that the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations is prepared to meet with the hereditary chiefs at any time.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when there is a national crisis and the hereditary chiefs have asked the Prime Minister to meet with them, yes, the Prime Minister should meet with those chiefs. It is pretty simple.

Indigenous leaders and business leaders have all asked the Prime Minister to meet with the hereditary chiefs. For some reason, the Prime Minister does not get it.

This whole crisis could have been avoided if, over a month ago, the Prime Minister just met with the hereditary chiefs when they asked for it.

Again, will the Prime Minister commit today in the House to meet with the hereditary chiefs?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, when I had the opportunity to talk with the leaders of the opposition about this situation, the member opposite brought up that exact question. I explained that there were many voices within the Wet'suwet'en community: some hereditary chiefs, some elected chiefs and some leaders within the community as well.

The work they need to do, without outside interference, to determine their path forward would be interfered with by a prime minister sitting down with one group too quickly. I am of course open to engaging constructively, but in the right way.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, illegal blockades continue to hold the country hostage, with no end in sight. By failing to lead, the Prime Minister has shown eco-radicals exactly how to delay, disrupt and ultimately defeat major energy projects.

Canadians are suffering. Over 1,500 people have lost their jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in damage has been done to the economy.

Are the unelected, unaccountable radicals at the blockades in charge of the country or is the Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives are pitting Canadians against one another with their divisive language and their dangerous rhetoric. They are ignoring the complexities of the situation and exploiting divisions within the Wet'suwet'en community for their own narrow political gain.

It is a party that had 10 years to act, but failed, and now the Conservatives are doubling down on those failed approaches.

Our work has always focused on finding peaceful and lasting resolution in a way that builds trust and respect among all parties involved. The injunctions must be respected. The blockades must come down peacefully, and stay down.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, protesters erected a rail blockade in my riding of Abbotsford.

For weeks, anti-energy activists have been grinding the Canadian economy to a halt. They have even defied court orders and flouted the rule of law.

However, we know what their real agenda is. At Monday's blockade, protesters erected a sign that said, "Shut down Canada." Why? Because the Prime Minister's feckless leadership has emboldened these radical activists.

When will the Prime Minister finally stand up and uphold the rule of law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are suffering and the best way to stop that is to bring a solution that is quick, lasting and peaceful. That is where all our work has been focused.

The Minister of Indigenous Services has been in close and regular contact with indigenous leadership, as has the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. We have engaged with party leaders and premiers.

The policing decisions are being made by police services independently, as is due course for the law, and injunctions must be obeyed. We have been clear that our hand is extended to meet at any time.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are on day 21 of this crisis. Canadians are fed up with the Prime Minister's lofty rhetoric.

Managing a country is serious business. It means making tough decisions. Our economy is being held hostage, and we have not seen any plans to get us out of this crisis. Business owners across the country are worried. Billions of dollars have been lost, and many workers have been laid off.

How long do we have to wait before the Prime Minister assumes his responsibilities and shows the slightest bit of leadership?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, Canadians are suffering. That is why we need a quick, peaceful and, above all, lasting resolution.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives continue to play petty politics by pitting Canadians against one another, ignoring the complexity of the situation and exploiting the divisions within the Wet'suwet'en community. That is not the way to move forward as a country.

We will continue doing the difficult but necessary work to ensure a profitable, positive future for all Canadians.

● (1440)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to say the Prime Minister's leadership in response to the rail blockades has been weak is putting it mildly.

Like so many others, Jean-Luc Laplante, a dairy producer in my riding, is impatiently awaiting a shipment of soy meal, a protein essential to his herd's survival. The situation is catastrophic. The trains are not running, trucks are full, and trucking is much more expensive.

At what point will the Prime Minister enforce the law and resolve this issue once and for all?

When will he do that?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives are proposing aggressive, simplistic solutions that do not work. Their solutions will not result in a lasting peace.

We are working to overcome this challenge peacefully. At the same time, we are making sure the essentials can get through so the shortages so many people are worried about do not occur.

We are working to help Canadians and find peaceful, lasting resolution.

Oral Questions

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the withdrawal of Teck Resources Frontier oil sands mine was a blow to first nations and workers in my province.

It is no coincidence that Teck's decision came within days of the Liberal government's decision. Teck could read the writing on the wall. Even former Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff recognizes that ignoring energy-producing provinces undermines democracy.

It is time for the Prime Minister to come clean. Will he admit that killing Frontier is part of his plan to end the oil sands?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Teck Frontier has made a clear statement that it supports carbon pricing. It supports a plan to fight climate change. It supports climate action.

The problem is that the Conservative Party of Canada and its provincial affiliates continue to think that the way to move forward on jobs is to refuse to move forward on fighting climate change and protecting the environment. They are wrong, and sticking in their wrongness is actually hurting Albertans and all Canadians. We are all impatient for them to wake up.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Teck Frontier is the latest victim of the Prime Minister's plan and policies to phase out the oil sands.

The Local Fort Mackay Métis president says it is “a black eye for Canada” and, in his words “What the hell is going on?” However, in 2018, the Bank of Canada already warned of no new energy investment after last year.

Today, BMO warns that chaos, instability and uncertainty damages Canada as a place to do business. A leading economist says that Canada is “hostile” to oil and gas and to building major infrastructure.

Why is the Prime Minister a puppet of anti-everything activists who want to shut down Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, global investors like Larry Fink of BlackRock and other significant international pension funds and investment funds have indicated that the way forward is to make responsible investments in jurisdictions that have plans to fight climate change and that have a plan to continue to protect the environment.

Alberta and the Conservative Party of Canada continue to politically resist any action on climate change, and that unfortunately is why we need to keep moving forward to help Albertan workers, to help Canadians from coast to coast to coast, prepare for a better future.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I want to remind members of the loyal opposition that the noise is coming from one place, and it is very obvious, even to folks back home. I ask them to keep it down, please.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

* * *

● (1445)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as an opposition party, we may be less royal, but we are more disciplined.

This government has to focus on dismantling the blockades and getting the economy back on track and not make firearms the priority. The Premier of Quebec expressed concern about the presence of automatic weapons at some of the blockades, which is a rather dramatic development.

Does the Prime Minister still think that police intervention was the solution?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous respect for the professionalism of our police forces and their ability to do their job. It is not for politicians to order the police to go anywhere or do anything.

Our responsibility is to continue working on a peaceful and lasting solution to this troubling situation. That is exactly what we are doing while securing different ways of keeping essential commodities moving on our railway to help Canadians across the country.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on one hand, the knee-jerk reaction of politicians should not be to pawn their responsibilities off on other institutions.

On the other, it is possible to meet with indigenous leaders. I met with some this morning. I am also meeting with some this afternoon. It is possible.

Will the Prime Minister take another look at the three things that should be done, namely, asking the police to refrain from intervening for a minimum of 24 hours; flying to British Columbia to meet with indigenous leaders from the Wet'suwet'en nation, as the NDP leader also suggested a little earlier; and appointing a mediator?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for nearly two weeks now, our ministers have had regular meetings with various indigenous leaders. I myself have had many conversations with indigenous leaders to try to resolve the situation and find a peaceful solution to this problem. We will continue to be engaged on this issue, that is for sure.

Meanwhile, we will respect the professional work of our police forces. Politicians should never order the police to do anything. We have confidence in their system and we sincerely believe in the separation of powers that is part of our democracy.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government failed to protect Marylène Levesque from a murderer who had a history of violence against women. The Parole Board has reluctantly undertaken an internal investigation, but no one trusts it to investigate itself. Canada's correctional investigator is calling for an independent investigation into this case to be certain that all facts are known and to make sure that this never happens again.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to opening an independent investigation so that Canadians know that the government will not cut corners on protecting women?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Marylène Levesque. It is a tragic loss for any family to have to face. The individual has been arrested and is facing charges.

We know people have difficult questions to ask, and that is why Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board are launching a board of investigation into the circumstances that led to this tragic case. I will emphasize that the review includes two external vice-chairs. The findings of course will be made public.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what happened was a terrible tragedy. That is why the family wants answers and everyone wants answers. Yesterday, Canada's correctional investigator clearly said that the internal investigation requested by the government was problematic and that there must be an external investigation.

Will the Prime Minister ask the Parole Board of Canada and Correctional Service Canada for an external investigation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Marylène Levesque. It is a tragic loss for any family to have to face.

The individual has been arrested and is facing charges. We know people are asking difficult questions. That is why Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board of Canada are launching a board of investigation to examine the circumstances that led to this tragic case. The investigation includes two external vice-chairs. The findings will be made public, of course.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are more aware than ever that this country is being run by a neglectful government. This government is abdicating its responsibilities for the national crisis that is plaguing the country, on

Oral Questions

top of its financial responsibilities for job creation in this country. Ever since the Liberals took office, the energy sector has been paying the price. Canada's energy sector has shed 200,000 jobs so far. That means 200,000 families have been directly affected by this government's poor decisions. The Financial Post recently reported that \$150 billion in investments have evaporated due to this government's bad policies.

Does the Prime Minister realize how costly his anti-energy policy is for all Canadians?

• (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past few years, Canadians have created over one million new jobs, and over one million Canadians have been lifted out of poverty. We know that Albertans are having an especially tough time right now. That is why we are investing in infrastructure, seeking to help them through innovation and new solutions. We are going to keep working with them, because making the changes that need to be made to fight climate change will require innovation and leadership from Albertans and from all Canadians, so that we can find solutions for the future.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we saw moments ago was disgusting. The Prime Minister specifically blamed Alberta, not its government, nor its leaders, but Alberta, for his government's refusal to approve the Teck Frontier mine, costing 7,000 jobs. Add that to the 200,000 people who have already lost their jobs. Add that to the \$150 billion that has fled the western economy as a result of his policies. History does indeed repeat itself.

Does the Prime Minister realize that when his father tried to cause a recession in Alberta, he caused one right across Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite has respect for the House, with his long career in politics. He knows he should not be misleading the House deliberately. It may have been an accident, so I will give him the opportunity to withdraw his statement.

He indicated that this government refused the project. We did not. The Teck Frontier project was withdrawn by the company in question. I know he does not want to mislead the House deliberately. I give him an opportunity to correct the record and correct his statement.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with no real plan to fight the climate crisis or create jobs, the Liberals are failing at both. A climate plan that leaves workers behind is no plan at all. We cannot attract businesses and jobs if the government is not serious about climate change. We need investments in new infrastructure, renewable energy, public transit and in helping people to retrofit their homes.

There are lots of things we can do to help fight the climate crisis, so why are the Liberals not doing any of them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House to explain what we have been doing.

We have put a price on pollution right across the country. We have protected historic amounts of our land and coastlines. We are moving forward with a plan to phase out plastics. We are going to move forward, as promised in our election campaign, with a plan for home retrofits. We are moving forward on a broad range of things that demonstrate we understand that fighting climate and protecting the environment need to go hand in hand with creating good jobs and supporting families.

That is what we are doing. That is what we will continue to do.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite all of the emotional words, the government has failed to take any meaningful action to fight the discrimination that indigenous people face in Canada's legal system.

Yesterday, I met with Colten Boushie's family. They are still waiting for answers, and they are waiting for action.

Will the Prime Minister support first nations, Métis and Inuit people and accept their call to invite the UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people to Canada so she can investigate the systemic racism in our justice system?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to sit down with family and friends of Colten Boushie last night to talk about exactly this and to remind them that we too continue to share their grief in the tragedy that their family underwent.

We have committed to advancing reconciliation and addressing the systemic issues involving indigenous peoples within the criminal justice system. We abolished peremptory challenges for both the Crown and the defence, which gave each party the ability to veto a selected juror without having to give any reasons. This addresses long-standing concerns that racialized Canadians were being unfairly excluded in the jury selection process.

We recognize there is more to do and we will do it.

• (1455)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, young Canadians face bullying daily both in and out of school. An increasing amount of time is spent online, which means that people cannot escape harassment by simply walking away. This makes it even more important to stop the culture of bullying before it can spread.

Could the Prime Minister update Canadians on what our government is doing to combat bullying and harassment?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Surrey—Newton for his hard work and for his support for youth in his community.

We are combatting online hate, harassment and other forms of discrimination to ensure that all Canadians, regardless of age, culture, gender and sexual orientation, feel safe. We have an obligation to create diverse and welcoming communities so the young and the most vulnerable feel valued and included.

This Wednesday, I congratulate all colleagues who are wearing pink on Pink Shirt Day. We will continue to take a stand against bullying.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier of Nunavut said he would not support any new marine protected and conservation areas until a devolution deal can be reached. The premier said:

The creation of any new conservation and protected areas in Nunavut would have a significant impact on our ability to manage our lands and resources and carry out negotiations for decision-making, leading to potentially very serious consequences.

Will the Prime Minister listen to the premier and people of Nunavut and not close any further lands or any marine protected areas without a devolution agreement in place, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to take this opportunity to thank Premier Savikataaq for his hard work on advancing the cause of protection of our vulnerable ecosystems in the north and for creating economic opportunity for people of Nunavut and indeed people across the Arctic. This is an extremely important issue on which I have worked closely with the premier and all northern premiers.

We will continue to work together to ensure economic opportunity and development that makes sense for the people of the north, while at the same time protecting and preserving these fragile Arctic ecosystems for future generations. This is the kind of partnership we will continue to work on together.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister ordered the defence minister to get moving on replacing our north warning system as part of NORAD modernization, but he forgot to put it in the budget. A senior Canadian military officer recently warned, “the North Warning System cannot identify and track Russian long-range bombers prior to their missile launch...or their overflights of the Arctic...we cannot defeat what we cannot detect.”

Canada is at risk and we have to replace our antiquated north warning system now. Where is the money? Where is the plan?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years the Conservatives opposite under-invested in our defence. That is why we have been pleased to put forward, over the past five years, historic investments in upgrading defence capacity after 10 years of neglect by Conservatives, who wrapped themselves in the flag any chance they got and hid behind the troops any opportunity they could for photo-ops, but would not invest in our military.

We will take no lessons from them on needing to invest in our military, because that is what we have been doing and that is what we will continue to do on this side of the House.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, money laundering allows organized crime to profit off despicable acts like human trafficking and selling fentanyl. The Attorney General for British Columbia has said, “I’ve been incredibly disappointed with the response from the federal government.” Why? It is because the Liberals have done nothing. They promised \$10 million but zero has been spent.

This is a crisis the Prime Minister has ignored for almost five years. What is he going to do today to ensure the country's financial system is secure?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past years we have invested close to a billion dollars in strengthening our capacity to go after tax evasion and tax avoidance.

We have moved forward on working with the Province of British Columbia on money laundering. We will continue to work on this, particularly the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, who is working closely with his counterparts to ensure that we are cracking down on money laundering and the illegal activities that flow from it. This is something that we take seriously and Canadians take seriously.

Oral Questions

• (1500)

HEALTH

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today in Truro, Nova Scotia, a memorial service was held for 23-year-old Chantelle Lindsay. Last week, Chantelle passed away due to complications with cystic fibrosis. Of course, our condolences go out to her family.

Trikafta is a drug that treats CF, is available in the U.S., but is not available here in Canada. It could have saved Chantelle's life. Chantelle's father, Mark, said the government's chess game with the pharmaceutical industry cost Chantelle's life.

What is the Prime Minister going to do to make sure Trikafta and other life-saving drugs are available to Canadians who need them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that life-saving drugs are available and affordable to Canadians right across the country, which is why we have committed to moving forward on universal pharmacare, but also why we continue to work with the provinces to ensure that more drugs are approved.

We also recognize the high cost of rare disease strategy drugs, which is why we are moving forward with a way to support the provinces in those high-cost drugs. We know there is always much more to do.

Our heart goes out to the family and we will continue to work to make sure that all Canadians have access to the life-saving medication they need.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Alain Thérien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, CP obtained an injunction against those responsible for the rail blockade in Kahnawake. The Peacekeepers are responsible for enforcing it, but they said no. As usual, the Prime Minister did nothing and made it Quebec's problem. However, the Sûreté du Québec cannot go to Kahnawake. That is obvious.

What happens now?

The people of Kahnawake have set up a blockade to protest against a problem in British Columbia. The solution is therefore in British Columbia, and the Government of Quebec cannot do anything in British Columbia.

Will the Prime Minister finally address the problem in British Columbia?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members know very well, we have been working for a week and a half to fix this crisis with the people of British Columbia, Mohawk community members and people across the country.

We are negotiating to find a peaceful solution. In the meantime, we acknowledge that these blockades must be removed and that injunctions must be obeyed.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what has happened since the police dismantled the blockade in Belleville? Other blockades have gone up, in Kanesatake, in Lennoxville, in Gaspé and on the North Shore. In Kahnawake, in my region, the blockade is still up. The number of protesters has increased, and the blockade is bigger than ever.

We need to address the source of this problem. Unfortunately, only the Prime Minister of Canada can do so. I always thought that he had his head in the clouds, but now I see that it is firmly buried in the sand.

On behalf of Quebeckers and the people of La Prairie, my question for the Prime Minister is this: Will he finally stand up, respond, take action and fix this problem?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House respect provincial jurisdictions. We respect the authority and the responsibilities of British Columbia in this challenge. However, we are happy to provide support and assistance.

I do not think the member opposite is asking the federal government to assume the responsibilities of the provinces. That would be completely illogical.

We will always be there to provide support and assistance and work closely with our partners to come up with a peaceful, lasting solution.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a dire situation across the Prairies. I met with farmers in Saskatchewan who are facing an urgent cash flow crisis. Actions by China are blocking canola exports and, of course, the Liberal carbon tax is putting a squeeze on their bottom line. Early snowfall has prevented the harvest from being completely taken off. As a result, loans are due in a short period of time and farmers do not have the cash flow to plant this season's crops.

Is the Prime Minister willing to consider extending the advance payments program deadline, waiving interest on its loans and looking for other types of solutions that will ensure that farmers have what they need to get a crop in the ground this spring?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the 2019 wet harvest has been a challenging year for farmers and producers. We recognize that there are many challenges that they are facing right now. That is why we are continuing to work with provinces, the prairie provinces in particular,

to look at solutions that are going to help farmers whom we rely on right across this country to put good, healthy food on our tables.

We will ensure that they are supported, that their hard work is rewarded and that they are reassured that there is a strong future in this country for our hard-working farm communities.

• (1505)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Do you even have a clue what farmers do, Mr. Speaker?

Many farmers in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex counties and across this country did not get their crops harvested due to the late spring and a wet fall. Now, they cannot pay back their advance payments, due next month, because their main asset is still in the ground covered in snow. As much as they would like to, farmers cannot control the weather, but they are majorly affected by it.

Does the Prime Minister have a plan to help farmers get through the coming planting season?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the difficult moments that farmers have been living, particularly this past year that has been particularly wet and difficult. That is why we have a Minister of Agriculture who is engaged regularly and with positive engagement with her counterparts across the country. We will continue to look at all sorts of ways to support farmers in the important work they do for our country. We will be there for them, as we have in the past.

The Speaker: I am sorry I missed that, but I just want to remind the hon. members to channel their questions through the Speaker, and not ask the Speaker what he believes.

The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last fall farmers in my riding and across this country endured the harvest from hell, and then they had the carbon tax, the CN rail strike and trade issues. Those producers who were able to get their crop off are now facing illegal blockades, preventing them from even selling those commodities, putting them in a serious cash crunch this spring. Now their advance payments are due and they have no way of paying them back. They do not need platitudes; they need answers.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to extend the deadline on those loan prepayments and waive the interest under the advance payments program?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canada's agricultural and agri-food industry is a key driver of jobs, economic prosperity and growth for the middle class. We know that severe weather, from drought to flooding and other risks beyond farmers' control, can have serious impacts on their businesses.

Our government stands shoulder to shoulder with Canadian producers. We are monitoring the situation. We are working to ensure that they have the support they need.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 14, our government announced a \$600,000 investment in Motrec, a manufacturer of industrial vehicles located in Sherbrooke, to help increase the company's growth and production capacity. Thanks to this investment, Motrec is well positioned to expand its operations to international markets.

Can the Prime Minister tell us more about this investment?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard for the question and his hard work.

We know that businesses in the steel and aluminum industries are important players in our economy and supply chains. They provide good jobs to thousands of Canadians.

We are proud to give this company the tools it needs to develop innovative technologies and processes. Canadian companies that are innovating and seeking to capture new markets can count on our support.

* * *

[*English*]

UKRAINE INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT 752

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister yet realize that Iran's foreign minister, to whom he smilingly offered a handshake, a buddy hug and a bow, is not only the deceitful chief propagandist for Iran's democracy-crushing, terror-sponsoring regime, but is linked to recent gross human rights abuse in the deadly crackdown on civilian protests against the theocratic regime, not to mention his direct participation in the 1988 massacre of political rivals and dissidents?

Will the Prime Minister apologize to Canada's Persian community?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I made a promise to Canada's Iranian community to do everything we could to find answers to the questions they had about how their loved ones were taken from them and how they will be ensured to get compensation for it.

That is exactly what I expressed to the Iranian foreign minister. We need to be part of an international investigation that is credible and serious. We will continue to stand up for Canadians' rights. Whether they be Iranian Canadians or otherwise, we will continue to defend them and stand with them through this difficult time. We will not play petty politics the way the members opposite choose to.

Oral Questions

• (1510)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Iranian regime has found a new way to persecute members of the Baha'i faith, by requiring Iranians to declare their religion on their national ID cards but only providing four options.

No other religions are allowed, including Baha'i, the largest minority religion in Iran. Without one of these cards, Iranians cannot access government services, book a flight or even purchase a car.

Will the government call on the Iranian regime to end this and all other discriminations against the Baha'i faith?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government consistently stands up for human rights and the rights of minorities right around the world, which is exactly what we will continue to do.

I will highlight, however, that it has become more difficult for Canada to stand up for Iranian citizens who are facing persecution since that government closed the embassy in Tehran.

We are going to continue to work to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I want to remind the hon. members that the rules of the House—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. I want to remind the hon. members that the rules of the House state that when someone is speaking, we sit and listen respectfully. Respectfully being the key word.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, thank you for highlighting that it is indeed anti-bullying day and that is why so many of us are wearing pink.

I will continue to say that we will look to stand up for human rights at home and around the world at every opportunity, including holding the Iranian regime and its violation of human rights to account.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the Prime Minister would talk about wanting to reopen the embassy in Iran, when he actually, personally, voted in favour of my motion not to do that a couple of years ago.

In June, the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion calling for an international independent investigation into allegations of genocide against Tamils in Sri Lanka. I would like to ask the Prime Minister what steps, if any, his government has taken to advocate for that investigation, and will Canada join the U.S. in applying sanctions to Sri Lankan army chief Shavendra Silva?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our positions are consistent. We stand up for human rights everywhere around the world, whether it be in Sri Lanka or in Iran.

Indeed, in asking about Iran, that is why Canada led a resolution at the United Nations in November 2019, calling on Iran to comply with its international human rights obligations. We deeply oppose Iran's support for terrorist organizations, its threats toward Israel, its ballistic missile program and its support for the murderous Assad regime.

We will continue to defend human rights and hold Iran to account for its actions, as we do all around the world, including in Sri Lanka.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that anti-personnel mines are senseless weapons that continue to claim too many innocent lives and seriously injure people who will forever bear their scars.

In fact, it was a Canadian initiative that led to the establishment of the anti-personnel mine ban convention in 1997. Could the Prime Minister update this House on the steps Canada is taking to achieve a world free of anti-personnel mines?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for York Centre for his advocacy on this file and for his tremendously hard work.

We are firmly committed to advancing the objectives of the Ottawa convention and achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines by 2025. Canada has invested \$180 million over the past decade to achieve this goal. Since its signing, 20 years ago, 53 million mines have been destroyed and 30 countries have been declared free of mines.

This is exactly the kind of leadership that Canada is demonstrating to the world.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, well over a year ago, the Prime Minister committed in this House to work with us to reach the UN targets that would lead to the eradication of HIV. Instead, new infections are up 11%, and 19% in Saskatchewan.

Nothing has been done to make HIV testing and treatment more available, not for racialized and marginalized Canadians, not for young gay men, and especially not in indigenous communities where the rate of new infections continues to climb.

Why has the Prime Minister failed to get the things done that we need to eradicate HIV in this country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the impact of HIV/AIDS on Canadians from coast to coast and, indeed, around the world, which is one of the reasons we hosted the global fund replenishment a number of years

ago to ensure \$13 billion towards the eradication of HIV, tuberculosis and malaria in Africa.

We recognize there is much to do in Canada, as well, and we have, by investing in supports for communities, investing in grassroots organizations, investing in health approaches that are showing reductions in the rates of HIV, even though we recognize it continues to be a challenge. We will continue to work together.

* * *

● (1515)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Dustin Duncan, Minister of Environment and Minister responsible for SaskPower in the province of Saskatchewan.

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CENTRE BLOCK CENTENNIAL

The Speaker: Today, Parliament marks the 100th anniversary of the first sitting in Centre Block on February 26, 1920, following the great fire which ravaged most of the original Centre Block. During the rebuild, the House of Commons sat in the Victoria Memorial Museum, now the Canadian Museum of Nature.

We too sit in a temporary chamber, as Centre Block is under rehabilitation. It is a reminder that history is always in the making and that democracy will always have a home on Parliament Hill regardless of the roof under which we debate.

[Translation]

As Speaker, I have the privilege to serve members and to ensure the proper functioning of the proceedings of the House and Parliament.

Although this chamber may be temporary, what happens in it is not. I know that my colleagues will join me in thanking the clerks and the administration. Thanks to them, future generations will be able to see the work and debates that they carefully record and preserve.

Some copies of the February 26, 1920, Hansard have been placed in the lobbies for any members who would like to take a look at the deliberations that took place that day.

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On Monday of this week, in response to an answer from the Minister of Environment, I used a term that is quite popular in the oil patch in Alberta and that I believe was about 100% correct to the minister's answer, but upon reflection I realized that it was unparliamentary language.

Some 200,000 Albertans are unemployed because of bad policies of the—

The Speaker: I will cut the apology off there while the member is ahead and accept the apology.

DECORUM

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also rise on a point of order. I do not need to remind the Speaker that I know that a prop is not acceptable in Parliament, but there is an exception when the piece of paper one is holding up has to do with the point one is making.

I want to remind members that they may have seen this book, the Standing Orders—

The Speaker: I believe the rule states that we can use a book when referring to it or reading from it, but holding it up cover out is not allowed because it is then being used as a prop. I want to clarify that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, my intent, of course, is to open it and read from it. I thought it might be helpful for members to know that we have our Standing Orders and within them a chapter heading of “Order and Decorum”. Since there are educators in the room, I am going to attempt briefly to be an educator and state clearly that two different standing orders were repeatedly violated—

The Speaker: I believe we are going into debate and I will have to stop it there.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: After consultation with my trusted adviser, I will let the hon. member finish, but very briefly.

• (1520)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate a second chance.

I have raised this point of order repeatedly, and that is why members groaned when I rose. The point is that Standing Order 16 and Standing Order 18 make it clear that interrupting members when they are speaking in this place or speaking disrespectfully of another member violates our rules. I know the Conservative Party believes in observing the rules and I would really urge that we not embarrass ourselves in front of the nation's educators.

The Speaker: I also want to remind hon. members that we are not to refer to anyone in the gallery.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, also on a point of order, I want to remind you that in 2013, the Harper Conservatives com-

Business of Supply

pletely gutted the farm safety net programs, and for Conservatives—

The Speaker: That is debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PROPOSED TAX CHANGES

The House resumed from February 25 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:23 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, February 25, 2020, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion related to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1530)

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

(Division No. 18)

YEAS

Members

Angus
Atwin
Blaikie
Boulerice
Collins
Duvall
Gazan
Harris
Johns
Kwan
Manly
Mathysen
McPherson
Singh—27

Ashton
Bachrach
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Cannings
Davies
Garrison
Green
Hughes
Julian
MacGregor
Masse
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Qaqqaq

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif
Albas
Alleslev
Amos
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Badawey
Bains
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Benzen
Bergeron
Bérubé
Bezan
Bittle
Blanchet
Block
Boudrias
Brassard

Aitchison
Alghabra
Allison
Anand
Arnold
Arya
Bagnell
Baker
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Beech
Bennett
Bergen
Berthold
Bessette
Bibeau
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Bragdon
Bratina

Business of Supply

Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe	Miller	Monsef
Calkins	Carrie	Moore	Morrison
Casey	Chabot	Morrissey	Motz
Chagger	Champagne	Murray	Nater
Champoux	Charbonneau	Ng	Normandin
Chen	Chiu	O'Connell	Oliphant
Chong	Cooper	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Cormier	Cumming	Pauzé	Perron
Dabrusin	Dalton	Petitpas Taylor	Poilievre
Damoff	Dancho	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Davidson	DeBellefeuille	Ratansi	Rayes
Deltell	d'Entremont	Redekopp	Regan
Desilets	Dhaliwal	Reid	Rempel Garner
Dhillon	Diotte	Richards	Robillard
Doherty	Dong	Rodriguez	Rogers
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Romanado	Rood
Drouin	Dubourg	Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Duclos	Duguid	Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Sajjan	Samson
Dzerowicz	Easter	Sangha	Sarai
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Saroya	Savard-Tremblay
Ellis	Epp	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Schiefke	Schmale
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Schulte	Seeback
Fergus	Fillmore	Serré	Sgro
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Shanahan	Sheehan
Finnigan	Fisher	Shields	Shin
Fonseca	Fortier	Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Fraser	Freeland	Simard	Simms
Fry	Gallant	Sorbara	Soroka
Garneau	Gaudreau	Spengemann	Stanton
Généreux	Genuis	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Gerretsen	Gill	Strahl	Stubbs
Godin	Gould	Sweet	Tabbara
Gourde	Gray	Tassi	Thériault
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Therrien	Tochor
Hallan	Harder	Trudeau	Trudel
Hardie	Hoback	Turnbull	Uppal
Holland	Housefather	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Hussen	Hutchings	Van Popta	Vandal
Iacono	Jaczek	Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Jansen	Jeneroux	Vecchio	Vidal
Jones	Jordan	Viersen	Vignola
Jowhari	Kelloway	Virani	Vis
Kelly	Kent	Wagantall	Warkentin
Khalid	Khera	Waugh	Webber
Kitchen	Kmiec	Weiler	Wilkinson
Koutrakis	Kram	Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Kurek	Kusie	Wong	Yip
Kusmierczyk	Lake	Young	Yurdiga
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Zahid	Zann
Lametti	Lamoureux	Zimmer	Zuberi— 294
Larouche	Lattanzio		
Lauzon	Lawrence		
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier		
Lefebvre	Lehoux		
Lemire	Levitt		
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert		
Lightbound	Lloyd		
Lobb	Long		
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)		
Lukiwski	MacAtlay (Cardigan)		
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)		
Maguire	Maloney		
Martel	Martinez Ferrada		
May (Cambridge)	Mazier		
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McCrimmon		
McDonald	McGuinty		
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)		
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)		
Melillo	Mendès		
Mendicino	Michaud		

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Speaker: Pursuant to section 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B), 2019-20”.

* * *

● (1535)

[Translation]

2018-19 DEPARTMENTAL RESULTS

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of 87 departments and agencies, I have the honour and pleasure to present, in both official languages, the departmental results for 2018-19.

* * *

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the 141st IPU assembly and related meetings held in Belgrade, Serbia, from October 11 to 17, 2019.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Section of ParLAmericas respecting its participation at the 16th plenary assembly and the 49th meeting of the board of directors of ParLAmericas, held in Asunción, Paraguay, from October 30 to November 1, 2019.

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, entitled “Review of Standing Orders, Procedure and Practice of the House”.

* * *

REDUCTION OF RECIDIVISM FRAMEWORK ACT

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-228, an act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today on behalf of the people and organizations I have deliberated with to introduce a bill that would improve the lives of thousands of Canadians. The bill

Routine Proceedings

would aim to shut the revolving door that plagues our prison system.

Thousands of lives and hundreds of communities across Canada are negatively impacted by the revolving door within the prison system. Nearly one in four people leaving the prison system will re-offend and find themselves back in prison within two years. That number is higher for indigenous and black Canadians.

An act to establish a federal framework is about calling on the Minister of Public Safety to establish effective partnerships across multiple sectors to develop a through-the-gate support structure. I believe that the establishment of effective partnerships with provinces, indigenous groups and NGOs as well as non-profit, faith-based and community organizations, is the crucible and centre for lasting societal change. This approach has been successful in reducing recidivism in other countries such as the U.K., the United States and other jurisdictions.

As the former lieutenant governor, the first of indigenous Maliseet descent, and as a retired provincial court judge, the hon. Graydon Nicholas has said that this bill is a step toward helping the walking wounded in our society. It is time for a creative initiative to tackle the devastating and persistent harms that are both the cause and the effect of recidivism.

I hope the members from all parties recognize the importance of this bill and that we will begin working together to ensure people leaving the prison system become contributing members of our society.

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

* * *

● (1540)

OIL TANKER MORATORIUM ACT

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-229, an act to repeal certain restrictions on shipping.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House to introduce my private member's bill today, an act to repeal certain restrictions on shipping. I want to acknowledge my luck drawing six in the lottery for the consideration of private member's business. I want to put that luck to good use through this bill.

I also want to thank the member for Edmonton West for seconding the motion to introduce the bill today, and to thank my constituents for their suggestions and input on possible topics for this bill. I want to recognize that today is my son's 34th birthday. He has overcome many challenges in his life, but never did I think he would be faced with a government that would limit his opportunities.

The topic of this bill is to right a wrong that happened before I was elected, namely the passing of former Bill C-48 in the previous Parliament by the Liberal majority in this chamber. This discriminatory bill has stalled economic development for a part of our country that desperately needs it, and it has contributed to the rise in unemployment in my home province of Alberta.

Routine Proceedings

Investors need to understand they have access to markets. Alberta should have the right to access, just like every other industry. If the Liberals are serious about listening to Alberta, I hope they will support this important bill.

To wrap up, I look forward to the debate on this bill in the coming weeks and to see the updated thoughts from my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this very important issue for all of Canada.

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

* * *

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO REDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM ACT

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.) seconded by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-230, an act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism.

She said: Mr. Speaker, *Wela'lin Al-Su-Sid*.

An act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism could also be called, in short, a national strategy to redress environmental racism act.

Environmental racism can be defined as the disproportionate number of environmentally hazardous sites established in areas inhabited primarily by members of indigenous and other racialized communities.

The enactment would require the Minister of Environment, in consultation with representatives of provincial and municipal governments, indigenous communities and other affected communities, to develop a national strategy to promote efforts across Canada to redress the harm caused by environmental racism. It would also provide for reporting requirements in relation to the strategy.

I introduced a bill similar to this in Nova Scotia several years ago. It reached second reading and we debated it on the floor of the House, at which point people in Nova Scotia started to understand what exactly environmental racism was. Since then there has been a book written about it, called *There's Something in the Water*, by Dr. Ingrid Waldron, which has now been made into a documentary by Ellen Page that will soon be available on Netflix.

I look forward to hearing debate in the House, and I hope all parties will support this important bill going forward.

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

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN INVESTMENT BOARD ACT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-231, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act (investments).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and honoured to rise in the House today and introduce my private member's bill, which would amend the investment policies, standards and procedures of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board to ensure that no CPP funds are invested in any entity that has performed acts or carried

out work contrary to ethical business practices or has committed human, labour or environmental rights violations.

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board manages over \$400 billion in assets and is mandated to invest in the best interests of CPP contributors and beneficiaries by maximizing returns without undo risk of loss. It is important to note that my bill would not change this mandate. Despite its adherence to a policy on responsible investing, the CPPIB has billions of dollars of investments in companies contributing to climate change and environmental degradation, and it has previously invested in companies implicated in human and labour rights abuses.

The Canada pension plan is an important part of our retirement system, but Canadians expect that its investments are not contributing to human misery around the world. By amending section 35 of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act to specific ethical business practices and human, labour and environmental rights considerations, this bill would do just that.

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

* * *

● (1545)

CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION ACT

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-232, An Act respecting a Climate Emergency Action Framework.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise to present my bill, the climate emergency action framework act. The bill recognizes the right of Canadians to a safe, clean, healthy environment as a human right.

As we are witnessing around the country, individuals, especially young people, are concerned about the climate emergency. I share their concerns and I honour their understanding that this cannot be achieved without the recognition and respect of the fundamental human rights of indigenous peoples, as affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There is no reconciliation in the absence of justice.

We must move forward in this country with a green new deal that supports the human rights of all peoples, while investing in a green economy that brings workers along. The bill would provide a clear path forward by calling on the Government of Canada to take all measures necessary to address the climate emergency. We have no more time to waste.

I look forward to working with other members of the House to push the bill forward.

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

* * *

SEX-SELECTIVE ABORTION ACT

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-233, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sex-selective abortion).

She said: Mr. Speaker, in Canada we value human rights and equality. At home and around the world, we are known for our voice in championing equality between men and women, between girls and boys. We as legislators in the House of Commons have the responsibility to act on behalf of Canadians on an issue that is widely condemned and flies in the face of equality between the sexes.

I am pleased to introduce my private member's bill, the sex-selective abortion act, and I thank the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster for seconding the bill.

It is true that the majority of Canadians agree with having access to abortions. It is also true that 84% of Canadians stand against sex-selection abortions.

I look forward to debate in the House.

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

* * *

● (1550)

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (home security measures).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured today to rise to introduce the bill.

Before I do, I would like to thank the many residents in my constituency who have reached out to me and provided input on this very important matter. I would also like to thank the member for Red Deer—Lacombe for his guidance and leadership and for seconding the bill. I would also like to thank the Conservative caucus for its support in moving this file forward.

Like many constituents in rural Canada, my constituents in Prince Albert are being ravaged by increasing crime rates. During the last Parliament, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security recognized that crime in rural areas was a growing concern and that rural crime rates in both eastern and western Canada were increasing.

Routine Proceedings

The bill I am introducing today would create a non-refundable tax credit for home security measures. It would also assist rural residents in purchasing the home security they need to protect themselves, their families and their property. While it is not a complete solution, it is a step in the right direction, a step that individual legislators can take together to begin addressing this problem.

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

* * *

ENDING OF THE STIGMA OF SUBSTANCE USE ACT

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-235, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians have died because of the opioid crisis. For the first time in 40 years, according to Statistics Canada, our life expectancy has stalled, and Statistics Canada attributes that to the opioid crisis. It is a national public health crisis.

This bill would delete the possession offence completely from the CDSA, not for trafficking or producing but for people who need our help. We should treat patients as patients and not as criminals. The bill's focus is fundamentally to end stigma.

Canada's public health efforts highlight the importance of ending the stigma that surrounds people who use drugs. Of course, the criminal sanction is the primary stigma in our society.

Decriminalization in other countries has increased the number of people seeking treatment by 60%, and it is supported in Canada by the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Canadian Public Health Association and public health experts across our country.

The bill, if passed, will save lives.

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

* * *

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-236, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (evidence-based diversion measures).

He said: Mr. Speaker, we need to treat drug use as a health issue in the context of the opioid crisis if we want to save lives.

Routine Proceedings

I will not shy away from advocating for decriminalization, but I am aware that early on in this Parliament, I have this opportunity to introduce a bill that will be debated and voted on. In the context of the opioid crisis that has taken so many lives, I want to ensure that a measure is passed that will improve our laws and will help Canadians in need.

To that end, while the bill would not decriminalize drugs, it would ensure there would be an evidence-based diversion framework, a principles-based framework, built on public health principles in our national drug strategy and principles embraced and adopted at the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

The bill is also built on the successful model of the Youth Criminal Justice Act at home. It would require police and prosecutors to ensure, before they move forward with charges, that they consider whether it is sufficient to give a warning or to refer an individual in need to a public health agency and provider.

Again, the evidence from the Youth Criminal Justice Act is clear. We will alleviate unfairness in the criminal justice system, we will help people in need and we will save lives.

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

* * *

• (1555)

PETITIONS**HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING**

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present three petitions today.

The first petition is in support of Bill S-204, a bill in the Senate that would make it a criminal offence for someone to go abroad to receive an organ for which there had not been consent. It would also create provisions for someone to be inadmissible to Canada if that person was involved in this horrific practice of forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

Similar bills were passed unanimously in the House and the Senate, but, unfortunately, not in identical form and thus the bill was not actually passed.

The petitioners expect that this same concept, Bill S-204, will get through in this 43rd Parliament and that we will be the Parliament that gets it done.

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the persecution of the Sikh and Hindu minority in Afghanistan. This is a small, very vulnerable community. Numbers have declined significantly in recent years.

The petitioners call on the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to use the powers granted to him to create a special program to help persecuted minorities in Afghanistan be privately sponsored to Canada. They also call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to highlight this issue with his Afghan counterpart.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition highlights specifically the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to respond to these events. They note that one of the ways in which Falun Gong practitioners are persecuted is through organ harvesting and trafficking.

Organ harvesting is referred to in the first petition on Bill S-204, but this petition asks us to, in a comprehensive way, respond to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and call on the Government of China to respect fundamental human rights.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a petition here on behalf of constituents who are concerned for the Uighur population in China and its marginalization.

There are five requests within the petition for which the petitioners call, and I would like to present this on their behalf.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, the petitioners call on the House of Commons to recognize that violence against women remains a critical problem in Canada and disproportionately impacts indigenous women. They also note that striving for pay equity and equal participation for women in leadership roles must be political priorities for all members of Parliament and that shifting cultural attitudes toward women and gender minorities in our society requires structural changes to education and socialization.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, this petition calls upon the Minister of Veterans Affairs to remove any statutory limits on back pay eligibility for the disability allowance and to work with individual veterans to achieve just and due compensation for disability allowance in a timely manner.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.) moved that Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-7, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding medical assistance in dying.

[English]

The bill proposes a legislative response to the Superior Court of Quebec's Truchon decision, as well as some other changes to the Criminal Code provisions that set out Canada's medical assistance in dying regime.

In June 2016, former Bill C-14 amended the Criminal Code to create Canada's first law on medical assistance in dying, or MAID. The legislation created exemptions to Criminal Code offences so that individuals suffering unbearably and nearing the end of their lives could die peacefully and with the help of a physician or nurse practitioner, rather than in agony or in circumstances that they considered undignified.

This significant change in our criminal law was indicative of the value that Canadians ascribed to having choices, including about the manner and timing of their deaths when suffering in the dying process was intolerable. The most recent data obtained by the federal MAID-monitoring regime indicates that over 13,000 Canadians have received MAID since it has become decriminalized.

[Translation]

We are now proposing another important change to our criminal law. In Truchon and Gladu, the Quebec Superior Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to limit access to medical assistance in dying to persons whose death is reasonably foreseeable.

• (1600)

We decided not to appeal the decision because we want to reduce the suffering of people waiting for medical assistance in dying.

When we announced our decision not to appeal the ruling, our government also committed to changing the eligibility criteria for medical assistance in dying throughout Canada to ensure that criminal law is consistent nationwide.

Application of the court's ruling, which is limited to Quebec, was suspended for six months. The deadline is March 12. Because these issues are so important and because we want to ensure that our laws are consistent all across Canada, we have asked the court for a four-month extension, which would give Parliament time to thoroughly consider and debate the amendments proposed in this bill. There was a hearing yesterday regarding this request.

Consulting Canadians about the next phase of medical assistance in dying in Canada was crucial to drafting this bill. That is why we launched a two-week public consultation on January 13. The level of participation was unprecedented. We received over 300,000 responses, an indication of how important this issue is to Canadians.

Government Orders

[English]

At the same time, together with the Minister of Health, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion and our parliamentary secretaries, we held 10 round-table discussions across the country between January 13 and February 3.

This included round tables in Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver. We met over 125 individuals, including doctors, nurse practitioners, legal experts, members of the disability community, indigenous peoples, and representatives of health regulatory bodies and civil organizations.

We are grateful to all who participated in the round tables. Their shared expertise and experiences were of immense value in developing this bill. I have no doubt that many will continue to engage in the parliamentary process as witnesses before committees.

The results of this consultation process will be published shortly in a "what we heard" report. We heard views on many different topics, but I would like to mention just a few.

From the public online consultations we heard that, while the majority of respondents think the current safeguards are adequate to prevent abuse, in a MAID regime that is expanded to persons who are not dying in the near term, a majority of respondents also thought it would be important to require additional safeguards in such a broader regime. Many round-table participants suggested two separate sets of safeguards in an expanded regime. Others shared their experiences with existing safeguards as they apply to those who are near the end of their lives.

Specifically, many felt that the requirement for two witnesses when a person's written request was made was too onerous and afforded little protection, and that the 10-day reflection period unnecessarily prolonged suffering.

Informed by these in-depth consultations, and by the Canadian experience with medical assistance in dying to date, along with many other sources of information, Bill C-7 proposes to respond to the Truchon decision by adjusting both the eligibility requirements and the safeguards. It also proposes to enable patients in certain circumstances to waive the requirement for final consent so that they do not lose their access to MAID.

We know there are other issues about which many Canadians still feel strongly but which are not subject to the Superior Court of Québec's deadline, such as eligibility in cases where mental illness is the sole underlying condition, advanced requests and mature minors. These will be examined in the course of the upcoming parliamentary review.

Government Orders

Before describing the proposed amendments, I would like to address the concerns we heard from many in the disability community following the Truchon decision and during our consultations. Disability groups were very clear that, for them, removing the end-of-life limit on MAID would create a law that holds disability as a valid reason for ending a life and reinforces the false perception that disability is equivalent to a life of suffering.

Our government is sensitive to these concerns. We strongly support the equality of all Canadians, no matter their situation, and we categorically reject the idea that living with a disability is a fate worse than death. However, we are also mindful of the need to balance these concerns, along with others that have been expressed, with other important interests and societal values, in particular the importance of individual choice.

The bill's objectives are therefore to recognize the autonomy of individuals to choose MAID as a means of relieving intolerable suffering, regardless of their proximity to natural death, while at the same time protecting vulnerable persons, recognizing that suicide is an important public health issue and affirming the inherent and equal value of every person's life. More concretely, Bill C-7 proposes to expand eligibility for medical assistance in dying beyond the end-of-life context by repealing the eligibility criteria requiring that natural death be reasonably foreseeable.

Recognizing that intolerable suffering also arises outside of the end-of-life context and that Canadians want to have choices, medical assistance in dying would be become available to all those who are intolerably suffering; who have a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability; and who are in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability, without regard to whether they are dying in the short term.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

At this time, the bill proposes that persons whose sole underlying condition is a mental illness not be eligible for medical assistance in dying. First, we are subject to a court-imposed deadline and this matter requires more in-depth review and debate. We have learned that the trajectory of a mental illness is more difficult to predict than that of most physical illnesses. This means that there is a greater risk of providing medical assistance in dying to people whose condition could improve.

It is also more difficult to carry out competency assessments for individuals with a mental illness. In the case of some mental illnesses, the desire to die is itself a symptom of the illness, which makes it particularly difficult to determine whether the individual's request is truly voluntary.

Like the Government of Quebec, we are of the opinion that we need to continue consultations, discussions and policy development on the issue of MAID requests based solely on mental illness.

The parliamentary review that will be launched next June will be an appropriate forum for examining these issues, without the time constraints of the court-imposed deadline.

[*English*]

I would now like to turn my remarks to the question of safeguards. Many experts believe there are greater risks in assessing requests for MAID from individuals who are not nearing the end of their life. We agree. While these individuals would have a choice to seek MAID, the bill proposes that these requests be treated with greater sensitivity and care.

Accordingly, the bill proposes two streams, or two sets of safeguards. To distinguish these cases the bill proposes to use the concept of reasonably foreseeable natural death. Let me be clear on this point. Not having a reasonably foreseeable death would no longer be grounds for rejecting a MAID request; however, it would be used to determine which of the two sets of safeguards are required in a given case.

As enacted by Parliament in 2016, reasonable foreseeability of natural death refers to a death that is expected in the relative near term. It means that in light of all the person's medical circumstances, his or her death is expected in a relatively short period of time. Natural death is not reasonably foreseeable just because an individual is diagnosed with a condition that will eventually cause death many years or decades into the future.

In practice we know that practitioners are more comfortable prognosticating when death is expected in shorter time frames. The standard of reasonably foreseeable natural death provides flexibility in a way that maximum fixed prognosis would not. The standard also has the advantage of using language that practitioners have become familiar with over the last four years.

Those who are dying in the short or near term would benefit from the current set of safeguards in the Criminal Code, which the bill proposes to change in two ways.

First, the 10-day reflection period would be eliminated. We heard during the consultations that most persons have already given their MAID request a lot of thought by the time they sign their written request, resulting in the reflection period unnecessarily prolonging suffering.

Second, the requirement for two independent witnesses would be amended so that only one independent witness to the written MAID request is required. Further, we have added an exception so that health care and personal care workers who are not the person's provider or assessor would now be able to act as an independent witness.

Again, we heard that it is difficult for some who live in long-term care facilities or in remote areas to locate two independent witnesses. The purpose of the independent witness is simply to verify the identity of the person signing the request. The witness is not involved in the assessment process.

For persons whose death is not reasonably foreseeable, the existing safeguards would all apply with some additional ones. Specifically, the bill proposes a minimum 90-day assessment period, which will help ensure that practitioners spend sufficient time exploring the various dimensions of the person's MAID request, which, outside the end-of-life context, could be motivated by different sources of suffering requiring greater attention.

Also, at least one of the practitioners assessing eligibility would have to have expertise in the condition that is causing the person's intolerable suffering. The safeguard aims to prevent people from obtaining MAID when something could have been done to relieve their suffering or improve their condition.

The bill would also clarify the notion of informed consent for these kinds of cases.

First, a person who is not dying would have to be informed of the means available to relieve suffering, including counselling services, mental health and disability support services, community services, and palliative care, and be offered consultations with professionals that provide these services.

Second, the practitioners and the person would also have to agree that these means of relieving their suffering were discussed and seriously considered.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

The bill also proposes to allow people whose death is reasonably foreseeable and who are eligible for medical assistance in dying to give prior consent if they risk losing capacity to consent before the date set for MAID. At present, the Criminal Code requires the practitioner to ensure, immediately before MAID is provided, that the person gives express consent to receiving MAID.

The bill would enable a patient who has already been assessed and approved to enter into an advance consent arrangement with their physician that sets out all the relevant details, including the date selected for the provision of MAID and the fact that the person consents to receiving MAID in case they lose the capacity to consent by the day in question.

Although this scenario was not covered in Truchon, experts told the government that it presents relatively little complexity and risk. Doctors also told us they would be comfortable with the idea of providing MAID under such circumstances.

To our government, compassion means ensuring that people waiting for MAID do not lose their opportunity to die in the manner or on the date of their choosing just because their medical condition robs them of the capacity to make decisions in their final days.

Another narrow form of advance consent would also be allowed in the unlikely event that complications arise after a person who has been assessed and approved self-administers a substance intended to cause their death and loses the capacity to consent to MAID, but does not die.

The patient and their physician could enter into an arrangement in advance, stipulating that the physician would be present at the time the patient self-administers the substance and would adminis-

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ter a substance to cause the patient's death in case the patient loses their capacity but does not die.

The data show that there have been very few cases of self-administration so far, perhaps due to fears of possible complications stemming from self-administration of a substance. Offering such an option could provide greater reassurance and allow more Canadians to choose this form of medical assistance in dying.

• (1615)

[*English*]

There are other changes in the bill that my colleagues will speak to, including changes to enhanced data collection and the monitoring regime that brings accountability and transparency to the practice of MAID in Canada.

A transitional provision would ensure that patients who have already signed their request when the bill comes into force would not be required to undergo any additional safeguards set out in the bill. At the same time, they would be able to benefit from the safeguards that would be eased, such as the elimination of the 10-day reflection period and the possibility of preparing an advance consent arrangement if it applies to that person's situation. We are committed to making the process as easy on patients as possible.

I would also like to briefly discuss the constitutionality of the bill. I have examined the bill as required by the Department of Justice Act. This involved consideration of the objectives and features of the bill. I am confident that the bill responds to the Truchon ruling in a way that respects the charter.

As is required by the Department of Justice Act, I will table a charter statement in the near future, which will lay out some of the key considerations that informed the review of the bill for inconsistency with the charter. This will serve to better inform parliamentary debate on this important piece of legislation.

[*Translation*]

I will conclude by thanking all those who participated in the consultations on medical assistance in dying and who contributed to the drafting of this bill. Bill C-7's proposed amendments to Canada's medical assistance in dying regime represent a fundamental policy shift, with the regime becoming less about end-of-life care and more about autonomy and alleviating intolerable suffering.

I look forward to working with all members of both chambers to ensure Bill C-7 is passed.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, from my perspective, the elimination of certain stages dramatically changes the potential context for a person receiving euthanasia or assisted suicide.

Right now, the requirements to have a couple of independent witnesses and a little waiting period address the possible risk related to somebody who, for a few hours or a relatively short period of time, feels in the depths of despair and then recovers. The idea of the existing safeguards is to ensure that a person is not pushed into this decision without family members around, without talking to anybody, as it can be the result of a thought process that could last for a relatively short period of time.

The minister knows that in certain circumstances the 10-day waiting period can be waived already. Why is the minister removing safeguards like additional witnesses and the 10-day waiting period, which occurs most of the time but not all the time? Why is he creating a situation in which people could, as a result of a relatively short-term sense of vulnerability and thought process, make a decision they might at any other time in their life not make?

• (1620)

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his interest in this matter.

What we heard in consultation after consultation across Canada is that the two safeguards in the current legislation are not doing their job as safeguards. All they did was add intolerable suffering on the person.

The two independent witnesses are merely there to witness the identity of the person who asks for MAID. In the decision to seek MAID, the assessments are all done prior to that by the medical professionals involved and the patient. This is really just a pro forma step. Having two witnesses, particularly for older people in remote areas of Canada who perhaps do not have any family left, became an unbearable impediment.

The 10-day reflection period came after the decision to have MAID. What happened is that people would, in some cases, not take their pain medication in order to not lose the capacity to make a final decision 10 days later.

It was believed virtually unanimously, among the experts, patients and others, that we should remove these two impediments, because they simply were not acting as safeguards and were increasing suffering.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of this bill. It is a step in the right direction, especially since the bill repeals the provision that requires a person's natural death to be reasonably foreseeable in order for them to be eligible for medical assistance in dying.

I recently met one of my constituents, Caroline Parent, a woman in her 40s who seemed quite engaged and active. Ms. Parent told me that she feels trapped in her own body and hopeless about her life. That was a very powerful day. Her story was overwhelming.

She told me that she had gotten to the point of planning a trip to Switzerland, where medical assistance in dying is accessible, and planned to return in the luggage hold. This was a harrowing story, and I am pleased to see that this bill is making some progress in this respect.

I do want to mention that the Bloc Québécois thinks the notion of advance consent should be considered. We are also wondering about the possibility of eliminating final consent in cases in which the person's death is not reasonably foreseeable, as is the case with degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's, for example.

What does the minister think about that?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. Obviously that is a very important question. We asked questions like that on the online form and we also asked them during roundtables and consultation panels we hosted across Canada, including in Quebec City and Montreal.

What we heard is that there is still a lot of work to do. There is some public sympathy for such measures, but these are very complex issues. There are still some unknowns and situations in which doctors and nurses do not feel comfortable with the potential framework.

It is a question we will address during parliamentary review. Studies are under way. Quebec commissioned a study and we commissioned one from the Council of Canadian Academies. This question is one of the elements we will look at, but for now that is a step we are not prepared to recommend.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I remember being in this place during the debate on Bill C-14 and reading through the Carter decision, which was very clear. There was also, of course, the important work that was done by the special joint committee of both the House and the other place.

When I was speaking to Bill C-14 in 2016, I knew the inclusion of the "reasonably foreseeable" aspect of the law was going to cause us problems, and here we are. I am sure the justice minister is feeling some closure, because he was one of four Liberals who voted against that bill. I am sure he is getting some satisfaction in revisiting this now.

I am pleased to report that the New Democrats support the bill in principle. However, we have a number of concerns, specifically with the assessment period for those whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable but who are facing intolerable suffering. The bill sets up a period of 90 days. We have already heard from some physicians who have concerns with the fact that they have to tell patients to bear their illness and suffer for another 90 days.

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Could the Minister of Justice inform the House on how the Liberals came up with that number? How did they determine that 90 days is the right amount of time?

• (1625)

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his very kind comments and the general support of his party.

We decided to have two regimes in order to keep doctors and nurses on board who were familiar with the original regime and add the possibility for others. There is a different set of balances in the non-end-of-life scenario. We heard from people who see themselves as vulnerable or susceptible to influence, like people living with disabilities for example, at round tables and this was an existential question for them.

This is the assessment period; it is not a reflection period. We have eliminated all reflection periods. This is the period of time in which the doctor or the nurse practitioner is assessing the condition with the patient. There are other proactive things the doctor or nurse practitioner has to do. We wanted to give an adequate amount of time for reflection. Some jurisdictions have six months in this scenario. We shortened that. We wanted to give enough time for adequate reflection. With catastrophic injury, for example, the first reaction is often that a person would rather die, but with time, a very short period of time, and after assessing the possibilities for life, a person makes a different decision.

This is really just adding to the assessment period, making sure that there is adequate discussion, adequate informing of the possibilities and consideration of the possibilities, while still understanding that people are suffering intolerably. We understand that, but feel this is an appropriate period that is not too long. It is certainly not as long as some of the other examples.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I remember that as we went through the very difficult discussions on Bill C-14, within the Catholic community in Guelph, to which I belong, there were a lot of concerns around advance directives and conscience rights and the protection of conscience rights within the Catholic community in particular. I remember that at the time I was asked a few times whether we were going down a slippery slope.

I want to be able to say to my community that we are looking to handle this legislation in a compassionate way that protects rights, but I would rather hear it from the minister so that I can take an authoritative comment on that back to my community.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I too am a practising Catholic, so these kinds of questions are very important to me.

This is about choice and reducing suffering. These are choices that have already been made. The pun is not intended. The point in the first scenario, in the known scenario, the end-of-life scenario, is to ease restrictions that were not doing any work. In the non-end-of-life scenario, the point is, again, to make sure that informed choice happens. That is why we think we have struck the appropriate balance.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to split my time with the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure today to rise as the shadow minister of justice for the official opposition to speak to the government's Bill C-7. As I rise to speak on this bill, I do so with concern over some of the contents within it and even over the way it was presented to the House this week when, unfortunately, many of us read about the contents of the bill in the media, rather than seeing it first in this House.

The bill was intended to be a response to the Quebec Superior Court decision that was made on September 11, 2019. The decision stated that the law as it stood was too restrictive around the requirement for death to be reasonably foreseeable. The official opposition called on the government at the time to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada in order for Parliament to receive clarity about the parameters in which we would legislate, but the bill was introduced without that clarity.

Not only was the bill introduced without that clarity, but it goes far beyond what was required to meet the Quebec Superior Court's decision. I believe that is an affront to this Parliament, because when the previous bill, Bill C-14, was passed in the 42nd Parliament, the wisdom of this Parliament required that there be a statutory review of our assisted dying regime in Canada. That statutory review was and is to take place in June of this year.

It is in that review period that parliamentarians would be able to go more into depth on how the government's legislation has worked over the past several years and on how best to proceed. Rather than wait for that review, as it should have done, the government has decided to start making amendments to the legislation now, avoiding the in-depth review that is to take place shortly.

The reality is that when we are talking about this legislation, we are literally talking about the matter of life and death. This is an incredibly sensitive issue. Members on all sides of the house have diverse opinions on it, and it is because of this diversity of opinions and because of the sensitivity of this issue that the Quebec Superior Court decision should have been appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada for further clarity. However, as the government has now opened this legislation up, it is upon us as legislators to now highlight other matters that should be addressed and included.

My office has heard plenty from concerned Canadians about the lack of protection for conscience rights for health care professionals. This is particularly important now that the government is broadening medical assistance in dying to include individuals whose death is not reasonably foreseeable. Expanding medical assistance in dying to more patients could in fact diminish the number of medical professionals willing to take part in the process. The fact is that this expanded access could result in a heavy emotional burden on those health care providers.

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None of us here can fully appreciate the burden put on those health care providers currently working in the system and providing medical assistance in dying. The fact is that there is nothing about ensuring proper support to health care professionals who provide this service and there continue to be no penalties for pressuring a medical professional into providing medical assistance in dying, nor are there penalties for punishing or penalizing a medical professional who does not participate in medical assistance in dying. This means there continues to be no real protection for conscience rights for health care professionals.

The issue of advance directives, now rebranded as a “waiver of final consent” by this government, is a complex one that poses questions of ethics and safety and issues with oversight. The fact that the legislation legalizing this is half a page of a bill shows a lack of care given to this issue. This issue rightly should have been discussed as part of the parliamentary review to take place this summer.

● (1630)

The process for the creation and execution of this agreement remains ambiguous. Further, there is a lack of clarity on the process for proceeding with an advance directive agreement upon the date selected. The process will only be stopped if a patient expresses a form of resistance, but we do not know what that looks like. What if they are simply confused or groggy at the time? Under the legislation, unless they resist, the process will still proceed.

The bill also removes the 10-day waiting requirement when a person's death is reasonably foreseeable. When I read in media reports before the bill was tabled that this would be included, I, like many of many of my colleagues and parliamentarians, questioned as to what prompted its removal. I still remain incredibly concerned as to why this was included. This is particularly true because there was already the ability to remove the 10-day waiting period if a person's death or loss of capacity to consent was imminent, so why proceed with the removal of a safeguard that Parliament saw fit to include in the previous legislation?

It is also confusing that Bill C-7 requires a 90-day waiting period when a patient's death is not reasonably foreseeable. Why add an extended wait period for one, but remove the wait period entirely for the other?

On the issue of whether a death is reasonably foreseeable or not reasonably foreseeable, there is no clarification or guidance for health care professionals. As a result, it is not up to them to make the determination as to what category to put a patient under. That determination will decide whether a patient can access medical assistance in dying immediately or if they will require a 90-day waiting period. This is an extraordinary amount of pressure that the government is putting on health care professionals across this country.

The changing of witness requirements under this legislation has also been mentioned. The law requires only one independent witness, which is down from two.

All of these changes lead to an expansion of the law in Canada far beyond what was addressed in the Quebec court decision, an ex-

pansion that should have required deeper reflection through the study that is to take place this summer.

For a moment, let us speak to a point that seems to be lost in this conversation: palliative care services in this country.

The reality is if the choice is between a lack of quality palliative care and medically assisted dying, that really is no choice at all. Unfortunately, over the past number of years there have been instances of patients feeling they were forced to choose death because of a lack of palliative care.

The story of Archie Rolland comes to mind. Archie was a Montreal landscape architect who chose to end his life rather than continue suffering at a long-term care facility that was failing to provide him adequate care.

He had ALS and had his life upended when he was forced to move from a Montreal hospital that specialized in treating patients with severe respiratory ailments to a long-term care facility for geriatric patients. Mr. Rolland did not want to go, but he was transferred against his wishes. He called the system “inhuman”. He felt he was not getting adequate care, so he chose death.

I do not think that this is any real choice at all. We must have the discussion in this country about palliative care because people must not feel forced into a decision on medically assisted death. Mr. Rolland's story makes it clear that there was a failure of the system to provide him with adequate care. We risk medically assisted death being seen as some sort of bureaucratic solution for people who require an extra level of care. In a country like Canada, that is simply not acceptable. The government risks expanding a culture of not valuing life, and we should all agree in this place that we must place value on human life.

In closing, the bill disrespects Parliament and the parliamentary process. With Bill C-14, parliamentarians did a significant amount of work in the House and committee in an attempt to build consensus. The work was challenged by the Quebec Superior Court, but rather than defending the will of elected representatives in court, the Liberals immediately backed down.

● (1635)

Now the Liberals are responding not just to that decision but are also undoing the work of the joint committee on Bill C-14 by adding new measures.

Many of these issues should be dealt with in the summer when we have our scheduled parliamentary review. This is a complex matter that requires proper scrutiny and debate.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his contribution to today's debate and I welcome him back to the House.

I will begin by correcting about five errors in the member's speech and then I will ask him a question.

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The first point is with respect to the Truchon decision. It was not appealed, first because we agree with the substance of the decision and secondly because we disagree with prolonging the suffering of Mr. Truchon or Ms. Gladu or people like them.

The second point is with respect to health care providers and the potential of a chilling effect being exacted upon them. It is a valid point, and that is why we have entrenched important safeguards in the legislation, such as the requirement for advanced consent to be done in writing.

The third point is on people being pressured as medical practitioners to engage in this practice, which is patently false. Bill C-14 has conscience rights entrenched in its preamble and in the body of the bill, and the Carter decision, in its penultimate paragraph, said that the charter protections under section 2 for freedom of religion does not compel any health care practitioner in this country to provide this service.

With regard to the member's attempt at an analogy between the 90-day assessment period and the 10-day reflection period, they are different qualitative matters. Reflection is not assessment.

The member raised a very valid point about palliative care. We agree and understand that palliative care must be robust and we fully support the idea, which is why this government put \$6 billion into home care, including palliative care, two budgets ago. Does the member agree that this was a useful investment?

• (1640)

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his question. He covered a lot of ground.

If the government agreed with the decision, and that is the basis for not appealing it, then why was that not in the original legislation to begin with?

All too often we see on the other side of the House a willingness to let the courts do the work that is rightly the work of Parliament, and we are seeing that again here. One court decision is made in one province, and then the government will hide behind that decision rather than appeal it to the Supreme Court of Canada as it should.

Now the government has brought in legislation that goes far beyond what this court was dealing with, which is reasonable foreseeability of death. That again should have been dealt with in the review that is coming up this summer, when all parliamentarians can get input from their constituents and from experts on this issue.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would draw the member's attention to what is known as Audrey's amendment in the legislation. One of the challenges is the requirement for final consent at the time the assistance is rendered. This forces a lot of people who have already been assessed and approved for medical assistance in dying to make a very cruel choice when they are faced with the possible loss of competence, which would make them unable to give consent. Sometimes they are forced to go earlier or risk not being able to receive the assistance they need in order avoid continuing to live with intolerable suffering.

I wonder if my colleague can inform the House if Conservatives support this particular aspect of the bill, which would demonstrably help people who are facing end of life avoid this cruel choice.

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, in Bill C-14 from the previous Parliament, the decision was made not to include advance directives, meaning that someone would have to give consent at the time of medically assisted death. That is why, in the previous legislation, someone would have to consent and then give a further consent at the time of medically assisted death.

The bill before us would change that. This is a major expansion of Canada's laws on assisted dying. It was done under the premise of a response to an unrelated court decision in Quebec.

There is a reason parliamentarians and the House put in place a statutory review of this regime: so that we can consider new measures and look at what is working and see what is not working. This is why the whole discussion on this aspect of consent should have been done in the course of the statutory review.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Brandon—Souris, carbon pricing; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, indigenous affairs; the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, agriculture and agri-food.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, when this House opens most days, we take a moment to pray, reflect and ensure our words and our jobs of representing Canadians are done to our utmost ability. We are honoured to be in the people's House. My personal prayer today is that my words reflect the severity of Bill C-7, a very serious subject.

I have been closely following the Liberals' terrifying progress as they work to embed the practice of efficient death in our medical system. In January they held MAID legislative consultations online for a total of only two weeks; two weeks to hear from the public on legislation that is truly a matter of life or death.

There is a mandatory five-year review set for this June for our MAID law, but instead of working within that timeline, the Liberals have let one ruling from one Quebec judge dictate the legislative direction for the entirety of Canada. At minimum, this issue should have been referred to the Supreme Court of Canada.

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I am fearful of the current justice minister who voted against MAID in the previous Parliament, not because he was against it, but because he felt it did not go far enough. That is the driving force behind some of these drastic changes.

As the Liberals have just tabled the bill this week, I have only had a short period of time to begin digesting it. I need to stress to the House today that these are my preliminary thoughts. In my opinion, this is a needlessly rushed process on a sensitive, significant issue that does touch every Canadian.

For the first four months of my term, I have heard from many concerned constituents, advocacy groups, differently abled individuals and organizations, and those in the medical profession.

What I need to emphasize at the outset of my time here tonight is the innate value of every human being, regardless of ability. I want to speak directly to those who are in physical pain, those in mental anguish and those who feel they are a burden. Everyone is loved, everyone is valuable and everyone is made in the image of God. There is a place in our society for patients in unbearable suffering with no possibility of recovery to be provided with end-of-life options. We owe this to Canadians. Autonomy and personal wishes do need to be respected.

There is a paradox, in that suffering is both hard and good. Everyone who suffers deserves our love, our care and access to appropriate palliative care. I will touch on palliative care in a moment, but presently I will address this bill, raise some of the concerns I have with it from my initial reading and voice the concerns of those it affects directly from whom I have heard, including our medical professionals and the vulnerable or disabled of our society.

Numerous organizations like Canadian Physicians for Life and Canadian Society for Palliative Care Physicians have raised numerous significant issues with Bill C-7. The organizations cite specific concerns with clauses of the bill and also relay an overarching general concern about how the proposed legislation erodes the trust that vulnerable people should be able to have in the medical profession.

We seek out medical aid when we are at the lowest, most vulnerable points in our lives. Vulnerable Canadians must be able to find protection within the medical community. In an ironic, tragic twist, the preamble of the bill recognizes the importance of protecting vulnerable persons from being encouraged to end their lives, but does nothing to support what should be foundational in our health care system.

The bill itself drops many of the already too few safeguards around MAID and places vulnerable people at an increased risk.

Point one is that the reasonably foreseeable natural death criteria has been removed, which would drastically reinvent MAID. It would no longer be an alternative to a painful death, but an alternative to a painful life.

Point two is that independent oversight has been reduced. Where two witness signatures were previously required on a patient's written request for MAID, the requirement would now be one. The bar would be lowered even further as that individual, that supposedly

independent witness, can be the person paid to take care of someone, that is, medical staff.

Point three is that disturbingly, Bill C-7 also does away with the previous 10-day waiting period for those whose natural death is reasonably foreseeable.

● (1645)

Under Bill C-7, one could be diagnosed and killed all in one day, with no opportunity for reflection or discussion with friends or family members. That is what this bill would do.

Point four is that the bill would also legalize physician-assisted suicide by advance request through a waiver of final consent and drop the requirement for consent to be given twice before MAID is performed. The existing law requires consent at the time eligibility is granted and again before termination of life occurs. Under the new law, once consent would be given, there would be no need for medical staff to confirm it before administering a lethal injection.

Can someone consent in advance to being killed once they reach a state they fear but which they are not experiencing now and, in fact, have never experienced? Once a person has signed an advance request and has lost capacity to consent to medical treatment, at what point should euthanasia take place? At what point should a person be killed?

In a technical briefing yesterday, officials were pushed to explain how MAID would be administered and what safeguards would be in place for the day, the hour, the minute euthanasia would be carried out. Shockingly, the legislation would only require one medical practitioner to be present. Therefore, even if an individual attempted to withdraw consent, there would be no mechanism to ensure their wishes were respected. One medical professional should not be permitted to conduct euthanasia alone. This would not ensure accountability and, in my opinion, is completely unacceptable.

Additionally, there is no provision for individuals to be able to seek doctors who would not counsel MAID as a treatment option. In fact, there is no mechanism for physicians to opt out of providing MAID or any conscience protections for medical professionals who refuse to participate in MAID or do not wish to refer a patient.

We are seeing this in British Columbia, where the Delta Hospice Society has been denied funding for refusing to offer MAID services. With this in mind, how then are individuals able to trust that the doctor will really care for their well-being? The frightening thing is that pro-MAID health care providers are not waiting for people to raise the possibility of euthanasia. In fact, we are hearing first-hand accounts of individuals who have been encouraged to pursue this option unprompted.

What about section 241 of the Criminal Code, which counts it an offence to counsel a person to commit suicide? Those staring at the precipice of potential death should not have the entire medical establishment looming behind them to pursue a certain option.

This brings me back to palliative care and the dismal record on caring for Canadians at end of life. There is nothing in the bill and little tangible government action taken to approve access to palliative care. The Conservative dissenting opinion from the committee's review of previous MAID legislation states, "A genuinely autonomous choice for a person to end their life is not possible if they are not offered palliative care as they will see their choice as only intolerable suffering or PAD [physician-assisted death]."

The Canadian Hospice and Palliative Care Association estimates that fewer than 30% of Canadians who need it have access to palliative services. The Conservative Party recognized this need in its 2019 platform and a Conservative government would implement the framework on palliative care in Canada.

As I referenced the Canadian Hospice and Palliative Care Association, I need to make one its points crystal clear, which is that MAID is not part of hospice palliative care. It is not an extension of palliative care, nor is it one of the tools in the palliative care basket. Health care articles, the general media and, sadly, politicians continue to conflate and thus misrepresent these two fundamentally different practices.

Hospice palliative care focuses on improving quality of life and symptom management through holistic, person-centred care for those living with life-threatening conditions.

In conclusion, at my first reading, I am disappointed to say that the Liberal government's proposed legislation to amend MAID sadly misses the mark on many levels. It had the opportunity to increase safeguards for the vulnerable, provide conscience right for medical practitioners, implement protections for those living with mental illness and address many more legislative inadequacies. I hope that in the spirit of this minority government the suggested amendments coming from all sides of the House will be welcomed graciously and thoughtfully.

To my constituents, I am opposed to these changes and will urgently seek their feedback. Many of them live with stories and experiences on both sides of this issue and I need to hear from all of them.

To reiterate, to those who are in physical pain, who are in mental anguish and who feel they are a burden, they are loved, they are valuable and they are made in the image of God.

• (1650)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am going to offer four clarifications and then ask the member a question.

The first clarification is that, with respect to the conscience rights and whether they exist, they do exist in three places and I outlined them already: in the preamble, in subsection 241.2(9) of what was then C-14 and in the Carter jurisprudence. I think that is important,

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because this member is urging us to return to Supreme Court jurisprudence.

The second is about withdrawal of consent. Can it be done? Yes it can, through non-verbal means. That is entrenched in this bill.

The third is that the notion that people can die "all in one day", and I am quoting the member opposite, is actually patently inaccurate in terms of the empirical evidence. There are two independent medical practitioners, completely divorced from the people who verify the identity of an individual, who determine the eligibility. Those people take some time to do so. It does not happen "all in one day."

Finally, the issue about the independent witness going from one to two is simply to reduce one of the barriers.

If the concern is for ensuring that the autonomy and dignity of all individuals are entrenched here, does the member opposite agree that when the court, in Carter and in the Truchon decision, talks about ensuring that intolerable suffering is no longer continued, and that the dignity of those people who are making a personal choice about how they choose to exit this life should that be respected in the context of this legislation?

• (1655)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, this legislation was tabled on Monday. We are Wednesday in the House of Commons, and the changes being made are so drastic that all sides of this House need to take time to properly understand the impact of what is before us today, and properly understand that this is going to change our society in major ways. We do not know the full effect of what is going to take place now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was listening to my Conservative colleague and wondering whether I had understood him correctly and whether the interpretation had faithfully rendered his argument.

I heard that the medical establishment would push for death in the case of someone who is terminally ill. If the medical establishment could do what my Conservative colleague is suggesting, that would constitute criminal wrongdoing and the perpetrators would be immediately discharged. There are codes of ethics for that. I am not sure if that is what the hon. member was saying or if the interpretation was inaccurate.

I agree with my colleague that palliative care is needed. However, is he claiming that palliative care is the answer in every case? Does he know that palliative care does not adequately relieve pain and suffering in some terminally ill patients?

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, what I was referring to was what I heard in my riding, that medical practitioners were raising MAID without MAID being raised by the patient. That is what I was referring to.

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Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member had mentioned that we should be informed in the House. I am wondering if the hon. member thought it would be wise, perhaps prior to the release of the legislation to the media, for the government to provide us with the results of their consultation, because I do not believe we have it.

Would that consultation be helpful for us?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, yes, I think it is irresponsible on the part of the government to have tabled this legislation without hearing back from Canadians. As I mentioned in my remarks, two weeks for Canadians to respond to such important legislation was not sufficient, especially when we compare the all-party process of 2016 with what is happening now. This is not acceptable for Canadians, and I know for a fact that more Canadians wanted to have a voice on this. Canadians from all sides of the issue wanted to be able to share their perspectives with the government in good faith, and they were not given that opportunity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is with some emotion that I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-7, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding medical assistance in dying.

We are debating Bill C-7 today because the legislators who were here four years ago did not do their job properly when they debated Bill C-14. We do not live in a democracy run by judges. We are the ones that make the laws and who must make the voices of citizens heard, particularly the voices of those who are suffering. All judges do is interpret the grammar of justice. They look at the laws and people's rights and freedoms and determine whether the infringements are reasonable or not. However, before Bill C-14 was introduced, two courts told us that, according to the law, the Criminal Code infringes on the right to life and the right to liberty and security of those who are ill and suffering, are struggling with unbearable pain or have a terminal illness.

Today, I hope that we will seize the opportunity that is given to us. I hope that we will extend the debate until June because this is a serious subject. I hope that we will have a calm, rational debate.

I will start by saying that I am sure my colleagues in the House all have good intentions. They want to do good. They have kind hearts. I am sure that their behaviour throughout the debate will reflect the very values they are advocating, namely benevolence and caring. However, we cannot be benevolent and want what is best for a terminally ill person if we refuse to listen to what that person has to say before they die.

All I want is for us to understand what is at stake here, I am referring to the law, which my Conservative friends have always put on a pedestal. The value of autonomy is conferred by law through the principle of self-determination, especially with regard to medical care. I will come back to that.

I will take a moment in this debate on such a crucial and delicate issue to say that I hope all my colleagues get to cross the threshold of death peacefully, quietly and painlessly. That is my wish for everyone, because the best fate we can wish on another human being

is to find peace, to let go and to receive what is known as good palliative care if they are terminally ill with an irreversible ailment. More on that later.

Today we are discussing the autonomy conferred by law through the principle of self-determination. In the biomedical context, there is a rule. A value gives rise to a principle, which in this case is self-determination. This principle gives rise to a specific rule, namely the rule of free, informed consent. The rule about free, informed consent to treatment has never been challenged in emergency situations.

Why would it be any different for human beings experiencing intolerable suffering due to an irreversible illness or condition?

● (1700)

Why would it be any different for competent individuals who are neither depressed nor suicidal and who have expressed a desire to live fully until they reach the limit of what they can tolerate?

I therefore invite my colleagues to join me in a debate on autonomy and self-determination. If someone shows up at an emergency room, they cannot be treated without their consent. Everyone has the right to refuse treatment, by the way.

In the Carter decision, which led to Bill C-7, the Supreme Court ruled that the provisions prohibiting medical assistance in dying violated the right to life, liberty and security of the person. People like Ms. Gladu, Mr. Truchon, Ms. Carter and Ms. Taylor have not reached the end-of-life stage. They might not even be in the terminal phase of their illness. That does not mean they have not reached, or are not in the process of reaching, the limit of what they can tolerate.

The court stated that those provisions were effectively shortening the lives of such individuals, that they violated their right to life by inciting them to commit the act before they were ready. That is the issue that we are called upon to address. There is no issue for people who are terminally ill. The issue we need to address as legislators has to do with people whose death is not reasonably foreseeable and imminent.

The bill proposes that a person who is not terminally ill must consent twice and be bound by a 90-day period. I really wanted to talk about advance consent. I imagine we will do so eventually. That is about all that is missing from the bill. Clearly the Bloc Québécois is in favour of passing this bill in principle.

What we want is respect for the moral autonomy of the dying. We often speak of dying with dignity. Dying with dignity does not mean having a sanitized death. That is not it. The dignity of a person is derived from their freedom to choose and respect for their free will. That is what it means to be a human being. When that is violated, we violate the dignity of the human being. Whether the death is unpleasant or not is not the issue. The crux of the matter is to allow the human being to make a decision about the end of their life.

Unfortunately, in the past, we won the right to die rather than undergo aggressive therapies. At the time, we called this passive euthanasia. The person was left to die without death being the intent. Palliative care was still in its infancy. There was a great fear of administering one last fatal dose of medication, which always ends up causing death, because palliative care provides care.

Human beings won the right to die rather than undergo aggressive therapies. People did not die of cancer; the therapies killed them. Experiments were conducted on human beings. Doctors led the way to ensure that they would have quality of life if they were to be struck by cancer. They did not want to receive treatments that would make them ill for a year when they only had two years to live.

● (1705)

The right to die won out over aggressive treatment plans. That idea evolved and became palliative care.

For a long time, palliative care was thought of as the only solution that would allow someone to die with dignity. However, in the past 30 years, were there people living with terminal illnesses, dying a slow, agonizing death, who did not receive all of the palliative care they needed until the end of their life, if that was what they wanted?

First, we need to look at whether palliative care is accessible. There is an increase in requests for medical assistance in dying. Bioethics talks about clinical ethics, in which the patient comes first. It is about listening. Sometimes, even the best palliative care in the world, with the best framework in the world, cannot alleviate someone's suffering.

That is true for Ms. Gladu and for Mr. Truchon, but those people are not suicidal. They want to live as long as possible. When they want to die, they may be given anti-depressants. They will be of sound mind when they make their decision. That decision will be reversible. I was listening to Ms. Gladu the other day. What does she want? She wants freedom of choice. In many cases, once people have that choice, they have so much respect for their dignity that they are no longer in such a hurry. That reduces suffering tremendously. That is the issue we are dealing with.

We must not sidestep this issue on the grounds that we want to move swiftly. I have a lot of questions about the bill because it does not address degenerative cognitive disease. I think a person with Alzheimer's should have the opportunity to make an advance request.

These are predictable diseases. Doctors can tell patients how they will progress. People with these diseases often remain of sound mind for years. Eventually, they become forgetful. In the end, they die not of the disease itself but of complications from being bedridden or immobilized or conditions other than that disease. This bill does not take those people into account.

What I would hate is to see a repeat of what happened with Bill C-14. The reasonably foreseeable natural death criterion was established, and it was supposed to protect vulnerable people.

Is there anyone more vulnerable than someone who is suffering from intolerable pain, who is living with an incurable illness and

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who is being told to go to court for the right to choose and to die with dignity?

Is there anything more important and more intimately personal for an individual? It is not as though the person's neighbour is going to die for them.

I have a hard time understanding our Conservative colleagues' argument that the state must decide for an individual, when they are so economically libertarian.

In 1957, Pope Pius XII was a pioneer. He said that we must stop claiming that only God can decide whether we should die a slow death. At a certain point, he made it possible for us to sanction palliative care.

● (1710)

Today, let us not pit palliative care and medical assistance in dying against each other, regardless of whether we are talking about a degenerative disease or an illness that causes extreme pain but is not terminal. Let us not pit those two realities against each other. Respect for human dignity includes proper support when one is dying, which requires doctors to have the humility to recognize that they cannot always help people manage their pain adequately.

Our society recognizes people's right to self-determination throughout their lifetime but takes it away from them at the most intimate moment of their lives. In so doing, we think that we know what is best for people or that we are doing the right thing, when we are actually undermining human dignity. There is no more important moment in a person's life than their death. Learning to live is learning to die. Learning to die is learning to live. I say that because the clock starts ticking the moment the doctor cuts the umbilical cord.

I appeal to my colleagues' humanity. I am a staunch democrat, humanist and, of course, sovereignist. I am all of those things, but one does not take precedence over the other when it comes to problems like this.

I am not saying that the federal government should have challenged that ruling because it came from a Quebec court. In any case, it is a court under federal jurisdiction that rendered that decision.

This ruling challenges us as legislators to do our job and stop off-loading the problems, the ethical, social and political questions to the courts. We have a job to do as legislators.

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There is a sociology of law. In a society, the law evolves with people's consciences. I know I am straying from the technical details of the bill. However, I said from the outset that we agree in principle and on the grounds for discussion of this bill. I apologize for being overly philosophical today, but that is where the substance of the debate lies; it is ethical and it is political in the noblest sense of these words. Indeed, it is up to us to make the laws to ensure the well-being of all. It is a philosophical debate and, in a way, a theological debate that leads us to the law. However, regardless of how much time we spend on this, let us use substantive arguments.

• (1715)

When I hear arguments to the effect that this is a slippery slope, I think about the study of Bill C-14, during the last Parliament, when some people were practically saying that nursing homes and long-term care facilities would become euthanasia machines. I do not know of any evil people who work in health care, in any position. If such a person exists, then let them be fired, because they have no place there. I am not buying the slippery slope argument.

We must assume from the outset that all stakeholders in the health system are caring and compassionate. Yes, they sometimes experience difficulties. With just a slight increase in health transfers, they could provide better care and there might be more palliative care units in hospitals. Even though I do not believe that palliative care is the only solution, that is what people have been saying for 50 years. It makes no sense that there are not more palliative care units.

Not everyone asks for MAID. I talk a lot about those who do not pose a problem. In Quebec, where the Quebec law is in effect, the obligation to meet the criterion of a reasonably foreseeable natural death forces people to go to court or to go on hunger strikes. This criterion was unconscionable, and the courts handed down an appropriate ruling in that regard.

Therefore, I appeal to my colleagues' humanity.

• (1720)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I truly appreciated my hon. Bloc Québécois colleague's speech. He spoke very eloquently about the balance we hope to strike between protecting the vulnerable and respecting the dignity and autonomy of people who want more control over their manner of dying. The member mentioned that.

I also want to point out that medically assisted deaths accounted for only 1.89% of all deaths in Canada in 2018. I would like to ask the member a question that was raised by the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. He said that we did not listen carefully enough to what Canadians want. In fact, we launched a questionnaire that garnered 300,000 responses, most of which supported expanded access to medical assistance in dying.

What does the member opposite think Quebecers and Canadians want with regard to the possibility of expanding access and eliminating obstacles to medical assistance in dying?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I think the government was sort of playing with fire with respect to the time frame. We do indeed want an extension. I think the debate that is starting today

will help the courts give us that extension. After all, the courts do not make the law, and I think it is worth spending at least four months on this.

I think we can get this done because we have experience. We dealt with the issue of medical assistance in dying as part of end-of-life care. Quebec did that without having to amend the Criminal Code. Then the Carter decision came out. I am eager for the committee to be set up. I think we can produce a first draft that I hope will be followed by a review of the legislation focusing on sensitive issues, which could be done immediately after a bill is passed.

I am quite pleased that the government was wise enough not to extend medical assistance in dying to individuals with a mental illness. However, the problem has not been resolved. When someone continues to suffer, despite years of treatment, to the point where they are considering death as the only possible relief, that is a failure for the medical profession in terms of mental health. There is no palliative care in mental health. This issue needs to be raised and addressed. Although I am pleased that it was not included, I do think it warrants careful analysis. That is why I proposed that the Standing Committee on Health examine the issue. We will see whether my colleagues agree.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, the speech of my colleague from the Bloc was very passionate speech. I very much enjoyed listening to it.

When we looked at this issue in the previous Parliament, what was very clear back then was the Carter decision. What was very clear back then were the recommendations of the special joint committee. What was not very clear was why the government at the time had inserted the clause that required a reasonably foreseeable death. During my speech on Bill C-14 in 2016, I knew that clause would force us to come back and revisit this issue.

Parliament did look at this issue, we did deliberate and a number of parliamentarians at the time identified this as a problem. Then I see the Truchon decision, and that simply forces Parliament to clean up its act, to actually get the job done properly this time.

Who are we to impose our values on people who have gone through the suffering, who are being forced to live with these medical conditions? We have no idea what kind of a world they are living in. The member is very right that it is about treating their life with dignity and also allowing them to die with dignity in what is an incredibly personal choice.

I want to get my colleague's thoughts on a particular section of the bill that sets the assessment period at 90 days. For someone whose death is not reasonably foreseeable, but is facing intolerable suffering, what does he think of the 90-day period? The New Democratic caucus has already heard from physicians who have great concern that they may have to force their patients to wait an additional 90 days when it is already quite obvious the suffering is very grave.

Could my colleague provide us with his thoughts on that section of the bill?

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, we will need to look at this scenario in detail. Earlier I said that the patient comes first.

My Conservative colleague claims that it would be possible for everything to happen in one day. That is not how it works. I did support eliminating the 10-day waiting period, however. We need to get this right. Depending on the illness in question, there will have to be a process. It is a matter of prevention.

What is the current process? Take Ms. Gladu, who, if I am not mistaken, said in her interviews that she is going forward. For her, another 90 days will be complicated. She is suffering. However, for someone who has just been diagnosed, the 90-day period is completely acceptable. There will have to be some flexibility.

Renowned bioethicist David Roy said that the patient comes first and that clinical studies are opportunities to hear what patients are saying. These studies allow us to make humane adjustments, in line with rules and legislation, to an individual's end-of-life care.

I am open to looking into all of that. Even though it appears simple, a discussion about days, about a 30-day waiting period, is very complex.

I hope we will be able to count on my colleague's support to improve the bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member's presentation was very thoughtful and intelligent. He has presented us with a very personal choice that each of us will have at some point in our life and death experience, some of us through suffering and some of us through other ways. I am sure we will be passing in different ways.

However, there is the protection of people who might have to make a decision based on their experience, based on where they are in their life, then coming to the end through suffering. I was with my mother when she was going through some of the struggles of the end of life experience and she really had trouble with the final moment.

Could the hon. member talk about our role in the decision-making process as members of Parliament, in which we try to represent different experiences of faith, different experiences of people, different experiences of suffering, and the role we have in providing freedom of choice for the people we are representing?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, at this point, I do not see anything in the bill that disregards or disrespects any faith.

Some people decide to die with the help of palliative care and nothing else. That kind of care can slow down the dying process. Sometimes people are admitted in an emergency and get sent home because the care is so good their condition improves.

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People will have a choice. This is about freedom of choice. Both options will be available. People will exercise their free will and their freedom of choice. That is truly what it means to respect a person's dignity.

• (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is quite incredible to be revisiting this issue. I can remember when the debate on Bill C-14 went on, back in 2016. There were some amazing speeches uttered in Centre Block during that time. This truly was an issue that had a profound effect on so many members in the chamber but, we know, also on so many members of our society.

I was honoured in 2017 to serve as our party's justice critic. I am pleased to again be serving in the role as the deputy justice critic for the NDP. I have always felt that this particular critic role brings with it a very great weight of responsibility, especially when we are dealing with the Criminal Code. I do not think there is any other statute in Canada that has such a profound effect on people when they violate any of its provisions. It also gives a lot of guidance, as is the case in medical assistance in dying, over the parameters that are set up.

Regarding medical assistance in dying I, like many members in the chamber, received a lot of correspondence on the issue back in 2016, both from constituents who were against it and from constituents who wanted me to take up the cause.

I think that is the challenge that we as members of Parliament face on a regular basis. We have to look at our constituents' wishes, but they are not always very clear cut. We have to try to balance those with our own personal views on the subject and, at the end of the day, try to be accountable for the decisions we have made on behalf of our constituents in this place.

When it comes to an issue as complex as medical assistance in dying, I fundamentally believe that we must go beyond partisanship and work together with a compassionate lens. Ultimately, we must make sure that Canadians can die with dignity, compassion and fairness, and without excessive suffering.

I am pleased to see the introduction of Bill C-7 as part of the effort to help those who are looking to end their unnecessary suffering as they face the end of life. Bill C-7 is coming to us as a result of a decision in a Quebec court. For me personally, and for many members of the New Democratic caucus, it was quite evident in 2016 when we were debating Bill C-14 that this issue would come back to us. We knew it was only a matter of time.

I can remember referring, in the debates on Bill C-14, quite clearly to the Carter decision, which was handed down by the Supreme Court on February 6, 2015, in the final months of the 41st Parliament, when the Harper government was in power.

When the present Liberal government came to power in 2015, this was one of the major challenges it was faced with, because there was an impending deadline and there was a real rush to get in legislation that was going to respect the Carter decision.

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I want to give a shout-out to two of my colleagues, Murray Rankin and Brigitte Sansoucy. As members of the New Democratic caucus, they sat on the special joint committee that looked at this issue as a result of the Carter decision, and presented the committee's recommendations to the House of Commons.

When we look at the Carter decision, which really started this whole process rolling just over five years ago now, we can see that they felt the prohibition on allowing people to take their own lives because of suffering violated their Charter rights. I will just quote from the ruling. It was stated that:

Here, the prohibition deprives some individuals of life, as it has the effect of forcing some individuals to take their own lives prematurely, for fear that they would be incapable of doing so when they reached the point where suffering was intolerable.

It went on to say:

An individual's response to a grievous and irremediable medical condition is a matter critical to their dignity and autonomy. The prohibition denies people in this situation the right to make decisions concerning their bodily integrity and medical care and thus trenches on their liberty. And by leaving them to endure intolerable suffering, it impinges on their security of the person.

● (1735)

Thus, it violates section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Just to read it into the record, so that everyone is quite clear on what we are referring to, section 7 reads that:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

What Carter was clearly explaining to people was that by not allowing people this option, by keeping them in a state of constant suffering, of basically confining them to their bodies, we were in fact violating their section 7 rights. That was the clear message that was delivered to Parliament.

There is always a careful dance between our courts and the legislature. The courts, of course, are very much responsible for interpreting the law, but also finding when such a law runs contrary to our Constitution. They also recognize that Parliament has its role to play as the lawmakers, as the one institution that can amend the law based on people's wishes. That was the task that was handed to us at the beginning of the 42nd Parliament.

When that special joint committee with the other place was formed, there were some clear recommendations that directly followed from the Carter decision. Recommendation number two, which I will read into the record, was as follows:

That medical assistance in dying be available to individuals with terminal and non-terminal grievous and irremediable medical conditions that cause enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition.

The problem that led us to where we are today was the fact that Bill C-14, as a government bill, decided to insert a reference to "reasonably foreseeable death". This meant that if one had a medical condition for which death was not reasonably foreseeable, one could not qualify for medical assistance in dying.

Also, as a part of that special joint committee's recommendations, it did touch on the subject of advanced directives which is also, I am glad to see, addressed in Bill C-7.

The Truchon decision of 2019, in the Superior Court of Quebec, involved two plaintiffs who were each suffering from grave and incurable medical conditions that caused tremendous suffering and a total loss of autonomy.

They were 74-year-old Nicole Gladu, who used a wheelchair and had post-polio syndrome, which is a condition that weakened her muscles and reactivated her childhood scoliosis. She had difficulty breathing and was in constant pain. As well, there was 51-year-old Jean Truchon, who was born with cerebral palsy and no longer had the use of his four limbs. He lost the use of his only working limb back in 2012, due to severe spinal stenosis that left him almost completely paralyzed and caused painful spasms. He gave up most of his activities and went into assisted living since there was little he could do by himself.

Both of these individuals were refused medical assistance in dying under the Quebec legislation regarding end-of-life care as they were not at the end of their lives. Their deaths were not reasonably foreseeable.

With those grave medical conditions, they were prisoners in their own bodies but unable to find any relief. Really the heart of the matter here is how we, as an institution, respect individual autonomy. We can only imagine the pain and suffering they were going through on an hourly basis. When two individuals have arrived at this decision and obviously had the time to think about it, I think it is incumbent upon us to respect that, but more importantly to respect the fact that we have had a court look into this and determine that their charter rights were fundamentally violated.

● (1740)

That brings me through the long journey over the last five years to Bill C-7.

I am pleased to see the bill introduced. The Minister of Justice was one of four Liberals who voted against Bill C-14. I think he is now have a moment where it has come full circle. Now, as the Minister of Justice, I hope he feels some satisfaction in bringing in corrective measures to address the problems he saw as a Liberal member of Parliament back in 2016, when he voted against the government's legislation at the time.

As is required by the decision of the Quebec court, Bill C-7 will expand access to medical assistance in dying to those whose death is not reasonably foreseeable. I can assure the House that we are providing our support to the bill in principle at second reading. However, we will be doing our due diligence when it reaches the Standing Committee on Justice to ensure that access to medical assistance in dying has not been unreasonably restricted for those whose death is not reasonably foreseeable by the addition of the new conditions in the legislation.

We also want to ensure the standard of eligibility for receiving medical assistance in dying remains high. We remain disappointed that there has been no commitment by the minister to refer the question of the adequacy of the safeguards against pressure to seek medical assistance in dying to the formal legislative review, which will begin in June, again at the Standing Committee on Justice. Perhaps the government can hear those words, reflect upon them and address our concerns with respect to that aspect.

Going into some of the finer details of the bill, essentially there is a two-track process in Bill C-7. There is one for those whose death is reasonably foreseeable and one for those whose death is not reasonably foreseeable.

For the one where death is reasonably foreseeable, the 10-day waiting period is removed; the number of independent witnesses required for the written request is reduced from two to one; a paid professional or health care worker can be an independent witness; and the creation of a waiver of final consent.

For the second track, which is ultimately the part of the bill that is responding to the decision from the Quebec court, a few more restrictions are in place. The first big one, which will warrant some further study at committee, requires a minimum 90-day assessment period, which I think the legislation states can be shortened if loss of capacity is imminent and the assessments have been completed.

However, as I have said in previous questions and comments, we have already heard from some members of the medical community. They say that the 90-day assessment requirement may mean their patients have to endure another 90 days of suffering. For physicians, who take the Hippocratic oath to do no harm, if their patients are experiencing harm every day because of that suffering, that weighs very heavily on their conscience.

There are some other specifics in that other track process that I do not think warrant going into too much detail at this stage. The Standing Committee on Justice do that.

I also want to touch on another aspect of Bill C-7, which is the advance directive. This is known as the Audrey Parker amendment. It refers to Audrey Parker, a Halifax woman who was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer, which metastasized to her bones and a tumour on her brain. She spent the last weeks of her life raising awareness about the challenges facing Canadians who had been assessed and approved for assisted dying. She opted to die earlier than she would have otherwise wanted to. The legal requirement in the existing legislation is that the suffering person has to be competent immediately before the life-ending treatment is administered.

• (1745)

That presents a number of problems. If someone has already been approved for medical assistance in dying within the tight confines of what is written in Bill C-7, he or she can give that advance directive so that those wishes will be fulfilled even if there is a loss of competency. It would remove a sense of pressure that could be brought to bear on individuals who may feel compelled to take their life earlier, while they still have competency and the ability to act on their own directive. Therefore, I think this is a particularly important section of this legislation that should be noted, and I cer-

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tainly look forward to seeing what kind of testimony we hear at the justice committee.

I have received some correspondence with respect to the Audrey Parker amendment. I have an email here from a constituent. She sent me a copy of her letter to the justice minister. She states:

These steps ensure that the patient qualifies for medical assistance in dying under the law, making the late-stage consent requirement unnecessary — and puts an enormous physical and emotional strain on people who are at risk of suddenly losing capacity, or who need heavy medications to manage their pain.

Most importantly, this unfair requirement means that people in the Assessed and Approved category are faced with a cruel choice: access assisted dying now, or wait longer and risk losing out on their right to a peaceful death.

Right now, dying people are ending their lives far earlier than they would like, or are refusing adequate pain care out of fear that they will lose out on their right to a peaceful death. This is an unacceptable burden for anyone to bear, and it is a clear and grave violation of Canadians' Charter rights.

That is just an example of some of the correspondence I have received on that particular aspect. It is actually really nice and refreshing to hear someone lay it out quite clearly because I think if we were to visit any riding we would all have constituents who have faced those pressures.

This is weighty subject matter. I know that in this chamber and indeed across this great country there are going to be multiple views on whether we are in fact going down the right path.

In moments like this when we are called upon to make these momentous decisions, we are required to look inside ourselves and to switch more from sympathy to empathy. I see this difference between the two. Sympathy is feeling sorry for someone else, while empathy is trying to put oneself in that person's shoes in order to view the world as she or he sees it.

The truth is that the members of this chamber who are lucky enough to have their health and to lead privileged lives cannot adequately express or feel what it is like to live in a body that feels like a prison and to know that kind of suffering. My ultimate view of this bill, and what guides me in the direction we need to take, is that it is about trying to make sure we can give people the dignity in death that they had in life, to respect their autonomy, to respect their choice and to make sure that their charter rights are not violated.

I conclude by stating that the New Democrats will be supporting this bill at second reading, with the full realization that the committee work is before us, which will be a real opportunity to hear from members of the public and witnesses. Hopefully, when this bill returns to the House we will have a product that we all feel we have done our best on and that lives up to the important wishes of our constituents who are living with these incredible amounts of suffering.

• (1750)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his contributions in the previous Parliament and for his contributions now and forthcoming at justice committee. I would also like to thank him for his and his party's general support of the bill.

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The member cited at great length both the Carter decision and section 7 itself, reading it into the record, and that is important.

I want to put to him something that was raised earlier in the context of this debate by the member for Fundy Royal, where it was effectively put to us that not only are we seeking to comply with Truchon but we are actually going beyond Truchon. That was a reference to which the member had just left off in his comments when he talked about the advance consent regime in the Audrey Parker amendment.

In terms of everything that I have heard in my riding and the round tables that we have had around the country, this is where Canadians are, that in the context of a person who is assessed and approved is merely waiting for the date of his or her passing to allow them to have a regime where they could provide consent in advance is important step forward. I wonder if the member could comment on that. It is not squarely within the Truchon decision, but I firmly believe that is where Canadians are asking us to go and that is why it is in the legislation. Does the member agree?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We canvass the Canadian public, particularly with respect to the Audrey Parker section of this legislation and we explain to Canadians the really horrible choice that a lot of people might find themselves in. These are people who had qualified for medical assistance in dying but may not, under the current legislation, be eligible to receive it because they lose competency. Just imagine the amount of fear and pressure that must bring to them to either heavily medicate themselves to try and maintain that competency or maybe pressure to use medical assistance in dying much earlier than they are actually prepared to do.

With this particular section, allowing someone who is in such a state to give that advance directive is quite reasonable. More importantly, it respects the autonomy of that individual and the incredibly important and weighty decision that they have to make to do such a thing.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the question of advance consent. It is important to note that there is nothing in the legislation which requires the person to be consulted or informed of what is going on at the point at which he or she receives euthanasia if they had entered into the agreement in advance. This raises a concern.

If I sign an agreement asking for euthanasia on May 1, and at that point maybe I have lost capacity but I still have a certain general awareness of what is going on around me, should I not at least be asked at that point, told what is going on, and have my general comfort level with what is happening to me at that time assessed? It seems to me reasonable that we would ensure as much as possible there is some element of contemporaneous consent as well. Would the member agree with that?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, the safeguards that need to be in place for medical assistance in dying are incredibly important. We want to make sure that at all stages patients, should they change their mind, have a way of opting out.

If the member has particular concerns with how Bill C-7 is currently written and is concerned that there is not enough addressing the concerns he just brought up, perhaps there will be an opportuni-

ty for some slight amendments at committee. I am sure that myself and the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, who serves as our main justice critic, would be willing to look at his proposed amendments to see what he proposes to make that particular section of the bill stronger.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I really appreciated the words he used, especially when he was talking about empathy.

Prior to that, my colleague from Montcalm also delivered a wonderful speech. He talked about our role as parliamentarians. I see how the two speeches intersect. As parliamentarians, should the work we do not be driven by empathy?

I want to compare what we are doing to what happened in Quebec's National Assembly when this bill was passed. The bill was introduced by the Liberals, but the bill's sponsor was a Parti Québécois member, Véronique Hivon. She took a non-partisan approach to drafting the bill.

Does my colleague believe we should take our cue from what happened in Quebec's National Assembly and adopt the same approach here in the House of Commons as we work on this bill?

• (1755)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. As I said in my opening remarks, this is a subject with such weight and importance to so many people across this country, whether they live in Nova Scotia, Quebec or in my home province of British Columbia. We owe it not only to ourselves in this chamber but to the people we represent to treat this subject with the respect it deserves.

As a member of Parliament who served in the previous Parliament, I was, by and large, quite impressed with the tone of debate on Bill C-14. I know there were some disagreements on the bill, but members ultimately tried to bring their disagreements and respective positions on the bill to the floor with as much respect as possible. During many of the speeches in this place at the time, members who were here will remember that the chamber was so silent we could hear a pin drop, because we knew how important the bill was to members speaking and, more importantly, to their constituents watching back home.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his dignified and important speech on a subject that we admit is difficult for many people and is extremely important.

I know the member is extremely close to his riding on both sides of Malahat, from Langford up to Cowichan, and that he is home every weekend speaking to his constituents. I am very interested to know what his constituents have told him through this process. He brings a lot of experience and wisdom to this particular issue and the bill. What have people back home been telling him about the approach that Parliament should take?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I have already received some correspondence on this particular bill. A number of people back home have already organized a community meeting with me on this legislation when I am back in the riding during the constituency week next week. It is a group that had a lot of concerns with Bill C-14. Based on their faith, they had some real concerns with it.

I knew when I walked into the room to meet with them the first time that we were not going to walk out in agreement with each other. However, I think we surprised each other with how respectful we were. We walked out of there respecting each other's positions, with a sure knowledge that we had each given this issue some deep thought. I expect that the same tone of conversation will happen again when I meet with them next week to discuss this bill.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of serving on the justice committee with the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford in the last Parliament. I had the benefit of serving as the vice-chair of the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying and then served on the justice committee following that, when it dealt with Bill C-14.

I acknowledge that the circumstances Audrey Parker and others like her found themselves in presents a real, difficult challenge from the legal, moral and ethical standpoint. However, a regime that provides for advance directives does cause me some level of concern.

In the Carter decision, the Supreme Court of Canada made clear that there must be clear consent. How can there be clear consent absent contemporaneous consent on something that is ultimately irreversible when carried out?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, that is a fantastic question from my colleague and I do not know if I can provide an easy answer. This is the struggle we have before us.

The Carter decision clearly outlines that consent has to be as straightforward as the member discussed. However, at the same time, I am presented with examples of people like Audrey Parker and others who felt pressured to take their lives early because that was when they could give consent. That is the struggle we find ourselves in: How do we balance a court decision with what we know are real and very current examples of suffering? I will admit that I do not have an easy answer to that, but this is the task we have been charged with.

I can only say that we have to go forward. We have to send the bill to committee. We have to hear from members of the Canadian public and experts involved in this particular aspect of the Criminal Code. We have to use our best judgment to arrive at a decision that we believe reflects not only our values but also the values of the people who sent us here to deliberate on their behalf.

• (1800)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Kings—Hants.

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I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-7. I have some prepared remarks, and during the course of my comments, I will try to sprinkle in some responses to some of the various issues that have already been raised.

Clearly, we are here because there was a decision of the Quebec Superior Court in the Truchon case. This decision struck down a particular criterion under both the Quebec regime and the Canadian regime with respect to the end-of-life nature of medical assistance in dying, this being the reasonable foreseeability of natural death criterion, in particular at the national level.

The court's ruling only applies in Quebec. We heard the minister speaking about this. He suspended its declaration of invalidity for a period of six months, until March 11. It is important for this chamber to understand that on February 17 of this year, the Attorney General of Canada filed a motion to request an extension to give Parliament sufficient time to enact an appropriate response to ensure consistency in the criminal law. That motion was actually debated yesterday, and a decision from the court is forthcoming.

Before I go into some of the details in this bill, I want to start off with two important provisions related to conscience protection that were raised by members of the official opposition in the context of this debate. I want the record to be crystal clear that conscience protections are robust in this country and are entrenched in the law.

The first location is in the preamble to the old Bill C-14, which I will read. It states, "Whereas everyone has freedom of conscience and religion under section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms".

I have had further questions from members of the official opposition about why it is only in the preamble and not in the statute. That assertion is wrong, because it is in the statute. Section 9 on page 8 of the old Bill C-14, which amended subsection 241.2(9) of the Criminal Code, says "For greater certainty, nothing in this section compels an individual to provide or assist in providing medical assistance in dying."

The third point I will read is from the Carter decision of the Supreme Court, which has been the subject of extensive discussion in this chamber thus far. I am reading from paragraph 132 of the majority reasons in Carter. The court states "In our view, nothing in the declaration of invalidity which we propose to issue would compel physicians to provide assistance in dying."

Those are three instances. One is jurisprudential and the other two are statutory. The fourth one is of course the broad penumbra that is cast by section 2 of the charter, which protects freedom of conscience for all Canadians, including those who practice medicine. Therefore, the assertion that somehow conscience rights are not protected or are somehow being eroded is categorically false.

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Another point in terms of what is being addressed in today's debate is the notion that a culture of overly facilitating medical assistance in dying is upon us, and that somehow this government bill is pushing us further toward predatory practices by health care practitioners or toward disavowing the right to life, liberty and security of persons who are vulnerable, including persons with disabilities. That is categorically false and is not commensurate with what is in evidence.

The evidence we have is readily available in the technical briefing that was already provided to all members of Parliament. It is that in total, 13,000 MAID-assisted deaths have happened in this country in the last four years. The average age of people who are accessing MAID is 75 years old. It is being accessed equally by men and women, 51% by men and 49% by women. The most common medical condition is cancer, followed by neurological conditions, in that 67% of all people who access it have cancer. Second come neurological conditions and third come cardiovascular conditions.

Very importantly, in the most recent year of analysis, a grand total of 5,444 people accessed MAID in this country. That represents 1.89% of all deaths in this country. I read that into the record because I think it is important for people to understand that there is not some sort of culture of medical assistance in dying that is being foisted upon unwitting individuals. I will elaborate on my reasons going forward.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

I would like to talk about some aspects of the bill. The eligibility criteria have changed, as the Minister of Justice pointed out.

There are two series of safeguards. The first applies to cases in which the person's death is reasonably foreseeable, while the other applies when death is not reasonably foreseeable. The bill would add new safeguards to that second category.

Lastly, the bill allows a person to waive final consent on the day of the procedure in certain circumstances.

[*English*]

I will return to that in a few moments.

Much has been made about the consultation process, including some comments by the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon about it being a rushed procedure and that the government is not adequately listening to Canadians. I have great respect for all members in the House who are participating in this debate and raising a number of very personal, ethical, legal and moral issues. I understand that; the government understands that.

However, to assert that the consultation was not robust is again categorically false. We heard from 125 different individuals, who are experts in this field, whether they are delivering it or acting on behalf of disabled individuals, and from nurses, doctors, etc. We heard from 300,000 Canadians through their responses to a questionnaire that outlined the various scenarios.

The views of those individuals were quite concrete in the direction they were seeking. They wanted to be empowered in terms of

their autonomy, dignity and their choices. They were seeking less obstacles to what had evolved to become an overly restrictive regime, as identified by the court in Truchon. That important feature must be canvassed here. What is important to understand is that the input received was critical to the development of the bill.

[*Translation*]

As part of the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code, the reasonably foreseeable death provision will be removed from the eligibility criteria. This is in response to the Truchon decision.

In terms of legal impact, this amendment would mean that people whose death is not reasonably foreseeable would be eligible for medical assistance in dying if they meet all of the other eligibility criteria.

[*English*]

This is very important.

The bill proposes to exclude persons whose sole underlying condition is mental illness. This has been touched upon by different people who have already intervened in the context of this debate. This is important, as was outlined by the minister. It recognizes the increased complexities and risks associated with such cases, which were highlighted by many practitioners, stakeholders and experts at the main round tables.

What is very important is that the Canadian Mental Health Association supports the position we are taking with respect to excluding mental illness as a sole underlying condition to render someone eligible for MAID.

[*Translation*]

This complex issue must be examined carefully as part of the parliamentary review of the legislation on medical assistance in dying, which is to start in June of this year, as the minister himself mentioned.

[*English*]

Importantly, the Government of Quebec has also announced the exact same study for the exact same provision, that the issue of mental illness as a sole underlying condition is complex. Issues of consent and capacity and issues of properly being able to diagnose and have a prognosis are critical.

I will move to some of the comments that have been made. It is important for people understand that the safeguards are under two tracks. Those safeguards respond to persons whose deaths are reasonably foreseeable and those whose death is not.

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With respect to some of the aspects raised in the context of today's debate, we have taken the 10-day period of reflection out of the legislation. This was put squarely into issue by the member for Fundy Royal when he asked about the basis for doing that. The basis for it was that the safeguard was not doing the work it was meant to do. As opposed to protecting vulnerability, it was actually increasing the vulnerability of individuals insofar as it was prolonging suffering in some instances.

We heard, and the minister commented on this, that some people were so concerned about the inability to provide their final consent after 10 days that they would stop taking their pain medication, which was creating further suffering, just to maintain the ability to provide that final consent.

On the question raised by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan most recently with respect to how one assures informed consent is applied when it has not been solicited actively, I have two responses. This is with regard to the advanced consent regime.

The government is conscious of the Audrey Parker situation and we are seized with it. When people have been assessed and approved for this procedure and when they make a determination that they want to access it and provide consent in writing, that consent would be sufficient.

In direct response to the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, could it be vitiated? Yes. First, if the person has not lost capacity, consent could be vitiated. Second, it could be done by a physical gesture that would be interpreted to fully and finally eliminate that consent for the purposes of the practitioners.

• (1810)

The bill strikes a balance and the balance is important. We are conscious that a compassionate response that protects vulnerable individuals and also respects their dignity and autonomy is critical and what is required by the Constitution.

That is what this bill represents and I am very hopeful, as the member from the Bloc Québécois pointed out, that we can achieve all-party consensus on that very fundamental point.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, specifically on the 10-day cooling off period, does the parliamentary secretary acknowledge that under the current legislation, if necessary, those 10 days could be waived? That was a safeguard put in place by this Parliament and has been taken out in haste.

I would like the parliamentary secretary to comment on a couple of facts that deal with this Parliament. First, a two-week online consultation is not a parliamentary review. Bill C-14 called for a parliamentary review that was to take place this summer before we expand our regime in Canada around medically assisted dying. The Liberal government has jumped ahead with a vast expansion of the legislation without the benefit of that review.

Does the parliamentary secretary see a two-week online consultation having some equivalency with a parliamentary review?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I will take those points in order. In terms of the 10-day reflection period, what we heard overwhelmingly, whether at the round tables or from some of the 300,000

Canadians who contacted us, is that period is not required because it prolongs suffering.

We heard the minister say in his opening remarks that a sufficient amount of reflection has gone into the point when a patient actually puts in writing a request for MAID. The reflection has already occurred.

What we do not want is a situation where people are coming off of their medication to ensure they are maintaining a full capacity and prolonging suffering that we need to alleviate through this bill.

A questionnaire online is not the same thing as a parliamentary review, but the two are not addressing the same thing. What we are addressing here is a narrow amendment that deals with the Audrey Parker situation for somebody who is already assessed and approved. What the parliamentary review will do, as it rightfully needs to, is study three major areas: requests for mature minors, requests for when mental illness is a sole underlying condition and an advance directive, which is very qualitatively different from advanced consent.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for taking a step in the right direction when it comes to medical assistance in dying. Offering Canadians a clear personal choice for a dignified death without suffering is certainly one of the most humane acts. Nevertheless, while the easing of certain requirements might facilitate access to this service, certain points need clarification.

My question is this: Beyond these cases described as having a reasonably foreseeable death, what about the issue of advance requests, for instance, for people with Alzheimer's?

• (1815)

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and her comment.

Cases involving Alzheimer's and dementia raise questions regarding consent and capacity, some rather complex questions since they relate to the prognosis itself. These two types of cases will have to be examined in June as part of the review that Parliament is required to do under Bill C-14.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned that advanced consent was different from advance directive. Could he elaborate on that?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, advanced consent is a very important concept. Under the current regime, people who are approved for MAID have to give consent on the day they are meant to be provided MAID. What we now are proposing is that when that date arrives, if people do not have the capacity to provide an oral consent, they could do it in writing in advance. That is advanced consent.

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What is not being proposed in the bill is an advance directive. If 30 years from now, I have a malady which I find intolerable in terms of my own suffering and I want to apply for and be given MAID, that would not be permitted under this law.

What is being proposed is that people who have already applied for MAID, have been granted eligibility and for whom the date has not yet arrived on which it is scheduled, on that date if they have lost capacity, they can provide it in writing.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members know, on September 11, 2019, the Quebec Superior Court's decision in Truchon struck down the eligibility criterion of reasonably foreseeable natural death from the medical assistance in dying, MAID, regime in the Criminal Code. It is my sincere pleasure today to join the second reading debate on Bill C-7, which is the government's response to this ruling and which includes a revised safeguard framework.

Bill C-7 proposes amendments to the Criminal Code that would work to ensure consistent application of the MAID law across the country and would adjust the safeguards for a MAID regime that is no longer limited to end-of-life circumstances. Specifically, the bill would create two sets of safeguards to be followed before MAID is provided.

One set would be for individuals who are dying whose death is reasonably foreseeable; in which case, most of the existing safeguards would continue to apply, with a few being eased or removed. The second new set of safeguards would apply to individuals whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable. That is why we are here today, to talk about this legislation given the fact of the decision from the Superior Court in Quebec.

This approach to differentiating between MAID requests is consistent with the view that providing MAID to people whose natural death is reasonably foreseeable presents less of a risk and is less complicated than providing MAID to those who are not on a clear trajectory toward death. It is sensible and appropriate that the assessment of a MAID request should be tailored to these different types of cases to account for the different types of risk that could arise.

For people who have requested MAID and whose natural death is reasonably foreseeable, amendments to the safeguards in this legislation include the removal of the mandatory 10-day reflection period, which, of course has been discussed quite widely in the speeches here today; a reduction in the number of independent witnesses; and a change regarding who can be independent witnesses.

Existing safeguards, such as the need for two independent practitioners who verify the person's eligibility and the need for the person to confirm consent immediately prior to the provision of MAID, will remain unchanged for those whose natural death is reasonably foreseeable. The exception is in specific circumstances where consent is given in advance. I am referring to Audrey's amendment, which is something that is very important to me, and was certainly highlighted given the fact that Audrey Parker was from Halifax in my home province.

During the government's recent MAID consultations, stakeholders noted that the existing 10-day waiting period could result in the

prolonged and unnecessary suffering of the patient. We can all appreciate some of the challenges that would present. Bill C-7 proposes to remove this requirement for people whose death is reasonably foreseeable. A patient who is in that situation and requesting MAID has likely thought and reflected about this particular decision for a considerable amount of time. Requiring the patient to wait an additional 10 days when his or her suffering is already unbearable is just unnecessary.

For both streams of the MAID request, it is proposed that the requirement for two independent witnesses to a patient's written request for MAID be changed so that only one is needed. The role of an independent witness is to attest to the fact that persons requesting MAID have signed and dated their MAID request themselves in a voluntary manner. The witness would not play a role with respect to the eligibility assessment, which is the responsibility of two independent practitioners, nor do witnesses confirm whether the safeguards required by the Criminal Code have been followed.

The current rules also exclude people like health care providers and personal support workers from being independent witnesses. This can create access barriers for individuals living in nursing homes or other residential settings who may have very few family or social networks.

Speaking from my own experience in my riding, that certainly can be the case, where individuals who are living in nursing homes or in these situations might not have a large family or friend network to be able to draw upon, and I think that is an important piece. Individuals who are paid to provide personal care or health care are likely to be among the limited number of personal contacts an individual living in a care institution may have, as I alluded to. The amendments to the MAID regime would allow a paid personal or health care worker to be an independent witness, which would increase access to MAID for this population. That is key.

For patients who are eligible for MAID but whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable, the key piece of the Truchon decision, Bill C-7 proposes a separate set of safeguards in addition to the existing safeguards, such as written requests that are signed before an independent witness and confirmation of consent.

• (1820)

In situations where natural death is not reasonably foreseeable, there would be new requirements that focus on the need for additional time, expertise and information in these circumstances. I believe that is balanced in the way we move forward.

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First, there would be a minimum assessment period of 90 days, which could be shortened if loss of capacity was imminent and the assessments were complete. Second, one of the assessing physicians would need to have expertise on the condition that is causing person's suffering.

There would also be two clarifications of the requirement for informed consent. First, the patient must be informed of the appropriate counselling, mental health supports, disability supports, community supports and palliative care options available to them, essentially outlining the availability of health care and supports that are there.

The second practitioner would need to agree with the patient that the reasonable means of alleviating their suffering have been discussed together and seriously considered, which is very important.

It is fair to say that the assessment of MAID requests by those whose death is not reasonably foreseeable can be more challenging, and can raise more concerns, than MAID requests by those who are dying or whose death is reasonably foreseeable. I think that certainly resonates with Her Majesty's loyal opposition and my colleagues on that side of the House.

For example, is their suffering caused by factors other than a medical condition, such as loneliness or lack of access to necessary supports? Are there ways of addressing the suffering, other than MAID? I think this really gets into the slippery slope in the sense that we are making sure that there are provisions in place to explore all options before an individual chooses to move forward with the process.

The new safeguards, the requirement of a minimum of 90 days and for one of the two assessors to have expertise in the source of a person's suffering, seek to ensure that enough time and the right kind of knowledge are devoted to exploring all relevant aspects of a person's situation, including whether there are treatments or services that could help reduce a person's suffering.

These are bolstered by the proposed requirement that practitioners discuss reasonable treatment options with the patient and be satisfied that the patient has weighed the risks and benefits of the available options. I think that is balanced and fair.

I think we can be confident that most of our practitioners, as part of their good medical practice, fully explore appropriate supports that are available and the available treatments in discussion with their patients. The proposed safeguards reinforce the importance of these good practices and will help to reduce risk to vulnerable persons, which I am sure we can all appreciate is a concern for members in the House.

I would like to conclude by stating that it is my belief that this bill strikes a delicate balance. We know that this is a challenging issue for many members, but it strikes a delicate balance between respecting personal autonomy and protecting vulnerable individuals.

MAID is a personal issue, and one that likely has or will touch many of us here today at some point in our lives. I, for one, am comforted by Bill C-7's proposed two-tier approach in terms of the safeguards. It is reasonable, and it is balanced.

Also, I want to go on record that I think Audrey's amendment makes sense. It was a gap under the former legislation. I have had many individuals reach out to my constituency office asking me to be a champion to make sure that Audrey's amendment was included in our revised legislation moving forward.

Other members have spoken to this, and I am certainly pleased to see that in there. If anyone knows Audrey Parker's situation, they would know of the challenge it presented to her and her family, and we do not want to have people in Canada who are forced to make that decision.

• (1825)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that my constituents have expressed to me, when we have a conversation around MAID, is that palliative care gets put on the back burner when we are talking about MAID. Rather than investing in palliative care for people who deserve high-quality palliative care, they would instead be offered MAID as an alternative. I am wondering if the member would be willing to share with the House if his constituents had expressed the same concern.

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I have not heard that specifically. That is not to suggest that my constituents are not concerned about the thoughts the member has put forward.

He mentioned palliative care. My position is that of course we need to continue to support palliative care for the individuals who want to move forward in that process. This legislation ensures that individuals who are going through considerable suffering have the means available to them to make a conscious choice themselves. Our courts have said that this is the direction we need to go, and I believe this legislation strikes a proper balance.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to hear a Liberal member express his support for a two-tiered structure within our health care system. I would ask him to further develop his comments about the advance consent issue.

It would seem reasonable for the government to have included, or to accept at the amendment stage, an amendment requiring people who have previously expressed a desire for euthanasia to, at the time they are to receive it, at least be told what is going on. It would give them some opportunity to show whether they accept what they had asked for in the past. One might ask to have something in the future and then change one's mind. It seems reasonable to me that patients, even those with a limited capacity, be informed and in some sense consulted, even in their lower state of capacity.

Would the member be willing to support that kind of change to ensure that people's lives are not taken at a time when they do not want it to be taken?

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Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite mentioned two-tiered health care. I will say on record that I do not support two-tiered health care. My remarks spoke to the two different safeguards we moved forward. I think that is important to note.

The member talked about the advance directive. I had cited Audrey Parker as an example. The member opposite's suggestion that there are no proper safeguards in place, in my mind, is not a fallacy, but there are provisions in the legislation that allow an individual to withdraw a prior advance requirement in this regard. They would also allow individuals who get to a non-verbal state to physically communicate and illustrate that they do not want to move forward with it. Again, it strikes a proper balance.

I would ask the member opposite to look into Audrey Parker's case. He should ask himself whether we should not be allowing people to make this conscious choice when they are going through so much suffering, enough to end their life early, that they get to the point they no longer have the capacity to make it. I think it is important they have a choice.

• (1830)

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had many calls regarding MAID, and many of my constituents are in favour of it. Some are concerned that this could be risky for people who might be vulnerable in their hours of pain. What safeguards would the member say we have in place that guarantee, whether for religious beliefs or other reasons, people are not coerced or pushed into making a decision they may not be in the right state to make?

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the things he pointed out. He mentioned that, by and large, the constituents in his riding support this. We can all recognize that this is a delicate issue. It is an issue that many Canadians have different feelings about and is evolving over time. Even in the last five years, Canadians' values regarding this type of legislation have evolved.

To the member's question on the safeguards that are in place, as I mentioned in my speech, this legislation would ensure, particularly when death is not reasonably foreseeable, that there are multiple opportunities for practitioners and other individuals to consult with the people who are contemplating this to ensure that all other avenues are explored and all options are available before individuals make what is really a crucial choice.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, I will let him know there are about six minutes remaining in the time for debate this afternoon. He will have his remaining time when the House gets back to debate on the question.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some members have been asking me today about what is on my forehead. Do not worry, it is not the remnants of an inappropriate Arabian Nights costume and it is not the result of slipping and falling while changing a child's diaper. These are ashes. Once a year on what we call Ash Wednesday to mark the beginning of Lent, Catholics receive blessed ashes on their forehead

and may be told, "Remember that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return."

Although I oppose the bill, I will note that there is something poetic about discussing death on Ash Wednesday. I have had many conversations with passionate advocates of euthanasia-assisted suicide. They tell me that we should not be afraid of death, that death is a natural part of life. I agree with them that death ought not to be feared. However important we think we are in the House, from dust we came and to dust we shall return.

The tendency of modernity is to seek autonomy from and control over the world around us and to feel, as technology improves, that we are bound by fewer and fewer of the things that bound us in the past, this in both a physical and a moral sense.

In ages past and in other parts of the world, the idea that death was a solution to suffering was unthinkable because life was full of suffering and suffering was taken for granted. Hunger and disease were rampant and uncontrollable for the vast majority of human history. People had to find meaning and purpose independent of their physical circumstances and they recognized profound limits on their ability to control the world around them.

Our age is unique in its expectation for control, so much of the demand for euthanasia and assisted suicide is not about suffering, but it is about control. Most physical suffering can be addressed through effective pain management and palliative care. Illness and the use of pain management may involve the loss of autonomy and control or a change in capacity, which can be very scary.

The good news, belied by our modern assumptions, is that people often adapt to unexpected circumstances. While we want to control our lives in advance, we can often find meaning and happiness in circumstances that we had thought would be unendurable.

I did my master's dissertation on happiness measurement. One of the insights of this burgeoning field is that measurable happiness levels often adapt in negative circumstances much more and much faster than most people think. I might think that going mute would make me very unhappy, but if I did go mute, there is data to suggest that I would find ways of adapting and that my happiness would not be impacted nearly as much as I thought it might in advance. Of course, other people's happiness might be impacted if I went mute as well.

Part of our desire to control all aspects of our life is our tragic disinterest in generational wisdom. Many cultures, including first nations cultures here in Canada, revere elders for their experience and wisdom and give them pride of place in families and community. It is no surprise, in light of their reverence for the elderly, that many first nations people oppose this expansion. My friend, former Liberal MP Robert-Falcon Ouellette, once reflected that it sends dangerous message to young people when older people choose suicide.

Also on the question of autonomy, I think many of us would find that what makes life most worth living is not our sense of autonomy, but rather our presence in meaningful communities that affirm human dignity. We need to think about the impacts on communities that flow from this expanded euthanasia regime.

Suffering together has often been part of our experience of community. It is a tragedy that too often we shut people who are suffering out of public spaces. This loss of community rather than the initial cause is likely a source of great suffering and pain as well.

Think back to a time when we accompanied someone as they suffered. Unique, meaningful moments happen because of the intimacies that exist in moments of vulnerability and dependency. When people fear that they may be a burden, we need to say to them, “no, we love you, you are not a burden and rather we desire to share your burdens with you”. We cannot be a society characterized by happiness and meaning if we are not composed of communities of people who are willing to suffer with each other. The very word “compassion” comes from the Latin for “suffer with”.

In any event, we do not talk often enough about death. Nobody wants to be reminded that one day they will die and probably after, not before, their opinions have ceased to be of interest to anyone outside their family. There has been a lot of discussion in the context of the bill about the notion that for some people at certain points in time, death is or is not reasonably foreseeable. Surely death is reasonably foreseeable for all of us and hopefully we speak and we vote in a way that allows us to face our mortality with confidence.

It is good to recognize our own limitations and to seek joy and meaning in the midst of the inherent unpredictability of life while pushing for greater supports for those seeking to adapt to new and challenging circumstances.

• (1835)

We need better support for the inclusion of people with disabilities, and we desperately need improvements to pain management and palliative care. We must build communities. We must be a society which seeks to share each other's burdens so that nobody needs to feel like they are a burden.

In the time I have left, I want to note some of the history of this bill. Prior to 2015 we had various bills proposed in this place on this issue. In every case it was a majority of Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats who opposed it. The legal situation changed in 2015 when the Supreme Court overturned the existing law. The expectation at the time of Carter was for a legal regime that would apply narrowly.

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Some were concerned about this decision, arguing that any opening of the door on this issue would lead to a slippery slope once the sacred principle that doctors should do no harm was violated. Rates would escalate, safeguards would be ignored, and patients would feel pressure toward euthanasia and assisted suicide during moments of extreme vulnerability.

Others thought that it would be possible to allow this practice without initiating a slippery slope. They thought it would be possible to carve out a narrow hole in the usual practice of medicine that would remain narrow and limited.

In reality, the slide down the slippery slope has been dramatic, with annual rates increasing by five times between 2016 and 2019. I wonder if members have thought about how high they want this number to go. We are hearing many horror stories about people's experiences with the health care system in the context of euthanasia.

I look forward to sharing more of my concerns with the specific provisions of this legislation, as well as sharing some of those stories, when the House returns to this issue at the next point.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan will have 13 and a half minutes remaining in his time for his remarks when the House gets back to debate on the question, and then the usual 10-minute period for questions and comments.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just imagine going through a harvest from hell and then not being able to combine the crops. That was the reality for farmers across the Prairies, and our farmers are already dealing with a tirade of trade disruptions and the decline of commodity prices.

Let us never forget our farmers are bearing the brunt of the illegal blockades that have shut down Canada's rail system, prohibiting them from getting their grain to ports for export. They are facing a cash crunch that is causing real hardship, and yet the Liberal government has been absolutely absent. To make matters worse, farmers are now opening their mail to find that the Liberals are sticking them with a huge tax bill to dry their grain, a huge carbon tax bill.

If the Liberals hope that I or my colleagues are going to go away, let me be crystal clear. I will never waver from standing up for the western farmers, and my colleagues will always stand up for the farmers in their areas as well.

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We are being forced to do this because there are no substitutes for propane and natural gas for drying grain or heating barns, yet these fuels are not exempt from the Liberal carbon tax within the agriculture sector.

In question period I asked for the removal of these carbon taxes on fuels as farmers need them to heat their barns and dry their grain. I am disappointed that the Minister of Agriculture has not been able to push through the necessary changes to exempt farmers from the carbon tax on these necessary fuels. The minister claims she is listening to farmers, but our government is ignoring what these farmers are telling them.

The Liberals have proposed no solutions to lessen the financial pain that their carbon tax is causing for farmers. That is why my colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South has provided his private member's bill to this House. It is to help farmers solve this Liberal lack of action or recognition of hurt. His bill would remove the carbon tax from fuels for drying grain and heating barns. This is action that I can support.

However, today in question period, in this House, the Prime Minister said that his Liberal government recognizes this issue is hurting farm families. Recognizing the issue is simply not enough. It is time for the government to stand up and act. That is what my colleague has done.

I ask the Liberals again, will they do the right thing and fully exempt farmers from the carbon tax? I ask for a simple yes or no answer.

• (1840)

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's farmers and farm families are critical to the health and well-being of Canadians and our economy.

The green sector is an important driver of the Canadian economy, with over \$20 billion in farm gate receipts and exports. Canadian grain growers have shown incredible resilience in the face of some very significant and stressful weather and market challenges last year, not to mention the CN rail strike. Wet conditions resulted in an extremely difficult fall harvest season for many growers across Canada. We recognize the challenges that farmers are facing and the extra demands on energy for grain drying.

At the same time, carbon pricing is an important part of Canada's plan to transition to a cleaner and more innovative economy that reduces emissions and protects our environment. That is why we are taking steps to review the information at hand and to consult with the sector and the provinces to determine a path forward, one that is good both for farmers and for the environment.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is working with industry to see whether existing programs can help. I thank the industry for working with us on this important issue.

When it comes to the well-being of our valued grain sector, the Government of Canada will do everything in its power to help farmers overcome these challenges, while keeping our commitment to protect the environment. The two go hand in hand. Canada sim-

ply cannot have a strong and growing grain sector without clean air, land and water. Producers understand this better than most.

We are exploring all potential options to address this issue and we will continue to collaborate with our provincial and territorial partners moving forward.

Canada has the very best farmers who grow the very best grains. The Government of Canada wholeheartedly supports the sector and our grain growers.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, therein lies the problem.

I thank my colleague across the way for his reply, but he is just saying that he recognizes the problem, the same as the Prime Minister said today in the House. However, there is no action. All the government has to do is remove the carbon tax from these particular heating fuels, propane and natural gas, that are used for drying grain and heating barns in this country, producing food for consumers in not only our country but in neighbouring and international countries as well.

Once again the Liberals refuse to give the farmers a straight answer. Farmers continue to pay the price for the government's failed carbon tax plan. Westman farmers and farm families and those in the prairies want to know why they are continuing to be penalized for drying their grain and heating their barns.

Farmers are vital environmental stewards, as has been pointed out. My father had a saying: "If you look after the land, it'll look after you". Through zero-till farming and regenerative agriculture, farmers are essential in protecting our air and water. Together, they help reduce 1.5 million tonnes of carbon every year.

Despite the decade of strong management practices that farmers have had, the government continues to put farmers at a disadvantage relative to their major international competitors. It is time for the Liberal government to stop stalling and take real action to fix the issues they have created, so I will give the government another opportunity.

Will the Liberals exempt farmers from the carbon tax and reimburse them for the taxes they have already paid, yes or no?

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• (1845)

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Speaker, we know that grain growers faced serious weather and market interruptions challenges last year. A wet harvest coupled with the rail strike meant grain sat in storage and required extra energy to dry. We recognize that the unusually high drying costs late in the 2019 season have added to producers' financial concerns.

We are working with our provincial and territorial colleagues to review the suite of business risk management programs we offer to producers and to make changes to ensure producers have timely, predictable and effective support. Carbon pricing is an important part of Canada's plan to transition to a cleaner and more innovative economy that reduces emissions and protects our environment.

We are exploring all potential options to address this issue, and we will continue to collaborate with provincial and territorial partners moving forward.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, on February 6, the day that the RCMP began raids on the Wet'suwet'en people asserting sovereignty over their lands, I asked why the government had abandoned its duty and allowed the constitutional and legal rights of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs to be violated.

Since early January, the hereditary chiefs have been asking for meetings with the federal and provincial governments to help them deal with the issues they were facing with the Coastal GasLink project.

I travelled to Wet'suwet'en territory on January 19 and met with a hereditary chief. I travelled through the territory and learned about the Wet'suwet'en law. I met with the RCMP detachment commander in Smithers and at the community-industry safety office, 25 kilometres off the highway, out in the bush. The RCMP told me that as long as there was dialogue, it would not act on the Coastal GasLink injunction.

The Wet'suwet'en had proposed alternate routes for the pipeline six years ago. Instead of compromising and using an existing pipeline route, Coastal GasLink pushed its project through a pristine and culturally sensitive area.

Coastal GasLink is running its pipeline down the historic Kweese trail, which is thousands of years old. This area contains archeological sites and burial grounds. The area is used for cultural training of the Wet'suwet'en youth. It is an area used for hunting, gathering, trapping and other cultural practices. The Unis'tot'en camp was established in the area 10 years ago to assert sovereignty, and now includes a well-established healing centre.

I have a map on my desk of the alternative routes, a description of these routes provided by Pacific Trails Pipeline, another pipeline company working in the area. I have the documents outlining Coastal GasLink's refusals to consider these alternative routes because of the cost. I have a petition to the Supreme Court of B.C. by the Office of the Wet'suwet'en, outlining a long list of non-compliance by Coastal GasLink of the terms and conditions set out by the environmental assessment office in B.C., including the damage done to archeological sites without a proper assessment of those sites.

A week before the raids, I gave the Prime Minister a letter in person and asked him to take time to meet with the hereditary chiefs. The Prime Minister's response was that this was a provincial issue, not a federal issue. I told him that it was a federal issue. The federal government is responsible for the Indian Act, the reserve system and the nation-to-nation relationship with first nations.

Let us review the constitutional and legal rights of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 states that indigenous title to indigenous lands must first be reconciled before settlement can take place and only the Crown can reconcile indigenous title.

Section 35(1) of the Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes and affirms aboriginal and treaty rights.

The Supreme Court in Delgamuukw affirmed that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 applied and confirmed that aboriginal title was not extinguished by the Wet'suwet'en. It was the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs who were the plaintiffs in the Delgamuukw case. They were recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Supreme Court's Tsilhqot'in decision confirmed that land rights were collective and intergenerational, and it was the collective that spoke for the ancestral territory. The hereditary system represents that collective.

The government has had 23 years to work with the Wet'suwet'en First Nation to implement the directives outlined by the Supreme Court in the Delgamuukw decision. The lack of free, prior and informed consent and the RCMP raids are violations of the government's commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The federal government has failed in its responsibility to the Wet'suwet'en people by not negotiating with the hereditary chiefs before the RCMP raids.

• (1850)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging that we are all gathered here on the unceded territory of the Algonquin.

This is a trying time for all Canadians, indigenous and non-indigenous alike. We all want a peaceful and rapid resolution that brings down the blockades and advances dialogue with the Wet'suwet'en.

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Our government has been working around the clock to resolve this issue in a peaceful and lasting way. That is why the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations has been in regular communication with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs throughout the past week. It is time to move forward together to get our economy moving and to continue advancing reconciliation with indigenous people.

The government's commitment from 2015 has not changed. There remains no more important relationship to the government, and to Canada, than the one with indigenous peoples. Our resolve to pursue the reconciliation agenda with indigenous peoples is as strong as ever. Canada is ready for this. Canadians want this.

We have significantly stepped up rights-based discussions with indigenous peoples. Today, active discussions are under way with partners from every province and territory: more than 150 processes, more than 500 indigenous communities and almost 900 indigenous peoples.

This government has also moved to strengthen relationships with national indigenous organizations to ensure they have the stable, predictable and reasonable funding needed to carry out their work.

To ensure key issues are regularly discussed at the highest levels, the Government of Canada established permanent bilateral mechanisms with first nations, Inuit and Métis leaders to identify each community's priorities.

We continue to make progress on implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has said the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples charts a path for reconciliation to flourish in the 21st century in Canada. We are committed to working collaboratively with indigenous partners to develop legislation to deliver on our commitment to introduce legislation on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the end of 2020.

We were disappointed when the Conservative leader blocked Bill C-262 in the other House during the last Parliament and we will ensure that our government legislation fully respects the intent of the declaration and establishes Bill C-262 as the floor and not the ceiling.

There are many hopeful signs, but there is also much work that remains to be done.

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, the results of not negotiating with the Wet'suwet'en chiefs led to the RCMP enforcing the injunction and it has led to a reaction across Canada. Nobody should be surprised. Indigenous people across Canada have said that they would stand together when a first nation is attacked. The results are hundreds of protests, blockades and occupations across this country.

Now the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs are demanding that the RCMP completely withdraw from their traditional territory, including the removal of all the expensive infrastructure related to the community-industry safety detachment at kilometre 29 on the Morice West Forest Service Road, and that Coastal GasLink cease all operations in the territory.

The Liberal government must stop failing in its duty to the Wet'suwet'en people. It is time to apologize, meet these demands and meet with the hereditary chiefs.

• (1855)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, we need to work in true partnership. Together we can find a path towards a better future and reconciliation with indigenous peoples. We have already started down this path, and we will keep walking together inspired by and joined by our youth, who are leaders not only of tomorrow but already of today.

We have all seen what happens when we do not come together to keep the conversations going. It results in mistrust and confusion that can be the root of conflict. It is a barrier to moving forward together.

Yes, these are challenges. The hard work ahead is worth the effort. All of us will benefit in striving for a better present and future for indigenous peoples and all Canadians.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, Canada's farmers are leaders in agriculture. They are innovative, good stewards of the land and they feed Canada and the world.

The success of our farmers is vital to all Canadians, but the reality is that they are struggling right now. In large part, that is because the Liberal government is failing them. The illegal blockades across this country are holding our Canadian economy hostage and this includes our farmers. Our farmers are not able to get their products to market because of the ongoing, illegal blockades.

The Prime Minister's leadership is failing them in this crisis. For weeks, the Prime Minister has sat on his hands, emboldening activists and still today, there is no plan to end these blockades.

Just the other day I spoke to Brandon, a constituent in my riding who is in dire straits. The local grain elevator is so backlogged that he cannot make arrangements to get his grain to market in March. His farm operations depend on the income of that sale. His ability to keep the heat on in his house and feed his family also depends on the income of that sale. The banks are not offering any relief. Where does he turn? Unfortunately, Brandon's story is not unique.

The bills are mounting for our farmers, and every day that they cannot get their product to market puts them further and further behind. This economic crisis created by these illegal blockades is just the latest. Our farmers are constantly finding themselves at the losing end of the government's failures. Trade relations and opportunities have deteriorated and the Liberal carbon tax is bankrupting our farmers. Eliminating the Liberal carbon tax is a real, tangible action they could take today to deliver relief to our farmers.

In question period, I asked the Prime Minister to fully exempt our farmers from the carbon tax. I also asked him if he would finally acknowledge that his carbon tax unfairly punishes our rural communities and our farmers. The Prime Minister's response was that Canadians were better off with his carbon tax and that he was putting more money in their pockets. That is completely ludicrous. If \$100 is taken out of someone's pocket and \$1 is put back in, they are not better off.

No one is naive enough to believe that. It shows that the Prime Minister is either not listening, he does not understand the realities of rural Saskatchewan or that he does not care. Maybe it is all of the above. Regardless, my constituents of Battlefords—Lloydminster are owed better.

The Liberal carbon tax does not acknowledge the reality of living in rural Saskatchewan, it does not acknowledge the contributions of our farmers to environmental sustainability and certainly the Liberal household carbon rebates given to farm families do not even come close to offsetting the taxes paid by their farm businesses.

Farmers in Saskatchewan are paying the carbon tax on everything from drying grain to hauling crops to machinery to rail transportation and so many other major farm expenses. Unlike other industries, farmers and producers cannot pass along the added expense. It is a direct hit to their bottom line.

This year, they are losing 8% of their total net income and in less than two years, that number will be 12% of their net income. Those numbers are astronomical and will drive our family farm businesses into the ground. Blow after blow, our farmers are taking hits and they are desperate. I sure hope we will hear a different answer.

How does the Liberal government expect farmers to put food on their own tables, let alone the tables of Canadians?

• (1900)

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to further address the question of the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster on pollution pricing in the agriculture sector.

In many ways, agriculture is leading the way in our transition to a low-carbon economy. Canada's farmers are and will continue to be part of the climate change solution. That is why our carbon-pricing policy reflects the realities of Canada's agriculture industry.

Our government recognizes that farmers and farm families are important drivers of our economy. We understand that Canadian farmers are making important contributions in the fight against climate change, for example, by adopting sustainable technologies and practices like precision agriculture or conservation tillage. We know farmers are price takers and cannot easily pass along increased costs to consumers. That is why gasoline and diesel fuels for on-farm use are exempted from carbon pricing under the federal backstop. As well, emissions from crop and livestock production are not subject to carbon pricing.

As for the issue of usage of propane for grain drying, we are committed to listening to producers. We thank the organizations who have provided data and we will certainly give it full considera-

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tion. The agriculture sector already has a solid track record of innovating and adopting new technologies to improve environmental performance and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As one young farmer said recently, environmental sustainability is in their DNA and if they are not caring for their land for those six consecutive generations, they are not in business. In fact, for more than a decade, greenhouse gases from agriculture have remained stable, despite growth in production.

The government places a high priority on helping the industry adjust to the effects of climate change. Climate change and the environment are at the heart of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Canadian agricultural partnership. Through this partnership, the federal, provincial and territorial governments are investing in key priorities of the agriculture sector, including the environment. The programs help farmers capitalize on opportunities for sustainable growth while adapting to climate change. They help farmers adopt precision agriculture technologies, tools and products to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This helps them further contribute to Canada's actions on greenhouse gas emissions while growing production to feed the world.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is investing \$70 million in agriculture science to address emerging priorities such as climate change and soil and water conservation. That includes an investment of \$10 million in the living laboratories initiative, which brings scientists and farmers together to develop practical technologies of sustainable farming practices that are field tested so farmers can adopt them quickly. In Prince Edward Island, the research conducted under living lab Atlantic will help P.E.I. farmers enhance soil health, improve water quality and boost their crop production.

We know Canadian grain farmers are working hard to safeguard our environment. We will continue to invest to support them in their great work.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot of things there. I do not know how the government is respecting provincial jurisdiction.

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We look at Alberta and Saskatchewan and what farmers are already doing. Obviously, they are innovative. It is good for their bottom line. They want to be good for the environment. They are already good stewards of the land, so just to hear the same platitudes over and over again, farmers know that they are doing what they can do. They want to be innovative, but when the Liberal government keeps putting its hands in farmers' pockets, they are not going to have any capital left over to be innovative and to afford those things to reduce their carbon footprint.

I heard the member mention exploring the idea of an exemption of the carbon tax on propane for drying grain. I am wondering if this is a commitment that the government is willing to make, to make that exemption for propane fuel that is used for farm purposes such as drying grain.

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Speaker, Canada has the opportunity to be a global leader when it comes to feeding a growing world population sustainably. The government will provide the investments needed

to maximize and accelerate the efforts of our farmers, our scientists and industry. Our programs will help farmers care for their land and strengthen their businesses. These efforts will bring enormous value to our Canadian brand, already renowned in global markets for quality and respect for the environment.

We are committed to supporting farmers as they continue to be responsible stewards of our land. We will continue to work with farmers to help them capture sustainable growth while adapting to climate change.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:04 p.m.)

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